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.

Production Note:
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I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land, on which I walk and live each day. I pay my respects to the Elders, past, present and those emerging.

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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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

In 1991, the Federal government released the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) report. Whilst all States and Territories posited that they would commit morally and financially to the adoption of the proposed 339 recommendations stemming from the inquiry, some States and Territories have demonstrated a piecemeal approach to their implementation. The RCIADIC (1991) resulted in a comprehensive report that examined the tragic circumstances of 99 Indigenous people who died while in police custody between January 1980 and May 1989. A key finding of the RCIADIC, *Recommendation 62* identified a significant over-representation of Indigenous juveniles in the criminal justice system.

Recommendation 62

That governments and Aboriginal organisations recognise that the problems affecting Aboriginal juveniles are so widespread and have such potentially disastrous repercussions for the future that there is an urgent need for governments and Aboriginal organisations to negotiate together to devise strategies designed to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are involved in the welfare and criminal justice systems and, in particular, to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are separated from their families and communities, whether by being declared to be in need of care, detained, imprisoned or otherwise (p.252).

In response to the findings, recommendations for justice reform and the development of strategies to reduce the high incarceration rates of Indigenous youth within the prison system were identified as critical (Cuneen & McDonald, 1997; Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1991). Since the report was handed down incarceration rates for Indigenous peoples have increased substantially over the

past decades and deaths in custody continue to occur at an alarming rate (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018; Australian Law Reform Commission, 2017). With the exception of findings presented in the RCIADIC report there has been minimal research which has investigated the educational explanations for the high incarceration rates of Indigenous Australians and there is a growing disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples who encounter the criminal justice system.

There is an increasing volume of international literature indicating that those from minority groups, particularly young males who are excluded from schools are more likely to enter into the criminal justice system (Owusu-Bempah, Kanters, Druyts, Toor, Muldoon, Farquhar & Mills, 2014; Rios, 2010; Rudin, 2007; Warde, 2012). While there is international literature addressing the school to prison pipeline (Mallet, 2016; Mittleman, 2017; Raufu, 2017) there is minimal literature addressing the link between these two phenomena here in Australia. Proportionately, there are significantly higher numbers of Indigenous children suspended or permanently excluded from state education in Queensland compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, and more so for Indigenous males (Department of Education Queensland, 2018). The key task of this thesis is to present research which contributes to this significant gap in the literature. Taking into consideration the stark findings of the RDIADC report, this thesis will investigate the school-to-prison pipeline with an effort to understand the educational experiences of Indigenous boys prior to incarceration in Queensland, Australia. This research has been undertaken with Indigenous adults who support young Indigenous males on a daily basis.

1.1 Statement of Problem and Rationale

Transgenerational trauma (Atkinson, 2003) and socio-economic disadvantage for many Indigenous Australians has been an ongoing crisis since colonisation (Beresford, 2012; Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Norris, 2001; Paradies, 2005). Many Indigenous Australians experience socio-economic disadvantage across a range of determinants, such as health, housing, education, employment and justice

(J. Atkinson, Nelson & C. Atkinson, 2010; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2014; Weatherburn, Snowball & Hunter, 2006). Identifying how the education system, schools and educators can play a role in improving these economic factors through understanding how they impact upon Indigenous families and children is critical in order to make positive long-lasting change to the socio-economic fabric of Australian society.

Educational disadvantage for Indigenous people can be traced back to discriminatory policies enacted by Federal and State Governments, up till the early 1970's. These policies have had a profound effect on the continuing inequality that exists for many Indigenous Australians (Guenther, Bat & Osborne, 2013; Gunstone, 2012; Rowse, 2012). Young Indigenous children who experience intergenerational trauma can find it difficult to engage in mainstream schooling (Hertel & Johnson, 2013; Howard, 2018). Engagement may be difficult due to discriminatory policies which have had a direct bearing on children's families. Males in particular are suspended, excluded or 'pushed out' of the school system at inordinate levels and the complex reasons for this occurrence have not been fully investigated in Australia (Graham, 2018; Purdie & Buckley, 2010). This research investigates the educational experiences for Indigenous boys in the state education system of Queensland and aims to identify whether these experiences link to their over-representation in the juvenile justice system.

Queensland is a state located on the Eastern seaboard of Australia. This research has been conducted just outside the capital of Brisbane, Queensland in the Moreton Bay regional area (see, Figure 1.1).
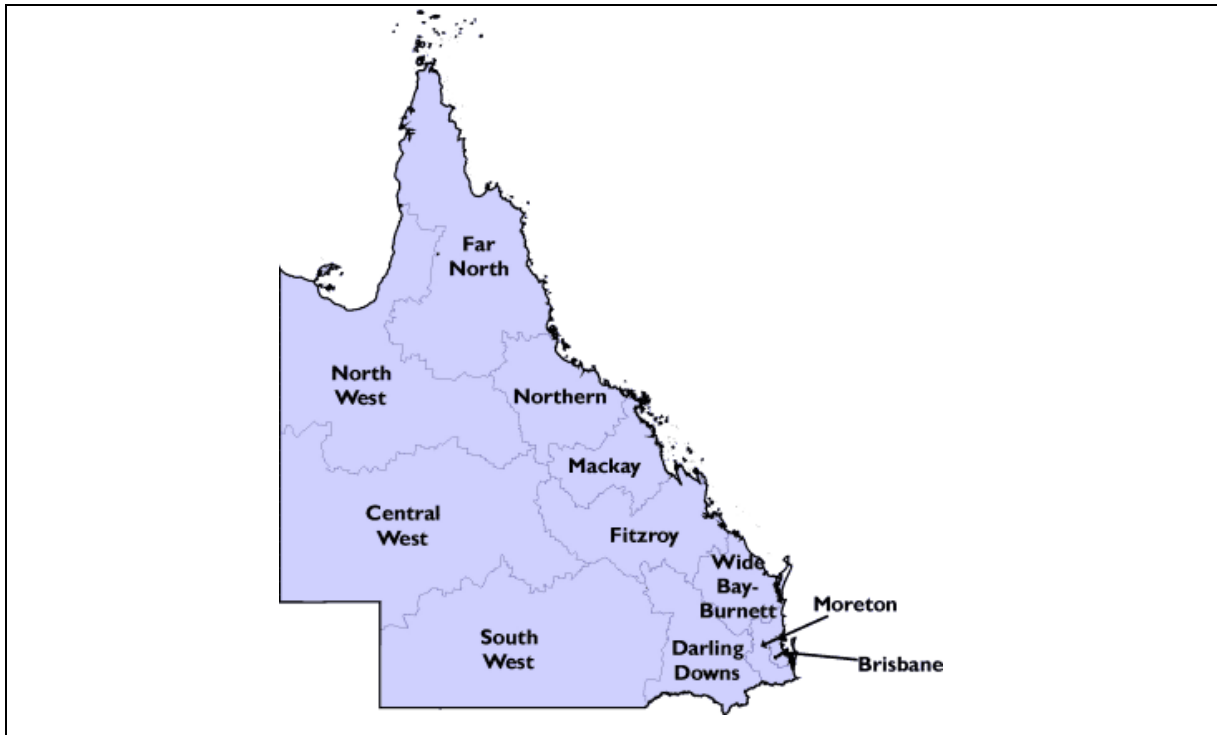
Figure 1.1 Map of Queensland, Australia, identifying the Moreton Bay Regional Area. (Source: Queensland Government Statisticians Office, 2016).

Literature from Canada and the United States provide evidence of a relationship between systemic exclusion from school and higher incarceration rates of Indigenous Canadian and African American young males (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Losen and Martinez, 2013; Owusu-Bempah et al., 2014). In the United States research reveals that young males from minority groups who experience exclusion from education are much more likely to experience incarceration, with one in three young African American males ending up in prison during their lifetime

While there has been a decrease in criminal activity within the United States and Canada, it is interesting to note that more prison facilities are being built (Gramlich, 2018; Keighley, 2017). From the early 1970's to the year 2000 the number of prison facilities in the United States climbed from 511 to nearly 1,663. Most of these were built in conservative southern towns that welcome the establishment of new prisons since economic downturns have been experienced in these regions. For many, these prisons offer the hope of employment, however privatization of the prison system is a contentious issue where some believe that profit comes before rehabilitation. Eason (2017) indicates that the United States spent approximately \$55 billion on correctional services in 2014 alone, and although supporting economic improvements in small

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towns, this was a significant expense for taxpayers (Eason, 2017). In 2011, Canada's conservative government also budgeted for the building of several new mega prison facilities similar to those in the United States, as well as an expansion to those in existence. Although the incidence of crime in Canada was decreasing at the time, harsher longer-term penalties were being handed out by the courts (Blaze-Carlson, 2011). In Ottawa, Canada it was recently announced that there would be an expansion to an established prison facility, apparently to reduce overcrowding. However, it was noted that many of those who were incarcerated within this facility were dealing with mental health and drug rehabilitation issues that were not being addressed within mainstream society (Seymour, 2017). Rather than allocating funding to alleviate the social and economic issues faced by many of its citizens, some governments are 'resolving' this situation by choosing to build more carceral establishments to detain citizens for relatively minor criminal or drug related offences.

Comparatively, in Australia, an increase in juvenile criminal activity is constantly being presented as a pre-eminent election issue by conservative politicians and media organisations, even though statistics show that juvenile crime is decreasing (Richards, 2011). Between 2015 and 2017 there was a decrease in juvenile offender rates for all Australian states and territories except Western Australia and Tasmania (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). There is a current ideological position which advocates for a 'get tough on crime' policy across Australian states and territories, which is concerning (see, Cunneen, 2016; Lovell, Guthrie, Simpson & Butler, 2018; Willingham & Oaten, 2018). In Queensland, while the sitting Labor government has advocated for a more holistic justice re-investment approach to youth crime (Farmer, 2018), the opposing conservative government has indicated that if elected they will build two new juvenile detention facilities in Queensland (Bavas & O'Brien, 2017) indicating a move towards further incarceration of youth, rather than seeking solutions for prevention.

While there has been much research addressing the intensification of the carceral state in America (see, Eisen, 2018; Gotschalk, 2014; Palacios, 2016; Simon, 2007), little discussion has taken place in Australia about what escalating incarceration rates mean for future populations of minority groups who are incarcerated at higher rates than any other demographic. While law enforcement is currently being addressed in a castigatory fashion, there can be no doubt that the high social, economic and moral

costs for its citizens will require exigent investigation. The access to equitable education for all people in Australian society has significant implications for Australia's future public spending and the socio-economic well-being for all of its citizens.

This research is of critical importance because Australia's Indigenous peoples are coming into contact with the legal system at much higher rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009; Weatherburn, 2014). Speaking directly with Indigenous adults who are working in education, social services and youth justice within the community offers an opportunity to understand this issue from an Indigenous perspective.

While young Indigenous males aged 10-17 years account for only five percent of Australia's population, they make up 50% of all of those children who come under juvenile justice supervision (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). Of key relevance to this study, two out of every three young people in Queensland's juvenile detention centres are Indigenous Australians. In Queensland state schools although young Indigenous children make up just under ten percent of the student population, they account for 20% of all student disciplinary absences (SDA's). Allen and White-Smith (2014) concede that,

> Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline for black males is a multifaceted problem requiring a comprehensive approach. As part of a larger ecology of the black male experience, we understand that schools are one of many institutions and cultural formations that systematically marginalize black males (p.454).

This research seeks to address this knowledge gap by investigating the educational experiences of Indigenous boys in the state education system of Queensland and aims to identify whether their schooling experiences are associated with the high numbers of Indigenous boys over-represented in the juvenile justice system. It will examine what can be done to disrupt the 'school to prison pipeline' for young Indigenous males and also considers the broader implications of providing a culturally responsive schooling experience for young Indigenous males, with support from the Queensland education system, its agents and community organisations. While it is not the intention of this study, it would be appropriate for further research to be conducted regarding

the disturbing rise in the over-representation of Indigenous women who are incarcerated in Australia.

1.2 Current Indicators – State school disciplinary absence rates of Indigenous students in Queensland

High rates of suspensions, exclusions and the disengagement of young Indigenous males from Queensland state schools is a significant problem. Education can be a decisive catalyst to address this issue and ensure the ongoing well-being of young Indigenous males. To continue to dismiss the disengagement of at-risk young Indigenous males from our education systems is negligent, not only on the part of governments, but schools as their agents (and educators). Figures 1.2 and 1.3 show the number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children who are given a school disciplinary absence (SDA) in Queensland state schools. School disciplinary absence is a process used by school principals to exclude students from school for specific periods of time. These graphs indicate the five categories that principals use to determine how students will be disciplined for minor and major school infringements, as well as the use of out of school charge, suspensions, which gives principals the option to exclude students on the grounds of a criminal charge or conviction. These categories include one to ten days for a short suspension; 11-20 days for a long suspension; exclusion; cancellation of enrolment and charge suspension, which relates to students who are charged with a criminal offense and wish to return to school.
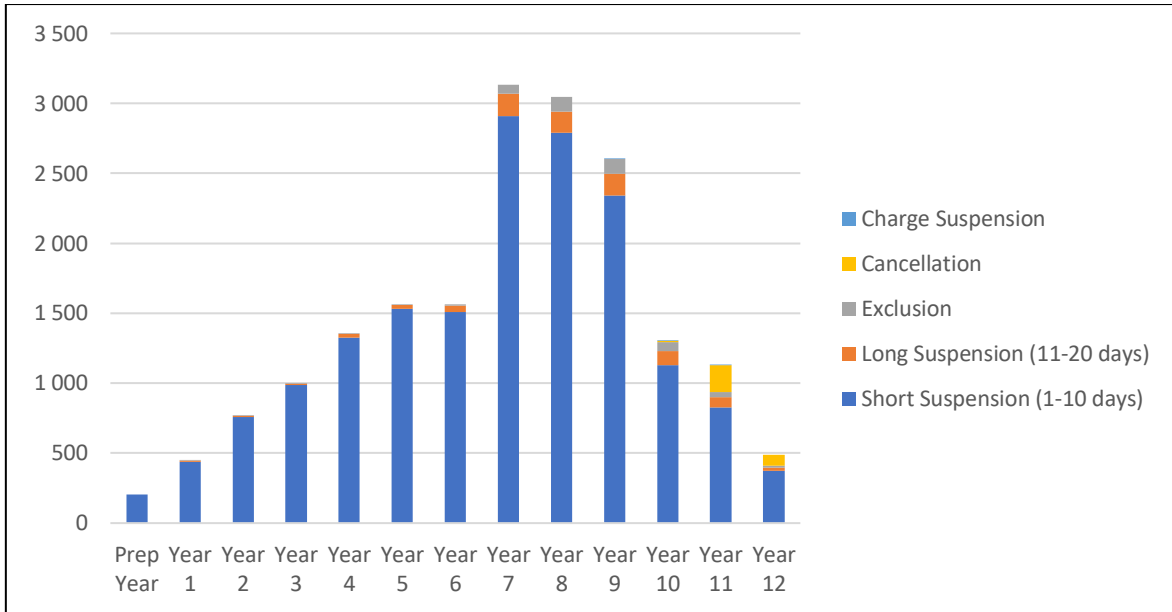
Figure 1.2 Indigenous students receiving a School Disciplinary Absence in Queensland State schools by year level - 2017. (Source: Adapted from Education Queensland Data, 2018.)
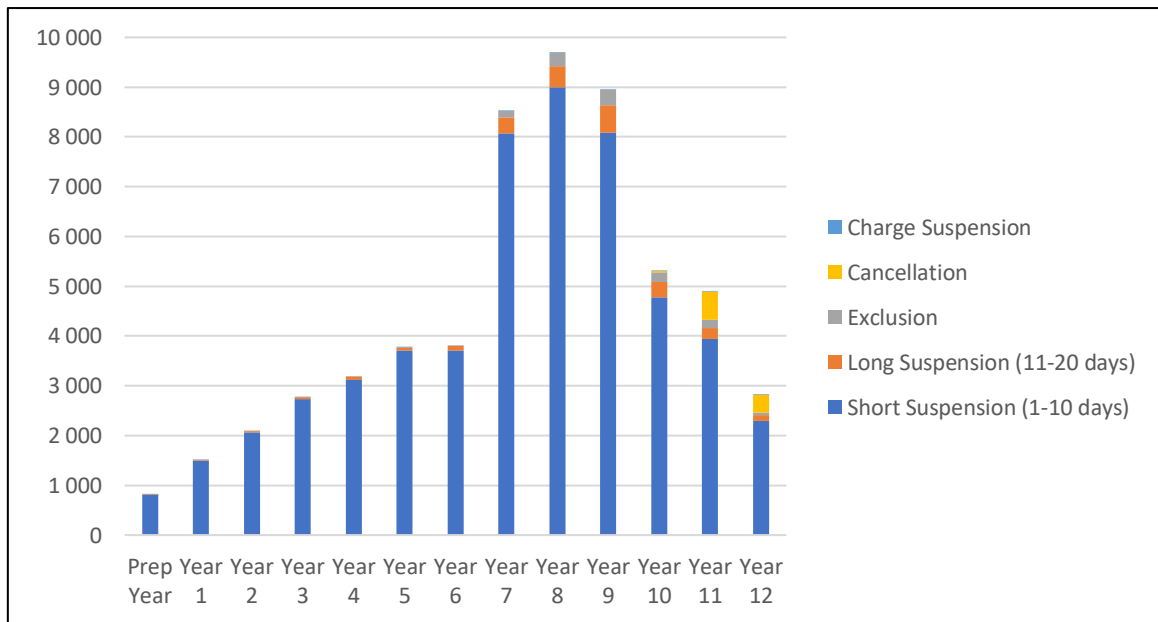
Figure 1.3 Non-Indigenous students receiving a School Disciplinary Absence in Queensland state schools by year level – 2017. (Source: Adapted from Education Queensland Data, 2018.)

Upon further analysis it is evident in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 that in the middle year levels, which encompasses key transition points of secondary school, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in years seven, eight and nine, receive the highest amount of short suspensions of all year levels from prep to Year 12.   However, Indigenous students are over-represented in all of three of these year levels receiving both short

suspensions (1-10 days) and long suspensions (11-20 days). The highest cancellation of enrolment occurs in Year 11 for both Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous peers, with Indigenous students accounting for 192 students who receive a cancellation of enrolment and non-Indigenous students at 571 respectively. Indigenous students are significantly over-represented in receiving SDA's within the Queensland state school system across most year levels (Department of Education Queensland, 2018). Whilst these figures reveal the disciplinary absence rates of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous males and females, research indicates that boys from minority groups are more likely to be suspended or excluded than their female counterparts (Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris & Catalano, 2006; Hemphill, et. al, 2012; Skiba, 2000; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

Queensland Education Minister, Kate Jones, cited in an article by journalist Sarah Vogler from *The Sunday Mail* in 2015 was concerned about the significant increase of children being excluded from the state education system in Queensland since the introduction of harsher disciplinary penalties, with no right of appeal by students or their parents. Jones indicated that there needed to be some investigation into the rising statistics of young people being excluded and suggested that there should be alternative education options for such students.

In her research, Graham (2018) questions the impact of changes to state government policy around suspension and exclusion of students from Queensland state schools, highlighting that there has been a considerable increase in the number of students who are now receiving SDA's particularly in the preparatory year and in year seven, both of which are important transition phases for children attending school. It has also been established that many children who receive SDA's, also experience greater socio-economic disadvantage, have a disability, or are identified as Indigenous (Beauchamp 2012; Graham, 2018; Losen & Gillespie 2012).

Freire (1972) suggests that from the commencement to the completion of their schooling many young people feel like they are silenced and dealing with the enemy. Freire's ideology is particularly relevant within the space of this research, as he proposes that, "students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and

obliged to respond to that challenge" (p.54). It is within this context that those young Indigenous males who continue to be culturally marginalised and subjugated within school communities, continuously find themselves excluded from education, by challenging the dominant system through whatever means necessary. Freire (1972) submits that it is the structure of our society which needs changing, not those who are present within it - it is within this social, theoretical framework that this thesis is situated.

1.3 Current Indicators – Incarceration rates of young Indigenous males in Queensland

In 2014, the Australian Human Rights Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda suggested that Indigenous Australians were more likely to be in prison than retained within the education system (Gooda, 2014). In 2013, an Indigenous Member of Parliament, Bess Price suggested that prison was a preferable place for young Indigenous people, because they would be fed, have a place to sleep, be drug free and could live in safety. Waters (2015) and Georgatos (2016) strongly disagreed with this assertion and suggest that social exclusion, poor educational outcomes and economic disadvantage for young Indigenous people were significant contributing factors that lead to Indigenous children's over-representation in the prison system. Both Georgatos (2016) and Waters (2015) condemned the simplistic proposition that youth detention was a suitable place for Indigenous children and argued that this was not the solution to support or rehabilitate Indigenous children. The continued incarceration of children who are experiencing poverty, homelessness, health issues or trauma, is a poor indictment on Australian society.

In 2018, imprisonment rates of Indigenous peoples did not improve. The national adult prison rate for Indigenous peoples was 11,963 persons. This is an overall increase of one percent, from 2017 and indicates an increase of 552 Indigenous persons in 2018 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia incarcerate the highest percentage of Indigenous peoples in Australia, with Queensland accounting for the second highest at 23% or 2,792 persons.

For young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged between 10 and 17 years, the national statistics are alarming, as Indigenous youth were identified as being 24 times more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to be in detention (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017). Queensland statistics fair no better and identify that there appears to be incongruent criminal sentencing of young Indigenous males. Although Figures 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6 do not indicate the ratio of Indigenous males to females who are in juvenile detention, it is known that the majority are young males and a disproportionate number of these are young Indigenous males (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2018). Overall, national statistics showed that the detention rate of young Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as 24 to 1 respectively.
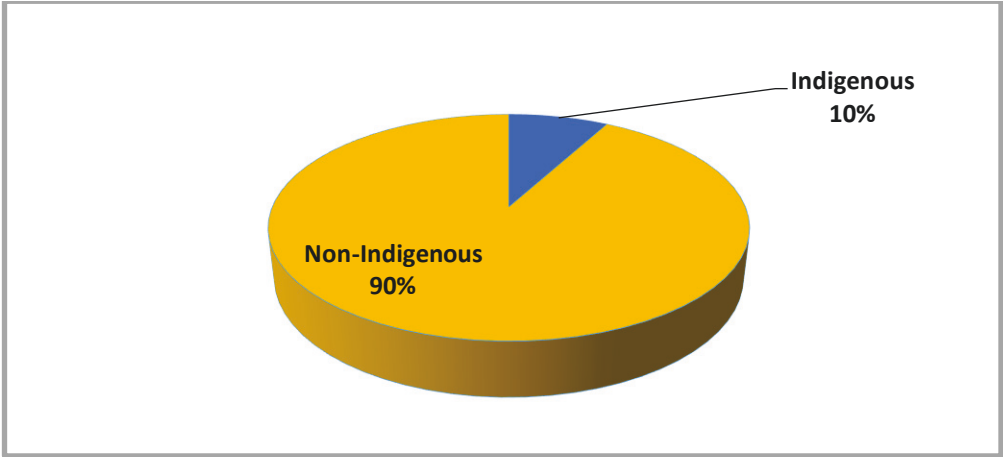
Figure 1.4 Queensland population – Indigenous & non-Indigenous children aged 10-17 years, 2017-2018. (Source: Adapted from Education Queensland Data, 2018.)

Figure 1.4 shows that the population of Indigenous students attending Queensland state primary and secondary schools in the 2017-18 period was ten percent of the total state school population while non-Indigenous students accounted for 90%. In contrast, Figure 1.5 illustrates that during the 2015-16 period Indigenous children accounted for 55% of all young people incarcerated in Queensland's two youth detention centres. While caution should be exercised due to the relatively small cohort of Indigenous children, it is worth noting that Indigenous children are significantly over-represented within the juvenile justice system in Queensland, particularly, Indigenous boys.
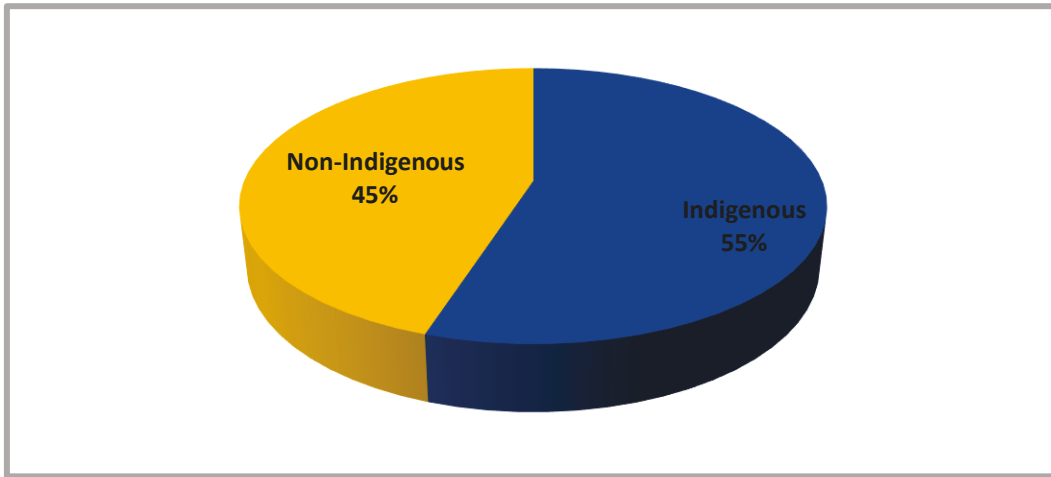
Figure 1.5 Queensland population – Indigenous & non-Indigenous children aged 10- 17 years incarcerated in 2015-2016. (Source: Adapted from the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare: Youth justice fact sheet no. 78, 2015-16.)

Young people in detention during the year by age for Queensland 2016-17

	10-13 Years	14-17 Years	18 Years
■ Indigenous	106	482	1
■ Non-Indigenous	43	325	1
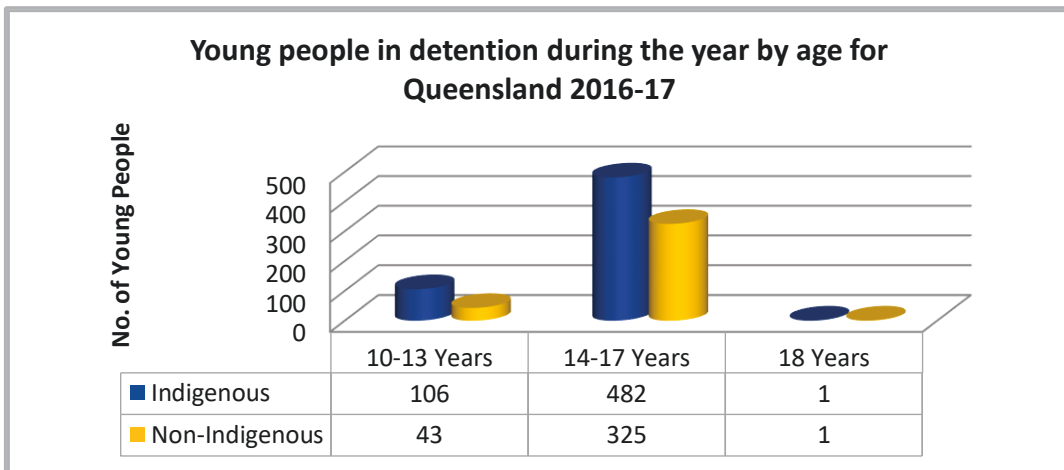
Figure 1.6 Non-Indigenous and Indigenous young people in detention in Queensland by age, 2016-2017. (Source: Adapted from the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare: Youth justice fact sheet no. 78, 2015-16.)

Of significance, Figure 1.6 presents comparative data from the 2016-17 period of young people in detention by age group. It shows that in the 10-13 age group Indigenous young people accounted for more than double those non-Indigenous children held in detention. The data also highlights that those in the 14-17 age group represented the largest number of children incarcerated during this period, correlating with the earlier graph that identifies Indigenous children in the same age group receiving school disciplinary absences. The data illustrates that while non-Indigenous children account for only 325 young people held in detention, Indigenous children made up a significantly higher number at 482 children held in detention during the

same period. As the criminal justice supervision[1] rate of young Indigenous peoples rose from 15 to 18 times that of non-Indigenous youth between 2012 and 2017 (AIHW, 2018) these statistics exemplify the urgency and importance of this research.

1.4 Significance of the study

According to a Queensland government inquiry into the educational opportunities for Indigenous students, the House of Representatives Standing Committee of Indigenous Affairs (2017) maintains that from 2011 to 2016 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments grew by 23.9%, compared with 8.6 percent for all students' in Queensland, and this will increase exponentially over the coming decade. With a predicted increase in the numbers of young Indigenous people attending Queensland schools in the coming years, it is important to address the causes behind the high numbers of young Indigenous males suspended, excluded or disengaged from their principal schooling years. If not, we could expect to see more young Indigenous males excluded from future employment opportunities and possibly even higher numbers in the school to prison pipeline.

A set of recommendations will be provided at the conclusion of this research for the consideration of the Queensland Education Department, schools and educators (see section 9.2). They are designed to offer critical information that may be adopted by Indigenous and non-Indigenous community organisations in order to provide or reconsider service delivery in this space. The implementation of some or all of these recommendations may provide an avenue to address the stated problem of exclusion from school and over-representation in juvenile detention of Indigenous boys. While some of these recommendations may be implemented immediately, others will require more time to develop and will rely on the formation of relational and respectful partnerships between all entities for this to occur.

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[1] There are two different categories of Youth Justice Supervision - Unsentenced: Home-detention bail, supervised or conditional bail, and Sentenced: Parole or supervised release, probation or similar suspended detention.

The recommendations and findings will be shared with the Indigenous community that has supported the study. They will also be made available to government bodies and other community organisations who seek to question particular components within the current state education system in Queensland and redefine what a genuine culturally supportive schooling experience might look like. In turn, it is anticipated that the solutions offered will provide an opportunity for Indigenous boys to achieve at the highest level of educational attainment and reduce their over-representation in the Queensland juvenile justice system.

1.5 Primary research questions

After conducting a thorough review of the literature pertaining to young Indigenous males and their experiences within both the education and juvenile justice systems, the following four key questions were developed as the key foci of this doctoral research. These questions were asked of Indigenous community representatives employed in education, youth justice and social services.

Q1. How do Indigenous community representatives employed in education, youth justice and social services understand the educational experiences of young Indigenous males?

Q2. What is the relationship between Indigenous males aged 10 to 17 years who are suspended/excluded from state schooling and their over-representation in Queensland's youth detention?

Q3. How do economic and social barriers affect school completion rates of young Indigenous males?

Q4. What are the internal and external support strategies that may reduce the numbers of young Indigenous males who are suspended or excluded from schools?

Each question will be addressed individually in Chapter Eight. Importantly, the findings will contribute to a body of knowledge that will provide methods to improve the schooling experiences of young Indigenous males, and also advance the policy

and decision making processes of Education Queensland, schools leaders and classroom teachers.

1.6 Research Design – participants and data collection

Before the commencement of the research, ethical consent was given by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (refer to Appendix A). The process of this approval was stringent and required explanation as to how the research would maintain culturally respectful procedures and in what ways the research would be of benefit to the Indigenous community where the study was taking place. This research also recognised and encompassed the ethical principles, standards and guidelines of section 4.7 in the (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018) which acknowledges that in areas where the study may be particularly sensitive, in this case, research conducted with Indigenous peoples, the researcher must take this aspect into consideration and follow respectful protocols throughout the research process. This study complied with the six core values of the *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders (2018) identified as, Spirit and Integrity,* Reciprocity, Respect, Equity, Cultural Continuity and Responsibility.

This research was grounded in relationships with people from the Indigenous community over a considerable period of time, as a result of engagement and collaboration with Community in the areas of education disparities evident in schooling and providing socially just opportunities for Indigenous children within the community. By engaging in ongoing mutually respectful dialogue and by privileging Indigenous voices and Indigenous Standpoints, relational connections have been established throughout this study. It was critical to move beyond Eurocentric practices of colonial-settler research practices and find ways to foreground Indigenous Knowledges, beliefs and experiences relative to the study. It was vital then, that reflective consideration was given to the motivation and the reasoning behind the research, and the ways in which this study would be decolonised.

All participants had experience working with or supporting young Indigenous males in their professional employment capacity and or personal lives. Participants' standpoints were varied, in that, they worked across wide-ranging sectors of education, juvenile justice, social work and with Indigenous and non-Indigenous support agencies. Participants were recruited by making initial contact with the Moreton Bay Murri Elders network who gave support for the study and advised that certain people may be interested in taking part in the research. The people identified were initially contacted by email or telephone and then an invitation to take part in the study was sent to each of the ten prospective participants.

Ten participants, all of whom identified as Indigenous peoples took part in the study. One of the participants withdrew at the end of the interview process. During the interview process this participant became visibly emotional and once the interview had concluded he requested that the information which he had provided not be used in the study. It was agreed with the participant that any information provided would not be included at any stage of the research process or in any future research. The participant was asked if any further counselling or support was required, and it was indicated to that this was not necessary. The participant was provided with contact details of culturally safe support services if needed.

Data for this study was collected through a yarning process which encompassed the use of fifteen semi-structured questions. These questions were divided into three categories: General, Education/Legal and Community Support. Robust, in-depth discussions took place with the interviewees, each of whom selected a secure and safe space for the interviews to occur. Initially the research was to include a focus group session with community members, but this idea was abandoned to protect the possible identification of vulnerable children and their families during group conversations.

Further elaboration on the engagement process of participants, the instrumentation used to collect the data and the procedures that were followed is expanded upon in Chapter Four.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this research was based upon Nakata's Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) and Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony. Both these theorist's philosophical principles are grounded in the concepts of equity, social justice, emancipation and the examination of constructs of social and economic power. Lysaght (2011) emphasized the requirement of classifying the theoretical framework for a doctoral thesis study, suggesting that,

> A researcher's choice of framework is not arbitrary but reflects important personal beliefs and understandings about the nature of knowledge, how it exists (in the metaphysical sense) in relation to the observer, and the possible roles to be adopted, and tools to be employed consequently, by the researcher in his/her work (p.572).

Both Nakata and Gramsci offer critiques into the ways in which power is distributed or withheld by dominant societal groups disposed to maintaining power structures that support their own agendas. The literature presented in Chapter Two, and the theoretical perspectives highlighted in Chapter Three, identify that Indigenous Australians have been maintaining resistance since invasion of the colonisers. As Lippmann (1994) contended, resistance is not merely aligned to physical resistance of the invaders, but also relates to Indigenous people's intellectual resistance to be subsumed into 'white society' and in doing so relinquish their Indigeneity in the process. Lippmann (1994) stated that Indigenous peoples,

> …have become increasingly assertive and consciously proud over the years, using the political ploys of their opponents to turn against them, recapturing their history, fighting to obtain international support and taking on the role of educators of the white community as to the value of their culture and the centrality of their land (p.166).

Nakata's Indigenous Standpoint Theory offers a theoretical foundation which acknowledges the stories told within the literature presented in Chapter Two, and promotes the voices of the participants in Chapters, Five, Six and Seven that challenge

the socio-economic inequities which exist for many Indigenous peoples. Nakata (2007) maintains that Indigenous Standpoint Theory is, "distinct form of analysis and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of attention by others" (p.11).

A discrete lack of mainstream educational opportunities for many Indigenous peoples, is a continuing aspect that is reflected within the parameters of this thesis. As such, these lack of opportunities are foregrounded, investigated and examined in the contexts of Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the contemporary disparities still experienced by many Indigenous children attending mainstream schools.

While Gramsci may present a Western epistemological view, and his work is not specifically constructed within an Indigenous context, for this thesis the works of Gramsci have specific relevance. Gramsci addresses one of the key aspects of resistance to colonialism through his examination of *Cultural Hegemony*, and provides insights into the ways in which dominant groups exert their power within all sections of society, including the education and prison systems. He identifies the ways in which power then goes on marginalise certain groups within society through deep-rooted systemic inequity. Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony (1971) considers the ways in which hegemonic control is maintained through 'the apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. Gramsci (1971) contended that, States who endeavour to establish and uphold a particular kind of civil society and citizen and in the process vanquishes all others, will use the legal system, together with other institutional entities such as the school system to ensure that power and control is preserved. Unlike Mignolo's (2007) suggestion that, Marxist ideology, "should be subsumed under de-colonial projects" (p.164), for this study, it is believed that both Nakata's and Gramsci's theoretical frameworks can be deemed complementary in the contestation and challenge of current practices within the education and legal systems being examined.

1.8 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study was the inability to have direct access to interview young Indigenous males aged 10-17 years, who had been excluded from schools and who had also experienced juvenile incarceration. Attempting to obtain separate ethical approvals from the University of Technology Sydney, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice to interview Indigenous children within the limits of a three-year PhD project was not deemed practicable. However, there is potential to expand upon this study to include young Indigenous males in future research, particularly in a national study within a Postdoctoral Fellowship.

This research does not intend (ordinarily) to have generalizable findings, but to reflect deep, rich, storied discoveries which illuminate professional experiences of the Indigenous participants who support young Indigenous males within the community. Naturalistic generalization, although not always considered a key factor of qualitative research, can however be used in a limited capacity on the basis of similarity (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). It is also anticipated that based upon the findings of this research, those wishing to investigate, develop or instigate new policy relating to suspensions and exclusions from schools will greatly benefit from the data.

1.9 Overview of the Research

Chapter One has addressed the statement of the problem, identifying that young Indigenous males are over-represented in both exclusion from school and juvenile incarceration in Queensland. It highlights the issue of disparity for some Indigenous children across social and economic structures and maintains that dominant public bureaucracies, such as the schooling and legal system, uphold power, thereby restricting the rights and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of Nakata (2007) and Gramsci (1971), this chapter suggested that although these inequitable power structures do exist, Indigenous peoples consistently resist these dominant ideologies to achieve self-determination and emancipation. The four research questions are proffered, and the engagement

of participants were discussed. A brief outline was given of the research instrument and the research design procedures used for this study.

Chapter Two will provide a comprehensive overview of the historical discriminatory policies enacted by governments since invasion, with a focus on education and the punitive implementation of many policies. This chapter then specifically addresses systems of education and how principals and teachers have enormous opportunities to change the outcomes for Indigenous children with regard to supporting inclusive teaching practices, which may also assist with the prevention of school exclusion for Indigenous boys. This is followed by an exploration of the current legal system, which includes, surveillance, over-policing and high arrest rates and how this may negatively impact upon the well-being of young Indigenous males.

Chapter Three details the theoretical approaches adopted for this research. An examination of Indigenous research paradigms is considered exploring the decolonisation of Western theoretical perspectives. This is followed by a discussion which examines the theoretical perspectives of Nakata's (2007) Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Gramsci's (1971) theory on cultural hegemony. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of how a non-Indigenous researcher is located and researches within the liminal space of this study.

Chapter Four explicates the research design and methods used for this research. An examination of Rigney's (1999) three principles of Indigenist Research is considered to identify the ways in which colonialist practices can become deconstructed. It exposes how certain privileges exist within the academy of research. This is followed by a discussion about the methodology used to conduct the research, highlighting that a phenomenological, transformative research approach was considered the most appropriate for this enquiry. Finally, a detailed discussion on the methods used to collect the data is presented, which includes the importance of following ethical protocols.

The thesis then presents the data analysis component across three separate chapters – Five, Six and Seven. Chapter Five presents the data analysis relating to the socio-economic and cultural determinants that affect the school completion rates of young

Indigenous males. Theoretical concepts are explored within this analysis, elaborating on the findings identifying that individual and systemic inequities are being experienced by Indigenous boys attending mainstream schools. Three specific areas are also analysed in this chapter - social and economic well-being of family; health issues; and, the self-determination and identity of Indigenous boys.

Chapter Six provides an overview of the contemporary educational experiences of Indigenous boys. Explanations are given as to why Indigenous boys are suspended or excluded from schools, and the care or support that is provided when this occurs. Also offered in this chapter are the findings which relate to the provision of appropriate learning environments and the identification of educational priorities for Indigenous boys. The cultural capacity of educators is also explored highlighting the consequences of limited on-going professional learning opportunities for educators to embed Indigenous perspectives, build their own cultural capacity, and provide culturally relevant curriculum.

Chapter Seven presents analysis of three important aspects identified by participants as crucial to understanding the overall educational experience of Indigenous boys. In particular, it addresses the issues for those who are at risk of disengaging or who are returning to school from juvenile detention. In-school support services, transitioning back into schooling after incarceration and support services made available by community organisations is addressed.

Chapter Eight discusses the overall findings of the research presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. A discussion is offered that identifies the existing knowledge gaps relative to this research inquiry. This chapter highlights the key findings regarding the theoretical principles of power, hegemony and racism as discussed in Chapter Three. The four primary research questions are then answered, considering the literature and theoretical ideations of the study.

Finally, Chapter Nine offers a list of recommendations along with implications for future research. These recommendations are based upon the findings of this study and are presented to support young Indigenous males to remain at school and receive an equitable education that values and respects their Indigeneity, culture, self-

determination and emancipation. Suggestions for future research are offered as a result of information garnered from this research.

CHAPTER TWO

"WE ASKED: HOW DO YOU WINNOW? TEACH US" (Ilyatjari, 1998)

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the central foci of this thesis, emphasising the necessity to examine the educational experiences of young Indigenous males prior to incarceration. It also highlighted the need to investigate the connection between the high disengagement, suspension and exclusion rates of young Indigenous males from mainstream schooling, as well as their subsequent over-representation within the juvenile justice system.

Chapter Two will now provide a comprehensive review of the literature, commencing with Section 2.1 which focuses on the historical contexts of educational experiences of Indigenous children pre-invasion and the ensuing colonising processes. The collaboration between State and church, the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families, and the impacts experienced from this policy decision will also be investigated. Teased out within this section are the historical over-arching government policies, which have led to the hegemonic subjugation of Indigenous peoples since the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. By examining the practices and policies implemented by the colonial oppressors during this period, we can understand the deliberate fracturing of First Nations peoples' way of life and the present-day consequences of such dogmas. When analysing the concept of 'education' for Indigenous peoples, research is commonly measured from a neo-colonial, post-invasion framework – rarely from the standpoints of Indigenous peoples themselves. Historically, governments or their agents (schools) have given little consideration to equitable 'education' for Indigenous children. It is only within the last 30 years or so that socially just and equitable policies have begun to be developed and implemented. However, very little has been considered from an Indigenous standpoint in mainstream schools across the nation (S. Phillips, J. Phillips, Whatman & McLaughlin, 2007).

Section 2.2 will draw upon relevant scholarly literature to discuss the contemporary educational experiences of Indigenous youth within mainstream education, particularly with a focus on Queensland. This section reviews the literature from a contemporary perspective; exploring the education of Indigenous youth in mainstream schooling and specifically focuses on the experiences of young Indigenous males. The critical investigation of these educational experiences illustrates that the recent policies implemented by the Department of Education in Queensland, may have a direct impact upon young Indigenous males and possibly lead to further disengagement, suspension and exclusion from schools.

The deculturation of Indigenous students will then be discussed, emphasising that most schooling experiences for Indigenous children are in fact culturally deficit, as many teachers lack cultural capacity. It is fundamental that teachers have the cultural capacity to teach Indigenous students (Perso, 2012). Seldom offered, is the availability of culturally safe spaces for Indigenous children and youth. As Bin-Sallik (2003) points out, cultural safety, "empowers individuals and enables them to contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes" (p.21). This chapter will then argue that Indigenous students take with them into schools and into classrooms their own cultural values, belief systems and practices on a daily basis. It will show how these students are then required to negotiate their duality within a culturally void space, generally requiring them to leave behind their Indigenous standpoints and worldviews at the school gate. While some effort has been made to improve cultural inclusivity across the National curriculum, the schooling space and curriculum continues to be specifically designed to educate the dominant Eurocentric cultural group within Australian society.

At home, many young Indigenous males are given autonomy and independence in their own decision-making processes from an early age but are then expected to act in a certain way when engaged in Western systems of education. This can lead to confusion and behavioral issues for those who do not see their independence, cultural values or attitudes represented or valued within the 'normalised' curriculum in mainstream schooling. These behavioral issues can result in higher suspension, exclusion, and disengagement rates for young Indigenous males, subsequently

causing an increased likelihood of having contact with the juvenile justice system (Bourke, Rigby & Burden, 2000).

In Section 2.3 the discussion turns to the over-representation of young Indigenous males in juvenile detention. The release of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report* (1991) nearly three decades ago was a catalyst for action. However, it appears that instead of lowering incarceration rates for Indigenous peoples, the opposite in fact has occurred. Disproportionate incarceration rates of Indigenous youths are not a phenomenon particular to Australia. Demographically, in Canada and New Zealand young Indigenous males are also over-represented in the juvenile justice system. This chapter will then discuss the formidable incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples in Australia and then narrow the foci towards young Indigenous males in Queensland who are confined in juvenile detention.

The recent reforms to the *Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendments Bill (*2014) by the conservative Queensland Government is important when examining the over-representation of Indigenous youth in Queensland. In this section, the incidences of young Indigenous males having contact with policing operations at a significantly higher rate than their non-Indigenous counterparts is dissected. These occurrences result in higher charge and incarceration rates of young Indigenous males. Finally, the literature on Indigenous led community support practices in Queensland will be analysed, along with options available to assist successful re-engagement with family and communities.

Finally, Section 2.4 will briefly summarise the literature discussed. It will also identify the gaps in the literature, which this research seeks to address in relation to disengagement, suspension and exclusion from education of young Indigenous males in Queensland. The consequent over-representation of young Indigenous males in the Queensland juvenile justice system is also discussed.

2.1 An Historical Overview of Indigenous Education in Australia

2.1.1 Historical Educational Experiences of Indigenous Children

2.1.1.1 Pre-invasion Education

The way in which teaching, and learning took place within Indigenous Australian cultures before invasion has been an uncommon topic of discussion in the literature of non-Indigenous Australian scholars and academics. The absence of this inquiry suggests that for the most part, researchers and educators have been content to rely solely upon the historical premise that there was not much formal learning or education taking place in Australia until Europeans arrived. Historically, precedence has been given to the accounts and records of European colonisers who believed Indigenous peoples to be 'barbaric' or 'primitive', living a 'nomadic' lifestyle, incapable of learning, and requiring 'civilizing' so that they could exist in the newly forming 'white' invader/settler society (Pascoe, 2014; Gammage, 2012). This colonialist view is clearly revealed in the 1837 historical account given in the *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes* 1837 (RPSCAT) which specified that First Nations peoples of Australia had no formal social structures whatsoever.

> Passing to the case of the Australian colonies, it appears that on the eastern, western and southern shores of New Holland, the British settlements are brought into contact with aboriginal [sic] tribes, forming, probably, the least-instructed portion of the human race in all the arts of social life (RPSCAT, 1837, p.125).

For unknown millennia, Indigenous peoples have existed pragmatically with the lands and seas of the Australian continent. Colonisers who initially invaded and settled in Australia were overcome with a harsh and challenging environment. The colonisers believed that First Nations peoples wandered aimlessly without any consideration or connection to the land (Broome, 2012). However, some historians now argue that Indigenous peoples understood unreservedly their relationship with, and connection to, the land and the seas and knew precisely what was required to ensure their survival (see, Broome, 2010; Gammage, 2012; Pascoe 2014). Their continued occupation of the land would suggest this this is the more likely explanation.

Although often described as "semi-nomadic, hunter-gatherer" peoples, by non-Indigenous researchers (see, Barber, Jackson, Dambacher and Finn, 2015). Pascoe (2014) an Indigenous researcher and historian from the Bunurong clan of the Kulin Nation, suggests that there is a need to re-visit the ideation of the prescribed 'hunter-gatherer' paradigm. Pascoe (2014) argues that such agricultural practices were being used by Indigenous peoples throughout many different regions of Australia, and that long before Australia's invasion, Indigenous communities were using these techniques to ensure food availability, seasonally.   Indigenous peoples carefully and knowingly shaped the continent aided by fire to improve the quality of the milieu. In doing so, Indigenous peoples increased the presence of specific flora and fauna to ensure their continued livelihood (Broome, 2010; Gammage, 2012; Pascoe, 2014).

Based upon the writings of explorers and settlers, Pascoe insists that Indigenous peoples had complex and sustainable agricultural and aqua-cultural systems and techniques in place which supported a harmonious connection with the land and seas. Although it is known that China has the first scribed documented records of aqua-cultural farming techniques being used 4000 years ago, it has been determined by researchers who have examined rock formations in coastal seas and inland lake areas of Australia that Indigenous peoples of Australia were using judicious aqua-cultural techniques and practices for perhaps 60,000 millennia or more (Australian Heritage Database, 2013). Elaborate housing structures were built and used by Indigenous communities throughout the continent, and large tracts of land accommodated substantial agricultural practices. Pascoe (2014) also maintains that these practices were not "isolated examples" and conversely uses first-hand diary accounts given by many European explorers and colonial settlers throughout Australia to support his proposition.

These systems of knowledges and practices continued to go unrecognised or disregarded by non-Indigenous peoples. Handed down from generation to generation by Indigenous peoples, for the many Indigenous societies of Australia, these knowledge systems were a part of the interconnected educational processes employed for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. Trudgett (2012) suggests,

We must not fall guilty of thinking that Indigenous Australians became 'educated' after the First Fleet sailed onto the shores of Botany Bay…As the First Nation peoples, we had a deeply structured education system that had developed over tens of thousands of years (np.).

It is impractical to compare the formal education system that was introduced by Europeans upon arrival in Australia, with that of Indigenous systems of education. Each system had unique characteristics which centred upon entirely different socio-cultural practices. There is scope, however, for broadening our theoretical perspectives about what is meant by 'formal' education.

Exploring the origins and theoretical concept of the word education allows for some clarity. *Education* came from the Latin, *educare* meaning, to train or to mold and *educatio*, to bring up or tutorage which then became *education* mid, 16th century. At this time there was a belief that formal education could only take place within a school or university setting. However, it may be argued that this position is notionally inadequate in specific cultural settings. *The Australian Oxford Dictionary* defines education as,

1. The act or process of educating or being educated; systematic instruction
2. Particular kind of, or stage in education
3. (a) Development of character or mental powers
   (b) Stage in, or aspect of this (Moore, 2007, p.349).

However, Welch, Konigsberg, Rochecouste and Collard (2015) argue in their critique of the theorisation of education that,

Education is mostly thought of in institutional terms as formal schooling and as an artefact of 'advanced' cultures (East or West). Both conceptions are false. Aboriginal education is arguably the oldest form worldwide: perhaps 40,000 – 60,000 years old (p. 91).

Nevertheless, general definitions of the concept of education include the processes that transpired in the education of Indigenous children in Australia long before the influx of Europeans. Negating and devaluing Indigenous Knowledge systems and practices essentially established reasoning by Europeans that their knowledges, systems and epistemological practices were superior to that of Indigenous peoples (Burridge & Chodkiewicz, 2012). As Pascoe (2014) argues, "Europe was convinced that its superiority in science, economy and religion directed its destiny" (p.51).

At the time of invasion Indigenous ontological and epistemological practices were complex and highly developed. These practices played an integral part in both the teaching and learning processes within Indigenous communities. Parents and the community contributed to the education and growth of the community's children and observation and repetition were fundamental in the educational practices of Indigenous peoples (Partington, 1998; Berndt & Tonkinson, 1988). Secular education was non-existent within each community group, as spirituality permeated all cultural aspects of life (Welch, 1988). Kinship structures were of great importance and Indigenous Knowledges, stories, spirituality, Lore and Songlines were passed on from one generation to the next, ensuring survival of the oldest living continuous culture on the Earth (Cadzow, 2008; Partington, 1998; Trudgett, 2012; Welch et al., 2015).

The title of this Chapter privileges the voice of Nganyintja Ilyatjari, a Pitjantjatjara woman from the Central Australian desert. Ilyatjari tells her story of learning in her community, in her own language, which is transcribed into English. In her detailed story relayed to Bill Edwards in 1982, Nganyintja Ilyatjari demonstrated the importance of her educational experiences as a child.

> As a child I lived at a place called Angatja. My father, mother, grandmother, older brothers, aunts and uncles taught me there and I learned from them. We learned by watching. We asked: 'How do you winnow?' Teach us (Ilyatjari, cited in Edwards, 1998, pp.1-2).

They recalled storytelling and warnings from parents to be aware of dangerous animals such as poisonous snakes, and the dances and songs learned at night. Once

their work had been completed for the day, the girls would come together and play games, imitating their mothers' behaviours'.

Ilyatjari also spoke of the importance of listening and the significance of stories from the land and the sacred places to which she was connected. The sciences of astronomy and botany, rituals and ceremonies, and knowing that seasonal changes were linked to food supply; these were all part of Nganyintja Ilyatjari's childhood learning experiences. According to Hart (1974) every aspect of Indigenous education centres on spiritual beliefs.

Ilyatjari discussed women and girls using a stick to draw "symbols in the sand or soil to represent people and places of the story. Sometimes leaves were placed on the ground to represent the characters of the story" (Ilyatjari cited in Edwards, 1998, p.5). These were the ways in which children learned about their "relationships and behaviors" (Edwards, 1998, p.5). Ilyatjari also spoke of the many facets of education that she received as a child offering a profound sense of self, a connectedness to her spirituality and revealing a deep love of learning. Recollections of teaching and learning within the Pitjantjatjara community identified the daily educational practices that took place on country and within the contexts of the environment in which Pitjantjatjara children were living. Nganyintja Ilyatjari's recount of her early childhood, demonstrates the importance of storytelling and passing knowledge on to future generations so that they may understand and appreciate the important aspects of social life and community connections through teaching and learning.

Oral traditions played an intrinsic part in the education of Indigenous children. Although learning experiences were primarily expressed through oral communication, and observation; imitation and kinaesthetic experiences were also a part of the educational practices delivered to Indigenous children. In some areas of Australia today many communities are now revitalizing language and cultural ways of life which had been denied to Indigenous peoples for so long (Gaby, 2008; Walsh, 2005). For example, the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre, located in Kununurra in Western Australia is endeavouring to preserve and revitalise the Miriwoong language, which is the language of the traditional owners of this region. In the Northern Territory, the Ngukurr Language Centre, situated on Ngalakgan land is

also striving to revitalise their languages through engagement with community programs. Charles Sturt University is also revitalising the Wiradjuri language, offering a Graduate Certificate in Language, Culture and Heritage.

Hart (1974) furthermore emphasizes the learning experiences of young boys and explains that once boys reached the age of initiation, they left their mothers' side to become men. They developed their formal skills as "hunters, dancers and warriors" who would become 'guardians of the law' (Hart, 1974, p.12). Partington (1998) concurs, expressing,

> Each young man would be 'apprenticed' to an older 'master' of ritual, dance, art, or song. Usually this mentor was a close relative who would hand down the traditional forms of skill and ritual to the learner who, in turn, would be entrusted with preserving that part of the culture (p.14).

Indeed, colonisers did not recognise the complex educational systems that Indigenous peoples had in place. Welch (1988) states that the colonial settlers, could simply not make a connection with the educational practices employed by Indigenous peoples because there were no school buildings, books or writing implements. Indigenous peoples therefore did not meet the educational criteria to which Europeans were accustomed. However, it could be argued that this view negated the idea that, school buildings were established in caves or huts and writing tools that were used, were ochre and sticks.

Invasion and settlement by Europeans meant that the educational practices of Indigenous peoples were not only ignored but were dismantled in the processes of colonisation. Non-Indigenous people could not understand that Indigenous education 'was not so much a preparation for life, as an experience of life itself' (Hart, 1974, p. 8). Indigenous peoples were considered inconsequential to the expansion of the colony by the British (Partington, 1998) and this meant prolific change for Indigenous peoples and the inimical contact by Europeans was set to annihilate Indigenous peoples way of life and cultural existence.

2.1.1.2 Colonisation and the First Native Institution

Colonisation meant control of the land and resources of Indigenous peoples. Although Shaw (1977) argues that Great Britain seized the land as a penal colony, there is also speculation that the intention was to take control of the resources of New Holland (Australia). In doing so, it would irreparably determine the future for Indigenous peoples in every aspect of their lives. The aim of the British was to 'civilize' the Indigenous population by forcefully administering European educational and social practices (Welch, 1988).

In the very early 1800's in New South Wales (NSW) most schools for non-Indigenous children were established and overseen by churches, with some small financial support from the New South Wales government (Harris, 2001; Scrimgeour, 2006). The government was not significantly involved in the education of Indigenous children during early colonisation. However, this was soon to change and future collaboration between church and state was to become imminent (Dorsett, 1995). This collaboration will be explored further in the next section of this chapter.

Even before the first official proclamation to 'educate and civilize' Indigenous peoples came from the London Colonial Office in the early 1820's (Reynolds, 2005), Governor Macquarie had already set up a school in 1814 for Indigenous children in the NSW colony. This was known as the Parramatta 'Native Institution' that specifically aimed to educate Indigenous children. Macquarie principally sought to civilize the natives (Harrison, 2011) and his intention was to assimilate Indigenous children into 'white' culture. The education of Indigenous children focused on ensuring that they adopted a Christian attitude and a Eurocentric way of life. Many of the children wanted to return to their families and subsequently, the authorities declared this as a sign that Indigenous children could not cope with formal schooling and deemed them to be not intelligent enough to succeed (Partington, 1998). Although some children initially attended the school voluntarily, many of the children were forcibly removed from their families and Country. According to the Government and General Order (GGO) document for the *Establishment of the Native Institution,* released by the civil department in 1814, item 14 specified,

That no Child, after having been admitted into the Institution, shall be permitted to leave it, or be taken away by any Person whatever (whether Parents or other Relatives) until such time as the Boys shall have attained the Age of Sixteen Years, and the Girls Fourteen Years; at which Ages they shall be respectively discharged (GGO, 1814, np.).

Historical records indicate that children as young as one year old were taken from their families and held at the 'Native institution' (see Figure 2.1). Conversely, the Government and General Order record states, "That this Institution shall be an Asylum for the Native Children of both sexes, but no child shall be admitted under four, or exceeding seven years of age" (GGO, 1814, np.). Hence, there is some discrepancy between the establishment order and the actual practices by the Native Institution.

Maria Lock, who was one of four girls initially admitted to the institution in 1814 was of the Boorooberongal clan of the Dharug peoples. Maria was confined at the Parramatta Native Institution and would go on to surpass the low expectations of being merely competent at needlework and domestic duties, as was the belief of those in charge. Maria, however, would prove to be an outstanding student, receiving first prize for an examination that was given to twenty Indigenous children and over 100 non-Indigenous children in the colony (Parry, 2005).

Maria Lock's achievements were celebrated by Macquarie as an outstanding success story in Indigenous reform. Nonetheless, over the years many Indigenous children did not remain at the school and either absconded or were taken back by their parents and returned to Country, contrary to the regulations that insisted they stay at the institution until they reached a particular age.

In all, there were four other 'Native Institutions' established over a period of fifteen years, located in different parts of New South Wales. Although records show that Macquarie intended 'formal instruction' for Indigenous children, and conceivably the initial intention was to see Indigenous children advance in European education and social norms, the ensuing agenda was much more ominous. The aim of Macquarie was to 'breed out' the Aboriginality of these children (McGregor, 2000). It was hoped that the longer children remained at school, away from their community and families

that eventually they would forget about their customary ways of life. Although the 'Native Institutions' continued for only a short period of time, they would become the catalyst not only for the educational segregation of Indigenous children, but inevitably the assimilation of the 'Stolen Generation' into a Eurocentric way of life (Partington, 1998).

Figure: 2.1 Parramatta Native Institution Admission List, 1814. (Watson, 2015)

Figure 2.1 indicates the names of those Indigenous children who were taken into the Parramatta Native Institution in 1814. Maria Lock was the first child listed on the

admission list since its commencement in 1814. While many remained at the institution for long periods of time, the admission list shows that some of the children absconded from the institution or were taken back by their parents. Tragically, the document also records children who also died while in the care of the institution.

2.1.1.3 Protectionism and Segregation

In the early 1830's, the government began to take a more determined approach to the 'civilizing' and 'Christianisation' of Indigenous peoples. This was partly related to the increasing wars and skirmishes which were taking place between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as the settlers of the colony continued to drive Indigenous peoples further off their lands. The invading colonisers resisted any attempt by Indigenous peoples to reclaim what was rightfully theirs. It was during this time in Britain that the 'Christian philanthropic movement' aimed to ensure that the rights of Indigenous peoples should be protected (Reynolds, 2005, p.49). Their intention was to 'save the souls' of the 'native' population, by 'civilizing them' and conversion to Christianity (McConaghy & Nakata, 2000; Reynolds, 2005).

Cadzow (2007) notes that the Scott-Hall Segregated School was established during 1827 in Blacktown, located not too far from Parramatta in Western Sydney. Although this school was attended by Indigenous, Māori and non-Indigenous children, classes at the school were racially segregated. Attendance at Scott-Hall was voluntary but ultimately Indigenous children were forced to attend and many Indigenous parents hid their children from officials out of fear that they might be taken away (Cadzow, 2007). Then in 1832 at Wellington, an inland town of Northern New South Wales, another Christian Missionary School supervised by Anglican ministers was established with the intent to Christianise and assimilate Indigenous children into mainstream society.

Whilst Earl Grey, the Secretary of State in Britain, recommended that Indigenous schools should be set up on 'reservations' in order for children to remain with their families and within their communities, many in the colony disagreed with his proposal and some colonialists pursued an insidious path (Fletcher, 1989). At this time Governor Latrobe stated,

Nothing short of an actual and total separation from their parents and natural associates, and education at a distance from the haunts and beyond the influence of the habits and example of their tribe would hold out a reasonable hope for their ultimate civilization and Christianisation (Latrobe cited in Reynolds, 2005, p. 49).

The 'protectionist' policies of *The Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 [Vic]* introduced by the Victorian government established complete control over the lives of Indigenous peoples. The *Act* stipulated that the government would be responsible for 'The care, custody and education of the children of Aborigines' (Victorian Aboriginal Protection Act, 1869). Similar *Acts* were imposed upon Indigenous peoples throughout Australia in the twentieth century.

One of the key elements of the protectionist era policy was to ensure the segregation of Indigenous peoples from non-Indigenous society (Behrendt, Cuneen, Libesman and Quiggan, 2009). Decisions were made and enforced by the states and territories Chief Protectors as to where and how Indigenous adults and children would live.   In Queensland for example, the government introduced the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 [Qld].* The Queensland legislation contained 33 *Acts* in total, under government control and overseen by the police in the majority of protectorates at that time.   *Act 31* consisted of seventeen individual regulations, which were particularly disturbing, but according to government were considered to be for the welfare of Indigenous children.   Regulations, 6, 7 and 8 stated that the government would be,

(6) Providing for the care, custody, and education of the children of aboriginals [sic];

(7) Providing for the transfer of any half-caste[2] child, being an orphan, or deserted by its parents, to an orphanage;

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[2] The use of the word 'half-caste' is a term considered to be out-dated and offensive and is used only when quoting directly from past documentation – the use of this term should be avoided.

(8) Prescribing the conditions on which any aboriginal [sic] or half-caste children may be apprenticed to, or placed in service with, suitable persons (Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act [Qld] (1897).

While there are many examples of resistance, Indigenous people had very little power fight back against these imposed regulations, as the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897)* also made provisions for the punishment and incarceration of Indigenous persons who refused to comply (Aboriginal Welfare-Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, 1937). It could be argued that instead of being offered 'protection', Indigenous ways of life were being destroyed and Indigenous peoples were being subjugated, maltreated and enslaved. Regulations 13 and 14 ensured strict control on missions and reserves by,

(13) Imposing the punishment of imprisonment, for any term not exceeding three months, upon any aboriginal [sic] or half-caste who is guilty of a breach of the Regulations relating to the maintenance of discipline and good order upon a reserve; and

(14) Imposing and authorising a Protector to inflict summary punishment by way of imprisonment, not exceeding fourteen days, upon aboriginals [sic] or half-castes, living upon a reserve or within the District under his charge, who, in the judgment of the Protector, are guilty of any crime, serious misconduct, neglect of duty, gross insubordination, or wilful breach of the Regulations (Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897 [Qld]).

Conservative historian Windschuttle (2003) argues definitively that the removal of Indigenous children is a myth and attempts to trivialize and dismiss historical accounts in his research. However, others such as Manne (2003) insist that the neo-liberal right deliberately conceal the facts and downplay the injustices surrounding the removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities during this period.

Protectionist policies would eventually cease. A new ideological approach of assimilation was to emerge in the early 1930's, which continued to have a devastating effect on Indigenous peoples (Chesterman & Douglas, 2004). Although it was augured that protectionist policies were introduced to safeguard Indigenous peoples, the

policies led to mandatory social and educational segregation by the state and church (Dorsett, 1995; Forde, 1999; Schulz, 2011; Scrimgeour, 2006). The historical accounts revealed earlier in this chapter, identify categorically that the discriminatory policies of the colonialist governments were premeditated. Researchers suggested protectionism and segregation in Queensland ensured that the government had complete control of Indigenous peoples' cultural, social and economic affairs (Evans, Saunders & Cronin, 1993; Kidd, 2002). What proceeded was an increase in the forced removal of Indigenous children from their parents and the deliberate assimilation of Indigenous children into mainstream colonialist Australia (Haebich, 2000; Scrimgeour, 2006).

2.1.1.4 Assimilation and Eurocentric Education

Previous protectionism edicts resulted in Indigenous peoples having very little control over their fate. Their involuntary immersion into the Eurocentric mainstream left many Indigenous peoples in abject poverty and was used as an excuse by governments and their agencies to justify the increased removal of Indigenous children (Beresford, 2012). At a 1937 national conference held in Canberra, representatives from the Commonwealth and states, excluding Tasmania, came together to discuss the welfare and administration of Indigenous peoples. Twenty resolutions were agreed upon with the most odious being the resolution of the Assimilation Policy. Governments viewed the rise of the Indigenous population as a significant 'problem', which needed to be 'managed' (Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, 1937).

> This conference believes that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal [sic] origin, but not of the full blood[3], lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end (Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, 1937, p. 21).

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[3] The term 'full blood' was used to previously to classify Indigenous Australians. This term is considered offensive and use of this terminology should be avoided.

In conjunction with the Assimilation Policy, the socially engineered forced removal of Indigenous children by governments ensured that those children of 'mixed descent' did not remain with their families and communities, and that the eventual miscegenation would inevitably result in the cultural extinction of the Indigenous population (Partington, 1998). During the late 1930's in Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory, children were made wards of the state and came under total control of the protector (Partington, 1998).

Although some children did reside with their families on the outskirts of towns in extremely poor living conditions and segregated from the facilities of townships. Indigenous peoples were then forcibly moved onto missions and reserves with the intention to culturally assimilate and intermarry (Beresford, 2012; Townsend-Cross, 2011; McConaghy, 2000). Beresford (2012) contends, however that there were many thousands of Indigenous children removed from their families by government agencies until the early 1970's, as it was believed parents did not have the capabilities to raise their children according to the standards of 'white' society. In the minds of those who were in control, there could be no allowances, no notion of the survival of Indigenous cultures, and the implementation of the assimilationist policy was to be the beacon of 'white' colonialist domination (Daunton & Halpern, 2000).

Indigenous children received inferior educational instruction from the elected educators on missions and reserves, many of whom were not qualified to teach (Perso, 2012; Buti, 2004). Ironically, missionaries believed that 'Indigenous immorality' was predominant due to the rising numbers of children being born to non-Indigenous fathers, therefore a majority of schooling was centred on reading the bible and embracing Christianity (Parry 2005; Van Krieken, 2004; Wilson, 1997). Indigenous children were considered 'intellectually inferior' to their non-Indigenous counter-parts and were not given much hope of achieving academically (Elkin, 1939; Parbury, 1999; Van Krieken, 2004; Welch, 1988; Zubrick et al., 2006). Poor educational experiences prepared the way for Indigenous children into menial labouring occupations that would support 'white man's' way of living (Zubrick et al., 2006). In the 1940's, many Indigenous peoples fought for their children to receive an equitable education, but they also wanted their own cultural epistemologies to be recognised within the educational curriculum being taught in schools (Prout, 2009;

Zubrick et al., 2006) – it would take many years before this request would be given any consideration.

From the early 1930's up until the early 1970's discriminatory legislation resulted in many Indigenous children being prevented from receiving formal educational instruction in public schools (Flick & Goodall, 2004; Townsend-Cross, 2011; Prout, 2009). In many instances harsh, exclusionary practices were used by government departments and school principals. When government policy shifted notionally to allow Indigenous children to attend public schools, non-Indigenous parents rebelled against the inclusion of Indigenous children, insinuating that Indigenous children were not clean enough, or may even spread diseases to their 'white' children (Fletcher, 1989, p.8). In 1946, to address the concerns of 'white' parents, the government enforced the requirement of medical certificates from families before Indigenous children could be enrolled or attend a public school (Harris, 2001).

In 1967, all states, except Queensland abandoned laws and policies that discriminated against Aboriginal people (Kreutz, 2014). Queensland introduced *The Aborigines Act 1971,* and restrictions were place upon the movements of Indigenous peoples to and from missions and reserves. The government also controlled the relationships between Indigenous peoples at this time (Wilson, 1997). The *Act* also forbade the engagement of Indigenous customs and practices, and subsequently all reading materials brought onto missions were censored (Cadzow, 2007).

In 1971, the Australian census confirmed that only one percent of the non-Indigenous population had not attended school, whilst the figure for Indigenous peoples was nearly 25% (Beresford, 2012). Of the 25%, a substantial number of Indigenous children did not complete primary school and many only engaged in schooling up to year five level (Beresford, 2003). Assimilation practices introduced by the Commonwealth government continued as the official policy of education departments well into the 1970's (Wilson, 1997), with an aim to subsume Indigenous peoples into the mainstream by cultural indoctrination and deliberate eradication of any connection to Indigenous culture (Gilbert, 1995; Holm, 1981).

2.1.1.5 Integration to Self-determination

For many years, the policies sanctioned upon Indigenous peoples were discriminatory and breached numerous fundamental human rights - rights which had been privileged to non-Indigenous Australians. In the early 1960's, the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement, which was later to become FCAATSI, "campaigned for a referendum on the legal rights" of Indigenous peoples (Harrison, 2011, p.29). In 1967, the Australian government called for a referendum to make changes to the Australian constitution. Two constitutional amendments were made to the 1967 referendum relating to Indigenous peoples (Behrendt, 2007; Gillespie, 2007). These amendments were considered important in dealing with the discriminatory practices imposed upon Indigenous peoples. The referendum drew overwhelming support for the two constitutional changes. Nationally 90.77% of the Australian population voted 'Yes' to the proposals to remove these discriminatory clauses from the constitution. This resulted in the following amendments made to the Australian constitution: "other than the aboriginal [sic] race in any State' in s 51(xxvi) would be struck out and s 127 deleted entirely" (Williams, 2013, p.8). The change in wording to s 51 would give the Federal government the power to make laws specifically in relation to Indigenous Australians, and the complete removal of s 127 from the constitution would give Indigenous peoples the right to be counted in the census (Gillespie, 2007). It was believed that by removing the power and control held by the States up until this time, the Federal government would provide a more just system by having one key representative body, rather than individual States making ad hoc laws concerning Indigenous matters. Along with the 'Yes Vote' in 1967, and the subsequent election of a Federal Labor government in 1972, there would also be a change in policy direction for Indigenous Australians. However, none of these changes removed discriminatory practices towards Indigenous Australians and many communities continue to be affected by racist policies that are implemented by governments within Australia.

It was during this time, in international circles, that many criticized the ongoing mistreatment of the Indigenous population of Australia (Attwood & Markus, 1999). In the 1960's, at a United Nations General Assembly, the Soviet leader Khruschev,

condemned Australia's treatment of Indigenous Australians in a speech directed towards Prime Minister Menzies who at that time continued to support apartheid in South Africa (Taffe, 1995). This brought world attention to social, political and economic policies affecting Indigenous peoples. When the then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam dismantled the segregation policy, the policy of self-determination was adopted. Nevertheless, it was not necessarily an 'inclusive' policy as only basic consultation took place with a small group of Indigenous peoples about their aspirations for future independence and self-governance (Behrendt, Cunneen & Libesman, 2009). Then, in 1972 the *White Australia Policy* was finally abandoned by the Australian Labor government and the policy of self-determination was implemented to provide a positive way forward for Indigenous peoples.

Correspondingly, in 1972 the policy of excluding Indigenous children from schools was abandoned and school principals could no longer legally refuse right of entry into school (Cadzow, nd.; Chesterman & Galligan, 1997). The Federal government was able to advocate for Indigenous peoples as well as direct funding for the states to support reformative policies for the education of Indigenous children (Malin & Maidment, 2003). Interestingly, statistics saw a rise in the participation and retention rates of Indigenous students in schools throughout Australia (Zubrick et al., 2006). However, another possibility for the higher numbers of Indigenous children in attendance at schools was the introduction of '*Abstudy*' (Attwood & Markus, 2007). *Abstudy* was financial assistance awarded through a Commonwealth government scheme to support Indigenous children attend school and was welcomed by many Indigenous families who were struggling financially. Many parents viewed this support as a much-needed measure in the academic and social progression of Indigenous children within mainstream education and society.

A Two-Way Approach

Another contentious area for the government during this time was the operation of many Indigenous, bi-lingual schools, established and managed by local Indigenous communities (Simpson, McCaffrey & McConvell, 2009). These schools endeavoured to take a both-ways or a two-way cultural approach to the education of Indigenous children, valuing Indigenous cultural knowledges and systems of learning, while also accepting non-Indigenous knowledges in the educational domain. However, not all

government officials supported this idea and advocated for English to be taught as a first language in these schools.

Barnhardt (2005) acknowledges that a 'two-way approach' promotes awareness and understanding of Indigenous Knowledges and establishes collaborative partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. M. Nakata, V. Nakata, Keech and Bolt (2012) suggested that the both-ways approach is a 'contested space' where collaboration and learning about Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures is negotiated. Yunkaporta (2009) maintains that Indigenous children should be learning 'one way' and that is in their own cultural ways, but that they should also understand how to manoeuvre through Western knowledge systems because they are currently the dominant systems, and notably in which Indigenous children are required to participate. Although the processes may be different for each community, the common shared element is respecting and valuing what Indigenous culture can offer in order to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved in student learning. Many Indigenous community schools, which focused on the revitalisation of Indigenous languages and culture, unfortunately have had to contend with strong political interference and at times closures have occurred due to a retraction of funding and pressures to conform to strictly Eurocentric, homogenized teaching and learning practices (LoBianco & Slaughter, 2009).

From the early 1970's, until present, there have been many prolific Indigenous educators who have fought for changes to the education of all children in Australia. One important educator, activist and poet, was Oodgeroo Noonuccal, formerly known as Kath Walker, who fought for Indigenous knowledges and perspectives to be included within the mainstream school curriculum so that all students could benefit from understanding about Indigenous cultures (Craven, 2011). Oodgeroo Noonuccal established formal Indigenous education programs for teachers and pre-service teachers. Over many years, thousands of teachers and students - Indigenous and non-Indigenous, were taught about Indigenous culture on her country at *'Moongalba'* an educational centre she established on Minjerribah[4], in Queensland (Collins, 1994; Craven, 2011). Oodgeroo Noonuccal's legacy prompted a great number of other

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[4] Minjerribah is the Aboriginal name for North Stradbroke Island just off the coast of Queensland, Australia.

educators to advocate for Indigenous education programs in schools and at tertiary institutions.

At national and state levels, several reports and reviews were published which focussed on Indigenous education and future policy directions (Schwab, 1995). In 1975, The National Aboriginal Consultative Group released the report, *Education for Aborigines: Report to the Schools Commission* (1995), was 'significant in shaping Indigenous education policy' (p.4). The committee at this time encouraged the Schools Commission to address issues surrounding Indigenous education explicitly from that of mainstream schooling, identifying the complex and distinct concerns that were pertinent to each state and territory (Schwab, 1995). This was an important development in self-determination as it was the catalyst for the establishment of the National Aboriginal Consultative Group who contributed to policy formation and direction for Indigenous education at a national level (Schwab, 1995). Although many recommendations were made at the time, the process of implementation remained slow and countless reviews, reports and policies have followed concerning Indigenous education around Australia.

One of the policies that has had a profound effect on Indigenous peoples, and particularly regarding educational outcomes for Indigenous children, was the government policy of forced removal. It is necessary to examine briefly the consequences of this policy in the context of injustices perpetrated upon Indigenous children in the area of education and how this may be linked to intergenerational disparity.

2.1.2 Collaboration between State and Church

2.1.2.1 The Mission Experience and Education

The collaboration between the State and Church became much more predominant between 1910 and 1970. This was partly due to the belief of governments that Indigenous peoples were a 'dying race' (Ellinghaus, 2003; Holland, 2013; McGregor,

2002). According to the *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines 1930,* the need for labour in particular areas also declined for Indigenous peoples and it became prudent for governments to enact new policies which legislated to remove Indigenous peoples to confinement on missions and reserves. This was praised by those in the political arena to be in the 'best interests' of Indigenous peoples. However, it was also a convenient abandonment of government responsibility towards Indigenous peoples. For many in government it was simply a case of out of sight, out of mind. The government forced many Indigenous peoples from different language groups onto missions and reserves, where the living conditions in many instances were harsh, traumatic experiences (Atkinson, 2002; Blake, 2001; Loos, 2007). Governments focused on the children, and in 1934 the protector of Indigenous peoples in Queensland J.W. Bleakley remarked, "I think that any child whom the Protector considered should be separated from Aboriginal conditions should be taken away as soon as possible so as to leave as little remembrance as possible of the camp in the child's mind" (Bleakley, 1961, np.).

Many of the missions were managed and controlled by evangelical religious groups, and a number of the reserves were strictly controlled by police (Loos, 2007). These missions and reserves received operational funding from governments or used the stolen wages from the labour of Indigenous peoples who were interned (Gunstone, 2012). Most of the missions established during this period were complicit in taking children away from their parents and families (Read, 1998). In many instances mothers living on missions were segregated from, and had no access to, their children once they were placed into dormitories on the missions (Blake, 2001). Christian missionaries believed they were saving Indigenous peoples' souls and educating Indigenous children to become 'civilised'. Nevertheless, the missions, dormitories and schools were seen as places of oppression and internment by Indigenous peoples (Loos, 2007; Lydon & Ash, 2010; Ryan & Grajczonek, 2010; Schulz, 2011; Scrimgeour, 2006; Woolmington, 1986).

The indoctrination of Indigenous children was considered necessary, and in the process, missionaries claimed that cultural practices should be abandoned. As Loos (2007) indicated, "Government approval of the missionaries and their desire to use them to implement government policies was very early made apparent" (p.62).

Haebich (2000) explains that in the 1930's the formalisation of the removal of 'half-caste' children from their families, so that they could be "placed in institutions or reside with non-Indigenous families, was widely practiced' (p.196). Indigenous children were to participate in 'mainstream educational curriculum" (Haebich, 2000, p.196). There was much opposition to this decision by pastoral lobbyists and a decade later removal of children from their families was viewed overwhelmingly as a failure. Many of the children who were taken away were required to provide labour on farms or were used as domestic servants and received very little, to no education whatsoever (Hetherington, 2002; Robinson, 2003).

Writers such as Duffy (2000), Murray (2014) and Windschuttle (2002) controversially argue that few government records exist which attest to the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. It is evident though, that policies enacted by governments were specifically designed to remove Indigenous children from their families and force them to adopt Eurocentric customs, whether they were intended to harm or not (Manne, 2003). Whilst Windschuttle (2002) argues that government documents which approved and supported the removal of Indigenous children are scant with information there are many archival policy documents filled with racial overtones which concur that these forced removals took place. Indigenous children who were taken from their families and communities were indeed, taken by the State, by force, and at times by deception, simply due to the "colour of their skin" (Forde, 1999, p.7).

2.1.2.2 Bringing them Home – The Contemporary Repercussions

Indigenous peoples are still experiencing the contemporary effects of enforced removal. In the early eighties, Professor Peter Read wrote his first paper coining the term the 'Stolen Generations' which he attributed to his wife who used this expression during their discussions concerning Indigenous children who were taken or removed from their families. In relation to the 'Stolen Generations' Read (2006) later commented that, "the psychological issues in the institutionalisation of the children are most complex" (p.9). Van Krieken (2006) contends that in the twentieth century State and Church agencies contributed too many Indigenous children being removed from their parents and communities. When the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity

Commission (HREOC) released its findings in the *Bringing them Home Report* in 1997, it was acknowledged that the 'State and Church' had breached the United Nations definition of genocide. *Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)* states,

> Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part 1; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (p.1).

The inquiry into the *Stolen Generations* found overwhelmingly that genocide had been committed deliberately. The inquiry heard many stories and submissions about the severe hardships experienced by those children who were forcibly removed in the past, and how this has resulted in loss of identity and culture. Anger and sadness have been experienced by many Indigenous peoples as a direct consequence of the forced removal of Indigenous peoples, as a result of the introduction of oppressive government policies (Wilson, 1997).

Cuneen and Libesman (2000) argue that the correlation between past government policies and the continued removal practices of governments, ascribe new contemporary paradigms of forced separation of children from Indigenous families. Intergenerational trauma has had an overwhelming effect on many Indigenous people's lives in contemporary society (Atkinson, 2002). The separation by child welfare and protection removals, or through the criminalization of Indigenous children may lead to disconnection from families or incarceration. However, this phenomenon has not only been experienced by the Indigenous peoples of Australia; studies show that Canada's First Nations peoples also experienced European subjugation and control during invasion and colonisation. As a result, many First Nations peoples suffer from intergenerational trauma and deep social and economic disadvantage (Pulver et al., 2010). Oppressive systemic policies for First Nations peoples of Canada

are strikingly similar to that of Australia's Indigenous peoples (Aquash, 2013; Buti, 2002). Canada's Supreme Court Justice Le Bel found in R v Ipeelee, that,

> To be clear, courts must take judicial notice of such matters as the history of colonialism, displacement, and residential schools and how that history continues to translate into lower educational attainment, lower incomes, higher unemployment, higher rates of substance abuse and suicide, and of course, higher levels of incarceration for Aboriginal peoples (Justice Le Bel for the majority in R. v. Ipeelee, 2012).

The implementation of poor government policies controlling the lives of Indigenous peoples has given rise to the accumulative effects of historical and trans-generational trauma, which has also contributed to ongoing social and economic disadvantage. Atkinson (2002) suggests that although governments are now trying to remedy their past mistakes, there is seldom consideration given to the intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples that has resulted from the implementation of unjust government policies. Nevertheless, Indigenous peoples continue to seek redress for the consequences of continual oppression and marginalisation.

Paulo Freire (1972) contends that emancipation from dominant social structures takes place when self-determination is attained by those who are oppressed. However, the ways in which self-determination is achieved, requires critical examination. It has been argued that Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives should be included and actively taught in early childhood and at all other levels of education (Purdie & Buckley, 2010). However, this must be done in relational and respectful partnerships with Indigenous peoples. Therefore, self-determination at the beginning of an Indigenous child's life would be considered a natural development (Franks, Smith-Lloyd, Newell & Dietrich, 2003; Sims, 2011) rather than Indigenous children having to constantly struggle to achieve self-determination. Indigenous peoples are continuously battling structural inequality and racism, which still exists within Australian society (Sims, 2011). Contemporary Western education systems need to be deconstructed and reconstructed in partnership with Indigenous communities for significant changes to occur (Rigney, Rigney & Tur, 2003).

Indigenous experts in the field of education correctly point out that Indigenous children must, and should, be able to recognise their culture within systems of education (Martin, 2005; Phillips, 2012; Sarra, 2009). Practicing educators who are predominantly non-Indigenous persons must examine their role in the construction of historical, contemporary, and social realities in classroom settings, and challenge the dominant hegemonic discourses which continue to regulate educational institutions (Hickling-Hudson, 2005; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk & Walter, 2012).

The next section of this chapter will address contemporary education policies which have been developed and implemented by governments that had a profound effect upon Indigenous Australians. It will also highlight the ways in which Education Department policies, particularly in Queensland schools, impact the successful promotion of self-determination for Indigenous children.

2.2 Contemporary Educational Experiences of Indigenous Children

2.2.1 Policies and Practices in Mainstream Education

2.2.1.1 Government Policy: Help or hindrance?

The Closing the Gap (CTG) reforms established in 2008 by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) were intended to reduce disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians across several social and economic determinants. The responsibility to ensure the advancement of the well-being and socio-economic status of Indigenous peoples rests upon Federal, State and Territory governments, as well as their non-government agencies. In the public media, McKinley (cited in Murphy, 2016) suggests this broad socio-economic, political policy agenda is largely driven by statistical analysis, and in many areas is clearly failing to deliver the required outcomes for Indigenous peoples (McKinley, 2016). Moodie (cited by Murphy, 2016) also states, "To my mind, the Closing the Gap approach – the agreements, the data sets, the

targets that underpin it – has become an exercise in reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to a set of indicators" (np.).

Although Moodie questions the practices of the government to Close the Gap, of concern is that the statistics and data sets do not necessarily relate to practicalities and implementation at a local level. Since the inception of the CTG reforms, Indigenous voices have been mainly silenced when addressing issues of equity and equality for Indigenous peoples. In 2008, COAG recommended six priority areas as a matter of urgency. Three priority areas were targeted directly towards improving the educational outcomes for Indigenous children and were flagged as critical. These were:

- To ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four-year olds in remote communities within five years;

- To halve the gap in reading writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade;

- To halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment rates by 2020.
 (Department of Prime Minister, & Cabinet, 2009).

Despite government support for CTG targets, more than a decade later, many of the targets are not on track and the inability to reduce the disparity in the areas of health, welfare, education and employment for Indigenous peoples is critical (Altman, Biddle & Hunter, 2009; Hoy, 2009). The Prime Minister's response in 2016 to the Closing the Gap targets acknowledged that, "the original target to ensure access for all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities to early childhood education expired unmet in 2013" (Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2016, p.12). This target was then revised to 95% by 2025, and it appears that according to data released in 2019, this target will be met within the prescribed timeframe. However, the current CTG report indicates that there are still substantial gaps in more remote areas and the results vary considerably according to location throughout the states and territories. In 2019, the target to close the gap on school attendance is not on track and attendance targets have in fact declined for secondary school students (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2019). Across year levels one through to ten, attendance at school for

Indigenous children remains considerably lower than that of non-Indigenous children and children in very remote areas have the lowest attendance rates "at up to 16 percentage points lower than that for Indigenous children in other areas" (Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2019, p. 45). Promisingly according to the government, the target for Year 12 attainment is on track. This improvement may be due to the intensive promotion of retention and completion over the last seven years for Indigenous students by the education departments in each of the states and territories.

Altman (2014) considers that whilst there are positive improvements in areas such as child mortality rates, there are also concerns that some statistics have been obscured in government reports. Continually excluding government data from some reports, enables States and Territories too avoid scrutiny by the general public and those agents who wish to use the data to further their research or contribute to social justice advances. Specifically, relative to education, Altman (2014) argues that,

> Obfuscation is also evident in reporting on the target of full access to early childhood education, access being a supply rather than demand variable. Here we are told that the target is not 100 per cent but 95 per cent to reflect the fact that early childhood education is not compulsory, a demand side issue. And the measure of success in attaining this goal is enrolment of 91 per cent of Indigenous children in remote areas, again hardly a measure of supply or of attendance for that matter (p.102).

In other words, the targets or the meeting of targets do not necessarily tell us anything about how much access there is to Early Childhood Education. The data may also inform us of the attendance rates but is not able to clearly identify what kind of quality education children receive from early education.

Another way of tracking how well targets are being met is through the use of the government's standard Australian literacy and numeracy targets which are used for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and compared through the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data. Although there have been some improvements demonstrated across five of the target areas of the NAPLAN outcomes, the data varies depending on region and gender, with Indigenous girls performing better than boys, but there has been little statistical improvement overall

(Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018). NAPLAN data coming from Queensland indicates that only year nine is recorded as being on track for reading and numeracy - while years three, five and seven are not meeting the prescribed outcomes.

It is fundamental for governments to understand that Indigenous Australians are diverse and hence, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not work, just as it has not worked in the past (Markiewicz, 2012; Rigney, 2011). Hunt (2013) suggests that there must be consultation with Indigenous communities otherwise 'it will be difficult to meet the targets of the Council of Australian Governments' (p.4). Whereas, Markiewicz (2012) contends that trying to evaluate Indigenous outcomes becomes highly problematical, as there are many other factors affecting Indigenous peoples which can contribute to successful or unsuccessful outcomes, such as income, housing and health. Davis (2015) agrees that the CTG reform is situated within a Western framework and does not afford Indigenous peoples the opportunity to engage in "discourse or debate without conceding that "our way" isn't the only way" (p.173). While Hunt (2013) argues that changing the outcomes of policies such as CTG on Indigenous disadvantage resists Indigenous community voices about ways in which this disparity can be overcome, and seldom is there thoroughness in the analysis of why improvements have not occurred. However, Vass (2014) maintains that the ideology behind CTG draws upon international discourses that may not fit within the Australian landscape and that importantly there is no guarantee that this type of policy will alleviate social and economic inequities for Indigenous Australians. Nevertheless, governments and their agencies continue to use Western schemas to 'fix' the historical and contemporary disparities which were, and continue to be, created by the dominant colonialist society.

In 2016, the Department of Education and Training Queensland had two key priorities relating to education targets for young Indigenous people. These included:

- continuing to support kindergarten participation and access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; and

- developing strategies to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in both remote and urban areas by focussing on attendance, participation, engagement and retention rates (DET, 2016).

Concurring with Altman's argument, research released by the Queensland Productivity Commission (2018), found that that although Indigenous children were statistically enrolled in early childhood education in remote areas of Queensland, they were not necessarily in attendance at these centres. This indicated a critical connection between early participation, attendance and engagement in mainstream education services and the relevancy to Indigenous children at a local level. This highlights that while governments are collecting data and statistics to improve outcomes for Indigenous children, they may very well be using the incorrect metrics, focussing more on 'outputs', rather than 'outcomes'.

2.2.1.2 Current Indigenous Education Policies and Frameworks in Queensland

Access and equity are fundamental issues which need to be addressed for Indigenous students and was one of the key areas identified as a priority by the Australian Education Union in 2016 (Australian Educator, 2014). Inclusiveness and recognition of cultural values within the curriculum must be a priority. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) states that there were over 221,982 Indigenous students in Australia, with the majority attending government schools. Indigenous students in Queensland (refer to Figure 1.1) make up approximately one quarter of all Indigenous students enrolled in schools throughout Australia. Many Indigenous students have considerably different life opportunities, depending on where they are born (Rigney, 2011). The current enrolment of all students in Queensland State schools on day eight of 2018 was 543,130 of which 56,317 identify as Indigenous Australians (Department of Education and Training Queensland, 2018). The majority of Indigenous students are located in the Far Northern Queensland region (11,926), followed by the North Coast Region (9,106) which takes in the Moreton Regional Council area, and the North Queensland region (8,073) (DET Queensland, 2018). These statistics are important as there have been significant increases of Indigenous children attending state

schools in Queensland across all seven regions since 2014. Therefore, it is expected that educators in Queensland state schools will more likely be required to teach Indigenous children and work in partnership with Indigenous families and the community.

Education Queensland - Strategies

The reality is, however, that for Queensland, overall the CTG targets have not improved substantially. It is known that each state or territory decides independently how reaching these targets will be achieved. Further, each school has its own method of endeavouring to achieve improvements. There is no nationally cohesive framework as to the ways in which proposed targets will be met or successful outcomes achieved for Indigenous children.

In *A chronology of education in Queensland*, there is an extensive list of programs and initiatives which have, or continue to, operate in Queensland's education system. This document acknowledged that between the years 1999 to 2011, there were 281 mainstream changes or initiatives identified, with only nine of these relating specifically to Indigenous education. There have been some successes overall with these initiatives, and there is a formal requirement of states and territories to report to the Federal government on Indigenous outcomes under the National Education Agreement (Council of Australian Governments, 2016).

More recently, only ten of the ninety-two strategies identified in Queensland's Department of Education and Training's (DET), *Advancing Education* Strategy (2016) specifically address ways in which to improve outcomes for Indigenous students in education and training. Whilst some may consider this a positive step, many of these key strategies that have been identified in the Advancing Education Strategy were already in place prior to this policy document being released. For example, one of the strategies highlighted the need for educators to form community partnerships, however in 2005 the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) program ceased due to a withdrawal of Federal government funding (Davis, 2012). Whilst in June 2015 the highly successful Parents and Community Engagement (PACE) program also ended, due to the cessation of funding by the Federal government (Benevolent Society, 2016). One could be slightly sceptical about the

merits of continuously releasing another set of policies to establish partnerships with Indigenous communities, while countless other policies committing to these ideals appear to have been overlooked. Indigenous peoples consistently request that they have more input at a local level to ensure the success of Federal or State funded policies, strategies and programs.

Nonetheless, there still appears to be reluctance to relinquish power and control by governments. It does appear however, that when Indigenous peoples and Indigenous organisations take ownership of programs, and they are deemed to be successful, government bodies decide to reinforce control and, in many instances, funding is discontinued. Davis (2012) contends that this is an "example of the systemic racism we endure as colonised people" (p.168). The problem also lies with the allocation of funding for Indigenous initiatives, many of which are run as 'pilot' programs, and whether they are successful or not, they usually cease to exist after a three-year period or when the next political party takes office.

In 2014, the Queensland conservative government announced the release of another 'strategic plan' to support improved outcomes across Queensland for Indigenous children – this was released as the *Solid Partners – Solid Futures Action Plan,* which was embedded into the *Strategic Plan for Queensland 2014-2018.* It is important to recognise that the continual reworking of government documents and strategies does not always equate to improvement in educational outcomes for Indigenous children and warrants further investigation. There is little indication as to how data is being collected from schools or how these strategies are being monitored by the State government's education department.

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training (AGDET), indicates an estimated $ 4.3 billion will be invested into schools around Australia from 2017-2027 for the improvement of educational outcomes for Indigenous children (AGDET, 2018). They have also indicated that $5.9 million dollars will be allocated for an English language literacy improvement program for Indigenous pre-schoolers, which will be provided through a series of play-based apps. However, the budget does not readily breakdown the accountability of funding. It would be fiscally prudent for each state and territory to be required to set specific targets at a regional and local

level. The federal and state governments must provide specific details as to why targets have been achieved or are unsuccessful. It is unclear how the implementation of strategic policies and budgets, designed to improve outcomes for Indigenous children at school are being vigorously scrutinised at a state, territory or federal level.

2.2.1.3 Mainstream Education Funding Initiatives and Curriculum: Indigenous Education

Rigney (2011) contends that bureaucrats, and those who develop and write curriculum documents, must take into consideration the "multiple causes, effects and disadvantages" (p.43) experienced by each unique community. Rigney (2011) also highlights the need to re-contextualise the curriculum to address the challenges and complexities that each of these individual communities face.

An example of how funding was utilized in Queensland was the extraordinary amount of funding which was targeted towards the Cape York Academy. The Cape York Welfare Reform strategy received Federal and State government funding of over $260 million since 2010 for a combined population of around 3000 people (Scott, 2016). Noel Pearson, who was the Chairperson of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy, saw a meritocratic rise as one of the favoured conservative government advisors on educational policy and welfare reform for communities in the Cape. The Federal government saw Pearson's Direct Instruction (DI) reform agenda as an enterprising 'model' which could be initiated and implemented across other Indigenous communities. Direct Instruction is a US model that was developed by Engelmann in the 1960's.

In her doctoral dissertation, Indigenous academic, Smallwood has been extremely critical of the method of DI, asserting that the DI approach jeopardizes both learning and teaching outcomes in Cape York communities (Smallwood, 2011, p.122). Still, Pearson maintains that the results demonstrated student improvement across the areas of literacy and numeracy, although he was heavily reliant on NAPLAN data to make his point and it was shown that in some cases there were concerns about the

outcomes being achieved, particularly for older primary school children (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2017).

Although there was division in the Aurukun community about the implementation of DI, Pearson continued to argue for its continuation as the preferred method of educational instruction for Indigenous children in The Cape communities. In 2018, the Queensland government took control of the school in Aurukun and a range of curriculum options, along with the use of DI, is presently being used as the framework for teaching Indigenous children in the Cape York region of Queensland. To date, there appears to be no bi-partisan reporting on the implementation of DI's success, six years after its inception. Although a further 22 million dollars was to be injected into DI and Explicit Instruction (EI) programs from 2016-2020, particularly focussing on remote schools, a Federal government decision to cease funding occurred for the program in 2018. Professor Chris Sarra who opposed the DI program of instruction stated in an ABC media article,

> Instead of spending $30 million on a US-based product like Direct Instruction in Aurukun, we could spend just $150,000 on a curriculum writer specialist teacher who could sit down with the people of Aurukun and write a high expectation kind of curriculum program for every year level (Sarra, cited by ABC News, 2016).

In this instance, we can identify that funding which is tied specifically to a curriculum agenda designed to support positive outcomes for Indigenous children must be vigorously scrutinized. In contrast to Sarra, the past Chair of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council, Warren Mundine argued for schools to adopt less cultural agency and stated,

> I agree that we need to reassess the curriculum because we need real units that teach the subjects without this ridiculous insertion of culture, the idea that you have to have an Indigenous or Asian perspective, to be frank, is silly. The sciences and maths should be taught properly' (Mundine cited by Casey, The Guardian, 2014).

It can only be speculated that Mundine believes that by incorporating Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into the curriculum, children were not being delivered

an adequate education. Nevertheless, educators such as Tyson Yunkaporta from Brewarrina in New South Wales, who developed the Eight Aboriginal Ways of Learning framework is highly supportive of promoting Indigenous learning frameworks across all schools. Yunkaporta (2009) states,

When our ways become planning at a higher level, our values can also gain a place in the organisational structure of the school, giving us a true voice and a true partnership in education (Yunkaporta, 2009, p.8).

Yunkaporta also promotes and supports practices such as Uncle Ernie's Grant's Holistic framework on his educational website, which celebrates and incorporates into the curriculum an Indigenous cultural framework for both educators and students. It emphasises the connection to local Indigenous knowledges and community, through understanding of Land, Language and Culture, intersecting with Time, Place and Relationships. For the most part, both of these culturally inclusive frameworks have been freely available to the public and have not received any significant government funding to implement. Keenan (2009) contends that, "cross culturally, there is much diversity and variation in relation to the way in which educational frameworks exist" (p.3). It is through the development of these cross culturally responsive frameworks that the best educational practices can be accomplished and implemented.

Nonetheless, there is still resistance by some educators to the implementation of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into mainstream schooling curriculums. The dilemma is, that the voices and agendas of a few 'handpicked' Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples are favoured in the political arena concerning educational policy agendas in Indigenous education (Hunt, 2013; McCallum, Waller & Meadows, 2012). Such polarised figures continue to favour a predominantly Eurocentric view of educational practice, silencing and marginalising the voices of many Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who are experts in their field, as well as parents and carers of Indigenous children. Martin (2008) and Rigney (1999) both assert that privileging Indigenous voices on such important issues at a local level can directly challenge continued colonialist attitudes and practices within the educational paradigm.

Indigenous Families' Experiences of Contemporary Schooling

Many Indigenous peoples have had negative experiences with schooling and education (Ockenden, 2014) and have been subjected to discriminatory policies and high levels of racism within the schooling system (Hayes, Johnston, Morris, Power & Roberts, 2009; Zubrick, Silburn, De Maio, Shepherd, Griffin, Dalby, Mitrou, Lawrence, Hayward, Pearson, H. Milroy H, J. Milroy & Cox, 2006). Education policies and practices continue to impact Indigenous peoples' connection to the schooling system and some Indigenous peoples view schools as punitive environments and have a distrust of those who are in positions of power. According to the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples' Right to Education (2016),

> The education sector is a particular arena that not only mirrors and condenses the historical abuses, discrimination and marginalisation suffered by Indigenous peoples, but also reflects their continued struggle for equality and respect for their rights as peoples and as individuals (p.1).

However, the reality is that Indigenous parents want their children to gain the skills and knowledges that will support them to achieve and participate fully in Australian society and to be strong in cultural knowledge and proud of their identity (Tripcony, 2010). Nonetheless, education institutions tend to remain places of inequality and in many instances lack inclusion of Indigenous "ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing" (Martin, 2003). There is also resistance by some school communities to become culturally competent (Parbury, 1986; Perso, 2012), consequently denying Indigenous students a culturally safe space in schools. Mellor and Corrigan (2004) suggest that "cultural competence is the explicit recognition and affirmation of a student's cultural identity" (p.34), while, Hart, Whatman, McLauglin and Sharma-Brymer (2012) contest that "schools are sites that have long-established non-Indigenous hegemonic methods of curricular decision making" (p.3).

Eurocentric practices continue to shape the curriculum of schools, despite the mounting evidence that successful outcomes in education for Indigenous children transpires when Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives are embedded into the

curriculum. One can only conclude that these barriers continue to exist because of the continual need to impose dominant societal constructs upon Indigenous peoples.

Racism in Schools

Coram (2008) claims that 'Australian colonial history makes it clear that inequalities derived of race ideology have and continue to apply to Indigenous Australians' (p.8). While Tikly (1999) suggests that, "colonialism is not over" (p.606) and that interactions within the colonised state continue to be restructured to suit the social and economic paradigms of the dominant society. A widely held belief amongst many Indigenous communities is that mainstream schools are 'white institutions', designed for non-Indigenous children, controlled by white people, to integrate into a life in a white society (Fitzgerald Inquiry, 1997). It could be argued that 'white privilege' exists within mainstream schooling. It appears that the marginalisation of Indigenous peoples occurs as a result of non-Indigenous peoples wish to maintain their privilege and power, which is ingrained within Australia's institutional systems (Coram, 2008; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003).

As a minority group, Indigenous peoples have been consistently excluded from the decision-making processes in the education of their children. Many Indigenous parents complain that they are treated with disrespect and have noted racial overtones during discourses with principals, teachers and office staff when seeking information about their child's welfare or inquiring about their child's progress at school (Partington, 1998). It is here that leadership in schools is important. Herbert, Anderson, Price and Stehbens (1999) insist that, "committed educational leadership is one of the elements of success" (p.100). Positive leadership from school principals is necessary to promote culturally responsive and safe places for Indigenous children and their parents within the schooling space (Niesche, 2013).

'Othering' and stereotyping of Indigenous peoples continues through these intentional or unintentional discourses that take place within schools and classrooms on a daily basis. Reynolds (2005) argues that, "even where acceptance is offered by the majority community, it is often conditional, and Indigenes are judged worthy and deserving of assistance and acceptance only on terms of white criteria" (p.51).

However, it is not only parents who experience overt and covert racism in school settings, Indigenous education workers and children also experience racism at school (Aveling, 2007; Bain, 2011). Racism is embedded in various educational institutions and cannot always be readily identified, although research has shown that many Indigenous children have experienced some form of racism or discrimination during their schooling lives (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; de Plevitz 2007; Mellor, 2003). This can come from administrative staff, teachers, and also other children resulting in a profound and overwhelming effect on a child's well-being and self-esteem (Bodkin-Andrews, Denson & Bansel, 2013). Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2013) go on to suggest that educators must 'also actively attack the existence of racism and more carefully identify and support agents of resiliency for Indigenous Australian students' (p.235). Walker (1993) asserts,

Our kids face racial problems from day one at school and have to cope with growing up at home with such strong cultural values and being so proud of who they are and then going out and mixing with the wider society to be confronted with bigots who have few clues about the sensitivities of our people (p.52).

Many Indigenous children who experience racism also express feelings of shame, anger and isolation and at times may display aggressive behaviour (Zubrick et al., 2006). Indigenous children who attend school must carefully navigate between two cultural constructs. The first being the construction of their Indigeneity and how this is viewed and either accepted or rejected by the dominant majority. The second requires negotiation through Eurocentric education systems and finding suitable pathways that enable them to adapt to dominant mainstream structures of schooling whilst keeping their culture intact (Shipp, 2013). Herbert, Anderson, Price and Stehbens (1999) state that, "an aspect of maintaining credibility for Aboriginal students and adults in their own world and in the world of work or school is the need to maintain two different ways of being and communicating" (p.12).

Many non-Indigenous children do not have to consider navigating these two social constructs and are therefore considered to already have an advantage at the commencement of their schooling experience. Nevertheless, Indigenous children are aware that this duality is always present. By providing a culturally safe environment,

Indigenous children can be supported to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to school (Krakouer & Meston, 2015; Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh & Bateman, 2007). This connection to schooling can have enormous benefits for the self-efficacy and agency of Indigenous children (Bernstein, 2000; McLaughlin, Whatman, Katona & Ross, 2012; Purdie, Tripcony, Boulton-Lewis, Fanshawe & Gunstone, 2000).

When school leaders challenge their own biases and social constructs, as well as those of teaching staff and administration, it opens up the way to provide culturally responsive learning spaces for Indigenous children (Sarra, 2011). This in turn helps to forge stronger connections and engagement with parents and the Indigenous community. Lampert (2012) suggests "non-Indigenous Australians may see themselves as just and equitable, but this does not always equate to the way race is experienced by Indigenous children in schools" (p.90). Nevertheless, Sarra (2011) maintains that by instilling a sense of self-worth and pride in being 'strong and smart' in Indigenous children it increases opportunities for self-determination. However, he also identified that there was an austere lack of teacher knowledge in engaging with Indigenous children and teacher understanding of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives was for the most part non-existent (Sarra, 2011).

Teacher Constructs and Indigenous Children

While many teachers are now endeavouring to embed Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into the curriculum, it is important to ensure that Indigenous children can see themselves represented positively within the school and classroom environment (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; Ockenden, 2014). Negative stereotyping of and locating deficits within Indigenous children in their home and family life to explain away poor outcomes has been an ongoing practice by policy makers and educators (Ainge, 2002). Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers continue to challenge teacher thinking around deficit discourses which are consistently directed towards Indigenous children (Harrison, 2011; Sarra, 2003). Tripcony (2000) states,

As educators we know that the critical period for the formation of identity is childhood and adolescence….in both primary and secondary schools our

interactions with students can influence the ways in which those students individually construct their identities (p.8).

However, there are still teachers and school communities that resist inclusive practices (Gray & Beresford, 2008). Moreton-Robinson (2015) highlights that non-Indigenous peoples maintain 'white' dominant structures to ensure positions of authority and control. This control is evident in the current structures of contemporary schooling where the curriculum is predominantly Eurocentric, promoting the values, beliefs and attitudes of those in power.

Teachers' attitudes do make a difference. Harrison (2011) also points out that teachers need to be aware of the tone of language they are using in conversations with Indigenous children, and in discussions with the parents of Indigenous children. He also states that all too often, "it is more about how the parents and the children interpret the teachers to be perceiving them (in this case in negative ways, *or* requiring special support)" (Harrison, 2011, p.10). Teachers must resist the temptation to frame Indigenous children as 'deficit' or 'victims' and avoid setting low expectations. This is critical, as many educators come to their teaching practice with little or no understanding of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives (Keenan, 2009), and many without any knowledge of what has occurred historically for Indigenous Australians, suggesting that they do come to their practice poorly prepared to contribute to improved outcomes. Bodkin-Andrews, O'Rourke, Dillon, Craven and Yeung (2010) claim that it is too simplistic to suggest that because over time "underachievement and disengagement statistics" show analogous results in relation to poor outcomes for Indigenous students, "that deficit models almost seem like a logical conclusion" (p. 6). Educators' understanding of how deficit models work to maintain the status quo is fundamentally critical.

Indigenous students experience deculturation daily when attending mainstream schools. The curriculum squarely focuses on Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies. As Stanesby and Thomas (2012) contend, from a non-Indigenous perspective, we are blind to our own 'whiteness'. We therefore privilege our own social constructs and negate those that we do not understand. There is validity to the presumption that non-Indigenous peoples consider themselves at the 'centre or core

of the nation' (Elder, Ellis & Pratt, 2004, p. 209). Therefore, teachers must endeavour to deconstruct their 'whiteness' to understand why 'white privilege' is maintained and what that means for those children who have been disempowered and marginalised in the schooling system by this particular social construction (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Moreton-Robinson (1998) argues that, 'whiteness controls institutions, which are expansions of white Australian culture and are ruled by that culture's values, beliefs and assumptions' (p.11). Barnhardt (2005) concurs and suggests,

> Many Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous people have begun to recognise the limitations of a mono-cultural, single-stream education system and new approaches have begun to emerge that are contributing to our understanding of the relationship between Indigenous ways of knowing and those associated with Western society and formal education (p.10).

It is within these parameters that non-Indigenous teachers and educators need to re-contextualise their knowledge frameworks. Barnhardt's (2005) approach promotes awareness and understanding of Indigenous Knowledge/s and seeks to establish collaborative partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Although this process may be different for each community, the common element shared, is respecting and valuing what each culture can offer and bring to the table in order to achieve positive outcomes for student learning. Creating this safe cultural space allows a collective and united front from which, in part, Indigenised spaces of de-colonisation are informed (Battiste, 2005; Nakata, 2004).

Over-representation in disengagement, suspension and exclusion from school
In the current *space* and *place* of schooling, many Indigenous children feel excluded and do not see themselves represented within the school system (Malin & Maidment, 2003). Enthusiasm to attend school or engage with learning can become problematic when students see themselves continually excluded. Indigenous children are much more likely to disengage from schooling at an earlier age than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Purdie, 2010). Student truancy or disengagement whether by choice, or enacted through school behaviour management policies, may be reflected in the punitive practices that schools continue to use. Although the use of interventionist

strategies, such as intensive one on one support options may assist in getting suspended students back into school, for some students change is not occurring upon return to the classroom, the cycle is repeated, and the disengagement from learning continues. In many instances, Indigenous children (particularly boys) are suspended or excluded from schooling at a much higher rate than non-Indigenous students (Bourke et al., 2000). This cycle of suspension and reinstatement can lead to an increased possibility of incarceration (Anderson, 2012).

Although there has been a push to adopt all-inclusive frameworks, many schools do not embody holistic practices within their school culture and a much higher priority is given to the achievement of high academic targets, rather than that of the social and emotional well-being of children. Some educationalists would insist that omission of this holistic process could be considered part of the problem (Frigo & Simpson, 1999; Muller, 2014; Sims, 2011). For example, Townsend-Cross (2011) argues that, "formal education is an important ingredient in successful social change education; however, it is but one component of a much more holistic, embodied, and emotive educative process" (p.75).

Partington and Gray (2012, p.163) maintain that schools are places which can challenge the active participation of Indigenous boys, consequently resulting in behaviour management issues which then need to be addressed. These challenges can be as a result of a lack of cultural understanding by educators, minimal cultural connections between schools and communities and a lack of Indigenous male role models for young Indigenous males. Unfortunately, failure to address these needs in schools is addressed with punitive measures that may result in suspension or exclusion from school. It has also been highlighted by Gray and Beresford (2008) that some schools can exacerbate the reasons for antisocial behaviour in children, whilst also having the capacity to prevent it.

There is a link to the socio-economic disadvantage experienced by some Indigenous children and their subsequent behavioural issues in schools (Hunter, 2009; Purdie & Buckley, 2010). Although there has been an increase in economic income over the past ten years for Indigenous peoples residing in urban areas (a decrease in very remote areas), there is still disparity present in the wealth distribution across the board

for Indigenous Australians. With the exception of Indigenous females who have graduated from university with a degree, Biddle (2014) maintains that education and employment for Indigenous Australians in all of the demographic and geographical areas including education and employment is lower than that of non-Indigenous Australians.

In other situations, Indigenous students deliberately resist the schooling system, seeking out suspension and exclusion to avoid learning if they are having academic or social difficulties (Harrison, 2011; Herbert, Anderson, Price & Stehbens, 1999). Indigenous boys can also find themselves dealing with suspensions or exclusions in retaliation to racist actions or comments inflicted by other students or teachers (Groome & Hamilton, 1995; Malin, 1997; Malin & Harris, 1995; Partington, 1998). Suspensions or exclusions create situations whereby students feel a sense of powerlessness and associations have been made between suspension, exclusion and anti-social or aggressive behaviours (Michail, 2011). All of these factors may lead to an overall disillusionment of schooling and lead to Indigenous boys receiving a School Disciplinary Absence, that is, either suspension or exclusion from school.

According to DET Queensland, School Disciplinary Absences data, from 2013-2017, Queensland state schools have seen an exponential increase across all SDA categories (DET, 2018). Previous statistics also indicated that young males from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to receive an SDA (DET, 2014). Table 2.1 identifies that those students whose parents were not in paid employment were also deemed at greater risk of receiving an SDA (DET, 2014). Research also shows that Indigenous unemployment is extremely high, particularly in remote and regional areas, therefore this can also be determined as an SDA indicator captured within this data (Campbell, Kelly & Harrison, 2012; Higgins & Morely, 2014; Urquhart, 2009).

Table 2.1: School Disciplinary Absences prevalence by parental occupation category

Parental occupation category	Proportion of students with SDAs
Senior management	6%
Other business managers	12%
Trades/office and sales	27%
Machine operators/hospitality	26%
Not in paid work in last 12 months	29%

Source: Department of Education and Training: School Disciplinary Absences, 2014, np.

In other SDA data, the statistics are even more concerning, indicating that although Indigenous students make up approximately ten per cent of all Queensland state school students in 2017, they constituted approximately 18 per cent of students with SDAs. Moreover, a larger proportion of Indigenous students with an SDA had more than one SDA compared to that of non-Indigenous students (DET, 2018, np.).

However, it is apparent that many of the practical strategies to generate changes within the educational sector and government agencies is hindered by a profound lack of knowledge about Indigenous cultures', and little if any understanding of the historical disparities faced by Indigenous Australians (Biddle, Hunter & Schwab, 2004; Zubrick et al., 2007). Rather school suspensions, Indigenous children appear to be excluded for similar behavioural issues to that of non-Indigenous students, who may only receive a short (1-10 days) or long suspension (11-20 days) (Mitchell, 2016). Welch and Payne (2010) agree and contend that, 'racial status is another variable consistently related to student punitiveness, with minority students receiving harsher treatment more often than white students' (p.28). Although this is an ongoing issue, there has been little research to date concerning this matter. The reality is that many young Indigenous males are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and consequently represented within these statistics.   Students whose parents only reached a year nine level of schooling were far more likely to receive a School Disciplinary Absence (SDA), and once again many Indigenous students fall into this category (DET, 2014).

Unfortunately, the over-representation of Indigenous students who receive SDA's applies to every State and Territory in Australia. DET (2014) stated that there was not necessarily a correlation between Indigeneity and the over-representation of SDA's once low Socio-Economic Status (SES) data is considered. However, Indigenous children may be represented in several of the low socio-economic indicators employed by the Department of Education and are much more likely to fall into this demographic category as a direct result of discriminatory policies and practices which have been implemented by governments over many years. For example, in Queensland the School Enrolment and Attendance Policy ceased in 2011 as it was reported that there were no conclusive findings that this punitive policy promoted engagement or retention levels for Indigenous children at school.

2.2.1.4 Change in Policy Direction for Schools and Legal System

Under the conservative Liberal government elected in Queensland in 2013, several changes were introduced to Schools' Disciplinary policies and procedures. For instance, The Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) Amendment Bill 2013 was implemented into Queensland schools, implementing harsher disciplinary actions and concurrently, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice also announced Youth Justice Amendments to be enacted early in 2014. This amendment aimed at enforcing more punitive measures to be placed upon young people who were considered to be repeat offenders in the criminal justice system. Clearly there was a push for punitive reform across the education and legal systems and young people were being targeted, within both the education and legal systems.

The Education Amendment Bill directed that discipline in schools would be strengthened by providing principals with stronger disciplinary powers and more flexibility and bolstering the grounds for autonomy around discipline decisions suspension and exclusion reducing administrative burdens to enable firm and timely responses to problem behaviour (DET, 2013). Daley (2013) points out in the *National Research Review into Student Suspensions*, that there is no merit in the suspension, exclusion or expulsion of students, as there are other underlying causes of problems, which are ultimately not being addressed. Daley (2013) states that, 'the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and student suspension is clear' (p.18). Other major reforms in the Schools' Disciplinary Policy included:

- Allowing that detentions can occur outside of school hours and on weekends;
- Lengthening the suspension period for short suspensions from 1–5 school days to 1–10 school days;
- Removing written submission provisions against proposed exclusions;
- Removing the show-cause process prior to cancelling an enrolment;
- Expanding the grounds for suspensions and exclusions;
- Expanding the grounds in relation to conduct to include conduct occurring outside school (DET, 2013).

These reforms were pushed through parliament with little consideration or research undertaken as to what impact they would have on young people. Rather than the adoption of a castigatory approach by the State government and its agents at this time, it may have been more prudent to offer support mechanisms to assist those young people who were struggling with behavioural issues at school, or who were at risk of committing a criminal offence.

Simultaneously, the introduction of significant reforms to the *Queensland's Youth Justice Act 1992 (QLD)* which affects young people who are coming into contact, with the juvenile justice system occurred (Hutchinson, 2014). These reforms comprised of:

- 'Boot camps' introduced to replace court ordered youth sentencing
- Publication of information and identification of youth offenders
- The removal of detention as a 'last resort' option, and
- Transferral of 17 years old children to adult prison (Hutchinson, 2014, p.243).

Under this new legislation, the contravention of several articles under the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (1989) (UNCRC) occurred some of which, was repealed by the sitting Labor government in Queensland in 2016. In 2018, the Labor government also reversed the decision to transfer 17 year old children into adult prisons, however this has yet to take place due to the high occupancy rates of juvenile detention facilities in Queensland.

Punitive measures to exclude children from schooling or the use of incarceration have significant flow on effects. In the United States for instance, Heilbrun and Dewey (2015) found in their research, that as a minority group, African-American children were most at risk of the 'zero tolerance' policy reforms. Their research indicated a host of negative consequences resulting from the suspension and exclusion of young people from schools, including higher levels of contact with police and higher levels of incarceration in juvenile justice facilities (Heilbrun & Dewey, 2015). There are also similarities in both Canada and New Zealand (see, Rudin, 2005; Fergusson, Horwood & Lynskey, 1993). In Australia, research conducted by Amnesty International also indicates that recent castigatory policy reforms throughout some States and Territories

of Australia has adversely impacted upon the incarceration rates of young Indigenous males in a comparable way (Amnesty International, 2015).

2.3 Incarceration of Young Indigenous Males

2.3.1 International Perspectives on the Incarceration of Indigenous Youth

Historically, countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand have witnessed an increasing over-representation of minority groups who are exposed to the criminal justice system. Of key importance to this dissertation is the over-representation of young Indigenous Australian males in the criminal justice system, many of whom have disengaged from their schooling early, either by choice or by deliberate exclusion from the education system (Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks & Booth, 2011).

In Canada for example, Millar and Owusu-Bempah (2011) highlight that racial profiling has become a significant factor in the high incarceration rates of young Indigenous males and minority groups. Millar and Owusu-Bempah (2011) suggest that, 'there are documented individual cases of racial profiling where police have targeted individuals for increased supervision because of their race' (p.654). In their research, Millar and Owusu-Bempah (2011) and Wortley and Owusu-Bempah (2016) state that there is a strong reluctance by police or governments in Canada to commit to any substantial reporting or recording of data which relates to 'race' as being a determinant in the high arrest rates and incarceration of minority groups, particularly the First Nations peoples of Canada. In their research, Owusu-Bempah et al. (2014) also point out that the rate of imprisonment of Canada's Aboriginal population has risen significantly "by almost 40%, while the non-Aboriginal prison population has risen by just over 2%" (p.5).

Wortley (1999) argues that race may not necessarily play a part in the consistently high arrest rates of minority groups. Other scholars suggest that there are other factors, which need to be taken into consideration; such as minority groups

congregating more frequently in public spaces, residence in areas that statistically have higher crime rates and high rates of traffic violation involvement (Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2016). Although this warrants further investigation, the statistics remain significantly higher for First Nations Canadians where racial profiling and over-policing of First Nations peoples remains a serious problem within many communities.

In a comprehensive report written for the Ipperwash Inquiry in Canada, Rudin (2006) found that between 1999 and the early 2000's Canada had one of the highest incarceration rates for First Nations youth, globally. Canada sought to reform its *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) to decrease the incarceration rates of young First Nations peoples. Although, Rudin (2006, 2007) indicates that there has been a substantial decrease in incarceration rates overall of Canadian youths, the statistics show that First Nations youth continue to be incarcerated at a substantially higher rate than non-Aboriginal youth. As in Australia, Canada's Aboriginal population is represented demographically by a much younger population, with Canada's Aboriginal children from 0 – 14 years, accounting for 28% of the total Aboriginal population. Table 2.2 presents the 2015/16 statistics for incarcerated Canadian Aboriginal youth, in conjunction with non-Aboriginal youth, excluding Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Alberta. As in Australia, these statistics show that Aboriginal youth in Canada are over-represented in both custodial and community supervision and account for more than half of the young people who are incarcerated in Canada.

Table: 2.2 Admissions of youth to correctional services, by characteristics of the person admitted and supervision program, nine jurisdictions, 2015/2016.

Identity 2014/15	Total Custody	Total Community Supervision	Total Correctional
Aboriginal	3,041 (39%)	2,601 (30%)	5,642 (35%)
Non-Aboriginal	4,675 (61%)	5,974 (70%)	10,649 (65%)

Source: Statistics Canada, 2017, np.

As in Canada, there are similarities for New Zealand's Māori youth. In 2007, a detailed report was conducted by the Police, Strategy and Research Group Department of Corrections (PSRGDC), regarding the over-representation of the incarceration of

Māori peoples. This report highlighted that historically, Māori peoples have had higher conviction and incarceration rates than non-Māori (Pakeha) people. Likewise, Māori youth are disproportionately represented within the juvenile justice system, and they too, experience lower socio-economic status. Moana Jackson argues that the 'impacts of historical and cultural factors in Māori offending' should be taken into consideration' (Jackson, 2007, p.8). Also highlighted in this more recent report were the findings of earlier research conducted by Fergusson, Horwood and Lynskey (1993) which indicated that young Māori peoples up to the age of fourteen had contact with police nearly three times more often than that of their non-Māori counterparts.

In 1989, New Zealand's youth justice system was 'overhauled' with an attempt to lower incarceration rates for youth aged between ten and seventeen years of age (Quince, 2007). Despite these changes, New Zealand's Ministry of Justice identified that in 2004, 54% of the 6269 young people prosecuted for offending were Māori (Ministry of Justice, 2006). Although Quince (2007) determines that Māori peoples are significantly over-represented within the justice system, she also argues that there are other factors that must be considered other than culture and ethnicity. Quince (2007, p.4) suggests that one of these factors is that "colonisation has directly shaped the socio-economic position" of Māori peoples, which then contributes to the likelihood of higher incarceration rates. Although offending rates have fallen across the board for all young people in New Zealand, more recent statistics indicate the rates of Māori youth appearing in court has increased by 23% in the 2014/15 and 2016/17 period, while comparatively the rate for non-Māori young people reduced by 12% over the same time period (Ministry of Justice, 2018). Tauri (2009) proposes that just as in Canada and New Zealand, negative relationships between police and Indigenous minority groups are also a significant contributing factor to the higher incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples in Australia.

Interestingly, Hutchinson and Smandych (2005) highlight that in the case of Canada and Australia, both have province/state-based approaches to incarceration, therefore giving more autonomy to each province or state with regards to the implementation of laws and the sentencing of offenders. They contend that a more positive approach from a legal perspective might be to tackle high incarceration rates at a national level. Considering the past and continuing inequitable government policies and practices

which have arisen through invasion and colonisation of Canada, New Zealand and Australia, the criminalisation of Indigenous peoples may be perceived as another form of surreptitious racism and oppression.

2.3.2 Incarceration Rates of Indigenous Peoples: Australia

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody – 339 Recommendations
As previously discussed, Australia's statistics on the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in incarceration are not dissimilar to those of Canada or New Zealand. Just as in Canada, Australia's Indigenous population consists of a larger demographic of younger peoples. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) indicates that, more than one-third of Indigenous people are younger than 15 years of age compared with one-fifth of non-Indigenous people, and these figures are expected to rise. This data is significant, as it indicates that unless improvements are realized in many areas for Indigenous children in Australia, we are going to continue to see an increase in the disproportionate numbers of young people who are disengaged from schooling and who are more likely to end up in the juvenile justice system.

It is therefore appropriate to turn our attention to the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) which handed down *339 Recommendations*. This report was commissioned as a result of the 99 Indigenous people who died whilst in police custody throughout Australia during a nine-year period, from January 1980 to May 1989. Many of the recommendations reinforced the ideology of self-determination for Indigenous Australians. Behrendt, Cuneen and Libesman (2009) point out that the RCIADIC also stipulated that Indigeneity was a significant and predominant factor "for the person being in custody and dying in custody" (p.115). Davis (1999) suggests that the findings from the inquiry stressed that many of these deaths could have been prevented had judicious care been taken whilst people were being held in police custody. Fitzgerald (1999) found that the changes in offending, or how the courts dealt with sentencing of offenders, may have also contributed to higher incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples.

Yet, it was not only the deaths in custody that were highlighted as a serious and critical issue for Indigenous peoples. The high incarceration rates of both Indigenous adults and young Indigenous peoples across Australia was also raised as an issue of concern (RCIADIC, 1991). Although non-Indigenous incarceration rates are also increasing, they are not nearly as substantial as the increase in incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the RCIADIC there was discussion and dissent around the key findings.

Don Dale Youth Detention Centre

During the course of this research, the Australian Broadcasting Commission's (ABC) *Four Corners* reported on the appalling treatment of young males, (98% of whom identify as Indigenous) in the Northern Territory Don Dale Youth Detention Centre (DDYDC). The current affairs program which aired in 2016 released images of an Indigenous teenager, Dylan Voller, being restrained and 'spit hooded'[5] by security staff at the centre. According to an ABC media report by Meldrum-Hannah and Worthington (2016) one of the detention guards indicated that Dylan Voller had been placed in a restraint chair on at least three separate occasions. It is understood that Voller had been incarcerated for substantial periods of time throughout his life in the Don Dale Youth Detention facility from the age of just eleven years old, for various offences.

Although government and media reports into the extremely poor conditions at the DDYDC had been previously available to the Northern Territory LNP government, this resulted in no action taken by the government. However, the footage which was released nationally on the ABC's *Four Corners* program led to an immediate public outcry within the wider Australian community and also internationally. The public pressure and extensive reporting by media agencies (see, Aikman, 2016; Daly, James, Bennett, Hunter & Noble, 2016; Innes, 2016; Martin-McKenzie, 2016; Meade, 2016) resulted in the then Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Turnbull calling for an urgent royal commission into the mistreatment and lack of care for young people in Northern Territory's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. During the program it was

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[5] A spit hood is a device used to cover or mask the face to prevent a person from biting or spitting.

revealed that many other young males in the DDYDC were also subjected to continued and deliberate ongoing abuse by security staff, which included tear-gassing, strip searches and excessive control and humiliation. Shortly after the airing of the footage a statement was released by Mr. Alvaro Pop and Professor Megan Davis who are both members of the *The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.*

> We would like to categorically reject and denounce the brutalizing treatment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre in the Northern Territory, Australia. The treatment carried out to children in this facility include extended periods of solitary confinement and humiliating procedures that further exacerbate their distress and alienate them from successful rehabilitation or reintegration to society (Pop & Davis, 2016, np.).

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and also to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, Australia witnessed first hand human rights violations of children detained in the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. The inhumane treatment perpetrated upon both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children was confirmed through the Commissioners' investigations and presented in the findings.

The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (RCPDCNT) was overseen by Margaret White and Michael Gooda. It resulted in 227 recommendations, all of which were agreed to in full, or in principle by the Northern Territory government, however only accepted in principle by the Federal government. The findings into the appalling conditions and lack of duty of care for children incarcerated in DDYDC disclosed horrific acts had occurred and in some cases demonstrated that contraventions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child had also taken place and were inconsistent with the Youth Justice Act of Northern Territory. The commission found that many of the youth justice officers at the detention centre had:

- subjected detainees to verbal abuse and racist remarks;
- exerted controlling behaviour, such as withholding necessities like food, water and the use of toilet facilities;

- dared detainees, or offered bribes to detainees, to carry out degrading, humiliating and/or harmful acts, or to carry out acts of physical violence on each other; and

- used mobile phones in inappropriate, humiliating and potentially harmful ways (RCPDCNT, 2017).

Out of the 227 recommendations, fifteen related to the inadequate education opportunities for young people within the correctional facility. Findings 13 and 14 in *Education in Detention* identified that children in the DDYDC were not given any transition support into mainstream schooling once they left the centre and neither was there any readily shared access to children's educational records by schools, resulting in greater difficulties for children to re-integrate back into mainstream educational settings upon release from the centre (RCPDCNT, 2017). Within the DDYDC, the commission also found that children were being punished excessively and therefore suspended or excluded from the school (within detention) without adequate behaviour management plans being put into place to support student re-entry into the classroom (RCPDCNT, 2017). Despite all of the findings and recommendations generated from the royal commission, there appears to be no immediate legal reform and there have been no charges laid against any of the perpetrators who carried out violent acts against the children in the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre.

Effective tracking of children's educational progress is paramount to ensure the smooth transition of children out of detention and back into mainstream or other school settings. However, keeping children out of detention should be the major priority for all states and territories within Australia and education has a critical role to play within this context.

Systemic Bias

Interestingly, Weatherburn, Fitzgerald and Hua (2003) argue that the over-representation of Indigenous peoples occurs simply because of "Aboriginal over-representation in crime" (p.65). Weatherburn et al. (2003) disagreed with what they described as a plethora of research conducted after the RCIADIC that asserted that

'systemic bias,' contributed significantly to the incarceration of Indigenous peoples. In response to the Weatherburn et al. paper, Cunneen (2005) countered that this is at the least, a simplistic interpretation of an extremely complex phenomena. Cunneen (2005) argued that there was ample research which identified systemic bias as a cause for the over-incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples (see, Allard, 2010; Fergusson, Swain-Campbell & Horwood, 2004). However, Weatherburn et al. (2003) maintained that rather than suggesting systemic bias was the cause, they suggested it was more likely that issues such as 'poor schooling outcomes, unemployment and substance abuse' (p.66) are the underlying causes which needed to be addressed to prevent the high incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples. It may be determined that to some extent, both Cunneen (2005) and Weatherburn et al. (2003) presented valid arguments at the time. Unfortunately, however, Weatherburn et al. (2003) neglected to examine in any great detail the findings by the RCIADIC that identified Indigeneity as having a substantial bearing on the higher incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples. In their research, Weatherburn et al. (2003) also attempted to disconnect past and present government policies of economic and social disadvantage and the high probability that this resulted in the over-incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples (Newell, 2013).

Factors such as systemic bias within the legal system, substance abuse, high unemployment rates and low levels of education, as mentioned by Cunneen (2005) and Weatherburn et al. (2003), nevertheless, whether causal or symptomatic, do have a substantial bearing upon those Indigenous peoples currently within the criminal justice system. Unless urgent action is taken to address government policies, which create social and economic disadvantage, these issues will continue to be critically significant for the next generation of young Indigenous peoples. Many racist and discriminatory policies have had a profound effect on Indigenous peoples, specifically because of their Indigeneity. Higgins and Davis (2014) state that, "despite the multiple policy and practice reforms that were initiated after the Royal Commission, the significant over-representation of Indigenous young people in the juvenile criminal justice system remains" (p.3).

Notwithstanding the 339 recommendations, the disturbing reality is that over-policing, and incarceration is a daily lived experience for many young Indigenous peoples. This will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

2.3.3 Over-representation of Indigenous Youth in the Criminal Justice System - Queensland

Incarceration Rates

The 2015 Amnesty International report, *Keeping Indigenous Kids in the Community and out of Detention in Australia* stated that, although the RCIADIC had extensively detailed the problems surrounding high custody and incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples that very little had been done over a 24 year period. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) expressed deep concerns that the 2008 Closing the Gap reforms also omitted to include as a target, the high levels of incarceration rates for Indigenous adults and children to remedy this situation. NATSILS also highlighted that without addressing the issue of high incarceration rates, it would be extremely difficult to improve or meet the overall CTG targets as outlined by the Federal government.

In the 2016-2017 period, incarceration rates of young Indigenous peoples in Australia increased. Although, only accounting for five percent of all young people nationally, young Indigenous peoples made up 50% of all young people under juvenile justice supervision on an average day (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2018). In the 2016-2017 period, Queensland and New South Wales' Indigenous youth represented the highest numbers of children under supervision for all states and territories. Figure 2.2 identifies that in Australia over 1200 children come under community supervision and also shows that Queensland has the second highest representation of children who are incarcerated in juvenile detention.   The data also indicated that, "in community-based supervision, Queensland (28%) and New South Wales (25%) also had the largest numbers of young people under supervision on an average day" (AIHW, 2018, p.5).
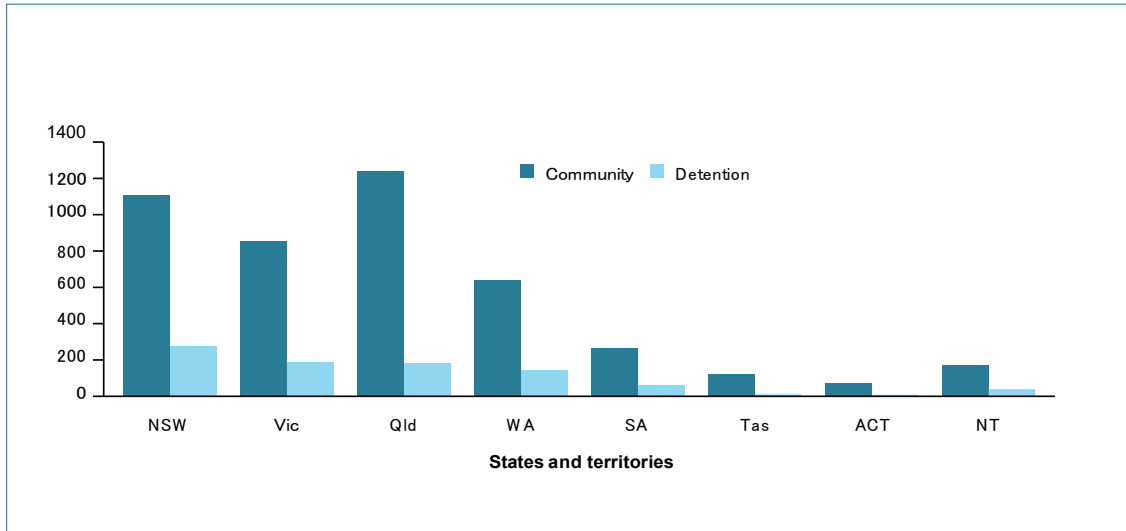
Figure 2.2 Young people under supervision on an average day by supervision type, states and territories, 2016–17. Source: Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2018.

As well, "In all states and territories, a substantial proportion of those in detention on an average day were unsentenced, ranging from 47% in Victoria to 86% in Queensland" (AIHW, 2018, p.15). Figure 2.3 shows that Queensland and Victoria had the highest rates of young people who spent time in a juvenile correctional facility, although they had not been sentenced. Overall, in four states, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia Indigenous children were over-represented in this area compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.
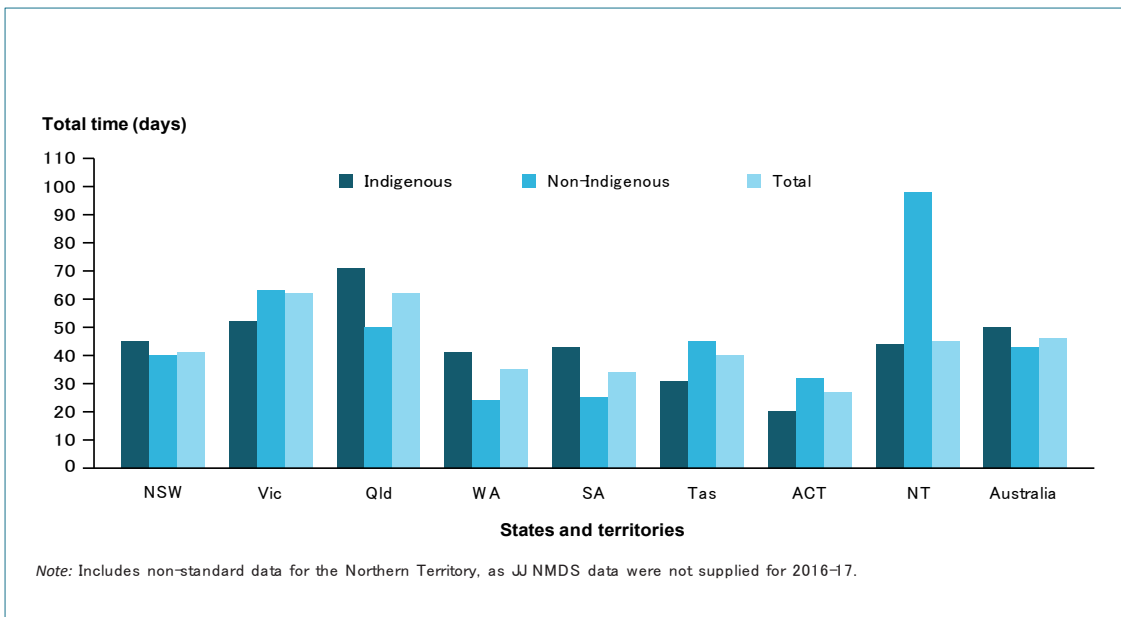
Figure 2.3 Average total time young people spent in unsentenced detention during the year, by Indigenous status, states and territories, 2016–17 (days). Source: Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2018.

In a 2018 *Report on Youth Justice* in Queensland, Atkinson found that in 2016-2017 "there were 38,338 occasions of police actions against children aged 10–16 years" in Queensland (Atkinson, 2018, p.2). In 2018, young Indigenous males and females in Queensland made up around nine per cent of all 10 to 17-year-olds, but 65 per cent of the youth detention population. Young males were four times more likely than their female counterparts to be under community based supervision, and 'about 8–9 times as likely as females to be in detention' (AIHW, 2018, p.30). Data showed that,

> On an average day in 2016–17, more than half (58%) of young people aged 10–17 in detention were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, compared with more than one-quarter (28%) of adults in full-time prison. Similarly, almost half (48%) of young people were supervised in the community, and 1 in 5 (20%) of adults in community corrections were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (refer to Figure 2.4) (AIHW, 2018, p.35).

Number per 10,000

Note: Data on young people under supervision are for 2016–17; data on adults under supervision are for the June quarter 2017.
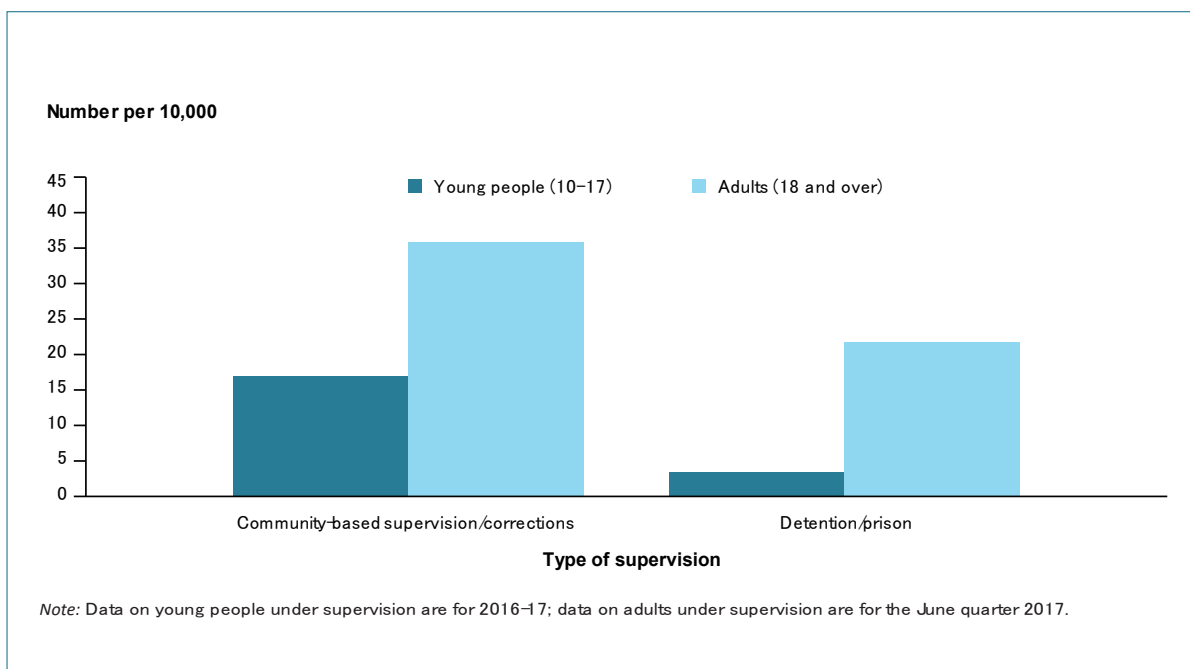
Figure 2.4 Young Indigenous people aged 10-17 and adults under supervision on an average day by type of supervision, 2016-17. Source: Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2018.

Figure 2.5 illustrates between 2014 and 2018 the incidences of incarceration of young Indigenous peoples rose significantly in Queensland compared to that of their non-Indigenous peers. However, these data should be interpreted with caution, as in 2018

a change to Queensland's legislation increased the juvenile detention age limit from 16 to 17 years. Although the data varies across states and territories, the commonality is that young Indigenous offenders are 'over-represented at all stages of the criminal justice system' throughout Australia (Higgins & Davis, 2014, p.2).
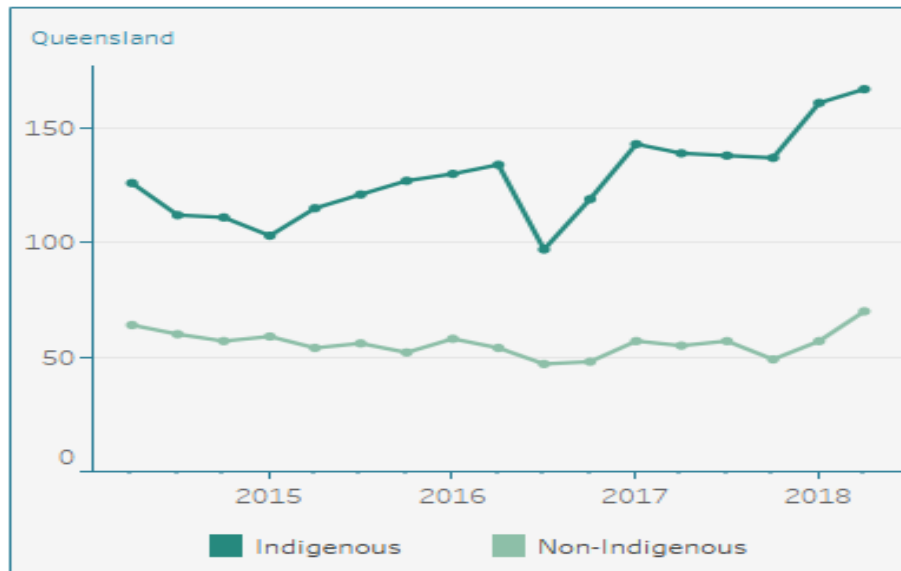
Figure 2.5 Indigenous and non-Indigenous representation in Queensland's juvenile detention centres, 2014-2018. Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018.

Police have considerable powers and discretion as to who receives a caution, who is diverted away from the courts, and whether a young person is detained in custody with or without sentencing. According to the Children and Young People in Queensland Crime and Justice Snapshot (2013), Indigenous young people were much more likely to be "issued a warrant or arrested" as a result of offences committed compared to that of their non-Indigenous counterparts, 49.6% compared to 24.6%. Non-Indigenous young people were also "more likely to receive a caution from police than Indigenous young people 39.1% and 20.3% respectively" (Children and Young People in Queensland Crime and Justice Snapshot, 2013, p.133).

Policing Interactions – Indigenous children and youths

Tauri (2009) proposes that in New Zealand, negative relationships with police is a contributing factor which impacts upon the high incarceration rates of Māori peoples.

Behrendt et al. (2009) concur and state that in 'Aboriginal communities in Australia search powers of juveniles are used more frequently' (p.99). While it has been suggested by Allard (2010) that there is substantial 'over-policing' within Indigenous communities in Australia, which in turn leads to higher charge and arrest rates, particularly of young Indigenous males.

In the 2015-2016 period, 182 complaints were received by the Department of Justice and Attorney General from children and young people aged 12-18 years, which represents approximately fifteen complaints per month. According to the AIHW (2018) "young people are more likely than adults to be proceeded against for allegedly committing an offence" (p.34). Police have discretionary powers to caution or charge those taken into custody and in most cases Indigenous youth are less likely to be diverted away from the court systems (Cunneen, Collings & Ralph, 2005; Wundersitz & Hunter, 2005). Behrendt et al. (2009) suggest that "to a large extent, police determine which young people will enter the juvenile justice system, as well as the terms on which they enter" (p.96). In the 2009 Crime and Misconduct Commission report: *Monitoring the Queensland Police Service - Interactions between police and young people*, research shows that Indigenous youth and minority groups are more likely to meet with physical aggression and 'intimidation' from police (CMC, 2009). In many cases, young people "are afraid to report incidents for fear of police retaliation or because they feel threatened by police warnings against making a complaint" (CMC, 2009, p.9). According to Allard et al. (2010),

Two-thirds of Indigenous males and one-quarter of Indigenous females in the general population had had contact with the juvenile justice system, while the proportion of non-Indigenous young people who had contact was much lower (p.4).

Historically, the negative results of police contact can be seen to be particularly deleterious to young Indigenous males, most of whom have experienced more than one incidence of contact with police since reaching the age of ten years. In the 2015-16 period, 182 complaints were received by the DJAG from children and young people aged 12 to 18 years against police, which represents approximately 15 complaints per

month. According to the AIHW (2018) "young people are more likely than adults to be proceeded against for allegedly committing an offence" (p.34).

In 2012, the sitting conservative government withdrew funding from, and shut-down, all Murri Courts[6] across Queensland. These courts were aimed at supporting Indigenous offenders during court procedures. Brisbane magistrate, Tony Pascoe advised that he had seen a reduction in serious crimes committed by Indigenous youth since the inception of the Murri Court system and believed much of this was to do with the involvement of the Elders from the community (Cunneen, 2008). The decision to overturn the closing of the Murri Courts was quashed by the Labor government, and in 2016, the re-instatement of fourteen Murri Courts throughout Queensland occurred.

Although community conferencing is a preferred option for many Indigenous communities, this figure is also lower for Indigenous youths at only 5 percent compared to 9 percent for non-Indigenous youths. Considering the very small proportion of Indigenous youth in Queensland these figures are extraordinary. Blagg (1997) suggests that, "the victimology must be balanced with an acknowledgement of genocidal crimes and steps must be taken to reform the structure and culture of the police" (p.497). Nevertheless, it is important that consideration is given to the ways in which police use their discretionary powers and the bearing that this has on the high incarceration rates of young Indigenous peoples.

Youth Justice Supervision – Queensland

In 2015 the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported that of those young people who are under community-based supervision, Indigenous youth make up more than half at 52%. According to the AIHW (2017) on an average day Queensland's Indigenous youth represented 53% of those aged 10–17 years under youth justice supervision, compared to the national level at 45% (see Figure 2.9). Since, September 2016 there has been a steady increase of young Indigenous peoples in juvenile detention, and according to the AIHW (2018) "on an average night in the June quarter

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[6] Murri Court is a culturally appropriate court process that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and provides an opportunity for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community (including Elders and victims) to participate in the court process.

2018, nearly 3 in 5 (59%) of young people aged 10–17 in detention were Indigenous"
(p.2).

Richards, Rosevear and Gilbert (2011) stress that "social crime prevention addresses
factors that influence individuals' likelihood of committing a crime" (p.1). At the same
time those Indigenous youth, particularly males, are more likely to have contact with
police and the juvenile justice system at an early age, which leads to the police using
'arrest and detention' rather than using cautions or diversionary processes. Early
intervention strategies which are based within communities to support Indigenous
youth, and in places such as schools, can have a significant impact on the reduction
of incarceration and recidivism rates of young Indigenous peoples.
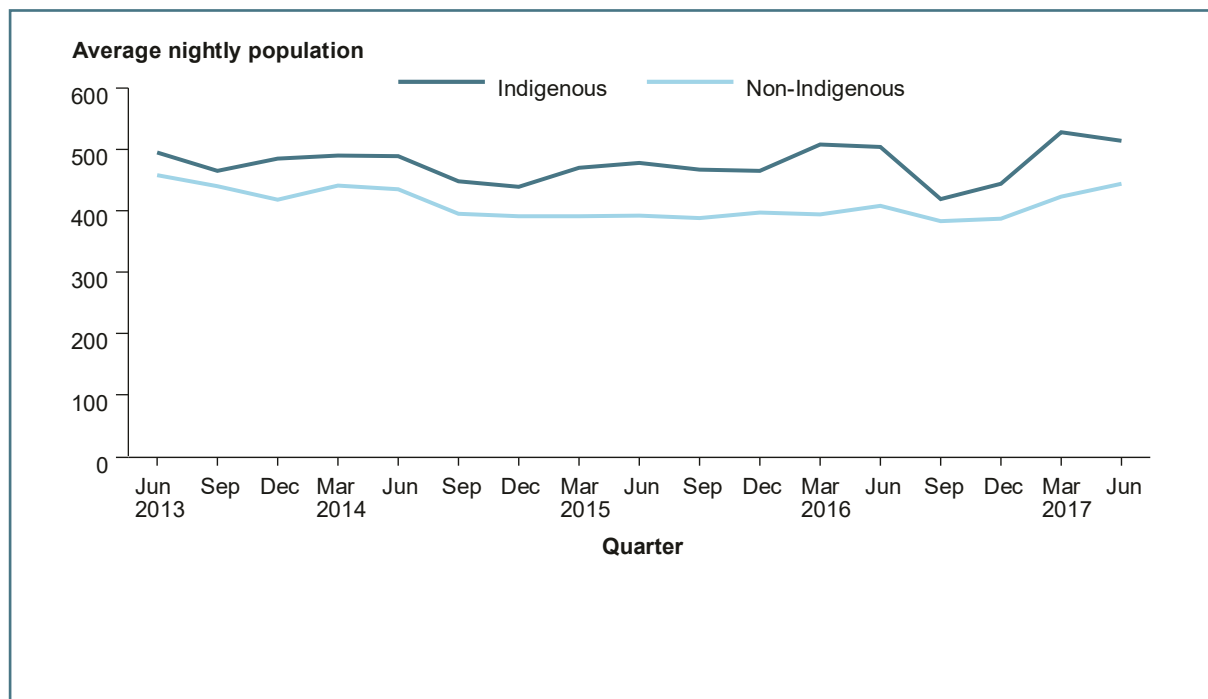
**Figure 2.6 Young people in detention on an average night, by Indigenous status Australia, June
quarter 2013 to June quarter 2017. Source: Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2017.**

The Australian Institute of Criminology (2003) states, "examples of prevention include
school-based programs (for example, truancy initiatives) as well as community-based
programs (e.g., local resident action groups) which promote shared community
ownership and guardianship" (p.1).

Australia has limited research analysing the benefits of early intervention strategies based within local Indigenous communities and places such as schools. Therefore, it is not known to what extent these early support systems have on the incarceration or recidivism rates of young Indigenous peoples (Cubillo, 2013). Despite such a paucity of research, the latest Queensland juvenile justice report, acknowledged that many of the youth who came into contact with juvenile justice have also had interactions with the child protection system (Atkinson, 2018).

Support Measures

The *Community Services Act 2007* is the method employed by the Queensland Government to issue funding to groups within the community. This mechanism supports young Indigenous peoples who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. In 2016, the Queensland government continued to fund the following programs:

- Young offender support services
- Employment project officer programs
- Specialist counselling services
- Bail support services
- Supervised community accommodation services
- Logan learning initiative.

(Department of Child Safety, Youth & Women, 2018).

One positive and specifically, Indigenous led strategy is the new Youth Justice First Nations Action Board (YJFNAB), which is the first of its kind in Australia. The YJFNAB representatives include Indigenous Youth Justice workers from throughout Queensland who have continued to work to support young Indigenous peoples across Queensland at the local level.

Justice re-investment

Cubillo (2013) states that, 'justice reinvestment aims to apply a data-driven, place-based and fiscally sound approach to the criminal justice system to reduce offending and imprisonment' (pp.16-17). Whilst, Bratanova and Robinson (2014) suggest,

"justice reinvestment would require a change of emphasis for the Queensland Government, from discouraging youth offending by punitive action to tackling youth crime before it eventuates" (p.2).

One of the areas that has seen the support of youth justice re-investment in Australia, is the adoption of the restorative Māori conferencing model (Tauri, 2009). This model involves Indigenous community and family members, the victim, and the police working with young Indigenous peoples to take responsibility for their actions. Blagg (1997) suggests that the program showed some positive outcomes for Māori youth and communities and that it was being community driven. However, the opposite in fact occurred when the program, was transferred and adopted into the regional town of Wagga Wagga, Australia by a local police officer. The program was essentially driven by police, who had the authority to direct outcomes of the proceedings. The reality is that the conferencing process was not community driven, but in fact replaced the police cautioning options and at its core involved "re-integrative shaming practices" (Blagg, 1997, p.485). Conversely, a justice reinvestment program operating since 2015 and initiated by local Indigenous peoples from within the Bourke community has seen positive results. In 2018 it was revealed that the Bourke Maranguka Justice Reinvestment project had seen a 14% reduction in juvenile re-offending with a new offence within twelve months of release from juvenile detention (Justice Reinvest, 2018).

There are, however, some restorative justice programs emerging across the United States which are worthy of mention. In his 2013 address to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) conference, Cubillo (2013) pointed to the example of Dallas, Texas where there had been a marked improvement in outcomes which were directly linked to justice reinvestment programs indicating that there has been a decrease in juvenile crime and a "reduction of 52.9% in the number of youths in state institutions" (p.17). Cubillo (2013), along with Stewart, Hayes, Livingstone and Palk (2008), suggest that justice reinvestment is about deterring crime by addressing causal factors for offending behaviour. Cubillo (2013) points out that although the US justice reinvestment programs cannot simply be relocated into Australia's legal systems, there is justification for examination of why the programs are working so successfully, acknowledging that, "justice reinvestment fits well with best

practice principles for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including self-determination and community control" (Cubillo, 2013, p.18).

Although youth conferencing was established in Queensland in 1997, in early 2013 the conservative government amended the Youth Justice Act (1992) and established that courts would no longer have the ability to refer young offenders to youth justice conferencing and that police would have definitive responsibility for these referrals. This amendment gives police significant discretionary powers in relation to the legal procedures concerning Indigenous children and youth in Queensland.

In Queensland alone, the average cost to keep one child in detention per annum is more than half a million dollars, and according to Bushnell (2017), the expenditure on prisons in Australia from 2010 to 2015 had increased by 25.3%, the fastest growing in all common law countries. However, in the 2012-13 period, research correspondingly shows that there are substantial financial benefits associated with justice reinvestment strategies for Queensland (see Figure 2.10) (Queensland Government, 2006; Productivity Commission, 2014).
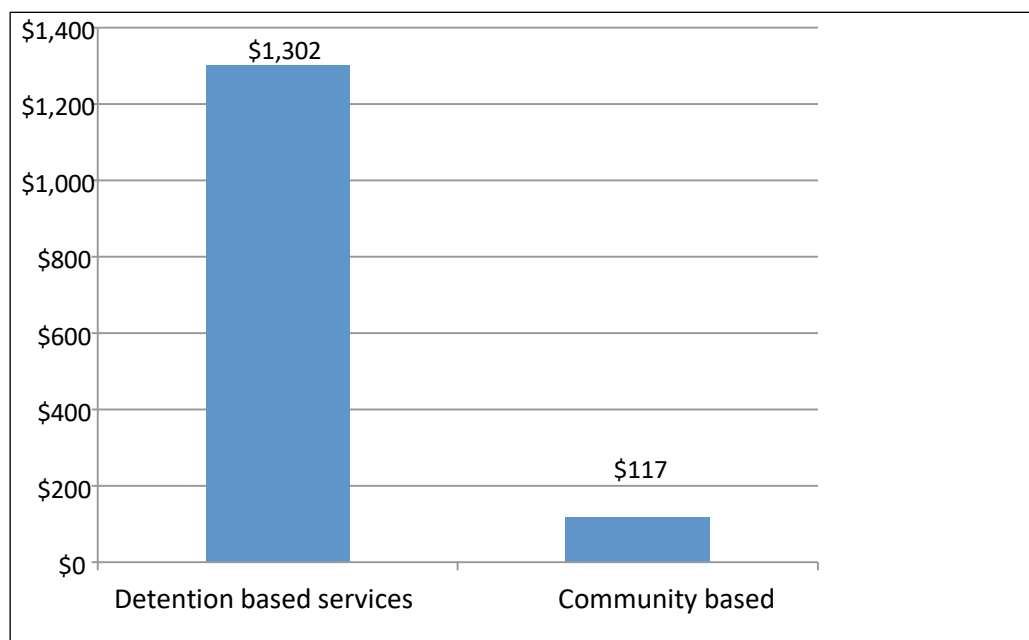
Figure 2.7 Cost per young person per day subject to supervision (2012-13). Source: Productivity Commission (2014).

Cubillo (2013) insists that Indigenous peoples must have input into "legislation and policy development, as well as educate others about what *we* want with respect to minimizing our over-representation in the criminal justice system" (p.23). Without Indigenous input into future action plans established by government departments, there is little hope of substantive and positive long-term changes occurring to keep Indigenous children out of the juvenile justice system.

2.3.4 Indigenous Community Support Programs - Queensland

There are several Indigenous community support programs throughout Australia which advocate for reducing the incarceration rates of Indigenous adults and youth. This section will focus specifically on Queensland programs, which are managed and operated by Indigenous organisations. According to Queensland Corrective Services (QCS),

> The existing literature has proven to be better at identifying what is not known about the treatment and rehabilitation needs of Indigenous offenders than what is. For example, it is not known how Queensland's Indigenous people define rehabilitation or at what point they would consider an offender to be rehabilitated (p.3).

It is well recognised that Indigenous peoples and organisations that facilitate Indigenous led programs have much better prospects at achieve long-term success (Hunt, 2013; O'Brien & Trudgett, 2018). Throughout Queensland, there are holistic community solutions to reducing the incarceration rates of Indigenous peoples. For example, The *Wundirra Project 10%* supported and promoted by Australians for Native Title and gained funding from several different establishments to develop a support booklet for Indigenous peoples who came into contact with the criminal justice system. Focussing upon success stories it gives examples of best practices from and for Indigenous peoples. The booklet is prefaced by a strong statement by Colleen Wall (2011) from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal and Advocacy Service, who explains,

As a Dauwa Kabi Grandmother I am proud to give congratulations to all our mob – the Elders, Grannies and Granddads and families, mentors, volunteers and workers out there who are leading the way with strengthening culture and wellbeing, health service delivery, diversionary programs, legal representation and advocacy, court support and post-prison release support (np.).

Wall (2011) refers to the importance of the government and the general community to respect, listen to and acknowledge that Indigenous communities are equipped to offer solutions to overcome crime and high incarceration rates, otherwise, imprisonment rates will rise and become more, costly for government and communities. The booklet addresses several programs, such as the *Red Dust Healing* program, which connects with its participants using visual tools to get to the root of past problems. This has been presented across Queensland, from the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in Townsville, to Cunnamulla in Western Queensland. *Safe here at the Centre* which is run by Murri Watch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation is a Diversionary Centre program that assists Indigenous peoples to reduce their contact with policing operations. This centre is open twenty-four hours a day and operates seven days a week. The centre offers a culturally safe space for Indigenous clients and assists "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from self-harming, suffering or dying in police custody" (Lindsay, 2011, p.26).

Another program highlighted was the healing in justice approach using culture as rehabilitation (Tauri, 2016). This gave a voice to Indigenous and Māori prisoners about effective and culturally appropriate prison-based programs and continued support programs for inmates upon their release from prison. Whilst this is not an exhaustive list of Indigenous led community programs *Wundirra 10%* promotes these programs which offer culturally responsive support mechanisms that draw Indigenous knowledges from within each of these organisations.

2.4 Summary

The literature review reveals there has been an overwhelming amount of research conducted about past racist and discriminatory policies and legislation in the

educational and legal sectors of Australia, which has contributed to deeply entrenched trans-generational trauma and socio-economic disparities for many Indigenous peoples in nearly every area of life (Atkinson, 2002). Poor policy decisions directly affect poor schooling outcomes for many young Indigenous males. Research shows that there is a lack of inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in schools, and the cultural capacity of many educators is wanting. The literature also provided views on the possibility of systemic bias (Cunneen, 2005) in the criminal justice system for young Indigenous males.

Of key importance, is that there is a significant gap in the literature around educational exclusion and how this may adversely impact upon the over-representation of young Indigenous males within the juvenile justice system in Queensland. The literature highlights a continued resistance to the voices of Indigenous peoples in policy reform and service delivery. This research proposes to centre the voices of those who offer care and support to young Indigenous males who continue to be excluded from educational opportunities and who are over-represented in the juvenile justice system in the state of Queensland to better understand how to disrupt the school to prison pipeline.

Next, Chapter Three will provide a detailed discussion on the theoretical underpinnings which have been used to guide this research. The framework provides theoretical explanations for the phenomenon being presented in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

NEGOTIATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE CONTESTED SPACE

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines and clarifies the impetus for using a predominantly Indigenist theoretical research framework. In Section 3.1 Indigenous research paradigms are examined by considering the decolonisation of Western theoretical perspectives. Nakata's (2007) Indigenous Standpoint Theory in Section 3.2 provides an Indigenous perspective of the intellectual and societal positioning of Indigenous peoples in the realms of Western educational paradigms. Gramsci's (1971) theory on cultural hegemony is explored in Section 3.3 and provides a lens as to how Indigenous peoples continue to be 'viewed' and positioned within societal constructs, and according to dominant Western hegemonic discourses. Using Indigenist research principles, Section 3.4 considers how a non-Indigenous researcher is located and researches within this liminal space. Adopting an Indigenous theoretical framework significantly influences the research design and methods used to collect and analyse the data, and ultimately how this will impact the dissemination of the findings amongst Indigenous and scholarly communities. Finally, Section 3.5 provides a summary of the chapter.

3.1 Indigenous Research Paradigms

For many, years research principally was 'done to' Indigenous peoples and not necessarily for the benefit of Indigenous peoples or communities (Smith, 2012). Māori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) states that the guidelines for developing theoretical frameworks remain steadfastly within the boundaries of the Western research academy and that this continued practice has led to silencing the voices of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous academic scholars such as Martin (2003), Moreton-Robinson (2015), Nakata (2002), Rigney (2003) and Walter (2010) challenge other

researchers to consider the practice of solely developing theoretical frameworks from a dominant Western perspective. They have called upon Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to develop their own theories of resistance to the colonising ideologies of non-Indigenous institutions. This study has deliberately resisted a dominant hegemonic Western theoretical paradigm and instead adopted a decolonising Indigenist theoretical framework (Rigney, 2003). Reasons behind this motivation will be outlined in the course of this chapter.

Gaudry and Corntassel (2014) state that, 'insurgent research' requires that non-Indigenous researchers consider two important aspects when conducting research in partnership with Indigenous communities. Researchers must firstly accept 'primary responsibility' for conducting ethical research, and secondly acknowledge that in the process of conducting research that they will make mistakes, for which they need to accept with humility as learning experiences. Potts and Brown (2005) contend that, 'a commitment to anti-oppressive research means committing to social justice and taking an active role in that change' (p.17). However, Walter (2010) argues that "dominant theoretical paradigms are immensely hard to challenge because they protect privilege, prestige and status of 'experts'" (p.13). The implication here is that there is a danger for many non-Indigenous researchers to uncritically accept prior Western theoretical paradigms that have contributed to the oppression of Indigenous peoples and Knowledges around the world.

In practice 'experts' must seek to challenge their own assumptions and accept multi-paradigmatic approaches which offer alternative ontological and epistemological standpoints into the research they are conducting. As a non-Indigenous female researcher, the challenge for me is therefore to employ a counter-hegemonic theoretical standpoint, which identifies and critiques how 'white privilege' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015) is maintained at an institutional level and how this is used to influence and control the subjugated and marginalised 'other' - in this case, young Indigenous males.

The constructs of 'whiteness', drawn from the early insights of Du Bois in the 1930's and then expanded upon in the early sixties by Theodore Allen in his writings on 'white skin privilege' and his concept of the 'invention of the white race', consider the ways

in which racial oppression and social control (Allen, 1994) were ultimately used in the American colonies by the presiding elite and maintained a system of 'white privilege'. This was done by ensuring that racial subjugation was enforced for not only African Americans, but eventually for some European-American labourers. The ideological concept of 'white privilege' was later adopted by the British in other invaded colonies, including, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Said's (1980) influential work on 'Orientalism' demonstrates the ways in which partisan representations of Indigenous peoples by 'Westerners' justified invasion and the imperialistic acquisition of Indigenous lands and a loss of autonomy and independence to self-govern through enforcement of colonialist rule. Indigenous peoples continue to challenge and resist overt and covert colonial oppression at many structural levels within Australian society.

Smith (2012) contends that the use and development of Indigenous theoretical frameworks in the academy "gives us space to plan, to strategize, to take greater control over our resistances" (p.40). As a non-Indigenous researcher, it is necessary to elucidate how I can incorporate an Indigenous theoretical framework to reconstruct the relational paradigms that take place during the research process with Indigenous peoples and communities. Nakata's (2007a) *Cultural Interface* (explored in more detail below) offers a culturally respectful transdisciplinary space to examine the tensions which can exist in the course of research undertaken within Indigenous communities by non-Indigenous researchers. In this research, Nakata's (2007a) theory also examines the ways in which young Indigenous males are positioned within the educational system, as another space in which Western and Indigenous peoples co-exist.

3.1.1 A Decolonising Theoretical Perspective

Grant and Osanloo (2014) suggest that the theoretical framework is the basis from which all knowledge is created (metaphorically and literally) for a research study, while Denzin and Lincoln (2008) maintain that researchers must reflect upon how the research will benefit and promote participant self-determination. As Creswell (2014) points out, it is important for the researcher to identify what issues are important for participants. This occurs through consultation and collaboration with participants,

endeavouring to improve individual lives and societal advancement, whilst devoid of marginalising individuals in the process. Nakata (2007a) explains that non-Indigenous researchers "are the outsiders in this world of experience and they must fathom our accounts of it and feel what it is like not to be a 'knower' of the world" (p.11). Critical to understanding anti-colonialist perspectives, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) also posit that decolonisation of the academy is interdisciplinary and politically pre-emptive.

Australia was built upon oppressive and racist socio-political laws and government policies, which resulted in loss of land and in many cases significant disruption to language and culture for Indigenous peoples. These policies have led to some Indigenous peoples experiencing severe disadvantage in contemporary living standards. Across states and territories, the use and enforcement of discriminatory practices and controlling policies of Australian governments renders many Indigenous peoples powerless in their own nation state (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). Using an Indigenous theoretical lens enables an examination of the two areas of concern relative to this project; the educational experiences and exclusion from state education, and the over-incarceration of young Indigenous males in Queensland.

3.2 A Meeting Place for Knowledge Systems

3.2.1 Indigenous Standpoint Theory

Nakata (2007a) describes Indigenous Standpoint Theory as a concept which stems from the foundations of Feminist Standpoint Theory that emerged in the early 1970's. Feminist Standpoint Theory was then utilized by marginalised or minority groups to explore their experiences of social and political oppression (Nakata, 2007a). J. Phillips, S. Phillips, Whatman and McLaughlin (2007) state,

Articulating one's own Standpoint is recognition of one's subject position and proponents of Standpoint contend that one's own identity and subject position is implicated in one's practice within the Academy (p.1).

Nakata (2007b) expands on this further and explains that Indigenous Standpoint Theory has to be produced and requires the researcher to draw upon one's own experiences and in doing so they may critically analyse "accepted positions and arguments" (p.214). Nakata's (2007b) theoretical framework explores the contested space between two knowledge systems, which he describes as the *Cultural Interface.* Within this paradigm he establishes three foundational principles. The first is the contested space; the second is Indigenous agency, and third, the tensions that are "created between Indigenous and non-Indigenous dualities" (Nakata, 2007a, p.12). Nakata's (2007a) theoretical philosophy allows the researcher to examine the ways in which young Indigenous males are positioned within state education and the legal system and challenge the invisibility of privilege and 'whiteness' within these dominant structural systems.

3.2.2 The Cultural Interface

To have any understanding of what the *Cultural Interface* is, researchers must be prepared to reflect on their individual social construction and examine the historical structural racism that has shaped most of the social and political systems in present day Australia. Nakata (2002) considers this contested space as the intersection of Western and Indigenous domains. Nakata's (2002) theory recognises that the *Cultural Interface* enables different knowledge systems to be interrogated and allows examination of Indigenous and Western Knowledge systems in the contested space. Nakata (2007a) theorises,

In this space are histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition how we all come to look at the world, how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday, and how and what knowledge we operationalise in our daily lives (p.9).

This has critical implications for our current systems of education. Our education system may be categorised as a contested and complex space. By continuing to privilege colonialist ontologies, epistemologies and power structures, the relevance of

Indigenous Knowledges within the curricula is often de-valued or denied (Fabelo, et al., 2011; Rose, 2012).   Nakata (2018) also maintains that, "decolonising approaches centralise Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing in the effort to deal with the dominant Western presence in the way we now under-stand Indigenous realities" (p.5). He insists that the way forward is "by reclaiming and reconstructing Indigenous traditions subjugated by colonialism" (Nakata, 2018, p.5).   Hegemonic systems and exploitative practices imposed by settler colonialist States has resulted in an overarching struggle for many Indigenous peoples, who continue to seek emancipation from Eurocentric systems of domination.   Tuck and Yang (2012) highlight that "decolonisation is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and our schools" (p.3). Researchers must look beyond merely including metaphorical discourses of decolonisation in their work. However, it could also be added that in order to ensure decolonising research is being undertaken, researchers must genuinely interact and engage with Indigenous communities to produce the decolonised research that Tuck and Yang (2012) speak of.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two discussed in detail the historical and contemporary experiences in educational settings for Indigenous peoples. It may therefore be argued that the imposition of damaging political and socially motivated policies have contributed to the current educational experiences of Indigenous children in school settings. These historical practices have also influenced the social and economic inequities and inequality experienced by many Indigenous peoples in contemporary society (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016).   Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016) argue that "the history of educational policies, programmes, and attitudes targeting Indigenous people has been for the most part extremely negative in its orientation" (p.786). Therefore, the evaluation and scrutiny of current educational policies is paramount if successful outcomes educational outcomes are to be achieved for Indigenous children.   More importantly, it is also about the perspectives of the Indigenous children and their families, as they have a unique position from which they understand the educational process as it applies to them and it is within this space Indigenous voices must be acknowledged and considered.

3.2.3 Complexities of the Contested Space

For Indigenous children, their journey of learning is located at the *Cultural Interface* as soon as they enter the school gate. As a minority group within the contested space of mainstream education, parents of Indigenous children also struggle to maintain their children's cultural identity in school settings. While some parents encourage their children to adopt an Indigenous standpoint of being, knowing and doing, they also acknowledge that their children are in a place of learning that privileges Western ontologies and epistemologies above all other knowledge systems. For some Indigenous children the negotiation between the two is a part of their daily life practices and experiences and they are manoeuvring the complexities of this contested space on a day-to-day basis. However, Nakata (2007a) maintains that this dichotomy can be addressed positively if we are to consider the relational opportunities that can improve social and political structures, rather than simply focussing on the tensions that occur within this contested space. Nakata (2002) advocates,

> *It is about maintaining continuity of one when having to harness another and working the interaction in ways that serve Indigenous interests, in ways that can uphold distinctiveness and special status as First Peoples* (p.286).

Schools can do much more by promoting and converging local Indigenous knowledge systems within their curricula and in doing so give Indigenous and non-Indigenous children the opportunity to accept, understand and respect the values and the contributions of both Indigenous Knowledge systems and Western Knowledge systems. However, Nakata (2007b) also insists that,

> Differences at epistemological and ontological levels mean that, in the academy, it is not possible to bring in Indigenous Knowledge and plonk it in the curriculum unproblematically as if it is another data set for Western knowledge to discipline and test (p.188).

Here, Nakata highlights the importance of Indigenous Knowledge systems being recognised as much more than simply an 'add-on' to the current Eurocentric curriculum being currently on offer. Nakata (2002) advocates that encouraging

relational praxis can provide an "understanding of the social organisation of life so that important social values are carried through" (p.287). This is a critical point, as it requires educators to think more broadly about what education is and the socio-cultural implications for all students.

There is also a need to acknowledge that young Indigenous peoples have much to contribute to contemporary Australian society and that they would benefit greatly from equitable educational practices. Nevertheless, there are those who seek to maintain power and status quo within the hierarchical structures of education which can make this an extremely challenging objective to achieve.

Much more dialogical work which privileges Indigenous voices within the contested space must occur to ensure deep systemic changes, rather than the implementation of tokenistic efforts that we currently see in many schools. Indigenous children's lives are interminably shaped by their daily schooling experiences. In particular, some Indigenous boys may find themselves alienated from the current school system at an early age and as a result find themselves over-represented in suspensions and exclusion from school (Gray & Beresford, 2001).

3.2.4 Agency, Education and the Lived Reality of Indigenous Boys

Nakata's (2002) concept of 'Indigenous agency' and how this applies to young Indigenous males in the dominion of education is now explored. Unfortunately, Nakata's writings do not expand on his principle of Indigenous agency in any great depth. In social sciences, nevertheless, post-structural theorists suggest that *agency* can be identified as "agency-centred perspectives that focus on the role of free and autonomous human agents, who have the power to change their social institutions and relations" (Howarth, 2013, p.127).

Cultural agency, however, can empower young Indigenous males to reflect upon who they are and where they are located within the contested space. Distinctly, cultural agency provides a sense of identity and a sense of self (Patrick, Mantzicopoulos,

Samarapungavan & French, 2008) and if this is inaccessible to young Indigenous males, for many, fitting in at school can become highly problematic. Trying to build on one's cultural agency within Western hegemonic frameworks may subvert the potential of young Indigenous males to engage fully with Indigenous agency. This becomes what Martin (2008) refers to as a 'push/pull' dichotomy. Throughout her teaching career at a university in the United States, bell hooks referred to the exasperation felt by African-American students, most of whom came from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Hooks (1994) stated, "they express frustration, anger and sadness about the tensions and stress they experience trying to conform to acceptable white, middle-class behaviours in university settings, while retaining the ability to 'deal' at home" (p.182).

This notion may also be considered within the Australian education diaspora. Hascher and Hagenauer (2010) studied the detrimental effects of alienation in school settings in Austria and although they were specifically researching 'drop-out' rates their research indicated several aspects which could also be applicable to this study. They found that many of the young people dropping out of school were low achieving young males, most came from difficult socio-economic backgrounds and many of the young people felt that schools had nothing to offer. Although the term 'alienation' is defined as the interconnection between sociological, psychological and educational contexts (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010) do not suggest 'race' or cultural ethnicity as a decisive determining factor in their research. Interestingly, they do claim that other determinants can over-ride cultural ethnicity in respect to the causes of alienation from school. They suggest that "there is a general decrease in academic motivation during adolescence' and that 'this decrease can lead directly to alienation and prove to be more detrimental than status variables like race or social class" (p.222).

In 1977 Paul Willis produced his ground-breaking work, *Learning to Labour*, in which he highlights opposition and resistance to school by working class young males in an inner-city English school. Willis (1977) discusses the relationship between societal structures and agency at a local level. He identifies conditions that lead to boys' refusal to engage with, or their detachment from mainstream education and believes this is attributable to school institutions manifesting as a microcosm of social

reproduction in a wider capitalist society.

Using five conditions of resistance (see, Figure 3.1), Munns and McFadden (2000) conducted a similar study in an inner suburban primary school in Australia. Their research was based upon the theoretical premise "that resistance must be seen as a response to the part played by education in the continuation of an unequal society" (p.63). Indigenous boys who do not see themselves and their culture represented within schools may experience powerlessness and feel powerless to do anything about changing the situation. This leads to the belief that school system is not working in their best interests and therefore they may reject or dismiss what school has to offer. Finally, with little or no cultural support mechanisms in place, engagement at school becomes increasingly more difficult. Correspondingly, this study exposes the powerlessness experienced by Indigenous peoples from continuous structural and individual racism.

Although the Munn's and McFadden study was undertaken nearly twenty years ago, their research shows that many of their participants believed that they were at war against an oppressive system. Central to the belief of the participants in Munns' and McFadden's research was the feeling expressed by parents and children that even if they (the children) engaged with education that success was not guaranteed once children left school. Therefore, there were few positive incentives for many children to engage with school and rejection of education for many was inevitable. Munns and McFadden (2000) also identified that Indigenous 'students became increasingly aware that education was part of the system they were fighting and that, for most, it was a losing battle' (p.66).
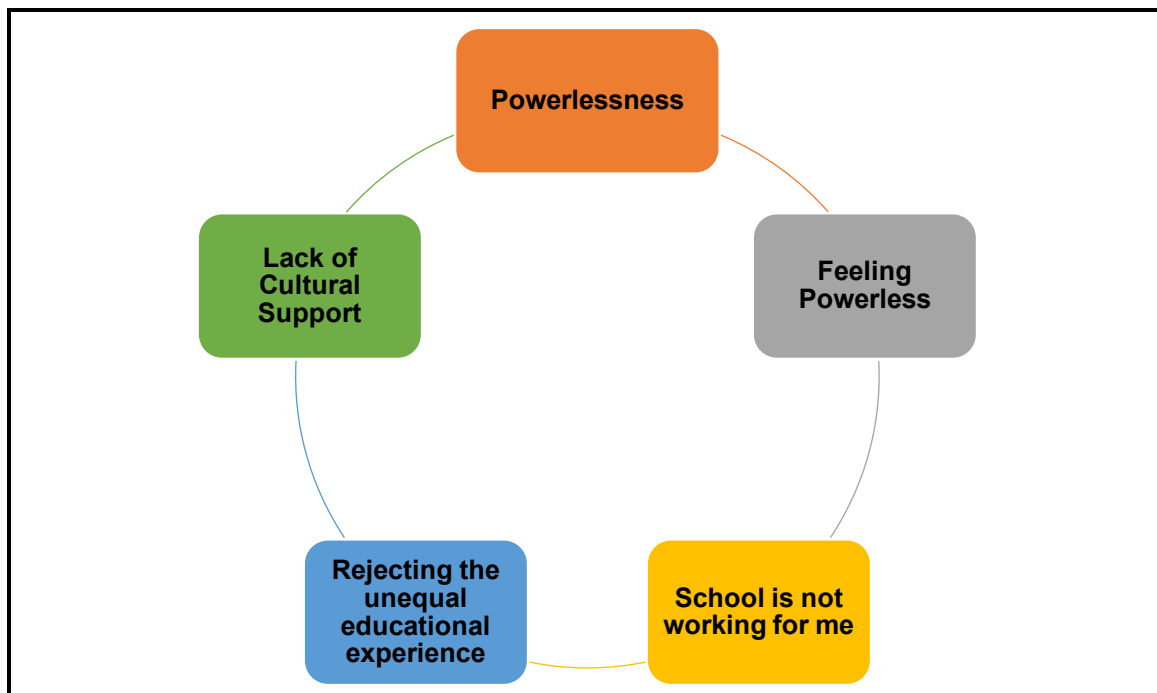
Figure 3.1 Adaptation of Munns and McFadden's Five Conditions of Resistance

Nakata (2002) intimates that, "Indigenous learners are understood in formal educational terms as having to reconcile two separate ways of understanding the world" (p.285). Although he maintains that this process has its benefits and disadvantages, Nakata (2002) also contends its one-dimensional philosophy obscures the complications which may be evident in cultural conventions in both domains (Nakata, 2002). He suggests that this simplification can lead to 'Othering' and may support a system of concepts that results in an embodiment of culture which conforms to Western ways of understanding difference. Eickelkamp (2011) suggests that within the 'intercultural domain', Indigenous peoples have to contend with the,

> Legacy of the colonial experience and the ongoing dependency on the state who controls financial and other resources, and…the historical and ongoing social and economic marginalisation, endemic disadvantage, racial discrimination and paternalism (p.503).

In his position as Principal at Cherbourg State School in Queensland, Chris Sarra (2011) understood the importance of challenging stereotypes by developing and embracing the identity and agency of Indigenous children. While he argued that there

was a role for young Indigenous children to 'confront their beliefs about being Aboriginal' he also argued,

> Given the discrepancy between white perceptions of being Aboriginal and Aboriginal perceptions of being Aboriginal, institutions, such as schools, become inherently vexed and problematic since they are a major aspect of the contact zone where these perceptions meet (Sarra, 2011, p.103).

Sarra (2011) makes an astute observation by pinpointing that many non-Indigenous educators do not acknowledge the intrinsic right to be Indigenous, nor do they understand the value of Indigenous agency in the school setting. In many instances, there are limited prospects for young Indigenous males to promote or develop their cultural agency in mainstream schools. This is exemplified in current school environments, clearly exposing an absence of opportunity for Indigenous boys to build upon spiritual connections to country, the presence of Indigenous male role models and the importance of maintaining kinship relations with community (Perso, 2012). As a result, young Indigenous males may perceive their educational ability as 'deficit' (Doyle & Hill, 2008) and therefore some may engage in a form of 'protest', which may result in behavioural issues or complete dis-engagement from school. Discussing the failings of the education system in the Northern Territory, in an SBS media article June Oscar stated, 'Our kids know the odds that they are up against. They know the stories of young Elijah from Kalgoorlie and Dylan Voller' (SBS, 2017).

In recent years, there have been some attempts to implement a more culturally appropriate inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges into the Australian curriculum. In this space, rigorous input from Indigenous communities pertaining to educational policies may provide decidedly greater opportunities to address inequities experienced by Indigenous children, their cultural identity, issues of racism and their engagement at school (Bodkin-Andrews, Denson & Bansel, 2013). However, Smith and Lovat (2003) argue that education is always influenced by dominant cultural epistemologies, values and belief systems, which in turn can exclude many minority groups from receiving an equitable education. Educators at the coalface have an important role in dismantling the inequitable reproduction of hegemonic social structures, which currently exist within Australian schools and mainstream society. Nevertheless, this can only be

achieved by engaging in respectful dialogues and listening to Indigenous peoples and communities about what changes need to occur and how these will be implemented.

3.2.5 Tensions at the 'Roundtable' of Educational Reform

Governments continue to push forward with newly formed and reformed Indigenous education policies and agendas, endeavouring to become more inclusive, rather than considering culturally responsive practice (Brayboy & Castagano, 2009). There are, nonetheless, still major flaws in the development and implementation of policies, which affect the educational outcomes of Indigenous children. The third principle of Nakata's (2007b) *Cultural Interface* is applied here to highlight the tensions or the 'tug-of-war' which can both "inform as well as limit what can be said and what is to be left unsaid in the everyday" (p.216). Nakata (2007b) also suggests that this is an intense experience that may also limit not just the range but multiplicity of responses that may be voiced by Indigenous peoples.

3.2.5.1 Informing Policy

An example of this was a roundtable conference in 2012 organised by the Department of Education Queensland which I attended in my role as Manager for Indigenous Education - North Coast Region in Queensland. This conference was an illustration of what some may describe as policy formulated 'on the run'. Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders from all areas of Queensland, across the field of education were invited to attend a 'roundtable' with the then, Queensland Premier, Langbroek. After speaking to the group for approximately ten minutes at the commencement of the day's activities, he then left a group of selected public servants to chair small rotating groups to identify issues of concern or highlight positive programs that were working in Indigenous education across the school sector. Those in attendance were given approximately twenty-five minutes with set topics for each session. Attendees were asked to discuss these issues in smaller groups and then write down their main points on small sticky notes and hand them to the facilitators at the end of each session. At the conclusion, the facilitators had made an overall selective list of these issues and presented them back to the whole group. During this final session, which lasted approximately twenty minutes, the main discussion came from the facilitators who

were presenting back to the group and the voices of most of the participants taking part were silenced.

As an attendee at this roundtable forum, I spoke with many of the participants afterwards. The responses were highly negative concerning the ways in which the process was conducted. Those in attendance expressed frustration that they had been given very little opportunity to make a real contribution to the policy that was being developed by the Education Department. This roundtable eventually led to the creation of an initial draft document promoting the *Solid Partners, Solid Futures* policy. Those who attended this roundtable forum were advised that there would be a future roundtable to review what had been included in the draft document – to my knowledge this did not occur, and the final document was released by the Education Department in early 2013.

This story is important to draw upon as it reveals the tensions as to how the knowledge was produced, the ways in which Indigenous responses were limited or restricted, and how this knowledge was then utilized by those who were in positions of power. Nakata (2007a) suggests however that situations such as this can empower Indigenous peoples to gain an understanding of the tensions that emerge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous dichotomies, and why these tensions might occur. Observing this dominant position enables Indigenous peoples to move beyond structuralist power. Nakata (2007b) maintains,

> I have knowledge of my experience at the interface and can forge a critical standpoint, I am not out to singularly overturn the so-called dominant position through simplistic arguments of omission, exclusion or misrepresentation but rather out there to make better arguments in relation to my position within knowledge, and in relation to other communities of 'knowers' (p.216).

Since 2012 there have been new governments elected in Queensland, and 'new' policy documents created, outlining how educational outcomes for Indigenous children will be improved. The Department of Education has indicated that improving education and training outcomes for Indigenous children was a key priority for the Queensland

government. Nevertheless, trying to instigate transformation through the continued roll-out of policy documents has not resulted in any significant changes.

Disadvantages in education, health, housing, employment and high incarceration rates are interconnected (Cunneen, Allison & Schwartz, 2014; Social Justice Report, 2009) and all are components of a broader system of racialised oppression for many Indigenous peoples. However, over many years Indigenous peoples have been speaking back to these complex issues and have voiced the need to consider holistic praxis, particularly to promote improved educational outcomes for Indigenous children. Yet, solutions to these matters is not always afforded due acknowledgement by those who maintain dominant power structures within Australian society. Freire (1972) insists that, "it is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours" (p.68).

This dialogical approach that Freire (1972) speaks of is one of the key deliberations to achieving relational, anti-oppressive practices. However, we must also consider the power imbalances which exist within society, what Gramsci (1971) refers to as cultural hegemonic oppression. Nevertheless, we must not simply equate what is included, or not included, in a glossy government policy document to the lived educational experiences of Indigenous children. As educators we are reliant upon these policy documents, therefore they do warrant critical analysis of their ability to contribute to equitable opportunities as well as structural inequalities which exist in educational settings.

The transformative potential for improving educational outcomes for Indigenous children, are undeniable, but on whose terms? Indigenous peoples must be able to openly critique structures of education at the cultural interface and interrogate how and why those in positions of power negate or 'shut-down' critical conversations that seek to challenge the prevailing status quo. These are the everyday tensions that Nakata (2007a) deliberates upon, and these critical conversations can be a catalyst for the resistance and emancipation of those who continue to be marginalised within a dominant hegemonic society.

3.3 Critiquing Hegemony in Civil and Political Society

History is at once freedom and necessity.

(Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks, 1971)

This section draws on the theory of Antonio Gramsci, an early twentieth century neo-Marxist and the Italian founder and leader of the Communist Party in Italy. Gramsci was condemned to imprisonment by Mussolini's fascist regime for twenty-five years for his political activism and anti-capitalist beliefs. However, within eleven years of his incarceration, Gramsci's health dramatically deteriorated, and he died before his release from prison. During his time in incarceration Gramsci scribed the *Prison Notebooks,* where he laid out his foundational theoretical philosophy concerning 'cultural hegemony'. In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci (1971) questioned whether the lives of the oppressed can ever change without economic reform, or without radical change to the social and cultural fabric of society. In this research, Gramsci's theory is examined by considering the ways in which cultural hegemony and power contributes to the suspension and exclusion of young Indigenous males from the state education system in Queensland and why they are over-represented in juvenile incarceration.

3.3.1 Cultural Hegemony: Power and Privilege in Australian Society

From a neo-Marxist position, Gramsci specifically focussed on the role of power within societies and institutions. Gramsci (1971) maintained that power is used to stratify groups of people within society by particular agents of the state. These agents exercise political and social control either by coercion or consent (hegemony) for the benefits of the ruling classes and in order to maintain, status quo. It is important to understand how race is constructed and is then used to regulate the racial stratification and marginalisation of certain minority groups within our society is important. The social construct of race affects the everyday lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, ultimately rationalizes persistent inequities and subsequently normalises and upholds inequality within Australian society, either consciously or subconsciously. In Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1971) it is suggested that hegemonic control continues through the

state enforcing power over particular groups who do not consent either actively or passively. Gramsci (1971) asserts,

> If every State tends to create and maintain a certain type of civilisation and of citizen (and hence of collective life and of individual relations), and to eliminate certain customs and attitudes and to disseminate others, then the Law will be its instrument for this purpose (together with the school system, and other institutions and activities) (p.508).

Gramsci's (1971) theory on cultural hegemony gives us some insight into the status and control in which the dominant hegemonic group operates within society. His theoretical philosophy dissects the methods that the ruling classes use to maintain the status quo, therefore, marginalising or 'Othering', minority groups who seek to achieve emancipation and self-determination. Gramsci (1971) also points out that hegemonic discourses are often used to negatively describe particular societal groups and contribute to maintaining particular dominant ideologies. The ways in which Indigenous peoples are often depicted in discourses used by media, government agencies, or by non-Indigenous Australians can be considered in itself an insidious form of hegemonic oppression. For instance, labels such as "alcoholism, laziness, welfare dependency and aggressiveness" (Sarra, 2011, p.77) are often used to stereotype Indigenous peoples to be viewed in particularly negative ways. This kind of 'demonising' pathological rhetoric and a culture of 'blaming' stigmatize Indigenous peoples for what many are presently experiencing from the implementation of past racist, oppressive policies, laws and practices.

In his work, Gramsci (1971) refers to a 'false consciousness' where the bourgeoisie control and normalise the ideological practices and experiences of the masses through the constructs of an indiscernible hegemony. Although Gramsci (1971) maintained that hegemonic power is upheld and preserved by dominant groups within society, he also acknowledged that these power relationships are constantly being challenged and contested by those who are experiencing oppression. Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony, also referred to by Lukes (1974; 2004) as the 'third face of power', highlights that the rules and practices of a Westernised school system are

normalised and maintained; privileging Western culture and overlooking the cultural agency of minority groups. Harris, Carlson and Poata-Smith (2013) argue,

> Identities, whether personal or collective, are inherently political. The politics of identity can involve the construction, reconstruction or disruption of notions about what it means to claim particular identities, or the creation or recreation of means attached to them – especially if these efforts are an attempt to shift power relations within or between groups (p.6).

In the United States for example, English and Mayo (2012) point out that the education system uses repressive methods such as the use of security guards or the police force on school campuses to control student behaviour (Giroux, 2009) and to enforce school rules. If necessary, they are also used to ensure their swift expulsion from school - and in a worst-case scenario, some students are arrested on school grounds for what could be considered minor behavioural issues. Mayo (2014) contends, "it signals to the students something about their identities, perhaps that of potential criminals who could eventually be incarcerated, a signal that is very much in keeping with the function of an ideological state apparatus" (p.388).

Although we do not see this extent of force used in systems of education here in Australia, more recently there has been a deliberate lean towards 'zero tolerance' policies in education. Education and incarceration are now inextricably linked in Queensland with the implementation in 2014 of the school disciplinary absence "charge" category, which gives school principals the power to exclude children from school if they have been convicted of a criminal offense.

3.3.2 Prevailing Hegemonic Practices in State Education

Helme and Lamb (2011) contend that attrition rates are higher for those Indigenous students who are alienated from the Australian school system than for any other group of students. Further, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) indicated that policies surrounding the discipline of Indigenous students at school were

oppositional to those of many parents of Indigenous children and the ways in which children may be raised by their parents and extended families in Indigenous communities. This too, has led to the disengagement of Indigenous children from school, particularly young Indigenous males.

While one might view the resistance to, and disengagement from school by Indigenous boys as recalcitrant, these actions may also be described as a 'war of position' (Gramsci, 1971) where Indigenous boys see an opportunity to challenge and transform the societal structures within which they are positioned. Gramsci (1971) alludes to the indistinct boundaries between civil and political society and insists that educational institutions and the state both encompass the capacity to marginalise, discriminate and exclude. This is not only evident in the realms of education, but also apparent in the racial profiling and criminalisation of young Indigenous males within Australia's contemporary society. Taking this further, in her writings, Sibblis (2014) explores the concept of the 'black body' in schools and intimates, "the black body is reduced to a discursive construct, which lacks understanding but can be thoroughly understood and therefore is always 'spoken for'; always subject to and enslaved by the interpretation of the white man" (p.71).

Within this paradigm we can see that Indigenous boys are more likely to be identified within this group, then targeted and profiled in schools as being perceived as a menace (Sibblis, 2014). Children who are racially profiled, reflect the embodiment of those adults who are currently incarcerated within Australia's prison systems (Officer for the Commissioner of Children, Tasmania, 2013).

In Australia, the Western education system mass-produces workers to support economic determinism. Within these educational structures, social stratification is evident. Regardless of whether there is agreement about the appropriateness of social-reproduction or not, Indigenous boys who do not see themselves represented within a progressive social paradigm are far more likely to respond with resistance to dominant power structures. Indigenous boys may also be acutely aware that these structures can limit their future personal life choices.

3.3.3 Dominant Cultural Hegemony and Criminalising Indigenous Peoples

Gramsci (1971) observes that knowledge constructions legitimate societal structures. Therefore, those who are silenced from contributing to these knowledge constructions can feel excluded from participating in a society which supposedly upholds democracy, equity and equality for all of its citizens (Havemann, 2005). Historically, in an invaded and colonised Australia, physical force and coercion controlled the lives of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples continue to experience marginalisation from within the colonisers' societal boundaries, and according to Atkinson, Taylor and Walter (2010), this exclusion "is out of the sight of white Australians even while residing side by side" (p.2). As time has progressed, dominant cultural hegemonic practices have emerged as a principal way to control minority groups within Australia (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015; Durey & Thompson, 2012). The state is able to reinforce and assert hegemonic control over Indigenous peoples through many avenues, including the criminalisation of Indigeneity. As Cunneen (2011) suggests, "criminalisation is a key part of the building of the nation through processes of exclusion – of keeping out the moral unworthy who lack commitment to the social contract" (p.8). The statistics presented in Chapter Two highlight the stark over-representation of Indigenous boys incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities, many of whom have also been suspended or excluded from the education system, largely because they are Indigenous.

Goldson (2009) states that to institutionalise children with multifaceted needs, and who present complex vulnerabilities is a fundamentally violent act in of itself. Whereas, Blagg (2008) examines how criminological theories explain anti-social behaviour and development of deviant behaviour in the bourgeoisie, as well as marginalised youth. He considers four areas:

- Group Conflict Theory, and Marxist and Social Class theories
- Labelling perspectives
- Strain/anomie perspectives, and
- Social Control and social disorganisation theories.

Group conflict theory, as well as *Marxist* and *Social Class* theories, can point to the divergent relationships established between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples,

in which Blagg (2008) cites conflicting socio-economic and cultural parameters that exists between the two groups. The theory of *Labelling Perspectives* identifies the inordinate levels of interaction that occurs with Indigenous peoples and the system, describing the facets of visibility, variance and ethnic differences (Blagg, 2008), resulting in a predisposition to intense police scrutiny. Blagg (2008) insists that these cultural variances, ostensibly justify coercion and control. *Strain/anomie* theory seeks to explain the disparately high offending rates, issues of violence and health concerns faced by Indigenous peoples. Blagg (2008) contends that this theory also highlights a lack of prospects for Indigenous peoples to justly attain status. Finally, he explains that *Social Control* and *Social Disorganisation* theories describe the opposition to conform to dominant social norms and cultural values. However, Blagg (2008) further argues that although these social theories are often used by researchers to explain or debate the disparity of over-representation in Indigenous incarceration rates, these criminological theories are somewhat lacking as they neglect to take into consideration issues of racism, colonialism and difference. Blagg, Morgan, Cunneen and Ferrante (2005) found in their study conducted on the over incarceration of Indigenous peoples in Victoria, Australia, that most of their research participants maintained "that discrimination on the basis of Aboriginality was institutionalised within the system" (p.164). Unlike individual racism, institutional racism exists through the formation of institutional policies, practices and political structures which can severely disadvantage minority and marginalised groups. Value systems which are embedded in our society can negatively impact Indigenous Australians and in many cases mainstream Australia may not even be aware of their existence.

While only making up 3% of Australia's overall population Indigenous peoples account for just over a quarter (27%) of prisoners (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Poor educational outcomes, poverty and lack of employment are just some of the determinants that contribute to the high rates of adult incarceration for Indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, for Indigenous youth, statistics are no better with respect to the over-representation in juvenile detention facilities throughout Australia.

In Queensland, Indigenous youth constitute a higher proportional percentage of all children aged between 10 to 16 years incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities (see Chapter Two). Indigenous youth are not only over-represented in Queensland's

detention facilities, but also in every other state and territory in Australia. Many of those from minority groups who are incarcerated are characterised as 'surplus populations', who are dealt with by the criminal justice system to avert attention from the bigger political and societal problems. Giroux (2009) suggests that this may be as a result of maintaining dominant hegemonic capitalist societies. While Lichtenstein and Kroll (1996) maintain that economic disparities contribute to higher levels of incarceration for those who fare poorly in the market society of any nation. In the United States for example, they highlight that,

> Across all racial groups, prisoners are drawn from the poorest sectors of society. A large percentage (of prisoners) are unemployed at the time of their arrest or have only sporadic employment. Of those with jobs, many have incomes near or below the poverty level. Seventy-two percent of prison inmates and sixty percent of jail inmates have not completed high school; many are illiterate (Lichtenstein & Kroll, 1996, p.22).

Here, we are able to draw parallels between the demographics of the prison population in the United States and those populations who are incarcerated in Australia. Most of those people who are imprisoned in Australia have not completed any formal schooling, and for a majority of young Indigenous males this also appears to be a reality. Consequently, a lack of education, poor economic participation and incarceration appears to be inextricably linked. Inequitable wealth distribution therefore can be seen to have a direct bearing on the well-being and social progress for many Indigenous populations in Australia. It may be determined that the enactment of inadequate public policies by those in power in the modern state continues to marginalise those with the least collective power in Australian society.

3.4 A Non-Indigenous Researcher in the Liminal Space

Minniecon, Franks and Heffernan (2007) insist that conducting research with Indigenous peoples and communities requires that "all research parties and partners, problematize, challenge, adapt, reframe, and negotiate ontologies, epistemologies and relationships" (p.23). Conducting research using decolonising theories and

methodologies also enables non-Indigenous researchers to challenge Western hegemonic frameworks when working in a mainstream space with Indigenous participants. My connection to, and with, Indigenous peoples and communities has been ongoing for over 40 years via a number of roles as a friend, professional educator and more recently as a researcher. Therefore, it is important to tell some of this story, and try to explain what brought me to this place, and what it means to be a researcher in this liminal space at this particular moment in time.

The Latin word 'limen' means at the threshold or, to 'traverse through'. A person in the liminal space moves from the known into the unknown, where their beliefs, attitudes, values and perceptions are challenged and transformed before moving out of the liminal space and forward (Turner, 1967). In fact, traversing liminality is a continual occurrence throughout one's life, whether we are aware of these manifestations or not. However, making a conscious decision to move into a liminal space in order to challenge dominant ideologies, could be considered an act of resistance on my part as a researcher. In order to challenge dominant ideologies, it was necessary for me to step outside of the societal privileges that I have gained as a non-Indigenous women in the research space. This was done primarily through considering why I was undertaking this research and who would benefit from the study. The importance of the cyclic nature throughout the research process, that is, the 'back and forth' of discussions, interpretations and re-interpretations which took place within the community and the knowledges and understandings gained through these dialogues were critical in establishing transparency and relationality with community.

Using an Indigenous theoretical framework and methodology, my presence at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002) could be considered the 'transition' phase, which Van Gennep (1960) describes as the liminal space. This transition is ambiguous, as it is during this phase that the researcher moves from a state of certainty about what they currently know and believe to be factual, to the unknown, uncertainty and transformation. Turner (1967) argues, "as members of society, most of us see only what we expect to see, and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we have learned the definitions and classifications of our culture" (p.47).

Challenging what the researcher is 'conditioned to see' offers an opportunity to contest "dominant forms of knowledge" (Connell, 2016, p.2). Meyer and Land (2006) suggest that,

> A threshold concept can be considered as a kin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress (p.1).

Without moving beyond the limits of Western ontological and epistemological frameworks, there is little chance of successfully undertaking anti-racist research which contests the institutional and systemic racism that exists in state education and within law enforcement. The intention of this research is to consider the possibilities and solutions for change from the Indigenous worldview of participants (Smith, 1999) relative to the educational experiences of Indigenous youth and their over-representation in juvenile detention. Therefore, this requires respectful, relational practice between the non-Indigenous researcher and Indigenous communities, which supports authentic decolonising praxis to occur, while privileging Indigenous voices in this process. In order to do this, it is necessary to explain my journey and position within this research.

3.4.1 My Story

I was born in what was once considered an infamous place called the Gorbals, a fairly poverty ridden working-class area in a large city, Glasgow, Scotland (see Figure 3.2) Although both of my parents were also born in Scotland, our family has always had a distinct connection with our home and ancestors in Ireland, where my parents spent most of their time growing up on rural farms by the sea. Three of my Grandparents were born on the West coast of Ireland, in County Donegal (Dhún na nGall). My paternal family is from Gortahork and my maternal family is from a place called Anagaire. When I was very young, my parents decided to immigrate to Australia with four children – we travelled by ship. Despite living in Australia from a very early age, I am still very much connected to my family who live in Gortahork, Ireland. They have always spoken Irish Gaelic. It is when I hear them speaking that I realise that growing

up in Australia has disconnected me from my own language, kin and culture. However, I was also aware as I grew older that my parents had made a choice to come here in order to better our life chances. I was soon to learn that 'life chances' were not necessarily the same for many Indigenous peoples on their own lands.

Figure 3.2 My sisters, Margaret and Cecilia either side of me in Nicholson St, Glasgow (The Gorbals, circa 1961). Source: Personal Photo Collection.

It was through my long-term friendships growing up in Oxley and Inala in the Western suburbs of Brisbane, Queensland, that my social and political ideologies were being shaped. However, it was not until much later, when I reached my early twenties that I was aware of the social disparities that existed all around me.

Gatherings, or the Da`ll, which in Irish means coming together and a meeting of minds, was a normal thing in my own household and many that I was invited into throughout my life. Being with friends and family, singing songs, listening to stories and talking politics around the kitchen table, gave me an insight into the immense privileges that I had acquired as a non-Indigenous person. Throughout these early years, little did I realise that some of the relationships I would develop with people from the Murri

community[7] in Inala would last a lifetime. The mob[8] in Inala accepted me into community and this is where my journey into education and social justice began.

I ventured into education in 1980 by applying to the Queensland University of Technology to undertake an Associate Diploma in Performing Arts. During, and after this time, I travelled to Western Queensland, regional New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia to work in the Arts, teaching drama to children. I did this for a couple of years until I decided it was time to get a 'proper' teaching degree. I returned to QUT in 1999 and graduated with a double degree - a Bachelor of Arts (Drama) and a Bachelor of Education (Secondary). When I commenced as a teacher in the Queensland state education system, I realised that many Indigenous children I came into contact with were disengaged from education. It soon became apparent that some teachers treated Indigenous students differently to non-Indigenous students. This was mostly visible in terms of their behaviour management practices, low expectations, and minimal care towards Indigenous students, most of which appeared to adopt a deficit approach to learning.

It was apparent that many Indigenous students I worked with did not see themselves culturally represented anywhere within the school system. I decided to advance my knowledge about how I could offer meaningful support to these students to help them re-engage in their learning at school. However, this meant that I needed to educate myself more about how I could shape or change current educational practices and curriculums to include more culturally relevant learning experiences for Indigenous students. I was working at an Island school in Queensland, with a primarily, Indigenous population, when I elected to attend the Stronger Smarter Program (SSP) at Cherbourg, with Professor Chris Sarra. Drawing on what I had learned from the SSP, a year later I took up a Head of Curriculum – Indigenous Education role in Western Queensland to support the professional development of teachers around embedding Indigenous education into the curriculum. I decided to further my education and I enrolled in a Master of Indigenous Education at Macquarie University in 2012. It was during this time that I met my current PhD supervisors, Professor

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[7] The Murri Community refers to Aboriginal people from the State of Queensland.

[8] 'Mob' is a colloquial term identifying a group of Aboriginal people associated with a particular place or country.

Michelle Trudgett and Professor Susan Page, who guided me successfully through my Master's Degree.

This decision coincided with my acceptance of a position as Manager of Indigenous Education for the North Coast Region in Queensland. It was in this capacity that I recognised that since the commencement of my formal teaching in 2003, that not much had changed in schools for Indigenous children, many of whom were struggling within a Western system of education. Indigenous students, particularly boys, were being suspended or excluded for behavioural issues, and some were receiving what I believed to be harsher penalties than their non-Indigenous counter-parts for the same infractions. Whilst undertaking my Master's Degree, I started to investigate the high rates of exclusion and suspensions of Indigenous boys from Queensland state schools. The research identified that increasingly, many of these young boys were coming into contact with the police and the criminal justice system. This is how my exegesis emerged for my doctoral study and why I now find myself in the liminal space of this research.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has firstly addressed the theoretical frameworks of Nakata (2002) and Gramsci (1971). Nakata's (2002), *Cultural Interface* and the three foundational principles (the *Contested Space*, *Indigenous Agency*, and the *Tensions*) which arise within this space were examined in Section 3.2.3. This led to a dialogue on how these principles relate to the positioning of Indigenous youth within the education and legal systems. Then, Section 3.3 discussed how Gramsci's (1971) theory of *Cultural Hegemony* explored the ways in which dominant and inherent socio-political and cultural practices can exclude minority or marginalised groups within society, and more succinctly within the parameters of education. The manner in which Indigenous youth see themselves as 'other' within this paradigm is highlighted. Finally, the concept of the liminal space was explored in Section 3.4, explaining how the researcher has come to be in this space to investigate this research phenomenon. The combination of these elements provides a useful and constructive theoretical framework in which to guide this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESISTANCE, POLITICAL INTEGRITY AND PRIVILEGING INDIGENOUS VOICES

'Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership in education must develop new ways of pursuing dialogue and negotiation to build new structures to prevent further human and community devastation' (Rigney, 2003, p.73).

4.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the research design and methods employed in this study. Section 4.1 examines the ways in which Western research archetypes are constructed and how decolonising epistemic praxis can contribute to a deconstruction of these paradigms by exposing certain privileges, which exist within the academy of research. It includes an exploration of Rigney's (1999) three principles of Indigenist research. The principles of resistance, political integrity and privileging Indigenous voices in research is considered, identifying how Indigenous research methodologies and epistemologies can lead to emancipatory self-determination for Indigenous peoples.

The methodology that is used in the process of this research is then discussed in Section 4.2. In this case a phenomenological, qualitative, transformative research approach was considered the most appropriate. Research considerations and the characteristics and engagement of participants is then discussed, as well as the importance of continued respectful, relational partnerships with Indigenous communities in this process are emphasized.

The method of data collection is then presented in Section 4.3, which takes into account the cultural significance of 'Yarning' combined with semi-structured interviews as an important process in interviewing participants.

Finally, the chapter concludes by considering the ethical requirements of conducting this research and acknowledging the benefits of the research for Indigenous communities.

4.1 Decolonising Western Research Archetypes

Indigenous Australians have been "poked, prodded, measured, tested, and compared data toward understanding Indigenous cultures and human nature" (Rigney, 1999, p. 109). Here, Rigney (1999) deliberates upon some of the characteristics that non-Indigenous researchers have employed in the past when conducting research within Indigenous communities. It has been noted (Castleden, Morgan & Lamb, 2012; Cruse, 2001; Fredericks, 2007; Trudgett & Page, 2014) that some non-Indigenous researchers are still carrying out this kind of incongruous research, thereby continuing colonialist power relations. Smith (1999) insists that there are influential researchers who begrudge Indigenous peoples inquiring about the research that they are conducting, and those whose research agendas continuously exploit Indigenous peoples and their Knowledges.

Kovach (2009, 2010) contends that the use of Indigenous methodologies dislocates the methodological homogeneousness that is evident in much research. She goes on to suggest that being able to select Indigenous methodologies should be endorsed and optimized as an alternative research methodology. While, Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009) suggest that "understanding Indigenous methodologies requires cognizance of the forces shaping Western methodological frames" (p.3). In order to support Indigenous research methodologies, autochthonous researchers continuously fight to have Indigenous research paradigms included and valued within the Western research academy. For example, Kovach (2010) insists,

> The nuances and complexities of an Indigenous paradigm may not be fully understood (or viewed as legitimate) by all members of the academy, but few would openly contest, at least in public spaces, that an Indigenous paradigm exists (p.42).

Therefore, it is necessary to identify how Indigenous methodological frameworks and Indigenous knowledge systems are positioned within the Western epistemological boundaries of research. This study endeavoured to respectfully follow the research principles associated with the Indigenous research methodologies of Rigney (2006) using a decolonising research approach, that is, research that expressed an awareness of who we are as humans and the familiar cultural contexts in which we operate (Smith, 1999). Smith (1999) also suggests that the methodology and methods (the processes) used in research are intrinsically important as they "enable people to heal and to educate" (p.128). Up until recent times, research undertaken on Indigenous lands and about Indigenous peoples, was done so, for the most part, without permission from Indigenous peoples (Martin, 2003). Although we have seen some improvement in the inclusion of Indigenous methodologies, within university settings (Fredericks, 2014) it could be argued that there is still an over-representation of non-Indigenous methodologies used to conduct research 'about' Indigenous peoples, which tends to privilege Western knowledge systems (Smith, 1999). Rigney (1999) suggests that in order to decolonise methodologies it is necessary to "privilege Indigenous knowledge, voices, experiences, reflections, and analysis of social, material and spiritual conditions" (p.117). Both Rigney (2006) and Moreton-Robinson (2005) challenge the non-Indigenous researcher to engage in a rigorous critique of Western epistemologies and ontologies. They ask non-Indigenous researchers to examine the ways in which these dominant ideologies impact upon research undertaken within an Indigenous space.

Rigney (1999) maintains that "there is little evidence that research epistemologies and methodologies in Australia were modelled on any knowledge of the Indigenous population or that it was produced from presumed equals" (p.113). Over time, there have been countless comparisons made between Western Scientific knowledge and Indigenous Knowledges, with Indigenous Knowledges often considered by many, to be 'inferior' to Western knowledge systems (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007).

Indigenous peoples must have an opportunity to utilize their cultural agency, knowledge and voices to participate in research that specifically considers their perspectives, without dominant hegemonic viewpoints being considered superior. In order for this to happen, researchers must understand and acknowledge that

Indigenous methodologies have always existed but have been suppressed and subjugated by the coloniser/settler (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; Kahakalau, 2004; Smith, 1999). Decolonisation of the research process is then a requirement. In their paper *Decolonizing Anti-racism*, First Nations women of Canada, Lawrence and Dua (2005) argue,

> If Indigenous nationhood is seen as something of the past, the present becomes a site in which Indigenous peoples are reduced to small groups of racially and culturally defined and marginalised individuals drowning in a sea of settlers— who needn't be taken seriously (p.123).

The deliberation to diverge from framing Indigenous methodologies specifically within a Western discourse can be of immense benefit to this study as it presents an opportunity for the research to be guided by Indigenous peoples. Martin (2003) explains, "although our worlds are now historically, socially and politically imbued with features of western worldviews and constructs, we never relinquished, nor lost the essence of our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being and this is reflected in our Ways of Doing" (p.12).

Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008) caution however, that when non-Indigenous researchers aim to decolonise Western centred methodologies they may in fact "recolonise and appropriate" in the process, "offering slogans and superficial versions of the intended project" (p.38). In order to ensure that this recolonising and appropriation did not occur in this research, I adhered to culturally appropriate research principles. This followed not only the University's HREC guidelines, which required comprehensive details about how the research would be undertaken within the Indigenous community, but also acknowledged and encompassed the ethical principles, standards and guidelines of section 4.7 in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement) (NHMRC, 2015) and the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (2012).

One of the critical components to ensure that the research endeavoured to decolonise the study was meeting with community and discussing the reasons behind the research and the importance of conducting such research for the benefit of Indigenous

children, families and community members. Importantly, guidance and formal support for the research was given by five Indigenous organisations. Later in this chapter the ethical considerations and processes of how this occurred is discussed in more detail.

By promoting the voices of Indigenous scholars, researchers and research participants, this study attempted to resist centring its focus on dominant Western methodologies and concentrated more specifically on promoting authentic Indigenous experiences of the phenomena being researched. Smith (1999) suggests that it is the responsibility of non-Indigenous researchers to challenge the existing systems and structures that may disadvantage Indigenous peoples rather than attempting to make Indigenous peoples fit into prevailing colonialist structures. Gramsci (1971) asks us to consider the ideational dominant hegemonic structures, and contends that critical interrogation of these structures is necessary. Gramsci (1971) challenges us to consider who benefits from legitimization of the current social structures and practices when the state maintains the status quo.

4.1.1 Rigney's Three Principles of Indigenous Research

Rigney's (1999) Indigenist research framework is informed by the principles of feminist theory and grounded on emancipation and liberationist strategies. Rigney (1999) proclaims, "the research academy and its epistemologies have been constructed essentially for and by non-Indigenous Australians" (p.113). Importantly, he focuses on how research is disseminated, then transferred back to the community and why this is critical in the process of decolonising research. Nakata (2007) concurs and insists that by transferring Indigenous Knowledges (IK's) across all domains it affords "due recognition and legal protection to those aspects and innovations of knowledge that are Indigenous in origin" (p.9). Rigney's (1999) three principles of Indigenist research consist of:

- The involvement in resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenous research,
- The political integrity of Indigenist research,
- The privileging of Indigenous voices in Indigenist research (Rigney, 2003, p.39).
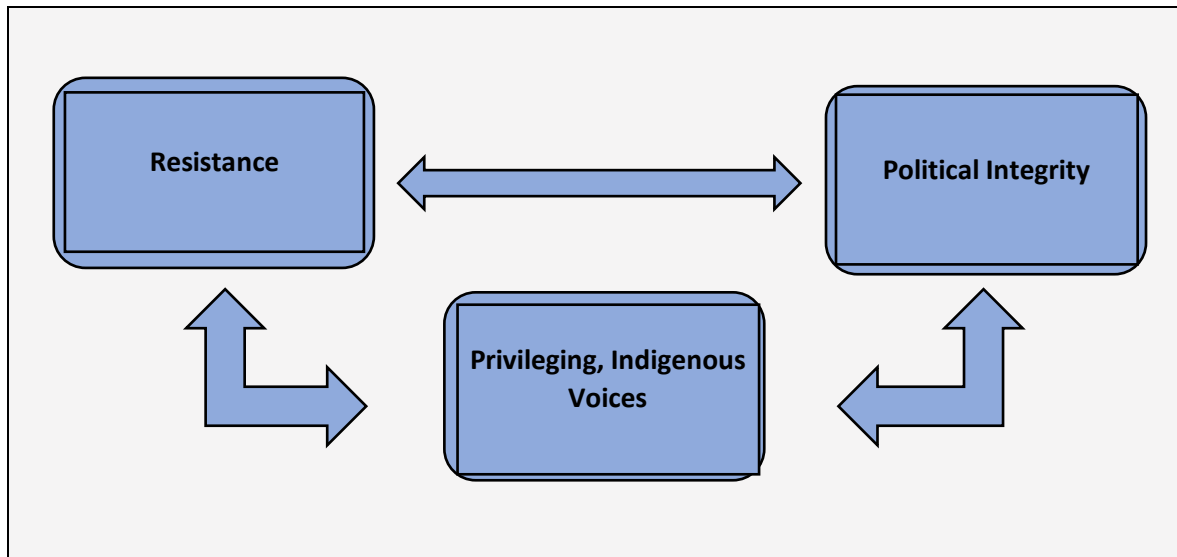
Figure 4.1 Indigenous research process adapted from Rigney's three principles of Indigenist research. Source: Rigney, 1999, p.9.

Rigney (2003) further highlights the necessary practice of "consultation and negotiation with Indigenous organisations as ongoing throughout the life of the research project and a process to determine research priorities and benefit to the Indigenous community" (p.35). Therefore, the engagement of Indigenous peoples in the research process legitimizes the transmission of knowledges and determines the benefits to communities.

4.1.1.1 Resistance

Indigenous research provides a platform for emancipatory resistance, independence and the undoing of colonialist regimes for Indigenous peoples (Bonds & Inwood, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Rigney, 1999). Although invasion initially resulted in catastrophic circumstances for Indigenous communities of Australia, many Indigenous Australians have and continue to resist this oppression by challenging government systems and those imposed upon them by non-Indigenous peoples in mainstream media and society. As Rigney (1997) argues, in Australia, "physical, cultural and emotional genocide" (p.118) has been vigorously resisted by Indigenous Australians. Rigney (1999) states that, "the struggle against racism must also include the fight to de-racialise micro and macro social formations left to us by colonisation, which continue to effect and shape the lives of my people" (p.113).

In her 1981, influential work, *Generations of Resistance: Mabo and justice*, activist and academic Lippman, highlights the extent of the historical oppression of Indigenous Australians. Lippman (1981, 1994) maintains that the struggle for justice for Indigenous peoples has been evident and ongoing in many different spaces and has been constant since the invasion of Australia. Despite this oppression many Indigenous peoples have risen above the dominant cultural practices of exclusion, marginalisation and assimilation through their cultural, social and political determinism (Fenelon & Murguía, 2008; Lippman, 1981; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). Nevertheless, in *'Being while Black'*, El-Khoury (2012) argues that self-regulation is maintained by 'non-whites' to co-exist within a dominant 'white' society, suggesting, "the 'disposition of steadiness' meant that blacks protest the matrix of domination as part of their everyday life: refusing to be defeated, rejecting the state-imposed social control, revoking different forms of power" (p. 97).

It may be argued that this self-regulation in itself is a form of oppression, which must also be resisted. However, the ways in which Indigenous peoples choose to navigate forms of resistance that are enacted within broader societal constructs remains complex. Harris, Carney and Fine (2001) found that Indigenous peoples concertedly resist oppression through their stories, narratives and political actions, galvanizing their cognizance that colonialist and racialised attitudes still dominate broader society today.

More positively, Indigenous peoples have gained some momentum nationally for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives to be embedded into the Australian curriculum. Throughout all of these junctures, some form of resistance has been observable, whether through passive non-compliance or social mobilization of Indigenous Australians. It is only within the last forty years or so that opportunities for Indigenous peoples in the field of mainstream education has seen some improvement. However, educational reform for generations of Indigenous children has been dilatory to say the least. Nearly two decades ago, Rigney (2002) identified some of the major barriers faced by Indigenous Australians in our systems of education. These barriers included being:

- Less likely to receive a preschool education,

- Behind in literacy and numeracy skills achievement before completion of primary school,

- Less access to secondary education in the communities in which they live,

- Less than half as likely to continue through to year twelve schooling,

- Less likely to have the same job prospects upon leaving education, even with the same educational qualifications as non-Indigenous people.

Rigney (2003) maintains that, 'Indigenist research acknowledges Indigenous peoples as resisters to racialisation not victims of it' (p.40). He also promoted an optimistic view that education is a transformative tool that can lead to equity and equality for Indigenous children. Unfortunately, however, many of the barriers that Rigney (2003) identified well over a decade ago are still present today. For example, according to the Prime Minister's 2018 *Closing the Gap* report, statistics indicate that:

- There has been no meaningful improvement in attendance rates in any of the states and territories and the target is not on track to be met.

- Although the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students has closed across all areas of literacy and numeracy, the target is not on track to be met. Only year nine numeracy is on track in all states and territories.

- The target to halve the gap in Year 12 attainment by 2020 is on track. Year 12 or equivalent attainment for Indigenous 20 to 24 year-olds increased significantly from 47.4 per cent in 2006 to 65.3 per cent in 2016.

However extreme caution must be exercised when considering these data as the federal governments compulsory participation phase for all high school students was introduced in 2003 and fully operational by 2006 and must be factored into this equation (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018).

Overcoming these inequities can be seen through community healing practices as well as the promotion and revitalization of Indigenous languages. Foley (2003) insists that the struggle of resistance is not only a struggle for self-determination, but also a course of action employed to challenge the continual oppression experienced by Indigenous Australians in everyday situations.

4.1.1.2 Political Integrity

The political integrity of Indigenous inquiry requires acceptance of Indigenous researchers who engage with Indigenous Australians to achieve what Rigney (1999) describes as research, which apprises an emancipatory and political struggle. Thereby, considering the ontological and epistemological principles and worldviews of Indigenous peoples and how this informs Indigenous philosophies, as well as socio-cultural values and belief systems (Henry, Dunbar, Arnott, Scrimgeour & Murakami-Gold, 2004; Rigney, 1999). Studies conducted by Indigenous researchers within Indigenous communities can empower communities to identify the primacies and pivotal research agendas, therefore building upon their own capabilities and agency (Castleden, Sylvestre, Martin & McNally, 2015; Fredericks, 2008; Rigney, 2003) gaining direct benefits from the research. Rigney (2003) contends that in this way, Indigenist research, "challenges the power and control that traditional research methodologies exert and directs attention toward ones that are compatible with Indigenous world views" (p.40). Still, Rigney is cognizant of the contributions that non-Indigenous researchers have made to the socio-cultural and political struggles of Indigenous Australians (Rigney, 1999).

Rigney (2003) insists that non-Indigenous researchers should not shy away from conducting critical research with Indigenous peoples. He maintains that Indigenist research principles can be employed by non-Indigenous researchers who support these principles for Indigenous self-determination. However, Moodie (2010) and Smith (1999) maintain that it is not about excluding non-Indigenous researchers, but challenging their control, privilege and power, which has been the vanguard of most research conducted about Indigenous peoples, therefore silencing Indigenous voices. Through critical reflexivity and the research design of this project I have sought to continually examine and challenge my assumptions.

4.1.1.3 Privileging Indigenous Voices

Martin (2003), Rigney (1999) and Smith (1999) point out that Indigenist research gives a voice to Indigenous people who have otherwise been excluded from the dominions of research up until the early 21st century. While, Rigney (2003) maintains that it is

essential that solid relationships and alliances be established with the Indigenous community to ensure that community voices are acknowledged throughout the entire research project. While, Jones and Jenkins (2008) suggest that "deafness of the colonisers to Indigenous speakers is one of the necessary conditions of a colonised society" (p.478). This 'deafness of the colonisers' which Jones and Jenkins (2008) allude to is constantly being challenged by Indigenous Australians, not only within the paradigms of research and the realms of education, but also in the constructs of everyday lived experiences. The powerful systemic structures which exist to maintain control of Indigenous peoples by their non-Indigenous counterparts is acutely evident and can be seen in such contexts as the Commonwealth government's refusal and opposition to give Indigenous peoples a 'voice to parliament'. Being able to engage with Indigenous participants is vital, however listening to and understanding what is being said is paramount. The gathering of information from participants must therefore be embraced respectfully and authentically.

Kovach (2009) maintains that, "choices made about representation in research and how participant 'voice' is presented reveal to the critical reader the researcher's assumptions about power" (p.81). How the researcher then interprets and represents the knowledge which has come from the community during the research process demands an integral shift of power from the researcher to those participating in the research. Kovach (2009) suggests that this can be achieved by gathering the research data in ways that are conducive to the participants being able to tell their stories on their own terms. However, simply conducting interviews by using a Yarning process, does not guarantee that misinterpretation of the data might occur. In other words, it is not just about the theories or the methodologies that are used by the researcher to underpin the research, it is the processes and methods of how resistance, political integrity and privileging Indigenous voices within the research is acknowledged, understood and respected by the researcher. These considerations are particularly significant in the research design of this study.

4.2 Research Design

Research design requires thorough planning from the commencement. Identifying the focus of the research, initial research questions posed, the theory and methodology used, to the ways in which the data is collected is fundamental. This determines how the outcomes of the research are disseminated and interpreted (Creswell, 2013; Drew, Hardman & Hosp, 2008; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Western paradigms of research, in some instances demonstrate that knowledge is produced and owned by the individual rather than an Indigenous research paradigm which proposes that all knowledge is relational (Wilson, 2001). Wilson (2001) proposes that within an Indigenous research archetype, "Knowledge is shared with all of creation" (p.176). In their critique of Indigenous methodologies, Atkinson and Ryen (2016) dispute Wilson's claim and argue that Western scholars also consider research from a relational standpoint, insisting that,

Again, one can only protest that 'Western' scholars can certainly endorse the view that understanding is relational (though perhaps not always quite as all-encompassing as the entire cosmos!), and equally firmly do not believe or act as if all research-based knowledge were a private, personal possession (p.4).

Atkinson and Ryen (2016) go further and challenge whether Indigenous methodologies actually exist at all, arguing that 'Indigenous methods, are not on the whole, very plausible' (p.10). However, further in their paper they contradictorily assert, "we can begin to explore the counter-proposition: all methods are 'indigenous' [sic], in the sense of being shaped by their cultural and historical milieu" (p.10). Botswanan scholar, Chilisa (2012) articulates her position about Indigenous research methodologies using an 'Eziko model'.

This project involves developing an Eziko model of doing research based on African ways of seeing reality, African values, and African systems of knowledge. We are articulating methods of research based on our conception of the cosmos and the environment. The ways in which we understand our connections with the

environment shape our knowledge system. And so, our knowledge system, our reality, is relational in different ways than academic knowledge systems (p.42).

Interestingly, there are similarities with Chilisa's (2012) description of Indigenous methodology of research, to that of Martin's (2009) ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing. Both of these scholars highlight the distinctive and unique nature of Knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples. Nonetheless, each knowledge system is contextual and relational to people and place. According to Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010), Blagg (2008), Moreton-Robinson (2000), Rigney (2006), Smith (2012) and Weatherburn (2014) the reality is that in the past, much of the research conducted by Western scholars was exploitative of Indigenous peoples. Some of this research resulted in the advent of 'scientific' racism, asserting concepts such as racial superiority, or pseudo-scientific racism, which employed techniques such as craniometrics to classify particular demographics by race (Mooney, 2005; Smith, 2012).

Knowledge creation is a dynamic entity, however research by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous researchers demands respectful consideration of the differences in the construction of knowledge, who is generating the knowledge, for what purposes it is used, and how it is shared that is of critical importance (Barreiro, 2010). Indigenous voices have been deliberately centred in this research design to gain insights into this phenomenon, recognising that these voices have a unique perspective on the school to prison pipeline which is too frequently ignored. A transformative and relational approach acknowledged the well-established ongoing relationships and dialogue between the researcher and the Indigenous community who have identified a significant problem in education.

4.2.1 Methodological Approach

Taking a phenomenological research approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) enabled me to look at the life domains of young Indigenous males through the standpoint of Indigenous workers, carers and supporters within the community. This

purposive study allowed me to conduct an inquiry into how Indigenous adults working with young Indigenous males perceived the challenges associated with suspensions and exclusions of young Indigenous males from mainstream state schools in Queensland and what this meant in relation to their over-representation in juvenile detention. This approach was framed from within an Indigenous research paradigm, offering an understanding from an adult's perspective, the unique experiences (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) that young Indigenous males may encounter during their educational experiences at school. This methodological approach offered important insights into the experiences of young Indigenous males who have been excluded from education, and consequently experience over-representation in incarceration facilities. By adopting this methodology, it enabled the construction of a deeper descriptive narrative overall, through the everyday life experiences of those who support or care for young Indigenous males within the community.

This research was reliant upon the interpretation of participant's actual experiences of working with, or supporting, young Indigenous males (Creswell, 2003). The objective of the research was to understand participants' innermost perceptions of young peoples' educational experiences, and how they may have an intrinsic bearing on young Indigenous males' subsequent contact with the juvenile justice system. The constant need for reflexivity was paramount. By suspending one's own predeterminations (bracketing), researchers may experience the phenomenon in its unadulterated form. Researchers maintain that there exists a commonality in the experiences of people and refer to this as the essence or invariant structure. In this study, I endeavoured to establish the 'essence' of participants' experiences who have worked with and supported young Indigenous males, before, during and after incarceration.

Kovach (2009) states, "decolonising methodologies demands a critical reflexive lens that acknowledges the politics of representation within Indigenous research" (p.33). When analysing the data, it was necessary to understand how my values and experiences might influence the research findings, therefore jeopardizing the validity of the study. In order to ensure validity, I was required to identify and counter bias to establish that credible and trustworthy research was taking place. This was done through ongoing discussions with Indigenous Elders and community organisations, as

well as keeping a journal where I could record notes relating to the everyday occurrences throughout the research process. Dialoguing on a regular basis with my principal supervisor also assisted with this process.

4.2.2 Research Considerations and Participants

Research conducted with Indigenous community members offered the opportunity "to enter pre-existing relationships; to build, maintain, and nurture these relationships" (Smith, 1999, p.129). Smith (1999) maintains that social research that is located within communities may be identified as emancipatory and indeed this process can "emphasize authentic community partnerships" (Caine & Mill, 2016, p.23). Caine and Mill (2016) also contend that conducting research, which focuses the attention upon community ethics, collaboration, authentic engagement and action, and the provision of knowledge that is relevant to the community is incontrovertibly emancipatory. This research reflected this process by utilising Indigenous participation, Indigenous standpoints and Indigenous research principles. Although I did not know all of the participants who took part in the study, I already had established connections with Elders and Indigenous community organisations in the Moreton Bay region in my role as Indigenous Education manager for the region. This was beneficial for the research process as authentic engagement with Indigenous community members previously existed.

First and foremost as an educator, my priority and commitment is to ensure social justice and equity for all children in education. Conducting research that relates to young Indigenous males, however, requires that I acknowledge and respect that within Indigenous communities there are particularly important gender-specific roles and protocols which must be recognised in relation to customary laws. As a female researcher, it is important to acknowledge that I am not male, and I am not Indigenous. As a non-Indigenous researcher, it is critical that I also recognise what 'white privilege' has afforded me in the space of the academy. As a single mother who came from a low socio-economic area of Brisbane, I have not been afforded privilege through the social constructs of class, nor have I easily stepped into education, as I left school before I had reached year ten, in order to seek employment. However, in Australia, "whiteness" has afforded me certain privileges that are not present for many

Indigenous Australians. Interrogating my own ''whiteness', why I chose to undertake this study, and why I am in this space, has at times been difficult. I have been challenged by many Indigenous peoples within what Nakata (2003) refers to as the contested space for conducting this research. However, there have also been many Indigenous peoples from community who have embraced and supported me to engage with this study, as they recognise that the research will be of benefit to children within the community. Through critical reflexivity, I see my cultural self, one who continues an ongoing journey of learning and change. Committing respectfully to the principles of Yarning and the ethics of conducting Indigenous research has been vital. Learning has occurred by understanding what is required to undertake culturally safe research and critically acknowledging and promoting Indigenous Knowledges and voices as part of the research process.

Being mindful of the sensitivities of researching in this space, and the issues which might be raised in relation to young Indigenous males, required thoughtful consideration. Although the research did not require me to work directly with young Indigenous males, it did entail collecting information about specific matters relating to their everyday lives. This research necessitated interpreting the perceptions of adults who work with, or support, young Indigenous males and how they observe the effectiveness or inefficiencies of the education system, and the subsequent correlation of young Indigenous males who have become involved with the juvenile justice system.

4.2.3 Engagement of Participants

The inclusion criteria for participants selected for the research required that they must have, or have had first-hand experience caring for, supporting, or working with young Indigenous males aged 10 to 17 years who had been excluded from a Queensland State school and who had subsequently been incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility in Queensland. Initially I considered speaking with young Indigenous males who were incarcerated, however I felt that I could gather a more global understanding of the experiences by engaging Indigenous Elders, carers and community members as participants. Preliminary conversations took place with Elders from Indigenous

Communities in South-west Queensland localities who extended guidance and support for the research and provided contact with relevant community organisations. This contact enabled further opportunities to check in with these groups regarding the processes and progress of the research from beginning to end.

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling as a way to identify and select those individuals or groups of people who had a specific knowledge of and experience with the phenomena being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Patton (1990) suggests that a great deal can be learned about matters of significance within the research paradigm through purposeful sampling. Contact with Indigenous community organisations in the region was made in order to advise prospective participants about the research and invite those who wished to be involved to make direct contact with the researcher (refer to Appendix D & E). Potential participants were asked if they had any questions prior to agreeing to participate in the study. People who met the criteria outlined earlier were then invited to take part in the research. A participation information sheet and informed consent form was provided to all people who were interested in the research. These forms comprehensively explained why the research was being conducted, the adherence to confidentiality, and the culturally sensitive ethical management of any data collected (refer to Appendix B & C).

The engagement process involved initial contact with potential participants by obtaining support from key organisations who forwarded information to prospective participants about the study and then inviting suitable participants to register their interest in the research. Participants were then requested to contact the researcher directly to discuss the research project further – this step helped to ensure that community members did not feel pressured to participate in the study. Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the research at any stage with respect and due care, and that there would be no recrimination or penalty and support would be provided where necessary. The researcher advised those prospective participants of their inclusion in the research and notified them of scheduled interview dates and times that Yarning sessions were to take place.

Ten participants took part in the research and all identified as Indigenous Australians. This number was made up of parents/carers, Elders and individuals from Indigenous

and non-Indigenous community organisations. The data captured a range of experiences, beliefs and stories that provided important information to understand the lived experiences of Indigenous boys and how they are impacted by high rates of exclusion from the education system. At the completion of the interviews it was acknowledged through further correspondence between the researcher and one of the participants that they did not fully meet the criteria requirements of the study, as one of the male participants retrospectively identified that he was non-Indigenous. Although his input into the research was greatly appreciated, this data has not been included in the final data analysis or the findings of this study. Another participant withdrew after the interview process had been completed and this data has also been omitted from the findings of this study. Therefore, a total of nine participants, five females and four males took part in the study.

4.2.4 Descriptive characteristics

Of the five females interviewed, two were currently employed in either education or youth justice and worked directly with young Indigenous males who had experienced suspension/exclusions from school, and who had also been incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility in Queensland. Another of the females interviewed had recently retired, but had extensive past experience working with young people in juvenile detention and had worked extensively in the area of education, mentoring incarcerated boys and adults. One female was currently undertaking her degree in education, whilst another female was presently seeking employment and had wide-ranging experience engaging with young Indigenous people in the community, as well as a background in educational mentoring in schools. All four of the males interviewed were currently employed. Three of the male participants were presently working in support areas for young people who were either in or transitioning out of juvenile detention.

All nine participants were aged between 25 and 55 years. All resided or worked within the Moreton Bay or Brisbane metropolitan regions of Queensland. Seven out of the nine participants were parenting children, or grandchildren, aged between four and seventeen years of age.

4.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through, a yarning process. Yarning is an important cultural process when working with Indigenous peoples and communities as it also offers a "relaxed and familiar communication process within a known and culturally safe environment" (Fredericks, Adams, Finlay, Fletcher, Andy, Briggs, Briggs & Hall, 2011, p.8). This was achieved by ensuring that all participants were able to select an environment where they felt comfortable and safe during the interview process. Rather than conducting a more formal and structured interview, the employment of Yarning as a culturally safe research method combined with a semi-structured interview approach was specifically adopted to ensure that participants felt relaxed (Bin-Sallik, 2003).

4.3.1 The Benefits and Processes of Combining Yarning with a Semi-Structured Interview Approach

Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) insist that using a yarning process allows the researcher to "develop and build a relationship that is accountable to Indigenous people participating in the research" (p.38). Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) explain that Yarning in research is, "an informal and relaxed discussion through which both the researcher and the participant journey together visiting places and topics of interest relevant to the research study" (p.38).

Similarly, Walker, Fredericks, Mills, and Anderson (2014) describe Yarning as, "a conversational process that involves the sharing of stories and the development of knowledge. It prioritizes Indigenous ways of communicating, in that it is culturally prescribed, cooperative, and respectful" (p.1216). This is not to say that yarning is less important in the interview process, because it is classified as 'informal'. When engaging in data collection using a Yarning method, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that Indigenous voices are privileged, rather than marginalised in the process. Dean (2010) suggests that,

These aspects of sharing, responsibility and accountability are what set yarning as a data collection method apart from the more non-Indigenous data methods. The standards induced by yarning as a method for data collection develop a higher level and appropriate application of Aboriginal research. Yarning is an invaluable tool in data collection within research conducted with Aboriginal communities for participants, researchers, local communities and the value of project outcomes (p.10).

Gathering information by Yarning enables the transmission of stories to happen in a less structured environment. However, Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) argue that at times this can be problematic as it also means that the participants can include or exclude important information during this process. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) explain that their Yarning research process includes four specific types of principles:

- Social Yarning
- Collaborative Yarning
- Research Topic Yarning, and
- Therapeutic Yarning.

Social yarning is described as a conversation which precedes the formal yarning process where the researcher and participant can have an informal discussion that leads into the formal yarning research process. As in my own Irish Gaelic ancestry, storying was the main form of communication before colonial invasion took place in Ireland. In many Indigenous communities worldwide, the dominant form of communication was storytelling (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Kovach, 2009). However, for many, this altered when Indigenous languages were suppressed under the legacy of invasion and colonisation. Although Indigenous peoples may have been denied their languages, the practices of Yarning and storytelling have continued into the present. Collaborative yarning takes place between two or more people who are involved in the procedure of sharing information regarding research or "exploring similar ideas" (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010, p.40). Research topic yarning is specifically intended to retrieve information from participants through their stories that are relative to the research being undertaken. This is what Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) suggest is purposeful with a defined beginning and end. Therapeutic yarning

transpires when during the storytelling process, some form of disclosure occurs, which may result in a traumatic experience for the participant. It is in this situation that the researcher must revert to listening to and supporting participants through their story and encourage meaning making to emerge throughout this process. Throughout the data collection process, there was acknowledgement of the possibility that all four yarning processes may overlap; therefore, it was necessary to understand the potentialities of these four principles at the commencement of the yarning process. Geia, Hayes and Usher (2013) contend,

> This type of Aboriginal storytelling or yarning enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to reconstruct their lives in new ways while at the same time keeping their cultural integrity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island yarns are rarely an individual construct; they carry within them the shared lived experience of their families, and communities (p.15).

In the process of using Yarning as a tool for collecting data for this research, I humbly became what Kovach's (2010) describes as the 'learner'. Kovach (2010) also insists that the, "conversational method aligns with an Indigenous worldview that honours orality as a means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition" (p.42). Throughout the Yarning process, it was important to listen and hear the principle concerns that were being addressed. Yarning with each of the participants was quite an emotional experience and every participant related their conversations around education back to their own personal stories.

In this instance, using a relational process allowed the researcher the privilege of being a part of the transference and sharing of important cultural knowledge in order to conduct research which can be of transformative value to Indigenous communities. Discussions took place with community as to when and how this knowledge would be shared back to the community.

4.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Combing the Yarning process with a semi-structured interview approach, allowed an opportunity to develop insightful and in-depth understanding of individual experiences (Cousin, 2009).   Ayres (2012) suggests that normally in semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions accommodate both, concrete or more narrative focussed questions. Ayres (2012) also insists that semi-structured interviews, can assist with the development of data, which is highly relevant to the research, but nevertheless, relies on the capabilities of the interviewer "to understand, interpret and respond to the verbal and nonverbal information being provided" by the participants (pp. 2-3). However, semi-structured interview conventions which are considered to be accumulative and methodical, rely upon the interviewer being able to use supportive tools to promote further ideas during the interview process (Galletta, 2013). The use of semi-structured interviews in collaboration with the yarning process allowed engagement in a two-way conversation with individual participants involved in the study.

A semi-structured interview format is the most widely used format to gather information in qualitative research (Drew, Hardman & Hosp, 2008). Although the initial research question was 'open-ended and broad' (Di Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), there was also an opportunity to engage with the participants in more general questioning allowing a more informal process, before moving on to focussed questions relevant to the issues being researched (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Edwards and Holland (2013) contend,

> These interviews allow much more space for interviewees to answer on their own terms than structured interviews but do provide some structure for comparison across interviewees in a study by covering the same topics, even in some instances using the same questions (p.29).

This type of interviewing process also meant that the participants could ask questions or seek clarification from the researcher. Creswell and Poth (2017) insist that many inexperienced researchers can be overwhelmed at the complexities of asking

appropriate questions during the interview process to elicit appropriate responses, pertinent to the research being undertaken. However, Drew, Hardman and Hosp (2008) contend that new researchers can overcome these difficulties by adopting interview techniques such as asking suitable questions, correctly recording the data, and giving attention to the "social contexts of the interview to assure the highest quality of data possible" (p.189).

The researcher is bound by an ethical responsibility to conduct the interviews in such a way that the participants feel safe throughout the interview process. Adams (2010) intimates that interviewees may provide information that the researcher might find offensive or strongly disagrees with, consequently stressing the necessity for the researcher to remain impartial during the course of the interview. Creswell (2003) nevertheless insists that the "researcher filters the data through a personal lens" (p.182). Therefore, this requires an unbiased and reflexive awareness from the researcher when gathering information from the participants. In an attempt to eliminate researcher bias and ensure 'trustworthiness' within this study, the data was also carefully reviewed by the researcher and critical self-reflection ensured maintenance of a high level of objectivity.

4.3.3 Thematic Analysis

The data collected was transcribed and then thematically coded using NVivo qualitative analysis data software. Rather than simply responding to the textual data as descriptive analysis, it required that a more categorical level of coding was utilised to identify themes, patterns and relationships in the data collected from participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

A phenomenological qualitative approach was used for this study looking at the 'individual's life-worlds' and how they may experience the phenomenon from their unique perspective (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Using this type of approach offered a greater insight into participants understanding, meaning and experiences and enabled the researcher to construct a descriptive narrative around the studied topic. The objective of this research was to understand participants' innermost views

and experiences of their understanding of the educational experiences of young Indigenous males and their over-representation in the juvenile justice system.

Statements and testimonials and these were then separated into thematically linked descriptors using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step approach to thematic analysis (see Figure 4.3). Initially, each of the participant's transcripts were read and re-read, notations were made, and sections of the transcripts were highlighted to identify key points of interest. Open coding was used to ensure that all information was considered in the data analysis process. In the next stage of the analysis, I began to generate initial codes which helped to identify themes relevant to the research questions and theoretical context.
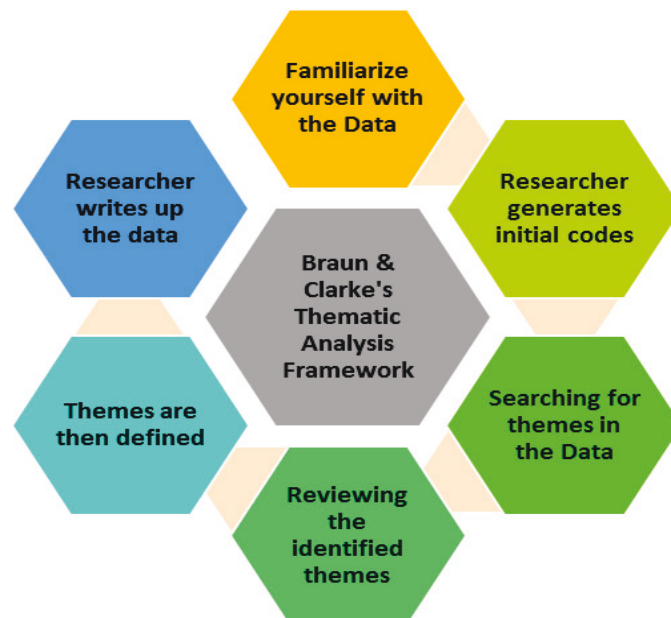
Figure 4.3. Adaptation of Braun & Clark's (2006) thematic analysis framework.

Focussing on specific words used by participants, such as, power, control and privilege enabled me to identify the dominant hegemonic discourses that were used in responses to the interview questions, which were relative to Gramsci's (1971) theoretical framework. In the first instance coding was done manually, by highlighting sections of the text in each of the transcripts. Once this had been completed the data analysis software, NVivo was used to classify any codes that were not necessarily identified during the manual coding process. This was done by searching for specific words and phrases that related to the initial categories in the manual coding process.

Certain patterns emerged, which identifying central themes and from there several sub-categories were classified under these central themes (Bazely, 2013). These data were then reviewed to identify any over-lap or to condense as required and to also eliminate any themes which did not provide enough supporting information. Finally, rich textual descriptions enabled the researcher to comprehend what participants experienced in the field and also consider the 'essence' of participants' contexts and situations (Creswell, 2007). This gave an in-depth representation of their understandings of working with and supporting young Indigenous males.

After the data analysis took place, participants were contacted to ascertain if they wished to review the themes and findings that emerged from the data from an Indigenous Standpoint. While none of the participants elected to formally evaluate the findings, three of the participants did engage in informal discussions about the findings and indicated that they were valid and significant to the research undertaken.

4.3.4 Possible risks to research participants

During the process of the research it became clear that some may have feared that the information they provided would not be treated confidentially, and that their participation in the research would be seen as a sign of giving ground to a non-Indigenous researcher who may be considered part of 'the system'[9]. Other areas of concern were note before and during the data collection procedures.

It was acknowledged that participants might have felt reluctant to divulge sensitive information about young Indigenous males to a female researcher who is non-Indigenous. It was also identified that the magnitude of potential risk might bring some discomfort to participants. As the research involved discussions about vulnerable children and sensitive information, participants were more likely to have established close relationships with these children. Therefore, some participants found it difficult to speak about the negative aspects children have experienced within the education and juvenile justice systems. By uncovering potentially uncomfortable experiences

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[9] The dominant groups and institutions that work together to make a complete whole are known as 'the system'.

during the research process, there was a possibility that unresolved issues may arise, having the potential to affect the risks associated with the study.

During the interview process some of the participants became visibly upset and emotional when speaking about children's experiences regarding exclusion from education and their contact with juvenile justice system. Counselling support service information was provided for all participants and follow up by the researcher took place to ensure participant well-being after the interviews took place. As a precaution this occurrence was discussed with my supervisor who offered support and suggestions as to how to proceed.

While the design of this research was not intended to expose illegal activity, participants were informed that where any criminal disclosure was identified during the research process, whether intentionally or incidentally, that names and identifying details would not be recorded as part of the research. However, participants were also advised on the participant consent form that where mandatory reporting exists regarding criminal acts against vulnerable third parties (i.e. Children), and where it is necessary to prevent a serious and imminent threat to anyone's life, health, safety or welfare, disclosure may be necessary according to *The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 4.6.6.*

4.3.5 Strategies to minimize risk for participants

It is imperative that all research involving humans considered a range of strategies to minimize the risk for participants. This study prioritized developing a trusting relationship between the researcher and participants. Initially, discussions took place with six community groups and Elders to seek approval and to explain what the research entailed, respond to any concerns or questions, and seek their approval. All groups gave their support and two of the groups also sent letters of support (refer to Appendix D & E). I was also invited to speak at the Moreton Bay Murri Yarning Circle on several occasions to explain what the research was about to members of the community and invite questions from those in attendance about why the research was

being conducted and what was hoped to be achieved as a result of the findings of the research.

I also garnered the support of a well-respected Indigenous advisor from the community who knew me on a personal and professional level. He kindly forwarded emails to his contacts and Murri networks advising that I had approval from the Elders to go ahead with the research. He also invited people to contact me if they were interested in being part of the study and to share their knowledge and expertise. The initial emails contained a detailed information sheet about the research. This then gave me the opportunity to build a trusting relationship with the participants that I had not met prior to the research.

At the commencement of the interview, I endeavoured to make the interview process as relaxed and informal as possible. This was done by engaging in an informal Yarning process that asked about where the participant was from and inquiring as to whether they would like to share a little bit about their family and their connections with community. I too, shared where I was from and a little about my background and why I had decided to undertake this study. During the interview process, I asked participants if they would like to take a break from responding to the questions or discontinue, if I believed that they were experiencing any stress. I ensured that participants taking part in the research had adequate access to support services, such as *Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Counselling Service* and *Lifeline* if required*.* Both of these services were able to offer culturally appropriate support following interviews if necessary. Contact information for these services was clearly identified on the information sheet for participants.

Privacy was another aspect that needed to be carefully considered, particularly as the research required participants to divulge information about young Indigenous males who had been excluded from school or incarcerated. It was vital that privacy was paramount in relation to personal information as presented in the Charter of Juvenile Justice Principles, 20, e. In particular, the safeguard of all confidential matters concerning young people and families who may be identified in the research was strictly adhered to in this process.

4.3.6 Validity and Trustworthiness of Research

Although the term 'validity' is conventionally associated with quantitative research, many researchers consider research validity or "trustworthiness" in qualitative research to be important. Concepts related to qualitative research validity are briefly discussed.

Maxwell (1992) suggests description is present in the majority of qualitative studies and that descriptive validity is important, as it is a key objective of qualitative research. This research provided factual descriptive accounts and was reported in context as heard by the researcher.

The study enabled me to look into the 'inner-world' of the participants and understand their thoughts, viewpoints, feelings and experiences, this is referred to as interpretive validity. It was important that the researcher accurately and empathetically portrayed the experiences and perspectives of all of the participants, even when distinctly contrasting views were expressed.

As there was a small sample size selected for this research, the degree to which representations could be applied across groups may not be reasonable with this type of qualitative study.

4.3.7 Ethical Considerations

This research design focused on establishing respectful partnerships with community and promoting the voices of Indigenous participants. The moral and ethical responsibility to establish equal partnerships with Indigenous peoples involved in the study was embedded into every aspect of the research design. The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement)* (NHMRC, 2015) section 4.7, outlines the requirements when working in particularly sensitive areas of research. This considers people who are marginalised, and in the case of this study, Indigenous peoples who may have been living in highly vulnerable situations. This research adhered to the six core principles of the Ethical conduct in

research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders (2018): *Spirit and Integrity, Reciprocity, Respect, Equity, Cultural Continuity and Responsibility*. Each of these principles will now be discussed briefly.

During the research process respectful acknowledgement was given to the connection between the past, present and future and the integrity that upholds both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and experiences. This was adhered to throughout the research process in my writings, in my discussions with Elders and community, during the interview process and in the presentation of the findings to community. Respectful dialogue with Indigenous community organisations and Elders in the Moreton Bay Region occurred before the commencement of, and throughout the research.

Collective engagement occurred with Indigenous community organisations and there was respectful recognition of the unique cultural differences and intrinsic values of each community member during the process of this study. This was demonstrated through collaborative engagement with people from community and consideration of Indigenous standpoints throughout the research process. In every instance attempts to do no harm to Indigenous persons or communities was critical and to the best of my ability respect for social and cultural protocols and the confidentiality of individual community members was upheld.

Throughout the study ongoing contact was made with all participants by email or by phone to advise the progress of the study. I also attended bi-monthly community meetings to share important information relating to each research milestone. There was acceptance of advice and guidance of Indigenous Elders and communities in the region during this process.

All participants were offered an opportunity to revisit the data once it had been analysed and written up, to check the data accuracy and interpretation of the data if required. Each participant was sent an email throughout the research process explaining each stage of the study and to keep them informed of what was occurring throughout the research. There was recoginition of the equal value of the information

being shared by all individuals participating in the study. During this process professional contacts were maintained with some of the participants to collaborate in partnership around current issues affecting youth within the community.

Respectful acknowledgement of the unique contributions and engagement of community was ensured, by formally thanking community for sharing their knowledge/s in the research thesis. Indigenous voices and knowledges were prioritised throughout this study with respect. All participants were offered an opportunity to revisit the data once it had been analysed and written up, to check the data accuracy and interpretation of the data if required. Those who participated in the research process, supporting organisations and community organisations were invited to a half-day forum where the findings and recommendations were disseminated. At this forum, discussions took place with the group to determine how the research data would be communicated to forward to other community members, policy makers, academics and other relevant organisations. This was an informal event, which concluded with a `thank-you' lunch.

Research must be considered from an ethical and legal approach, and it must be for the benefit or result in the improvement of issues of concern that have been identified within the community. Ethical research must also be reflected from a cultural perspective that acknowledges Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Martin, 2008) and concomitantly privileges Indigenous voices in the research process.

Finally, the recognition of the privacy surrounding the collection of data has been acknowledged as being confidential, and restrictions on the use of any data has been agreed upon with participants. At all times data has been managed securely. As a researcher I have also been aware that sensitive information, not connected to this research may have been divulged by the participants and therefore have been mindful of how the data has been collected and used during the research process to ensure the anonymity of participants.

4.3.8 Benefits of research to Indigenous communities and government agencies

Based upon Rigney's (1999) three principles of Indigenist research, this study seeks to highlight the importance of how research is decolonised through, disseminating and transferring findings back to the community, for the benefit of the community. This decolonising process offers an opportunity for community to critique, question, or utilise the research findings as they see fit. This research delivers the following evidence-based data to Indigenous communities and government-based agencies:

1) Knowledge and understanding of the barriers that exist within the Queensland state education system for young Indigenous males that may contribute to exclusion from education.

2) Documentation of the standpoints and voices of Indigenous community members, with regard to suspension, exclusion and incarceration of young Indigenous males.

3) The potential to increase the educational retention of Indigenous young males and decrease the numbers incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities.

4) New understandings of how future opportunities for young Indigenous males are created and managed. This will contribute to the cultural, social and economic fabric of Queensland and Australia, by focussing on how to reduce the numbers of young Indigenous males who are disengaging from the education system at an early age.

5) Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which Indigenous parents and Indigenous community organisations can drive solutions for change in educational policy to prevent high suspension and exclusion rates, which may divert young Indigenous males away from incarceration.

6) Offer solutions and strategies, supported by the empirical research to lower the numbers of young Indigenous males who are suspended and/or excluded from state schools by informing government policy through the dissemination of findings in the dissertation and publication of scholarly papers (refer to O'Brien & Trudgett, 2018).

The research will be potentially of benefit at a national, state and local level. The study has provided Indigenous community standpoints, in the hope that young Indigenous males have an equitable opportunity to continue to positively engage with education. Of considerable significance is the articulation of the findings to communities, governments, policy makers and educators and the necessity to build upon prevention

strategies and improve current intervention strategies. In turn, it is hoped to see a decrease in the number of young Indigenous males who are suspended or excluded from school prematurely and who are consequently exposed to the Queensland juvenile justice system.

4.4 Summary

Chapter Four has described the methodology and methods that have been used in this research. The importance of resisting archetypical Western research methodologies has been examined. In this study, Indigenous research methodologies such as those ascribed by Rigney (1999) are considered central to the development of a decolonising and emancipatory research process for Indigenous peoples. The importance of resistance, political integrity and privileging Indigenous voices has been explored using Rigney's (1999) Indigenist research principles, demonstrating how emancipatory research and decolonisation of research undertaken in the academic arena is necessary for self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

A phenomenological research approach was considered the most appropriate methodological design, looking at the life-experiences of young Indigenous males through the lens of adult carers and supporters. Purposive sampling in this instance was determined to be the most suitable engagement procedure. A total of nine Indigenous persons from the community participated in the study, all of whom displayed the necessary characteristics required for the research project.

Community engagement and participation took place before and throughout the process of the study. Indigenous community organisations have played an important role in these processes and the ways in which the research was undertaken within the community. At the centre of the research was the incorporation of ethical considerations when working in partnerships with individual participants who took part in the study.

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the research methodology and the research processes employed. The ethical considerations of the research have been emphasized as a fundamental component of the study. The data will be analysed in the following three chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

"OUR WORDS ARE OUR WEAPONS AND THE BATTLEGROUND IS THE SYSTEM" (Adam).

5.0 Introduction

Chapter's Five, Six and Seven will now present the findings of the empirical data collected and in this instance, the responses from those engaged with the research has been italicized to give prominence to their experiences and stories. The data analysis foregrounds the thoughts, feelings, experiences and voices of the nine participants. An important caveat is necessary here. As the interview process used a Yarning method to engage Indigenous participants to tell their stories, it was essential that the transcripts used were acknowledged, and valued the cultural contexts of stories as told by the participants. This was done by recognising and appreciating the vast and varied experiences that each of the participants shared in the research space. It must also be noted that I do not believe that I could have embarked respectfully upon these interviews without previous exposure to Indigenous Knowledge/s and the histories of Indigenous peoples. This exposure to cultural knowledges and histories has been an ongoing process for over thirty years. Some of this has been established through ongoing friendships and some of this learning has taken place in my professional capacity as an educator. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) suggest that collaborating in this way offers a methodology to generate genuine and meaningful conversations that can be experienced by both participant and researcher and in the process may lead to important new contributions to the research.

Several key themes developed from the data analysis. Initially, 32 categories emerged from the thematic coding using NVivo. From this, 17 sub-categories emerged from the overall data. These categories were then manually condensed into the seven major themes. This chapter will discuss the following three themes:

- Power, hegemony and government systems

- Racism and the education system
- Socio-Economic and Cultural Determinants.

Chapter Six will present the findings related to the educational experiences of Indigenous boys attending Queensland state schools and finally, Chapter Seven will discuss the findings pertaining to in-school support services, incarceration and transition back to school and community support services.

Section 5.1 presents a brief restatement of the demographic aspects relating to participants involved in the study, which have been detailed in the methodology chapter in Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4. It also provides a table identifying participants' pseudonyms and their professional roles.

The theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter Three also emerged from the analysis of the data. The concepts of power, hegemony and racism in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 identify participants' main concerns with respect to individual and systemic institutional inequities experienced by Indigenous boys at school.

Section 5.4 highlights the barriers impacting Indigenous males and presents an analysis of the socio-economic and cultural determinants that affect the school completion rates of young Indigenous males. It was identified that there were three specific areas which had a direct bearing on the retention of young Indigenous males at school. These comprised of the social and economic well-being of family, health issues, as well as the independence and identity of Indigenous boys. Finally, a summary of the key points will be given in Section 5.5 which provides an overall explanation of the data analysed in this chapter.

5.1 Participant Demographics

Nine participants were selected through purposeful sampling methods based on specific criteria. Five females and four males took part in the yarning interview process for the study. It required that all participants interviewed for this study identify as an Indigenous person who cares for, or has supported, those young Indigenous males in

the community who have been suspended/excluded from school and had experienced incarceration.

Table 5.1: Participant pseudonyms and professional roles

Pseudonym	Professional role
Alinta	Educator
Claire	Juvenile Justice Support
Lexi	Educator/Parent
Ella	Youth worker/Community & Education Support
Susan	Youth Justice/Education
Leigh	Past Youth Detainee
Adam	Child Safety
Danny	Juvenile Justice Support
Vann	Youth Justice/Education

Table 5.1 provides pseudonyms for each of the research participants and also gives a brief description of their area of professional responsibility at the time of interview. Some of the participants work across two or more areas in their professional roles.

5.2 Power, Hegemony and Government Systems

Fairclough (1989) argued that a majority of society perceived power as invisible and harmless and that many were unaware of how the use of systemic power could have a devastating impact on minority groups and those who experience societal marginalisation and exclusion on a daily basis. Participants were asked how they saw power relations play out within government institutions, such as education.

Education is still a government organisation and it's still the government, so historically blackfellas and the government don't have the best relationship. Sometimes they ask very intrusive questions and they just want information and blackfellas don't want to be giving out information to 'whitefellas', because historically, what happens? So, the communication is very one-sided with the school, it doesn't flow freely both ways (Claire).

In Claire's comment, we can see intimations of Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemonic

power, where government surveillance and interference may have negative implications for those who have the least power. Where, power relations are particularly relevant for Indigenous peoples and remain at the centre of everyday dialogue and praxis.

When questioned further about how the use of 'power' contributed to reluctance to participate on the part of some Indigenous peoples, Claire stated, "People could see it as a power thing." She conveyed that she wanted to see the governments "hand it back."

> *They need to be in clear consultation with blackfellas at grassroots level. They need to come from up here and come down here and talk to all these fellas down here and work out what works. Like management works from top down, but it works from down up as well, but it needs to go both ways, because it's broken, it's definitely broken* (Claire).

Adam explained that there needed to be a concerted effort by the Education department to ensure that all schools were engaged and in agreement about the education of Indigenous children, rather than the piecemeal approach which was the existing reality.

> *Across the state, across the country, across the board, everyone's got to have the exact same message, the exact same frameworks, and the education system needs to be seen to be making that effort. The Department of Communities, the Department of Child safety are seen to be making those efforts, JAG[10] is seen to be making those efforts, QLD Health - Education Queensland is not. It's only like till we try to go to the school that they'll go oh, oh, oh, and be inclusive and respectful, they won't do it* (Adam).

Adam spoke about the ways in which the power of government institutions "have really smashed our people apart." He stressed that the child protection system that was initially used to destroy Aboriginal families ironically was now re-structured to help

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[10] JAG is an expression used to identify the Department of Justice and Attorney-General

support Indigenous families.

It is a tick and flick, tokenistic, that band aid, smokescreen appeasing, whatever you want to call it, but there are no real outcomes, because our kids aren't finishing Year 12. Kids are in jail, our Elders are dying earlier than expected, glaucoma, diabetes. Kids are getting otitis media and all these lung and respiratory problems. It's systemic. There it is, you've got the health, education and criminal justice and child protection system, all have poor outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids, especially with education (Adam).

At a practical level, in Adam's professional role, he expressed sheer frustration at what he believed to be complete inaction by governments to implement substantial changes to support the welfare and the human rights of Indigenous children. He pointed to a succession of failures around health, education and criminal justice for Indigenous children. When asked what the Education Department could do to change the way the system currently operated, Vann stated,

Well, sitting around a table with all those people making those big decisions in education, needs to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. [They don't] need to be called in to be consulted, they actually need to be sitting there so a cultural lens is placed upon every decision that's made in education. So that's my view. It just needs to be done. So, you have a person not - you know, who's not only acknowledged in the community, but actually is active in their community, recognised in their community, putting their voice and their eyes on the things that are being written, and they're contributing to that. They're actually being consulted and are sitting alongside and so it's hand in hand together (Vann).

Vann highlighted the need to work collaboratively and to give a voice to Indigenous peoples sitting at the table. He stipulated that a 'cultural lens' was necessary to ensure that inclusive decisions were being made at the top. He articulated that input needed to come from Indigenous community members who were pro-active and 'recognised' within their communities. Vann also spoke of the lack of accountability of governments

and organisations that were funded to achieve outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

You know, Aboriginal culture is about collaboration and it needs to happen in all ways, shapes and forms. So, for me, that's a really big thing, is the funding of orgs, the accountability of those orgs with their funds, and then there's the collaboration. You know, what needs to be developed, is it needs to be best practice as well. But is their accountability to actually produce the results because at the end of the day we want outcomes, we all want outcomes. They look good on paper in a submission, but then at the end of the day we actually want them in homes, in our streets, in our communities, in our schools. We actually want outcomes, we actually want to champion kids and young people and families and say hey, listen, this kid's just done an amazing thing (Vann).

Accountability for the amount of funding allocated to non-government organisations (NGO's) to support improvement in Indigenous community services was discussed by most of the participants as being highly dubious. Vann challenged how the funding was being distributed and claimed that "in the past money has been misappropriated", in both "black and white communities." It was suggested that NGO's should be required to consult and collaborate with Indigenous communities before applications are submitted in order to receive government funding for the implementation of Indigenous programs and projects. Vann also recommended that transparency and accountability at every stage of NGO's projects or programs was critical. Insisting, "it needs to be done in collaboration." Whereas, Adam spoke of his presence at conferences and meetings with high profile Indigenous leaders and the disillusionment that was felt by those in attendance.

Everyone has the same opinion, pretty much you know it's all systems it's the government. They've got to own this, but they won't own it. Everything we are doing is just in vain, a band aid, there's going to be no change, no one can see any change (Adam).

Alinta disapproved of governments' funding non-government organisations for Indigenous programs without specific input coming from Indigenous community

members and organisations, suggesting that some Indigenous organisations were constantly "living from hand to mouth" and were "understaffed and overworked." Of great concern to some of the participants, it appeared that providers of critically important services for Indigenous peoples within the community were continuously under-resourced. The data indicated that Indigenous peoples are constantly impacted by the effects of hegemonic government systemic control, in both social and economic capacities and this created a disproportionate imbalance of power in the decision-making processes. Some participants argued that this ultimately affects the rights of Indigenous Australians to basic human services, and self-determination which they believe the majority of others in Australian society take for granted.

5.3 Racism and the Education System

Both individual and structural racism were identified as being prevalent in schools and throughout educational sectors. The data revealed that most of the participants had witnessed children being racially taunted. Further, many of the participants were aware of, and had experienced both individual and systemic racism themselves. Some participants were visibly emotional when responding to this question. Participants were asked if they believed racism affected young Indigenous boys at school. All nine participants believed it did, and were asked about whether such racism had any bearing on whether they remained at school. Adam explained,

Because nothing's changing, it's just fighting, fighting, fighting. It's the frontier war on a different battlefield and different weapons. Our words are our weapons and the battleground are the system and the courts. And, I still see it as a frontier war, because all of the inquiries and all of these government inquires, into child protection and deaths in custody, has it stopped, has it reduced the numbers? No, in fact they've gone up. So, there's, somebody's making money out of this at the cost of our people and the government and Australians are proud of this? (Adam).

Adam's sheer frustration was evident as he spoke about what appeared to an uphill battle for many Indigenous peoples within communities. He was highly critical of

government inquiries and indicated that although many of these types of investigations had taken place, there was little change evident. He insisted that there were people who were making financial gains out of Indigenous peoples' misfortune.

Claire spoke about her experiences working in educational institutions and pointed out that racism was a huge issue for many of the Indigenous children that she supported. Claire responded,

Yes, definitely, racism has been a massive one still with the kids, even if it's directly or indirectly by other staff or they feel ostracised. From my point of view, I can see they can't articulate that they've been ostracised from the rest of the class, but essentially that's what it comes across as, from staff and library staff and young people. So, if they don't feel good about, if they don't feel empowered to be at school, they just don't want to stay. Why stay somewhere that you are getting picked on? (Claire).

Claire maintained that racism was directed towards Indigenous children by both students and staff. Of key importance to this study, Claire believed racist attitudes had a direct impact on whether Indigenous children decided to stay at or leave school. Alinta concurred with Claire and stated,

I think racism exists, full-stop. Not just at school, but yes, I do believe racism exists at school. The most places that I've heard of it and seen it, out in the school playground, maybe sometimes in the classroom where the comments are made from somebody. For example, the comments are made from somebody when they are talking about history and Aboriginal culture in Australia, there are comments made by students that set the Aboriginal students off. They also feel that they are on display and that they have to answer to what's being taught and that, causes a lot of unrest with the boys and that comes with probably a lot of unrest and a fight at lunchtime over it (Alinta).

Alinta indicated that racism "exists, full-stop" and suggested this was a common practice not just in schools but in everyday life. The data suggests that the racism that students had to deal with in the classroom was overt. Alinta indicated that there were

inappropriate comments directed towards Indigenous students in the classroom "which set them off" and in some cases this resulted in altercations in the playground, particularly with Indigenous boys defending their culture.   However, Alinta also highlighted that some of the Indigenous students felt that they were being put on display in front of their classmates and that they had to be the 'experts' on all Indigenous cultural matters discussed in the classroom.   Alinta was asked how teacher's deal with situations when Indigenous boys respond to being racially taunted.

Most of the time the teachers are not aware of it. Or telling the boys to be quiet, but don't follow through with what happens (Alinta).

Alinta suggested that nothing was being done by educators about the racism experienced by young Indigenous peoples at school. She indicated that she perceived that most non-Indigenous teachers did not think that racism existed. Or, if they did, they were reluctant to, or did not know how to deal with it at school. This observation by Alinta concurred with previous comments made by Lexi and Susan surrounding issues of racism in schools. Often when parents of Indigenous children approach schools about these issues, they are advised that the situation is being taken care of and that there are strategies in place such as the 'Bullying No Way' program. A lack of teacher awareness surrounding the differences between racism and bullying in schools is discussed further in Chapter Seven. Adam also spoke about the aggression that young Indigenous males felt when they experienced racism at school.

I have initiated those sorts of conversations just to see where they would go, and they do get pretty angry, quite aggressive, not at me, but about the whole topic, about how they feel, and I don't think they can actually pinpoint what they are experiencing. A lot of it, the way I see it for me is non-verbals, and perceptions and I know from my experience working with the boys, they can't actually pin-point what that racism looks like, because it does their head in. That's what they'll say, "it does my head in" and that they can't actually talk about it. But they know that it's there, that it's live, that it's a living breathing thing that's killing them inside (Adam).

Adam's response indicated that the racism experienced by young Indigenous males he knew, was perceived to be deeply offensive. However, he maintained that these young boys did not have a clear conception of what it is they were dealing with, although they knew it existed and it affected them emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. Adam related his overall experience about the attendance and retention of young Indigenous males at school.

It's really hard, the boys, the one's that do go to school, experience all this stuff, and so they're outnumbered, they're a minority group and education is the last thing on their mind. They are just trying to survive in that peer group (unclear) and the boys that I am working with now, it's just about survival and fitting in and I guess being accepted (Adam).

It was apparent from Adam's statement, that young Indigenous males do comprehend that they represent the minority group at school and already face immense challenges, even before the concept of their engagement in learning is addressed. He highlighted the difficulties for young Indigenous boys to fit in and be accepted into the peer group at school. Adam also stressed that this was a priority for many of the boys he supported.

Danny articulated that he spent considerable time training young Indigenous boys to enter into the workforce after they were released from juvenile detention. He expressed frustration at the attitudes of some of the potential employers and the way in which they treated young Indigenous males during this process. Danny stated, "You know you can train them up, over three to six months and then it just gets thrown under the bus and you are back to square one again." He went on to say,

Yeh, it's a different set of rules for some people. Umm but yeh, like I said I haven't experienced it myself in employment. I have been very lucky, very blessed. However, a lot of the young people coming through now, they have experienced certain things like that, (racism) umm and we are behind the eight ball from the beginning. You get them built up, you get them confident and they just get cut down like in an instant. Very discouraging for some of these young people (Danny).

Danny's use of the words 'lucky' and 'blessed' gave the impression that he had 'dodged' racism in some way in the workplace. Although he expressed that younger Indigenous males were not so lucky. Danny maintained that due to their racial identity some people had more advantage over others, because "it's a different set of rules for some people."

The participants were asked about the ways in which systems maintained racist structures, particularly within education, and if they saw leaders in education making attempts to create positive and meaningful change.

It's not making any difference. I think everyone is still going around in circles, just tick and flicking those boxes. From the closing the gap thing that has just come out, no gaps being closed. So, everyone is talking the right talk, but no actions are going on. I still think, so we will go back to the racism. I think that a lot of whitefellas still don't understand what cultural sensitivity means. A lot of people still don't recognise what's being done, "because I didn't do it, it wasn't me". So, there's still that denial, so until everyone gets past that there is going to be no one moving forward. It's definitely going, I feel it's going to take a couple of generations four or five generations for something to change (Claire).

Claire perceived that governments were not doing enough to see any real change happen in the near future and that it all came down to a "tick and flicking of those boxes", while evidence showed that no gaps were being closed to help improve the education of young Indigenous peoples. While Adam stated,

So that this is an education, with that white privilege, white mentality, white system. My way, I'm in charge, this is my system, I'll show you how it's going to be done, you'll do it and you'll like it. (Adam).

When asked if he could explain further, Adam commented,

The government need to own it, schools need to reach out, the education system needs to reach out and really have a holistic approach as to how they are teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, what do they want to

teach these kids, and what do they expect from them, that's white man's system. They're not going to be interested in that. Teach them about their stuff, who they are. Cause all they know about 'whitefellas' is policeman, child safety, you know and a prison guard, and the doctor that tells them this and that and tells them you know you are very unwell. Not hi your healthy, you're doing well. So, all of the institutions are negative, so is the school. I don't see how people can be proud of that, even as an educator, I just don't see it (Adam).

For many Indigenous peoples, education continues to be viewed as Eurocentric and offers Indigenous children minimal connection to Indigenous culture. Adam maintained that in many cases, for these boys, their only real association with government systems was for the most part negative and their primary contact was with law enforcement or child safety officers seeking to make decisions about whether the child should be removed from their homes. He maintained that the education system was also viewed by many Indigenous boys and their families as disempowering and was similar to what they had experienced with other government organisations.

5.4 Socio-Economic and Cultural Determinants

It has long been recognised that some Indigenous parents and families have been caught in a 'cycle of poverty'. All too often however, Indigenous parents and families are 'blamed' for this continuing poverty, while governments persist with setting targets and goals to achieve change but struggle to understand why little improvement has occurred in this area. Poverty does appear to have some bearing on whether Indigenous children remain at school, or alternatively find themselves in situations that can result in their suspension and/or exclusion from school. Although poverty may also affect non-Indigenous students, in many instances Indigenous students are coping with more than poverty. Many Indigenous students also experience racism and cultural exclusion whilst at school, which can be particularly harmful and appears to have some bearing on whether they engage productively at school. Participants were asked, *Do, socio-economic and/or systemic cultural barriers effect school*

completion rates of Indigenous boys? Three areas in particular were acknowledged as significant:

- The social and economic well-being of family;

- Health issues of Indigenous boys; and

- Independence and identity of Indigenous boys.

Each of these areas will now be discussed in more detail.

5.4.1 The Social and Economic Well-being of Family

Five of the participants spoke about the inter-generational trauma that has existed for many Indigenous families and how this has impacted upon many in the community over many years. When asked to elaborate on how this affected families, Alinta stated,

On one level parents who don't have the skills themselves to raise, to even look after themselves or find themselves with seven and eight kids and basically the parent not knowing the basic skills of parenting and therefore relying on the next child to carry out care for the children. I think that's very sad for our Aboriginal families. So, I would say, where have we supported our parents of these children? Because we need to start where it started and it didn't start with the kids, it started with their parents (Alinta).

An important caveat here is to distinguish that stereotypical assumptions are not made about all Indigenous parents and families, recognising that Indigenous families come from a wide range of diverse socio-economic backgrounds and circumstances. Alinta's point, highlights that because of inter-generational trauma, some Indigenous parents require much more support in the home and once this is given, the positive benefits will flow through to the children.

Adam identified that inter-generational welfare dependency was a major issue for some young Indigenous males who may reside in households with parents or grandparents who have not had any regular employment. Adam maintained,

Although the boys are at school, I've got a few young boys that I'm working with, that are not interested in school. They are not interested in education and I think that comes down to the generational stuff, the systemic stuff. All those health and social problems will continue until Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's roles and responsibilities are re-instated (Adam).

Adam insisted that problems such as poor engagement, high incarceration and suicide rates were a direct consequence of many Indigenous males no longer knowing their roles and responsibilities within families and community. He stated that "men have lost their roles and responsibilities" and until these were restored, Indigenous boys would continue to experience these detrimental outcomes.

Danny spoke more about inter-generational trauma from the perspective of boys being unable to get assistance from their parents to complete schoolwork because sometimes Mum and Dad did not even go to high school. He stated that if parents of Indigenous boys had no connection to a community or a government agency that could offer support and assistance then "the boys would be left behind and fall through the cracks." Danny was concerned that Indigenous boys had no safety net in mainstream community and stated,

Yeh I suppose, jumping out of a plane without a parachute. Mum and Dad are third generation welfare and these kids are expected to go out and get a job. As they obviously have to study or get training (on leaving detention). Yeh, it's all new to them (Danny).

Vann also identified inter-generational trauma in his response and insisted that there were a "number of reasons things happen in the home" that have been happening for generations, "you know the trauma." When asked to explain, Vann elaborated on the nature of inter-generational trauma by explaining that,

You possibly have parents who haven't been to school, or education isn't a high priority for them. It's about the young person also being fed so they're not at school hungry, so they're not on edge. You know, it's their mental health. So, there's all those, sort of, I guess, therapeutic aspects of it and just social aspects

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of food and just basic human rights (Vann).

The data revealed that this group of participants believed that some Indigenous boys had few alternatives. They ascertained that eradicating the inter-generational trauma that families experienced was as much a responsibility of governments and the structural systems that have been created and maintained and many participants insisted that governments reinforced deep-rooted systemic discrimination.

5.4.2 Health Issues of Indigenous Boys

Participants discussed their experiences of working with and supporting young Indigenous males and spoke about the health issues young males encountered. Adam suggested that some of the very young people he was assisting on a daily basis required critical health support.

Right now, a twelve-year-old boy hasn't been to school in two years, he sleeps on the streets. So, okay for that instance school is not a thing for him at the moment, it's medical, obviously it's an emergency. Today he's been sent to hospital (Adam).

Adam pointed out that for some of these Indigenous boys attendance at school was definitely not a priority. He maintained that shelter and well-being took precedence for many Indigenous boys, some of whom were struggling to find a safe space to return to after release from juvenile detention. Paradoxically, Lexi saw health matters quite differently and spoke of the excellent work that Indigenous health organisations were doing to support Indigenous children and families in the community.

Yeh, all of those Closing the Gap statistics that have been tracked every year, the Health is working, Murri health that we have, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clinical Services are getting fantastic results (Lexi).

When asked why she thought these clinics were achieving great results, Lexi responded that it was because "they are Indigenous led" and that it was the "cultural

difference." Whilst juvenile justice worker Claire explained that those young boys who had been traumatised relied on using drugs to get them through their pain.

Also, too, with the drugs they are self-medicating. You know coming from a trauma informed background umm they are trying to deal with what they've seen or what they've experienced in their own way as opposed to getting help (Claire).

Claire maintained that boys were 'self-medicating' using drugs or alcohol to decrease their physical, emotional or mental pain and that it was extremely difficult for Indigenous boys to speak to others about what they were going through. Claire also pointed out that some of the Indigenous boys that she was supporting had not established close long-term emotional bonds with family members and this may lead to them experiencing psychological harm.

It's a shame, you don't talk about certain kinds of things, or it's hard to talk about things with your mob or anyone else. Some of the young fellas don't have primary attachments with other family members or they would prefer not to talk, so they self-medicate (Claire).

Due to the absence of any strong family relationships this may contribute to extremely poor social and emotional well-being for many of these boys, and for many result in harmful effects. An important caveat here is to stress that for the Indigenous boys that Claire speaks of, connectedness and bonding with families may have been diminished for a variety of complex reasons. These may include social and environmental contexts as well as psychological factors. In the confines of this research however, the intention is not to simply pathologise or label Indigenous boys, as 'mad, bad or sad' (see Krieg, Guthrie, Lewis & Segal, 2016), but highlight the real lived experiences of some of the boys that Claire and others work with on a daily basis.

5.4.3 Independence and Identity of Indigenous Boys

One of the strengths of Indigenous communities is the trust that parents place in their children from a very early age to achieve their independence. Indigenous children achieve independence through family members teaching responsibility and then in turn children being trusted to make their own decisions (Diamond, 2012; Lohoar, Butera & Kennedy 2014; Saggers & Sims, 2005). This in turn empowers the child, enabling them to pass this knowledge onto his or her younger family members. Central to the process of learning is an Indigenous child's identity, where cultural, spiritual, emotional and physical bonds are all part of the kinship structures which Indigenous peoples have embraced for thousands of years. However, since colonisation, many kinship structures have been broken down by those who have generated and implemented discriminatory government policies. In many instances, the complexities of cultural and social practices of Indigenous families and communities is not always acknowledged or understood by many non-Indigenous people.

Adam indicated that identity and language is important for the boys he worked with and supported. He also suggested that many boys found themselves without the coping mechanisms required to function within mainstream society.

Problem solving for these boys is massive. I'm massive for problem solving and I know that a lot of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys transitioning teenagers into manhood, adolescence into manhood can't solve problems, basic problems, they get stuck in situations. How do they get out of it, rather than acting out? You know negotiating something with somebody, you know those sorts of things, negotiations. Because kids don't have them (negotiating skills). You know that's my big thing getting kids to work on their problem solving (Adam).

Adam believed that the "importance of knowing who you are, your identity and your language" for these boys was critical, not just for those boys who had been suspended or excluded from school, but also for those boys who were trying to complete school. He maintained that at school, Indigenous boys should be "living and breathing

Aboriginal culture." Frustratingly, however, he believed that many of the Indigenous boys that he had worked with "for the most part, do give up their culture." Whether this was a deliberately conscious decision by Indigenous boys to do this, or their reasons for doing so, were unclear. Although comments such as these from participants, do mirror research findings from the *Telling it Like It Is* report conducted by the University of Tasmania in 2011. Lexi also commented on surrendering culture in some circumstances in order to get ahead in the 'white community'. Lexi maintained that this related not only to Indigenous boys but was also the reality for many Indigenous peoples in mainstream society.

And that's the evil of it all, is that you have to leave your own culture behind if you want to be a successful person in life and if you want to get a job where you can earn money, you have to leave your culture at the door and become someone who you're not (Lexi).

Adam emphasized the ways in which educators contributed to breaking down the connections between young Indigenous people, family and community. Although the story relates to a private school in Queensland, in this instance it is a highly relevant story that provides an example of the interference used by some educators to disconnect Indigenous children from their family.

I have been dealing with this school. So, I met with them and she is a non-Aboriginal Islander lady in charge of all Aboriginal students at that school. That's her words. I didn't like the way she said that and told me he's doing really well at school this kid. But she had the nerve to tell me that she didn't want him going back to his country, back out to be with his family on holidays, because when he comes back to the school, he is ratty. I was beside myself, I didn't know how to respond, because of my job, I had to really bite my tongue, because you know, that's his home and he has every right to go back home. And I just left it at that, and I had to cut the meeting short, because I was getting really, really angry with this attitude, because this is a highly regarded school. You have a high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids in this school and is that what you are teaching these kids, to stay away from home? So, I was a bit gutted by that, and I am still having trouble accessing that kid now, because they've not been

forthcoming. So, it's just again, it's those beliefs they think that they know better, just that Aboriginal protector stuff from way back when. When I heard that, that's what I got from it and I left there thinking well I am not sending anymore kids here to this school. No more (Adam).

This story pinpoints several areas of concern. The educator in question made negative assumptions about the child's family and community when discussing options for the child's return home during the holiday period. Although she (the educator in charge) maintained that the boy was 'ratty' on his return to school after visiting family, there was no other information provided by her that may have indicated why this was occurring, or if the labelling of the child as being 'ratty' was a fair and reasonable one. The other critical issue identified, was that this educator believed her position gave her the authority to deny the child his basic human rights to see his family, simply because of her biased negative perceptions. Adam expressed that it was akin to the directives of "an Aboriginal protector from way back when." Denying this young Indigenous male connection to his family and community, also denies him connection to his culture and his identity.

Ella related that Indigenous boys wanted responsibility and wanted to be treated like adults. She stated, "the more you keep [treat] them like a kid, the more they will rebel." She insinuated that if teachers gave Indigenous boys more autonomy then there would be prolific change in the next generation. While Susan claimed that, Indigenous boys "wanted more freedom" and that they "need some sort of finger on the pulse of their Aboriginality." Vann suggested that young Indigenous males must be connected to culture, "to know what it is to be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person." He maintained that young boys needed to understand the strengths they carried as Indigenous peoples.

These statements expressed the importance of independence for Indigenous boys at school. The status of Indigenous boys' self-identity and how that positions them not only within their family kinship structures but also within conventional society, was identified as critical and needed to be understood and acknowledged by non-Indigenous educators. Several of the participants recognised that although many of the young Indigenous males they came into contact with did not have strong

connections to their cultural identity, they highlighted cultural connectedness as being of central importance in the lives and well-being of Indigenous boys.

5.5 Summary

Section 5.1 provided the descriptive characteristics of each of the participants included in the study. This gave the reader with some background knowledge of the participants, placing their responses in the context of their professional experiences working with young Indigenous males.

Section 5.2 analysed the hegemonic power of government systems and how this has a direct bearing on the systemic institutional inequities experienced by Indigenous boys at school. The data suggests that there are still systems in place which negate the value and presence of Indigenous cultures within mainstream school settings and it was also found that there was a lack of culturally inclusive practices occurring within schools.

The data in Section 5.3 demonstrated that systemic racism at school can effectively result in serious implications for the engagement of Indigenous boys within the state education system. It was also identified that young Indigenous males contend with both overt and covert forms of racism and that this is not always understood or acknowledged by many educators. Participants suggested that racism was systemic, where government institutions knowingly or unknowingly perpetuated racist attitudes through their policies and practices in places such as schools. Racism towards individuals was identified as being prevalent within schools and could be witnessed in discriminatory acts towards not only Indigenous boys, but also their families.

A number of socio-economic barriers to learning were identified in Section 5.4 which addressed the incompletion of schooling for some Indigenous boys. The data analysis identified three main areas of concern: the social and economic well-being of the family, health issues and the identity of Indigenous boys. Next, Chapter Six will present the data relating to the educational experiences of young Indigenous males at school.

CHAPTER SIX

"WE'RE NOT JUST THE PIN UP PERSON FOR SPORTS DAY"
(Vann).

6.0 Introduction

Chapter Five considered the economic and socio-cultural determinants, identified by the participants as critical to this study. Chapter Six will now discuss the findings related to the educational experiences of young Indigenous males prior to their incarceration in juvenile detention. The research found that the social construction and environmental institution of state schools played a substantial part in whether some young Indigenous males engaged or disengaged from school.

Section 6.1 responds to the main research question and discusses the findings of the current educational experiences of young Indigenous males from the standpoint of Indigenous community support workers who provide care, support and guidance for young Indigenous males. This section also expands upon the literature presented in Chapter Two.

Explanations as to why Indigenous boys are suspended and/or excluded from state schools is addressed in section 6.2. There has been a substantive increase in the school suspension rates of children from state schools in Queensland over the past ten years, as well as an increase in the numbers of Indigenous children being excluded from school. Therefore, it is critical to understand from the standpoints of the participants' as to why these incidences may be taking place.

Section 6.3 centres upon the well-being of Indigenous boys at school. Participants views on the behaviour and well-being of Indigenous boys is discussed. It is highlighted that, inadvertently these matters may also be contributing to the disengagement, suspension and or exclusion of young Indigenous males from school. Finally, a summary of the key points will be outlined in Section 6.4 providing an overall explanation of the data analysis in this chapter.

6.1 Current Educational Experiences of Young Indigenous Males

In order to ascertain the educational experiences young Indigenous males, encounter prior to suspension and/or exclusion from school and their subsequent incarceration, participants were asked to describe their experiences in the context of their role and their relationships, supporting, or caring for, young Indigenous males. The following sections detail participants' responses and draws upon their knowledge, experiences and perceptions as Indigenous community workers in this space.

6.1.1 Principals, Teachers and School Administrators: disconnected and disinterested?

Ockenden (2013) points out that school environments are extremely complex for young Indigenous people and maintains that there is minimal empirical evidence that demonstrates how school leaders and teachers effectively improve learning environments for Indigenous children and assist them to remain at school, while also engaging with their learning. For some Indigenous boys, life beyond the classroom can be extremely complex, with varied socio-economic circumstances (as identified in Chapter Five) and in some instances limited opportunities to positively express their cultural identity at school can greatly impact upon the outcomes of education. Participants were asked generally, *what do principals, teachers and administrators do that positively changes the educational experiences for young Indigenous males at school?* Three of the participants overwhelmingly expressed an extraordinary lack of knowledge from principals and teachers about the everyday lived experiences of young Indigenous peoples and their families, and how this was connected to their participation at school.

Well I reckon schools, like principals, deputies, teachers, all those 'white fellas' need to go and live in community. They need to know, see what it's like to live as a 'blackfella'. They need to understand what it's like to not have a car, to be on Centrelink payments, to come from domestic violence, to come from an abusive background, to come from you know living hand to mouth, you know you've got your mob around, but you're living from pay to pay, everyone's pay week. They need to understand what that's like. To set a foundation of okay I

can understand where that's coming from because when you've got a principal, highly educated white men and women coming from pro-social backgrounds, coming from money, coming from wealth, coming from good social standing, when you've got all of them and they're trying to teach 'blackfellas' and there's just that complete disconnect and they don't know where 'blackfellas' are coming from, that's to me the foundation, they need to go and see how 'blackfellas' are living. Then from there they need to build, so how can we address this issue and they need to take one step at a time (Claire).

Although Claire's statement may be considered controversial by some, she is voicing her own lived practical experiences working within community on a daily basis. It is important to clarify however, that Claire works in a professional capacity with many Indigenous peoples within the community who are experiencing extreme financial poverty and social disadvantage, therefore her comment must be considered in this context, rather than essentialise or characterise all Indigenous peoples as experiencing the same hardships. Although, Claire specified that this proposal might seem 'cliché', she stressed the critical need for educators to understand the family backgrounds of Indigenous children as significantly important in relation to their schooling experiences. Claire believed that when teachers develop genuine relationships with Indigenous students and their families, they demonstrate a culturally responsive teaching approach that is inclusive and supportive, and this results in positive outcomes for students (Harrison, 2011; Perso & Hayward, 2015).

Some participants believe that many principals and teachers who are at the frontline in schools do not take the time to engage with Indigenous children or to find out about their well-being. Consequently, these educators lose the opportunity to establish and develop meaningful relationships, which considers the multidimensional lived experiences of some Indigenous children. Alinta gave a similar account to Claire, focusing on the lack of relational connections.

Our administration and our staff need to get some life lessons (laughs quietly). I don't think that they're in touch with what's going on with kids beyond the classroom. They do not, teachers/staff do not, take the time to ask if the student is okay. It's just straight into work, head down. Our kids need that connection,

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they need that time just to say hi how are you going, you know, rather than just getting straight into their schoolwork, you know they need to connect with them. You don't know what's happened that night, the night before that kid's come to school in the morning and it's worth asking, how are you? (Alinta).

Alinta stressed the importance of making personal connections with students before teachers launched straight into academic work. Here, Alinta is suggesting that there needs to be an understanding that some children may be experiencing difficult situations at home and that schoolwork might not be their first priority when they enter into a classroom.

Another participant, Lexi, who was undertaking her Bachelor's Degree in Education became quite emotional during the interview process and specified that she had set up a meeting with a Deputy Principal at her children's school to discuss why both of her sons, who had only been enrolled at the school for one year, were receiving poor academic results. Lexi stated that the response she received was dismissive and hurtful. She claimed that the Deputy Principal deflected her concerns and insisted, "It must be very hard for you to go back to school, to university at your age" and intimated that this was the reason that her children's grades were falling. Firstly, this response overlooked the obligation that the school's leader had to the parent and also to the children in her care. Secondly, parental blame was used by the Deputy Principal as a way to deflect responsibility away from the school and back to the parent without any sincere investigation as to why the boys were not progressing well at school. Unfortunately, in this instance the parent responded to this encounter and the Deputy Principal's negative feedback by removing her children two weeks later from this particular school.

Claire cited differences in social equity and suggested that the majority of teachers working in schools "have never stepped outside of their own bubble." She maintained that for most teachers, "life had been steady" for them, expressing that many teachers just do not understand what life is like for many Indigenous families who are struggling. It must be acknowledged however, that not all Indigenous or non-Indigenous teachers have experienced a 'steady life' and that this is one participant's perception and observation relating to her own personal experiences of the education system.

Adam was asked to consider whether he believed that schools were providing safe spaces and if he thought that this impacted upon schooling experiences of young Indigenous males.

I think that comes down to who runs the school, how it's run i.e. the principal and other of the (unclear) who work within the school grounds. This is the problem I think where the schools need to be actually interested and listen to these young fellas and actually ask these young fellas, ask them about, if they want to tell their story, whatever their story is no matter how mean or bad it is, or how great it is. I think for the education system to make a change, I think that they need to value, value what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men did in their communities before colonisation (Adam).

Adam proposed that good leadership was the key to establishing culturally safe spaces at school for Indigenous boys. He insisted that there needed to be a genuine interest by educators as to the welfare and safety of Indigenous boys. He also maintained that the 'stories' of young Indigenous males needed to be heard and implied that the role of Indigenous males was undervalued in society. Adam asserted that there needed to be acknowledgement as to the important role Indigenous males played within their communities.

The data also revealed that some Indigenous parents had difficulties accessing their schools – particularly the leadership within. In some instances, receptionists at school position themselves as 'gatekeepers', determining whether parents' concerns warrant time to meet directly with the principal of the school or not. As outlined in Chapter Two, Partington (1998) found that principals and teachers could be disrespectful to Indigenous parents/carers who wished to communicate with school staff when they were concerned about their child's educational progress. Gramsci (1971) indicated that the racial stigmatization of Indigenous peoples by their colonisers, sustained the hegemonic practices of marginalisation and alienation, thereby ensuring control. Lexi suggested that school offices were like "production lines" and recalls that on one occasion she approached the school administration to deal with a serious bullying incident concerning her child.

You can stand there and say, 'I would like to see the Principal' but you've got no hope in hell really and that appointment could be two weeks away and by then it's easier to go and deal with it yourself, isn't it? It's easier just to pull your kids out of that school and not send them anymore (Lexi).

However, Lexi also reiterated that some parents were reluctant to become involved in their children's schooling.

Parents aren't involved in their children's education at all and in some ways, they are not even encouraged to be involved because they [parents] are seen as 'aggressive' or a 'threat' you might even say (Lexi).

The contradiction described by Lexi does not necessarily represent a negative attitude towards a parental desire to be involved in their child's schooling, but instead emphasises how parents of Indigenous children are perceived by some educators. Consequently, Indigenous parents may become reluctant to communicate with principals, staff and administrators at school for fear of being perceived as 'aggressive' or a 'threat' to school staff.

As highlighted in Chapter Two, positive educational leadership around issues such as these may contribute to successful outcomes (Herbert, Anderson, Price and Stehbens, 1999) and in turn provide culturally safe spaces for not only children, but parents as well (Niesche, 2013). It could be argued that positive school leadership, which flows through to all staff in the school setting, is essential in the process of establishing equitable and culturally inclusive relational practices which offer a safe space within schools.

6.1.2 Cultural Capacity of Educators in Schools: theory practice disconnection

Participants were asked about their thoughts and experiences regarding the cultural capacity of educators in Queensland state schools. Claire and Alinta gave differing responses.

I think that they have got some good foundations, but I think to put it into practice, I think they've got a missing link between the implementation and the design phase (Claire).

Schools do what schools want to do...if they don't want to go out and reach out to community and somebody just wants to remain ignorant…that's where it is...or that's where it remains (Alinta).

Although Claire was aware that Education Queensland had 'some good foundations' to work with, she also acknowledged that there was a critical gap between the foundations that existed and their practical implementation in schools. She believed that little progress had been made on improving the cultural capacity of teachers in schools. Whilst, Alinta expressed some frustration and identified that educators made a personal choice as to whether they would connect with or refuse to establish any interaction with community. Importantly, this emphasized that although there was an expectation that teachers would positively interact, there was no obligation to do so.

Danny and Alinta stressed that educators needed to establish genuine partnerships and connections with community. The necessity to understand and acknowledge how educators' approach cultural protocols and the significant impact that this had upon the treatment of Indigenous students was also articulated.

I think that people need to communicate more with community cultural facilities that are out there and be more connected with those places so that when, and if, one of our Aboriginal boys or girls need support, they've got it rather than stumbling to look for something. Education should have a system set up by now (Alinta).

While Alinta suggested that 'systems' should already be in place in schools that offer support services for young Indigenous people, it was clear that in her experience this was not the case. For Alinta, the connections by schools to Indigenous community organisations was severely lacking.

Danny identified one of the cultural protocol barriers that young Indigenous people

experienced at school and explained that some educators reacted negatively to culturally sensitive situations, rather than adopting a pro-active approach. As one Danny explained,

> *Yeh, numerous times we have had young people [who] have sorry business to deal with and it's just one of those things, they're from big families. Unfortunately, yeh, there's been some sorry business happen and teachers' have just said you guys just use that as an excuse. And sorry actually, it's happened, my family is just at that age. And teachers have said sorry that's bogus, we can't keep on having sorry business all this time* (Danny).

Deeply sensitive issues such as Sorry Business were considered by some teachers as an excuse for students to be absent from school. Both participants acknowledged the responsibility of educators to increase their cultural capacity and by doing so educators would be able to understand and respectfully accept the importance of Indigenous protocols.

It was proposed, that schools needed to acknowledge and celebrate culture, but Adam claimed that some educators were averse to this due to their feelings of past guilt from injustices inflicted upon Indigenous peoples.

> *I mean we are…one of the oldest living cultures and everyone will say that, but the schools won't embrace it, governments won't embrace it, it's because there is so much guilt about what happened* (Adam).

Adam highlighted that there was some resistance by schools and government organisations to fully commit to learning about Indigenous cultures. His observation was that a majority of non-Indigenous people felt uncomfortable about the past treatment of Indigenous peoples and therefore employed avoidance as a tactic. He highlighted that many educators had no understanding about how to respond to, or deal with issues of colonisation. Importantly, what Adam was describing could be seen as a revocation of professional responsibility by those in the educational workforce and in government agencies. In turn, this may be perceived by Indigenous peoples as a refusal by governments and their agents to increase their cultural capacity.

Three of the participants observed that the majority of teachers working in schools were 'white' and they believed that most lacked any knowledge or awareness of the everyday occurrences experienced by many Indigenous peoples. When asked if she could explain this further, Lexi responded,

It is different, yeh, it is a completely different culture. That, 'white' middle class culture, is not where I've come from and it is not where my kids are coming from. As much as I'm striving to get there, you know, it's very, very hard. You know all of my friends in this community, a lot of them are single Mum's. They are raising six children by themselves, while their partner is in prison and there's yeh...there's no chance of sitting six kids around a table every night and saying [emphasis in a posh voice] 'Let's all do our homework, together, let's all do our reading'. Can you imagine? (Lexi).

There was exasperation with the apparent lack of understanding by educators in relation to what daily life might be like for many Indigenous peoples. Interestingly, Lexi pointed out that she was "striving to get there" expressing her attempts to move into middle class culture. Her description of family life in her community indicated that there were many single mothers who were caring for their children without the support of a father figure in the home.

Claire and Vann both commented on the knowledge and awareness of teachers.

We've got white middle aged, or straight out of university [teachers], from that textbook kind of thing, so you've kind of got like two cohorts that completely miss all the culture, it's a whitewash really, you know (Claire).

Then even if those things are all together and going well and the young person's still sitting in school, are the teachers engaging them? Are they - is there - for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men, if this is what we're focusing on, is culture not only identified, is it welcomed and is it respected, and is that something that they feel? (Vann).

Both participants appeared to show no confidence in what was presently occurring in

schools. Vann specified that even if young Indigenous boys attended school, that there could be no assurance that teachers were culturally competent to keep the students engaged in the learning process.

It may be inferred from the data that participants observed the cultural capacity of some teachers as habitually lacking with regards to Indigenous Knowledges and their ability to effectively engage with Indigenous children and their families. Interestingly, research (see, Ma Rhea, Anderson & Atkinson, 2012; Partington, 2003; Perso, 2012; Shipp, 2013) shows that many non-Indigenous educators concede that they do not have the necessary skills to engage with Indigenous Knowledges and are fearful to include them within the curriculum without seeming to be tokenistic. This is an extremely problematic dilemma.

There also appears to be a conspicuous lack of consideration by some educators as to the everyday occurrences affecting Indigenous students and their families. Therefore, this requires substantially more than educators to possess cultural competency with curricula, it also necessitates their critical understanding and acceptance of the historical and contemporary issues affecting Indigenous peoples (Anderson, 2012).

6.1.3 Relevant Curriculum in Schools: connecting culture and curriculum

There has been much debate over the past few years surrounding the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the Australian curriculum. However, there is a deeper more pressing concern for leaders to consider what an inclusive curriculum should look like in mainstream schooling. The participants offered a range of contrasting views when discussing relevant curriculum delivery for Indigenous boys. When asked about the importance of the current curriculum offered to young Indigenous males, and how such curriculum engaged these students in their learning, Adam stated,

If we are going to put kids in school, make it culturally appropriate, tailor make it as just an issue to get these kids into school, you know a five or ten year plan, tailor make education or schools for boys that are disengaged. It doesn't have

to be academia, so long as they can read and write. Aboriginal boys are more physical and athletic than they are academic, flat stick, it's a given (Adam).

Adam maintained that in order for Indigenous boys to engage with learning at primary and secondary school, they needed to have initial support services in place. He suggested that sport was a catalyst that offered a 'way in' to an inclusive curriculum for Indigenous boys, asserting that academia was introduced through the processes of colonisation and assimilation. Although there have been many successful sporting programs that have engaged or re-engaged Indigenous boys in mainstream education, to date there has been little research undertaken to determine what the long-term effects of such programs have on the overall educational outcomes for Indigenous males. Similarly, Ella expressed that 'school engagement' was also a key factor to the constructive participation of Indigenous boys and their learning in a mainstream school setting. She specified that support for students around cultural skills was lacking and acknowledged that it should play a significantly more important role as part of a school's curriculum.

Just going back to camp, getting in a canoe and rowing, or going for a walk on country. Back to country; I'd take them back to country. This is all we need to do. You can still do it in a playgroup, in the playground, by just taking them out into the paddock. I've got Indigenous games there we can play. Shadow chasing, they're Indigenous games. See, I could just take them out there for five minutes, okay, let's do this. I've already got games in my head that I can start - bang, bang, bang, bang - they'll be yes, we like that. See how you're getting boys involved. They've got to be involved (Ella).

Ella insisted that giving Indigenous boys the opportunity to connect with Country leads to more involvement in their learning at school. It was also emphasized that ownership of Indigenous led cultural programs at school instilled leadership qualities and a sense of belonging for Indigenous children. Ella expressed that much of the current curriculum was not at all relevant and was detached from the real-life experiences of some Indigenous boys. She suggested, however, that there should be more provision of, and intensive support around literacy and numeracy.

One of the other participants, Leigh, believed that the curriculum on offer was solely dependent upon the individual school, and when it was evident that there was an absence of Indigenous culture in the mainstream curriculum, this resulted in the cultural isolation of many Indigenous boys who were attending school.

Isolation, like bring them in closer. That was another thing that was annoying about [this] school. They didn't celebrate anything Indigenous. My first high school did. It was really Indigenous orientated. You would like have fellas come out…You'd bloody paint up a whole tree trunk (unclear) and they'd teach you how to make fires. Like it was cool. We had so much. So, our school wasn't offering that. So maybe 'read' your education system and see what they are offering. I went to [this] school around here and it's just academic. I find that some schools just push sports and some academic and then some just of a bit of an all-rounder. Well I reckon just a bit more support (Leigh).

While the promotion of sport in the curriculum was welcomed by some participants as a possible way to engage Indigenous boys at school, others had a slightly adverse reaction to focusing exclusively on sport as a way to engage Indigenous boys with the school curriculum.

We're not just the pin up person for sports days. You know, we value education as well as sport. Let's not just have the football stars, let's not just have the sports stars, let's have people – significant leaders, Aboriginal leaders in community who are doing a whole bunch of other things as well, other than sports. Sport is great, and I believe it is an avenue, but there are actually significant other leaders in other fields (Vann).

Participants gave varying responses about what they identified as relevant curriculum in mainstream school for Indigenous boys, it was evident that connection to culture was considered a critically important factor for all participants. Depending upon the school that Indigenous boys attended, it was established that connection to relevant curriculum may have overall direct impact upon their engagement with the curriculum and with mainstream school. While some mainstream schools offer a range of curriculum opportunities and embed Indigenous culture into the curriculum, others

offer Indigenous boys minimal or no connection to Indigenous culture in the curriculum whatsoever. As highlighted in Chapter Two, resistance to embedding Indigenous perspectives in school curriculums significantly impacts upon whether Indigenous children feel included at school (Hunt 2013; McCallum, Waller & Meadows, 2012). The inclusion of more sport was emphasized by some of the participants as a way to engage Indigenous boys in mainstream curriculum, however it was asserted by one of the participants that this should not be viewed as the decisive factor to engage Indigenous boys at school but should be an option considered alongside inclusive, academic curricula.

6.1.4 Education priorities and school retention of Indigenous boys

In their professional roles within the community, more than half of the participants interviewed, perceived that educational priorities were not necessarily an important factor in the lives of many Indigenous boys. The participants suggested that there were much more pressing needs such as being fed on a daily basis and having safe housing to rely upon.

Adam articulated that for those young Indigenous males who had already been incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility and had recently been released, government expectations were that young Indigenous males should immediately be either 'learning or earning'. There was also a sense that young males were having to fight against the justice system, to have the right to go home, and in turn this impacted upon their learning opportunities.

It's a really rocky road and a hell of a journey for these boys to get home. They will have to fight up against the department, the police, youth detention everything just to go home, so education is not their priority they just want to go home. But the department of child safety is not allowing them or supporting this boy, so straight off the bat saying, "I don't support you going back to your family", so that's going to get this kid upset. So, he's not worrying about his education, and so to get there, he has got to do all of these risky things which land him in juvenile detention (Adam).

Adam claimed that recidivism was a genuine concern for many of the young Indigenous males who were released from detention, indicating that support measures for young Indigenous males were not always forthcoming and, in many instances, education was the least important priority in their lives. He indicated that the primacy for a lot of these boys was simply to get home and see their families, rather than focussing on going back into school or looking for employment. Adam went on to explain,

They're not worried about the academic, being educated. Some of these boys can't read or write, 14 and 15, some of these kids that I work with can't read or write, you know, so why is that? It's survival. Everything is stacked up against them from the day they were born (Adam).

Adam questioned why many of the young Indigenous males he supported were illiterate. He indicated that this may be one of the reasons for the indifference some Indigenous boys felt towards schooling, as they had great difficulties understanding the work. Adam suggested that a lack of literacy skills was a critical barrier for many of these young males. He indicated that this was extremely problematic when the legal requirement for those young Indigenous males who were released from juvenile detention was to either re-engage with education, or to find employment. He emphasized that there was a lack of equitable opportunities for many Indigenous boys from birth.

Danny held a similar belief with regards to literacy, claiming that most of the young Indigenous males that he worked with and supported had extremely low levels of literacy.

Oh, there's some of the kids who can't write. They can write their own name, but this is some of our Indigenous young people that are, they're pushing seventeen (Danny).

He went on to say that many of the younger Indigenous males he was supporting to re-engage at school were also illiterate and therefore had great difficulty participating at school.

That's the struggle that we've got, that young people trying to go to grade eight or nine level, but they can't read. Now for whatever reason they fell through the cracks when they were younger, whether they were, ah missed a lot of school they can't read, they can't write, and that makes it hard for us, obviously with us not being teachers. We try and help the young people with simple things. So that's another reason why they can be excluded from school because they just can't keep up, they're not even at that level (Danny).

Vann indicated that although school was a place where challenges for young males could be identified and possibly addressed, his experiences revealed that these opportunities could be missed by teachers. He also suggested that the school system was not responding to the needs of young Indigenous males and this was problematic when trying to engage and retain young Indigenous males at school.

School is - education is such a place now where mental health can be picked up, things - those challenges. Social structures and social systems be worked on in there because you build friends because you're amongst peers. But our young people, the young men that I know and that I've worked with over the two decades now, that's broken down and it's broken down for some reason or some reasons. So, it's very, very rare that I would work with a young person who would have - who will be at school (Vann).

Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny and Pardo (1992) claim it is critical that schools and teachers create safe spaces for very young children to deal with and find alternative solutions to extremely complex issues that they [children] may be experiencing at home. In doing so, educators affirm children's lived experiences at home and at school to be considered equally valid. However, in many instances, participants indicated that young Indigenous males did not have access to Indigenous male role models in school settings, thereby making it challenging for them to share social and cultural difficulties that they may be experiencing without feeling stigmatized.

Vann also suggested that the inability to educate and retain young Indigenous boys at school may be considered an inter-generational issue. The social and emotional experiences of Indigenous boys whose parents have also encountered difficult home

lives may impact greatly upon the aspirations of young Indigenous males. This in turn may present barriers for many Indigenous boys who believe schools to be predominantly 'white' Eurocentric schooling systems that have little to offer them culturally, socially or economically.

That's generational as well. You possibly have parents who haven't been to school, or education isn't a high priority for them. So, there's a number of things that happen with those people. Then if you actually get the young person to school, it's about the engagement (Vann).

Alinta acknowledged that many Indigenous parents and grandparents converse with their children at an early age about their own negative schooling experiences and how they were mistreated by teachers and other students at school. She suggested that Indigenous children may bring to school preconceived ideas about what school will be like for them. Partington (2003) maintains that schools should be places where children can feel safe and secure from any external issues or challenges that they experience. Young Indigenous boys need to feel culturally safe and be encouraged to succeed at education (Partington, 2003). Similar to Alinta, Claire also referred to the negative schooling experiences of the parents of some Indigenous boys. She insisted that this was a flow-on effect for a lot of children who were disengaged or excluded from the education system.

You know like Mum obviously hasn't had a good school life, or has never had that person, that role model to let her know that school is probably the best place to be and it has just kind of like overflowed from there (Claire).

The legacy of past discriminatory government policies which negatively affected many Indigenous peoples, is still impacting upon the education of current generations of Indigenous children and has resulted in a distrust of 'white' society.

6.1.5 Appropriate learning environments to support Indigenous boys

Appropriate learning environments to support young Indigenous males at school was discussed in some depth. Contradictory views were expressed by some of the participants as to what might be the most suitable and appropriate learning environment for Indigenous boys. Adam insisted there was a need to set up new foundations in education, claiming that many 'young Indigenous males did not fit into mainstream schooling'. Danny agreed and suggested that many Indigenous boys needed a different style of schooling. He asserted that what was on offer was not always appropriate for Indigenous boys. As Shay (2017) suggests, some flexi-schools[11] offer alternative and innovated approaches into education for young Indigenous peoples, with Shay and Heck (2015) insisting that this model is working as a result of, the significance of relationships being built; the prominence of community and sense of belonging; and the empowerment of young Indigenous peoples.

That's what we try to do. Some sort of flexi-learning, some sort of flexi-school. Some young people are wired or geared to jump straight into trade learning, hands on, rather than just sitting in a classroom looking at a blackboard or a whiteboard is just boring for some of these young people. Like I suppose they are caged, like they've got to do the 40 min period, that structure doesn't always suit a lot of our young people (Danny).

Danny maintained that mainstream schooling may not offer Indigenous boys appropriate learning environments. Although, he paradoxically asserted that some Indigenous boy 'are not wired' for this type of schooling. Danny's contention is dichotomous by its very nature; however, his overall assertion is that there is some kind of 'lacuna' or disconnection for some Indigenous boys and the type of schooling environment on offer. Conspicuously, Danny believed that some young Indigenous males feel like they are "caged" at school. The sense of feeling trapped is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in Indigenous communities and has been recognised as one

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[11] Flexi-schools are alternative education or flexible learning sites, to that of mainstream schools.

of the risk factors contributing to the high rates of Indigenous youth suicide. Danny elaborated on the current schooling environment and stated,

From my experience umm I've always enjoyed being outdoors. The structures can still be put together, but the way they present outdoors, umm because outdoors you are getting back to mother-nature, because in our culture mother-nature plays an important role, back to your land. Yeh, there's no walls out in the bush. I suppose there is a connection with the land when you're outside, and they feel more at ease, more relaxed, rather than being clinical. It [classrooms] can have a feeling of being in a cell, or it can have the feeling of being in an interview room in a police station, yeh a watch house. That's not what they want, and I suppose being outdoors they feel connected (Danny).

Danny made the point that some Indigenous boys may in fact draw parallels between being 'caged in a classroom' with being detained in a 'cell', 'police station' or 'watch house', all of which are spaces where Indigenous children feel an overwhelming sense of anxiety and powerlessness. In the1999 report '*Growing up as an Indigenous Male*' Frank Spry from the Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation in Nhulunbuy stated, "the empowerment of Indigenous males is crucial to the raising of self-esteem, quality of life, health status and spiritual wellbeing" (Spry, 1999, p.3). As stated in Chapter Three, the shift of power away from Indigenous boys in a mainstream classroom setting may result in feelings of helplessness, alienation and loss of autonomy. Comparisons between schools and prisons have long been debated and although there are differences, there are also distinct similarities between both.

Another participant, Susan, maintained that many Indigenous boys who were taught in mainstream classrooms "fought against that type of structure." Although contentious to some, it was suggested that rather than educate in a 'normal' classroom structure it was recommended that,

You know, move the things out the road, let them sit on the ground, take your shoes off - like do it like they would if they're in a family situation and the Elders were sitting around, you know they wouldn't be sitting at a table and chairs (Susan).

Behavioural issues were also cited in relation to appropriate learning environments with Lexi asserting,

They [teachers] believe if the behaviour is managed if everyone is sitting at their desk, they are not speaking, and they have a pencil in their hand and they are writing stuff down, teachers think that, that is a good classroom. Where students are shoved into a box and forcefully told to remain there and not speak. I think that's what is detrimental to a child's wellbeing (Lexi).

In some instances, participants believed that teachers uphold an attitude towards greater levels of behavioural control over Indigenous boys as a way of reinforcing behaviour management in classroom settings. As highlighted in Chapter Two, at times the over-surveillance of Indigenous boys in classrooms, schools and in public spaces is particularly worrying and indicates a tendency to over-regulate certain minority groups more so than others in social settings (Gebhard, 2012; Raible & Irizarry, 2010).
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6.2 Reasons for suspension and exclusions from school

The Code of School Behaviour is the framework set out by the Department of Education Queensland to ensure schools align themselves with the guidelines of the department. Each schools *Responsible Behaviour Management Plan* (RBMP) is independently driven by the individual school community, therefore they are multifarious by their very nature. The reasons for suspensions and/or exclusions are based upon adherence to the RBMP. However, the principal of each individual school has sole discretion as to how each student is managed in regard to school disciplinary action under the RBMP.

Although participants offered several different reasons as to why Indigenous boys had been suspended or excluded from schools, there were some key themes:

- Poverty/home life,
- Cultural insensitivity of educators,

- Inappropriate behaviour of boys,
- Racism,
- Learning difficulties, and
- Poor literacy skills.

Five of the participants recalled incidents at schools that related to these key themes. They spoke about how a number of young Indigenous boys were disciplined through suspension or exclusion from school, some for minor infringements of school behaviour management policies. All of the participants indicated that they had seen significantly high rates of Indigenous boys suspended from school and four of the participants witnessed high rates of exclusion of Indigenous boys for various infractions, some of which were invariably linked to poverty, continued absenteeism and health issues.

According to Queensland Education, poor attendance at school has been flagged as "an early warning sign for future adverse outcomes" (Department of Education Training & Employment, 2013, p.3) and the mantra, *Every Day Counts* has been used as a catch-cry of the Queensland Education department to promote school attendance for many years. However, the use of suspensions and exclusions for the most part is solely at the discretion of Queensland state school principals since they gained increased power and autonomy from changes to the Department of Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) *Amendment Act 2013*. Each of the participants were asked, *how many of the Indigenous boys that you have worked with in your role have been suspended or excluded from school?* Adam claimed,

> *Here in my job, daily, we're just, there were a couple of kids just here this morning and we said you are not staying here, you've got to go. There are kids suspended daily. This room is where we sit kids when they get suspended and mostly boys* (Adam).

Most of the participants concurred with Adam's comments.

> *Aww (huge sigh) a good proportion of them, definitely a big proportion of them* (Claire).

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I don't know the exact number, but it would be very, very high. It would be a high number (Vann).

Ella and Alinta both indicated, from their own experiences working with Indigenous boys, that suspension and exclusion was a regular occurrence. In some cases, for what appeared to be minor infractions of school policy.

They're quick to suspend them.   That's their solution, they're just quick to suspend (Ella).

Oh, lots and when I say lots you know, every, bar one boy, every young boy that's been in education that I have worked with at some time has been suspended from school for minor things, such as not wearing the dress code (Alinta).

These comments from participants, corresponded with the statistics offered in Chapter Two around the comparatively high exclusion rates of Indigenous children compared to that, of their non-Indigenous counterparts. Alinta suggested that the practice of suspending Indigenous boys appeared to be the solution for dealing with many other issues, apart from behavioural matters.

I can tell you particularly about a number of young Aboriginal boys at a high school that I worked at who came to school repeatedly without the right coloured socks on. Repeatedly came to school without a pen or a book. Those boys were given a day's suspension and they came back to school and say probably didn't have the right socks on, or shorts, or shoes and therefore were given two days suspension from school. Come back to school, repeated the same behaviour and then got a week's suspension. In that week those boys have played up and got themselves into some trouble that's landed them in the juvenile detention centre out at Wacol (Alinta).

Alinta's story demonstrates that in this instance, there appeared to be no flexibility of school rules and the decision to continue to suspend these students showed a zero-

tolerance attitude; where there was no room to negotiate or discuss why these boys were coming into school with incorrect school uniforms or did not have appropriate school supplies.

Yeh, I've had a few young people, well not a few, I've had heaps of my young people telling me they've been suspended just because of being picked on. They don't have food to go to school with. Or just because of family situations (Claire).

I know that out of frustration, due to a number of those things, boys have been excluded or suspended for fighting umm because they've experienced those things. Racism, being blamed for these things, when they weren't there, when they (teachers) said they were. Umm we've had young people excluded from schools for being blamed for tagging - graffiti umm and yet they didn't do it. They've been excluded for poor attendance (Danny).

Claire and Danny both emphasized that many Indigenous boys experienced bullying as well as racism. Importantly, however, it cannot be identified whether the bullying of Indigenous boys distinctly relates to the practice of racial abuse by other children at school. Danny suggested that poor attendance of Indigenous boys was also a factor for their exclusion from school. Adam was concerned about the defiance shown towards authority figures at school and remarked,

It's a pattern of defiance. Yeh, defiance pretty much. Yeh, because they are good kids they just don't listen, and they refuse to listen, and they will talk back and threaten and do whatever, so it's just defiance. Yeh, that's probably one of the biggest patterns. But there is a bigger problem it goes deeper than that. I think it's the home life. A lot of this stuff here umm has to do with identity it all comes back to who they are where they are from (Adam).

Adam believed that although the boys were 'good kids', most were headstrong, and that this became a pattern that they adopted during their social interface with teachers at school. He went on to say that the underlying problem for most Indigenous boys related to their lack of self-identity, their home life and their relationship with the world.

Alinta commented that although she believed that the rules applied to everyone at school, there were some instances where young Indigenous males found it difficult to understand why they were being punished in the first place and consequently challenged the authority of those doing the punishing.

I believe there are the same rules for everybody. Because most of the time the Indigenous boys that I know at school who have been in trouble didn't understand why they were in trouble. And yet in comparison the 'white' kids just seem to go along with it, the punishment; the consequences. Whereas, young Aboriginal boys challenge it because of their lack of understanding as to why it is actually happening to them (Alinta).

The data clearly indicate that suspension and exclusion of Indigenous boys from school, many of whom have parents who are experiencing financial hardship, is fundamentally punishing children for systemic societal problems that have continued since colonisation. The transgenerational and persistent cyclical poverty for some Indigenous families has been identified by participants as a determining factor in the rudiments of everyday living, and dictates what is prioritized as important for some Indigenous families. Most of the participants stressed that for many Indigenous boys, this has led to mainstream education being considered less important in their lives.

Just like the intergenerational trauma, we come back to that intergenerational trauma, Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Mum doesn't have a place to live and you've got your little brothers and sisters that need food and Mum's got cut off from Centrelink. How is a young man supposed to go to school if he's got nowhere to live? So, it's just what they think is the most important thing at the time for them and obviously for them it's not school (Claire).

Poverty, racism, a lack of literacy skills and behavioural issues were flagged by participants as implicit contributors to the suspension and exclusion of Indigenous boys. The fact that 'only 46 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and older were employed' (Ewing, Sarra, Price, O'Brien & Priddle, 2017) has a significant bearing on the daily lives of many Indigenous people. Whether

they can indeed afford to purchase the required school uniforms for their children, the necessary resources to attend school, or even provide their children with school lunches was questioned. It may be argued that cyclical poverty is a result of structural racism and from this transpires the far-reaching consequences of how behavioural issues can manifest at a school level that contributes to the suspension and exclusion of many Indigenous boys (see, Dreise, Milgate, Perrett & Meston, 2016).

All participants contended that there was a tangible lack of understanding by teachers around cultural issues for Indigenous families and children. They maintained that many teachers were culturally insensitive when interacting with Indigenous children.

For whatever reason there's Sorry Business happening and they (Indigenous students) go off and engage with their families and that might not be locally. Sometimes schools, students, as well as the faculty, can't understand Sorry Business and why they do it, but it is important that they do it (Claire).

Claire suggested that there was minimal understanding by both staff and students about the significance of Sorry Business and that this was something that needed to be recognised and accepted by the school community. She claimed that this may impact upon the attendance of Indigenous students at school as in some instances children are required to travel long distances to be with family after someone has passed away.

Adam spoke of a conversation that took place with a young Indigenous boy he was trying to re-engage back into school.

In fact, I was actually just speaking with a young fella the other day and this is why he didn't want to go to school. They've got a white person telling him about who his Aboriginal people were and he's well no, and he told me, I've got my Grandfather for that. I don't need to sit in the school and have people tell me who I am and where I'm from. It is just mainstream. It is band aid stuff. Don't get me wrong people who are doing this stuff have all the best intentions for our kids but it's just that yeh culture is not really respected. (Adam).

Although Adam indicated that there may be good intentions behind what the teacher was trying to do, he maintained that there needed to be more cultural understanding and respect of cultural protocols by teachers in schools.

Both Danny and Vann made similar comments about the culturally insensitive nature of some non-Indigenous teaching staff. Vann commented on educational institutions which are responsible for educating teaching staff in general.   This stressed that teachers must have critical awareness when engaging with Indigenous curriculum, ensuring that they do not encroach upon what should be taught at home with family, or from the community.

> *That's what we have found from time to time, is that people are culturally insensitive. They just think the terminology, the analogy, they just think that 'we all got hit with the same stick' and it's like actually there's certain ways of doing things with people regardless of what background you are from, especially Indigenous, there has to be some sensitivity around it. It's frustrating.* (Danny)

Here, Danny described his experiences with some non-Indigenous educators who appeared to ultimately view Indigenous peoples as a homogenous group, rather than approach each person respectfully, acknowledging that each individual has their own ideas, thoughts and perspectives to contribute as an Indigenous person.

Furthermore, Vann insisted that institutions responsible for educating teachers had a responsibility to teach about First Nation's culture, even offering that it should be 'mandatory'.

> *I think universities and those that produce teachers, they actually need to be teaching the right stuff as well. It needs to be mandatory. We are, we're talking about First Nation's people, people of this country. They should be taught about culture and it should be respected, it should be honoured, and it should be safe to put your hand up and say I'm an Aboriginal person, I'm a Torres Strait Islander person. I'm an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young man* (Vann).

Vann went on to say that young Indigenous males needed to feel comfortable in their

own skin and be acknowledged for who they are and be proud to do so without experiencing anxiety or fear in the process. Importantly, while there is mandatory Indigenous content within the Australian curriculum, it does not yet appear to be translating into improved practice for many non-Indigenous educators.

In contrast to this though, some participants identified ways in which stereotypes were reinforced by non-Indigenous educators, through either a lack of knowledge, or due to cultural insensitivity surrounding cultural protocols. Claire, Adam, Danny and Vann all expressed immense frustration at the inaction of schools and educators to purposefully engage with Indigenous children and families around these issues. They suggested that there needed to be genuine attempts increase their capacity around Indigenous Knowledges, histories and cultural protocols.

6.3 Behaviour and Well-Being of Indigenous Boys

Behavioural issues emerged consistently in conversations with participants. Lexi claimed that her young sons, both in early childhood classrooms, were being singled out by teachers as having serious behavioural issues. One teacher's solution to the inappropriate behaviour was to exclude one of the boys from participating in all classroom activities on a daily basis and made him sit in the corner of the room. At lunch-time he was then required to sit outside of the Principal's Office until school resumed. It was later identified that her son was persistently being physically bullied by another student at the school. Despite this, the parent insisted that the teacher had often reported back to her, that it was her son that was displaying inappropriate behaviour and that there were no other options available to her but to exclude him. The 'internal' exclusion of this young Indigenous boy from classroom activities, and also from socialising with other children during playtime activities, led to a school refusal by the child.[12] The social exclusion of young children from participating in classroom or play activities can result in feelings of isolation, anxiety and anger at a very early age, which explicitly relates to teacher discipline, suspensions and stereotypes discussed previously in Section 6.2.

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[12] A school refusal is when a child decides that they do not wish to participate in or attend school.

Well he was crying every morning because he did not want to go to school. He was doubled over with stomach pain, he was vomiting, um in the toilet because he'd been punched in the stomach at school and it just went on and on (Lexi).

Another participant, Susan, also indicated that 'bullying' was a relentless practice that was an everyday occurrence experienced by Indigenous children at school.

But the bullying is still going on in school and a lot of our kids have scars from it and that's mainstream school (Susan).

Susan's use of the phrase, 'a lot of our kids have scars from it' describes the serious harm experienced by Indigenous children, which may be an indicator of racism, rather than 'bullying' per se that is being directed towards Indigenous children.   Bodkin-Andrews, et al. (2012) insist that much more research is required to distinguish the complex nuances and distinctions between forms of 'bullying' and discriminatory racist practices and attitudes that exist in schools. However, in a comprehensive study undertaken by Priest, King, Bécares and Kavanagh (2016) in this area, indicated that "reported bullying and racial discrimination were differently patterned by ethnicity, particularly for visible minority children" (p. 1883).

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An additional area of concern was whether assessment or diagnosis was required for some Indigenous boys who may present with symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). One participant indicated that this consequently led to the maladministration of students around suspension and/or exclusion. Danny stated,

Yeh, it's not acknowledged, and I think there are a number of our young people that don't get care plans or assessed as being ADHD, 'they are just disruptive and disrespectful so and so's' which is not always the case (Danny).

Danny explained that some students who may not have been diagnosed with ADHD, were instead simply being categorised by educators, as exhibiting problem behaviours. Additionally, Leigh suggested that during his own time at school, he may

have not been diagnosed as having ADHD, and that this may have contributed to some of the issues he experienced at school, particularly around his own hyperactivity.

I think I was just an undiagnosed case of maybe ADHD you know. I have a lot of energy. I have always had it, been on the go. I've never been able to sit still, it's just me. I am a very active person. Everybody that knows me, knows that is my personality (Leigh).

Oppositely, Lexi indicated that after some behavioural issues arose for one Indigenous boy in the classroom, the teacher appeared to be eager to complete paperwork to have the child assessed to see if he had ADHD. Although Lexi believed that this boy was being assessed 'quite differently' to some of the other children. When asked to explain further, Lexi explained,

Like he would get assessed with more fervour and the state school teachers do have the flexibility to do that (Lexi).

It appeared that Lexi held the belief that there was a more intense process undertaken by the teacher. Lexi's perception of how the teacher responded gave the impression that there were some negative connotations associated with how the process was conducted by the teacher.

Loh, et al. (2017) maintain that there is a cultural knowledge gap surrounding the diagnosis of ADHD in Indigenous children and that 'differences in interpretation of behaviour impact on help seeking behaviour, acceptance of diagnosis, and treatment compliance' (p.2). Unless all classroom teachers are educated to understand and recognise the clinical symptoms of ADHD and what constitutes orthodox behaviour within different cultural communities, there may be some confusion as to what is accepted as the 'norm' in one culture and the 'cultural differences in perceptions of behaviour' in another (Loh, et al., 2017).

Alinta elaborated on behaviour management in schools and insisted that 'boys should not be suspended from school in the first place' as it enabled those who were suspended, to "roam around on the streets." She contended that she had previously

discussed the issue of suspension and exclusion with the school's administration staff.

I think instead of excluding them from school, keep them in school in a room where they are not able to leave, where they are able to do their schoolwork, have their lunch in there and let them continue their education. Isolated, if that's what it has to be, rather than a suspension, were they're roaming around on the streets. Take them off the streets and put them in a classroom. Or in that case, if you don't want them at school, allow people who know what's going on with their schoolwork to go home and teach them in the same time that I would be teaching them at school if they weren't suspended. Suspension doesn't seem to work because they don't get the work to learn. (Alinta)

Interestingly, Alinta's view appeared to negate what was previously suggested by some of the other participants around confining Indigenous boys in classrooms, as other participants had indicated that confinement in classroom spaces was detrimental to the well-being of Indigenous boys. However, Alinta proposed that Indigenous boys should have an opportunity to see out their suspension at school. She went on to say that if the student was not allowed to remain at school that it should be possible to keep Indigenous boys engaged and continue with their schoolwork at home rather than have the boys roaming around on the streets. Alinta claimed that rarely, from what she had witnessed was there any follow up by teachers or principals about student academic learning once the student had been suspended from school.

The suspension and exclusion of Indigenous boys from schools cannot be exclusively considered in isolation. It appears that cultural, societal and economic factors are rarely taken into consideration when decisions are made about the suspension or expulsion of Indigenous boys from schools. Too often schools and educators are quick to dispense with punitive measures, rather than acknowledge the socio-economic and cultural complexities that exist for many Indigenous boys. With an increase in the numbers of young Indigenous peoples attending Queensland state schools, the increasing numbers of young Indigenous boys who are suspended or excluded from state schools should be of grave concern for governments, schools and educators.

The reasons underpinning the suspensions and exclusions of Indigenous boys from schools are by no means all-encompassing. However, they do address some of the significant shortcomings within the Queensland education system. In fact, many of these yarns with participants identified that there are numerous barriers in both family life and within school settings that obstruct young Indigenous boys from receiving a formal education in the state school system, and on many accounts, a system which fails to acknowledge who these young boys are, or how they are culturally positioned at school and within mainstream society.

6.4 Summary

Section 6.1 analysed the current education experiences of young Indigenous males who were suspended or excluded from Queensland state schools and consequently incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities. In doing so, it was found that the social construction and environmental institution of state schools presented many barriers for young Indigenous males on a daily basis. A lack of cultural capacity by education staff was addressed and identified as contributing to negative experiences for Indigenous boys at school. The data analysis also found that participants believed that a more relevant and culturally inclusive curriculum be provided for Indigenous boys to ensure positive engagement. The minimal understanding by many educators about the educational priorities of some young Indigenous males was highlighted. Participants also insisted that there was a definite need to establish culturally appropriate learning environments to engage Indigenous boys in their learning, thereby preventing the possibilities of suspension and exclusion from school.

It was clear from the data presented in Section 6.2 that there were many varied and complex reasons for the continued suspension and exclusion of Indigenous boys from state schools. There appeared to be an absence of culturally appropriate role models and mentors in schools. It was also identified that both racism, and socio-economic factors contribute to the suspension and exclusion of young Indigenous males. Other areas of direct concern related to a lack of culturally appropriate programs and cultural safety, and a lack of cultural capacity by teachers. In Section 6.3 it was also identified

that socio-economic dynamics may relate to behavioural issues and present as a distinct risk factor in the high numbers of Indigenous boys being suspended or excluded from school. Next, Chapter Seven addresses what support systems are in place for Indigenous boys both at school and through external community involvement.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"A BREAKDOWN IN EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE KEY AREAS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING INTO OFFENDING" (VANN).

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapter focussed upon the educational experiences of Indigenous boys at school. Chapter Seven will now discuss the three aspects which participants identified as critical to the overall educational experiences of young Indigenous males at school, or for those Indigenous boys who were transitioning back to school from a juvenile detention facility. These were:

- In-school support services
- Transition back to schooling after incarceration
- Support services offered community organisations.

In-school support services are discussed in Section 7.1 offering participants' perceptions about what strategies are available in schools to support the retention and engagement of young Indigenous males. Also provided are insights into the key personnel who can best provide Indigenous boys with culturally appropriate support services at school.

Section 7.2 offers an understanding of the relationship between Indigenous males aged 10 to 17 years who are suspended or excluded from state schooling and their consequent incarceration in a Queensland youth detention facility. The transition of Indigenous males back into the mainstream school community is then briefly discussed.

In Section 7.3 participants deliberate upon the external community support services, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous that are on offer within the community. Also

considered in this section are participant solutions to reduce the high incarceration rates of young Indigenous males from juvenile detention.

Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented in Section 7.4.

7.1 In-School Support Services

Providing holistic care and support, especially for children who may be experiencing marginalisation is crucial to ensure a safe environment at school. As pointed out in Chapter Two, Indigenous boys are less likely to complete formal schooling than any of their peers, and in turn, once they have left school are more likely to encounter interactions with the police and the legal system and many face poor employment prospects. Participants identified several crucial areas requiring urgent attention. For example, the retention and engagement of Indigenous males in Queensland's state schools; intensive support for Indigenous boys where needed; and, Indigenous education mentors being present within schools to offer this support.

7.1.1 Support for Indigenous boys at school

One of the questions directed to participants was around whether young Indigenous boys ever received in-school support to keep them at school if they were experiencing difficulties.

No one's actually said that they've received intensive support at school, no.   I don't see a support system in education for children who are suspended from school, unless they get sent home some schoolwork, umm that's probably all the department is required to do, is to send home some schoolwork with the student. But as for when they come back to school, so if they have been suspended from school for like a week because they have had a fight, they are not umm, prepped, helped, supported in any way, they are just expected to catch up in their own time, which is a fail, a fail every time. (Alinta)

Alinta indicated that there didn't seem to be any structured systems in place to support

students once they were suspended from school. Her perception was that although students may receive work to do while they were suspended, she wasn't aware if this was followed through by all teachers. Alinta's main concern was that there were no formal support services offered to Indigenous students once they returned to school from suspension. Her experiences working with children and their return to school demonstrated that they had to "catch up in their own time" which created an untenable situation for most of these children. The effective reintegration of young Indigenous boys then becomes questionable, with Alinta claiming that this inaction exacerbated an already difficult situation that young Indigenous males faced upon their return to school after suspension.

Claire on the other hand shared that one of the principals that she had previously worked with had a great rapport with the students, supporting them through challenging situations. Claire stated,

I know at one school, the principal, was amazing, he went above and beyond trying to keep the young people positively engaged (Claire).

Leigh and Ella indicated that for the most part support from teachers and principals was usually lacking. While Leigh suggested that many teachers and principals offered little support during his time at school, he commented that on the occasions he did receive support from teachers it was greatly appreciated and made him feel included and part of the school.

In school you mix and congregate with obviously students, administrative staff, teachers and principals and everything. You end up with a few interactions, you can build a bit of a rapport and know who you feel like you can connect a bit better with, as opposed to others. I didn't get it [support] from many of the teachers (laughs), but the ones that did you know you, obviously appreciated it (Leigh).

However, Ella insisted,

No, no support at all. There's no support in any of the schools. I've been

around to all the schools and there's no support (Ella).

While three of the participants articulated that they saw no support for young Indigenous males in state schools, one did acknowledge support being offered to students at a school she had worked at several years ago. This school atypically had an Indigenous principal, as well as overwhelming support for children attending the school from the Indigenous community where the school was located.

Leigh, who had been previously incarcerated as a youth spoke about his experience before being excluded from school and maintained that there was very little guidance or support for young Indigenous males at the school he attended.

Like I said, I got more attention with all this after (incarceration), all my, the worst-case scenario happened. Like you, it took too long to get attention, or get help before it was too late. You know alarm bells were ringing at school, you know, I wasn't a delinquent or anything, but far out, eh (Leigh).

In this instance the participant referred to the fact that he received more attention after he committed a crime and was sentenced to detention, than he did at school where he was really crying out for help, support and guidance. Leigh commented that he "secretly always craved guidance, like as long as there was someone there to pat me on the head or just say you're doing a good job." Reflecting upon his time at school, he identified that many young Indigenous males "acted out" when they were in distress or needed support and that most boys were usually "scared of teachers" and were afraid to approach teachers to disclose issues of concern. He went on to say that when a teacher did give some support, "or lend a hand it shows you how much further you can get as opposed to being kicked out to the kerb of the school."

Another participant, Lexie, indicated that a school she was associated with appeared to offer adequate support in the classroom; however, she stated that more support was needed at home for the students. Lexie stressed that she would like to see boys get tutoring after school and help with homework.

Helping with spelling and homework and strategies that they can use to do their

Maths and times tables, because parents can't help with this stuff. I know teachers like to believe that parents should be helping with homework, but how can they if they are not teachers. They didn't do four years of university, they don't know what teachers know, it's a very unrealistic expectation to think that a parent can help a student with assignments, and homework is so difficult (Lexie).

Clearly, the participant was pinpointing that in many cases teachers simply had unrealistic expectations of some parents to assist their children to do their homework. She alluded to the fact that some parents did not have good educational experiences and consequently had left school early without completing secondary education. Lexie believed that in many cases these parents could simply not understand the work that children were bringing home. These perhaps are some of the social determinants that may be impacting upon the educational outcomes of Indigenous boys.

Participants were also asked about support received from the school after the suspension and or exclusion of Indigenous boys had occurred.

Sit at home. Some of these kids just sit at home or go running around the streets. No, there's no support. Once they've been suspended from school for any length of time for you know more than a couple of days, you know they have to come back for an interview at the school, for a reconnection at school. Umm an interview with their parents, and their parents go away, and they are just left to go back into class. I am not told when the child has come back. It's just left for me to find them in the grounds (Alinta).

No. They didn't even get a guidance officer to maybe have a chat with me, to offer me a career pathway, to see if they could do something through school programs, nothing like that. Yeh, just left high and dry and because it was the end of the year, it was during exams. Well they just made me feel like crap really, yes (Leigh).

Both Alinta and Leigh were adamant that from their own experiences there was little formal or informal support for Indigenous boys at school. It appeared that there was

either reluctance or little knowledge on the part of teachers and or principals to provide any avenues for Indigenous boys to seek support that the school perhaps was unable to provide, e.g., Indigenous mentors or external Indigenous organisations.

In the state of Queensland, schools are required to provide students with schoolwork or access to an alternative education program when they are suspended. It is entirely at the discretion of each individual school to ensure that teachers are providing students with learning materials during suspension (*Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*, 2019). Interestingly, none of the participants could identify any structured support services offered by schools after students were suspended or excluded. It appears that some schools relinquish responsibility for the welfare of children once this has transpired and accountability for student welfare is only re-established once the child returns from suspension. However, no duty of care exists for the child's educational welfare once they have been excluded from school.

7.1.2 Indigenous mentors at school

Claire emphasized the importance of having Indigenous mentors at primary and secondary schools to support the welfare of Indigenous children. When participants were asked about Indigenous mentors or Indigenous support workers at school, all participants agreed that this was of critical importance and most pointed out that Indigenous support workers, particularly males are not readily available at schools to carry out this responsibility. Claire notes,

You know, cause you see that at university, you've got your Indigenous mentors for Indigenous kids at Uni and you need it to trickle right down to primary school because you are not getting your pro-social influence from family they need to get that from somewhere and if they don't have that cultural connection to the 'whitefellas' or the teachers then they definitely need to have that you know with the mentors, so it just makes sense having that service available to young kids (Claire).

Alinta also believed that there should be more Indigenous male role models in schools

and stated,

I would like to see some young Aboriginal men be more, have more of them to support our young boys. In all of my interactions with schools it has been very difficult to get a young Aboriginal working career man to talk to young Aboriginal boys. So yes, an active support person at the school, predominantly just for Aboriginal children. Just like they do, like they have their chappie[13]. A lot of Aboriginal, not just Aboriginal children in general don't go to the chappie. Umm so then there is the nurse. Not everyone goes to the nurse. To the children it is like going to a police officer, umm, so they need to have somebody interactive to get in touch with those kids who knows what is going on (Alinta).

These perceptions revealed that Indigenous children were reluctant to approach those in authority at school, such as the school chappie, the guidance officer or the nurse, with Alinta explaining that for them it was like "going to a police officer." Alinta expressed that what was needed was an Indigenous male mentor at the school, whose role was to solely be responsible for supporting the welfare of Indigenous boys and being the conduit between their home and school life. Alinta also highlighted that the responsibility should not rest upon the Indigenous teacher aide who was there in the classroom to support children with their academic studies. She expressed that it was extremely important that the Indigenous mentor must be "someone that knows and can work with community and understands some of the complications beyond the kid that just sits in the classroom."

Lexi stated that cultural mentors were necessary in each classroom for Indigenous children, explaining that "traditionally, Indigenous people have learnt that way." She clarified this further by asserting that,

It was about following your Elders around and watching what they were doing and copying what they were doing and that was the learning that was happening. I think it is, hard wired as human nature, that's how we learn, through doing, not

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[13] **QLD chaplains, or 'chappies', are a Christian, scripture union organisation who provide spiritual and emotional support to school communities.**

through sitting at a desk and writing and stuff down (Lexie).

Remarkably, Lexie's description draws close parallels with Nganyintja Ilyatjari's (1998) account in Chapter Two, of the ways that Indigenous children learn. Lexie spoke about her own children's experiences at school and how they were shaped and restricted by a predominantly 'white' education system that resists other methods of learning as seemingly of less importance.

Vann commented on the importance of employing both female and male Indigenous mentors on a full-time basis who could support Indigenous children at school, particularly those children who were experiencing challenges and were at risk of being suspended or excluded.

> *So that would be a big one, having a male and female on campus, on each and every school campus. I believe that culture needs to be taught because then I believe that young people understand that it's also valued. Because you've got to remember through the generations, through the hundreds of years, generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have been totally displaced. How can we connect young people to their country; well, we can't, because where is country for them?* (Vann).

When asked about what was available for young Indigenous people in the way of mentor support at school, Danny indicated that one of the Indigenous support workers that he frequently spoke with was working during her own personal time to get around to speak to children and families because she didn't have enough time to do this in her regular position as a part-time Indigenous support worker.

> *Yeh, she is still part-time, whereas there is enough work out there. Sorry, it's not about work. It's about Aunty having enough time to get around to all those young people and obviously with Aunty working with us in conjunction. And Aunty will say, can you go check on this mob? So, because they're part of our organisation, so we go out and visit them and try and do what we can. So, yes there's not enough help, Indigenous help around, we know that just with our work* (Danny).

Danny was particularly exasperated that the responsibility for the welfare of Indigenous students usually fell upon one or two Indigenous people within the community - most of whom were only employed on a part-time basis to work in schools. He went on to say that "even then, for the over-representation that we've got just in those areas, in detention, it's massive and we look it and say, well this is all we've got in terms of Murris in this workforce."

Ella discussed the issue of Indigenous support workers in schools from an economic stance.

Well this is why the Indigenous Elders will not step into the schools because there's no pay-packet and everything's volunteer. Every job we work in out here is volunteer. We don't have any paid jobs. The government's got us working on a free volunteer scheme (Ella).

Ella alluded to the fact that many Indigenous education workers were volunteering their services and time at schools, and within the community without being financially remunerated. The expectations of many government organisations including Education Queensland, was that Indigenous people would simply 'volunteer' their time, knowledge and experience, rather than being provided with gainful employment and be paid for their expertise.

Look, I feel I've got stigma too. I need to take that next step too, but I need somebody to help me get a job. The same with the kids, they need that next step to help too (Ella).

However, Ella went on to explain that in spite of this situation she continued to volunteer, "out of the love in my heart for the kids." This emphasized that Ella was still prepared to support Indigenous children at school and within the community, even though she believed ethically that she should be formally employed to do so. She claimed that the cycle of unemployment for Indigenous people was extremely detrimental to their future opportunities and that this was a critical obstacle that contributed to the 'stigma' experienced in the mainstream community. Ella also

indicated that most of the older children in the community were aware of this situation.

Most of the participants suggested that Indigenous male mentors could be the critical link between schools and community to support Indigenous boys. They believed that employment of mentors could also create opportunities for Elders, community leaders and organisations while helping to establish meaningful connections with schools. Most participants agreed that the education system needed to employ both male and female Indigenous mentors (Bridge, 2012). Participants insisted that the exclusive responsibilities of mentors would be to ensure that children felt welcomed, accepted and were supported culturally within the school context. All participants agreed that cultural engagement should be promoted and valued within the school and that mentors could engage with parents and family around the holistic well-being of Indigenous children.

7.1.3 Support Services required at School

All participants were asked what they would like to see occur in schools to support young Indigenous males achieve positive outcomes. Adam spoke of the need to have more Indigenous men present in schools.

I think what also needs to be in the schools is more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, not only in teaching, but in ground staff, just so the boys can see other black men - just so that not everything is white or see somebody from another country doing stuff. That they can actually see their own mob doing stuff as well, because they do respond to stimulus and that's where they get the aspirations (Adam).

Vann also commented on the importance of Indigenous males and females being present in schools to support Indigenous students.

I think every school needs to have a full time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worker. At least one, maybe two; one a male, one female, to handle men's business and women's business. That's my view (Vann).

Alinta suggested that there needed to be much more support in order to assist young Indigenous boys to remain at school. She claimed,

In all of my interactions with schools it has been very difficult to get a young Aboriginal working career man to talk to young Aboriginal boys. There are dancers, but they are not education workers, do they need more of them? Yes (Alinta).

Claire discussed more support services being available within schools. Programs such as 'Breakfast Clubs', but also suggested the possibility of establishing lunch and afternoon dinner clubs at schools.

Because like when they are not eating, they don't concentrate and stuff. Get them in the door, feed them. Get bums on seats. It's not like, an add-on, it's like a primary thing for them (Claire).

Alinta suggested that it was important to ensure Indigenous boys experienced success at the commencement of their schooling and for the first two weeks of school it was important to guide and mentor Indigenous children through the school processes. She explained that in some schools, well-being teams were now being established to discuss issues centred on the welfare of children. Although these teams appeared to be working at some level, they needed much more input from the Indigenous community and Indigenous community organisations if they were to be of any substantial benefit for Indigenous children. However, Alinta also mentioned that these well-being programs were only being funded in schools as trial projects.

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the school and classrooms was also highlighted as a necessary strategy to retain and support young Indigenous males at school. Lexi maintained that the boys needed help with work at school, as well as schools being able to provide support with their learning at home. She spoke about the importance of language and that not enough non-Indigenous teachers understood that children in suburban schools also brought their language to school.

We do have another language, Indigenous people. I think even some Australians pick it up and it is called slang (by non-Indigenous people) and it is frowned upon and it's not seen as a language and our kids are sent off to speech therapy because of it. I don't think that teachers have any value for where kids are coming from and their cultural backgrounds (Lexi).

Lexi went on to say that she was aware of programs in the Torres Strait Islands that invited Elders or community support persons into the classrooms to work with the teachers and children around language integration because kids were coming to school with a second language and that this needed to be supported and valued.

The main focus addressed by a majority of the participants was the need to have more Indigenous male role models and mentors at school to support young Indigenous boys. It was apparent that the perceptions and experiences of each participant around support services in schools was not a particularly positive one and that there was substantial room for improvement and progress in this area. The importance of in-school support services being offered to assist young Indigenous males to remain at school and achieve successful outcomes was identified as a critical requirement by all of the participants (Dreise, Milgate, Perrett & Meston, 2017; Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997; Tsey et al., 2010).

7.2 Incarceration - Transition Back to School and Community

Participants were initially asked to comment on the age groups of young Indigenous boys that they were supporting once they were out of the education system and juvenile detention had occurred.

Ella insisted that most of the boys that she had supported were between 10 and 15 years of age. While Alinta indicated that the average age was around 14 to 15 years of age. Both shared that most of the children had relatives who had also been incarcerated. Ella also claimed that many of the boys considered it to be a 'rite of passage' and part of the process of initiation into manhood. Adam spoke further about

the 'rite of passage' for many Indigenous boys and claimed,

Right now, eleven and twelve-year old boys are coming out thinking that you get status if you go to detention. I used to tell the boys this is not your right of passage, yours is out bush there (Adam).

Clearly, Adam reinforced that juvenile detention should not be considered a rite of passage and that in community there was positive status attached to the fact that the boys were being incarcerated. Adam insisted that culture was what the boys should be embracing.

Vann claimed that most of the boys that he came into contact within his professional capacity were around 14 years of age. He went on to suggest that there were few education alternatives for boys who had experienced juvenile detention. Vann's main aim was to prevent recidivism from occurring with many of the boys that he supported on release from detention.

Yeah, I'd possibly say that 14 years of age is probably the average age. The big thing around that is because there doesn't seem to be too much opportunity for schooling or education for them, or like alternative education. Because there's no alternatives for that 14-year old age group, it's really, really hard then to keep them busy, to keep them out of trouble, so to speak, or using education as a means to do that, we just don't have any options (Vann).

The vulnerability of young Indigenous boys being incarcerated at such an early age, rather than having an opportunity to engage in mainstream or alternative education, was deeply concerning. Evidence suggests that those young people who have positive education experiences, particularly at a very young age, are much less likely to become involved in the legal system or experience incarceration (Barnet et al., 2015; Christle & Yell, 2008; Jannetta & Okeke, 2017). It was also apparent from Alinta's comment that many of the young Indigenous boys that she supported and who experienced incarceration, also had siblings and other family members incarcerated at the same time.

Both Ella and Adam suggested that Indigenous boys saw juvenile detention as their only 'rite of passage' and that this was accepted as an alternative initiation process by many young Indigenous males. This is in line with other research that found that unfortunately Indigenous children have a much greater chance of having another family member being incarcerated in juvenile detention or in adult prisons (See, Beresford & Omaji, 1996; Ogilvie & Van Zyl, 2001).

7.2.1 Incarceration

Research has shown similar trends between the high numbers of young First Nations males in Canada and young African-American males in the United States who have been excluded from education and consequently end up in a juvenile detention facility (Rudin, 2007; Stevens & Morash, 2015). Participants were asked, if they believed that Indigenous boys who are disconnected from education may be more likely to get into situations where they end up in juvenile detention.

Claire responded, that this was definitely the case and that there needed to be more support services in place. Alinta concurred,

Not long ago I was invited out to the Wacol juvenile detention centre, to see what it was like, to meet some students out there and I think anybody who takes this seriously, should only just talk to the staff at those locations and see that umm, it's a cycle. They will be incarcerated, they'll come back out into society, with lack (word emphasized) of support. I guess that throughout the whole thing is that the actual people in juvenile detention centres say themselves, and that is, that it is a cycle. And the kids that are suspended and excluded from schools, generally are the ones that will end up in the juvenile detention centre (Alinta).

Adam indicated that on several occasions, throughout his role as a support worker for young Indigenous males in and out of detention, he stressed to the boys the need to build a strong foundation to get their education and have fun later on. However, he went on to say,

The education system doesn't work, especially for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander boys, there is nothing there for them. There's nothing interesting for them. That is not the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men – to sit in a classroom (Adam).

Adam's comment raises a dilemma around the value of mainstream education for young Indigenous males in Australia, many who find themselves leaving school out of indifference, or those who are being suspended or excluded from school for a multitude of reasons. Striking a balance between what non-Indigenous education offers, while also recognising the importance of cultural connectivity for young Indigenous boys is an issue that clearly requires further examination and is discussed in the findings in Chapter Eight.

Conversely, when asked about how education impacted upon the incarceration of Indigenous boys, Vann replied,

So, my experience in all those years, particularly evidence from seeing what I see firsthand, what I know that research says, is education is one of the key areas, or a breakdown in education is one of the key areas - of young people entering into offending. One of them, the majority, is in education. In fact, one of my roles is that I write bail programs and conditional release orders for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. In doing that, amongst all the things that I've put in, the main need that we do address is their education and employment needs. We believe it's vital because it adds a number of things to a young person's life (Vann).

Although Vann saw the breakdown in education as one of the main factors of boys entering into the juvenile justice system, he also commented on the intrinsic value of education for Indigenous boys and maintained that it was a critical part of bail programs and conditional release orders. As has been described in previous chapters, there is little doubt from past research, that education plays a substantial role in keeping young people out of detention and also offers them much better life chances.

7.2.2 Transition Back into School

Participants were asked to comment on the experiences of young Indigenous males who had been incarcerated, and their consequent transition back into mainstream schools. The responses varied, but most were extremely negative. Claire explained,

Umm, a lot of the young Indigenous men - so I am really talking about 14, 15 and over. They've had sporadic you know schooling. Schooling history, they've had next to none. Probably a big portion of them, I'd probably say 60% of them have not had schooling in the last 12 months or haven't attended (Claire).

The reality is that for most of the boys who have been incarcerated in juvenile detention, very few have had continuous educational experiences, whether in mainstream or alternative education programs. Furthermore, Alinta alluded to the lack of established structures by the education department, to support Indigenous boys to get back into mainstream school after incarceration.

There are people rushing around at the last minute to try and grasp it together to try and get them back into school when they should already have established a system for that to happen. They've got established rules to put them out, but they don't have established rules to bring them back in. Sometimes kids have been away for months. They need to have that fresh, they can't just be expected to come back in. They just sit in the classroom and expect them to catch up, it's just not going to happen (Alinta).

Alinta proposed that the Education Department needed to shoulder more responsibility around re-entry back into school, rather than it be left to outside agencies. She indicated that more often than not, young people were simply expected to "pick-up" with their learning and this was intrinsically setting them up for failure. More positively, Adam reflected on a young Indigenous boy's transition back into a flexi-school environment.

Another young fella that I'm with, he wants to go to school, he wants to do well, but his academic level is not up to where it should be. Umm, but he is going to

school. He's back at school, he is doing flexi-school and is doing really well because he wants that change, and that's where that consistency with youth work, mentoring and going through the problem solving works (Adam).

There appeared to be some complications for those young Indigenous males around the responsibility to be 'earning or learning' once they had left detention. While Vann insisted that boys leaving juvenile detention had these requirements written into their bail conditions or conditional release orders, the reality was that these expectations were extremely difficult for young Indigenous boys to meet, although they were legal requirements enforced by the Queensland Education department.

I'll be sitting down with two boys tomorrow. One of them is young enough to be in education and the other one, he is old enough to not be in school - formal schooling. I'll be saying to them mate, you need to be at school, I can't offer you anything else unless you somehow get a job because you could go and work as well. But you must be doing some earning or learning. You know, some young people maybe want to return to formal education. But for some of them that's a pretty scary thing as well, particularly if they've been out of it for quite some time. So, for me it's about looking at options with education. Looking at - you know, what's out in the community (Vann).

Vann also commented on the resistance shown by some schools to allow children who had been incarcerated back into the state school system. He explained that one of the young males who had been attending a flexi-school was making excellent progress according to the education workers at the school. They had advised Vann that as the young boy was doing so well, it may worthwhile to make inquiries as to whether it would be possible to have him transfer back into the local state high school to complete year nine.

So, I made that call. We spoke the following day, which was a Thursday. I know we played a bit of phone tag; it was Friday at the latest. Had a response from her and she was saying so happy to hear he's doing so well. I knew he could do it, he's a smart guy. All that sort of stuff, but said, I just don't know if the school's

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the right one for him. Whether he fits in, he may get in a bit of trouble here or there. So, what I came up with was, "Yeah, I'm glad to hear he's doing well, but maybe he can still go elsewhere" (Vann).

Refusal to accept a former juvenile detainee back into a state high school was also experienced by Claire, who stated,

I've just experienced it today. Trying to reintegrate a young person back into school and the guidance officer is saying but you know what about the offences? And I said it's our job to help advocate, but from a legal standpoint because he's under fifteen he needs to go back to school, he needs some kind of education. They are palming him off, blatantly saying, maybe 'normal' school is not for him. Maybe he should to go to a flexi-school (Claire).

When asked about the legal requirements to accept the child back into the school as a student, Claire maintained that she disputed what the guidance officer was suggesting and responded by stating, "It is a state school and because he's under fifteen and he's in your catchment, he willingly wants to come back." Claire indicated that the student was discouraged from re-enrolling in a mainstream state school. She went on to say that, "It's sad to see. So, I think you know we will see more flexi-schools popping up, because state schools don't want to deal with the problem. It's as simple as that" (Claire).

Most of the participants identified that there was a gap between what was occurring with the release of boys from detention and their subsequent re-engagement with school and educational opportunities. They also questioned whether the education department had any systemic processes in place to support these young boys to return to school after incarceration.

7.2.3 Transition back into the community

Providing support to Indigenous boys and their families upon release from detention

and transition back into the community is paramount. Unequivocally, the support must be aimed at focussing on the best options for the child.   Most of the participants maintained that upon leaving detention young boys had a host of requirements that needed to be in place within the community and offered them ongoing transitional support. However, not all participants found these support options readily available for young Indigenous males. Danny stated,

They may want to be involved in a school program, lifestyle programs, or independent living programs. We are getting a cultural program up and running, which is great, really looking forward to that. And yes, look they might want to be involved in drug rehabilitation, there's other different training courses, it might not be mainstream school. Just so that we can get the ball rolling before young people actually get out of incarceration and primarily just to see where they're at and see want they want to do moving forward (Danny).

In Danny's current role, he is responsible for providing support to young Indigenous males to positively reintegrate back into the community. Overall, he felt that there were minimal options for young males transitioning back into the community. However, he believed that his organisation was now considering several programs to enable young males to do this effectively.

Susan also spoke of positive support being offered to young males who were released from incarceration, but unlike Danny, highlighted that many of the boys were simply going "back to the same", indicating that nothing was changing for many of these boys.

But you know like if everyone sort of gave them positives and gave them an option as well, I don't think there'd be quite as much trouble. When they get released; why do we release them back to the same? (Susan).

Claire also spoke of her role working with young Indigenous people in the community.

My role is to work with young Indigenous men and women, 15 years and over to help reintegrate them back into the community, in either work, or further study,

or traineeships or apprenticeships or something like that, but as we know that doesn't go according to plan straight away (Claire).

Claire's response indicated that while her main role was to find suitable education or employment opportunities, there were considerable obstacles that young people had to contend with before reintegrating successfully back into the community. Most of the obstacles centred on inadequate education.

Rehabilitation of young Indigenous males transitioning back into the community was regarded by research participants as fundamentally critical to avoid recidivism. However, most of the participants ascertained that there was no clear formal process or structure in place within the community as to what rehabilitation and support options offered, once young Indigenous males were released from juvenile detention. Although there are several organisations within the community offering support, participants believed that in some respects it is a piecemeal approach and that there is a duplication of services by different organisations.

7.3 Community Support Services

In the Moreton Bay Region of Queensland alone there are approximately 30 non-government organisation (NGO) service providers, with seven of these being Indigenous led. Many of the NGO's provide support services for youth in the area and there are also Indigenous led service providers who organise programs within the region for Indigenous youth. Participants were asked what community support measures could be put into place to reduce the numbers of young Indigenous males who are excluded from state schools and conversely lower the high incarceration rates of young Indigenous males in juvenile detention.

Danny advised that he was involved in a program that engaged with young people in youth detention to monitor their well-being. However, he indicated that there were time constraints with the program. He claimed that as Indigenous youth were over-represented in the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, it was necessary to limit the time spent with each young person in order to try to touch base, even if just for a short time

with all of the detainees. He suggested that this support was aimed at positive engagement with incarcerated youth and also included working with families and some of the younger siblings. Danny stipulated that there was an Indigenous led community organisation in the region, which offered several support services for community particularly to support young people, but that this was under resourced. The under resourcing of Indigenous led community organisations is problematic. A lack of funding prevents local Indigenous led community organisations to respond to identified priorities within their local area.

Ella advised that one of the local youth organisations had been recently closed in the area and claimed, "We've got nothing for the kids. I believe the Justice Group needs to step in." She commented that the youth in her area had no chance of getting to the closest youth support group as it was too far away. Ella stated, "How are they going to get there? The kids don't have money for transport. They don't have money for bus fare."

Susan discussed community service providers in the Brisbane metropolitan region and spoke of the support offered to young Indigenous boys at risk who were still in attendance at school.

> *Well there is community houses like Gallang Place, and they're run or worked by Indigenous people - oh there's a few around, but every time I've gone to see one of the staff or something, it's more oh we're going to Dream World. Is that what they need? Take them fishing, like a normal skill, you know it's something then you can take it home and teach them how to cook it or cut it up or whatever the case may be - there's those sorts of things. We used to have the Aboriginal Legal Service - that's not as pronounced as what it used to be* (Susan).

Gallang Place is an Indigenous counselling service which operates on the South side of Brisbane. Susan was not aware of any similar service being offered in the Northern suburbs of Brisbane. Nonetheless, she was concerned that not all of the support organisations that did exist, were delivering culturally appropriate programs for children seeking support after being released from juvenile detention. Vann also commented on the services offered to young boys leaving youth detention and the

support mechanisms provided by Indigenous organisations to best aid schools and families to keep Indigenous boys out of detention.

It is a big question. Number one is that community organisations need to be funded, for starters. That's a massive one because in our community we have very little. I have a significant number, in my XY Service, even again, now, the current data is that - we do hold the biggest numbers in the state. We are probably - we are from last month, 38% Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander young people of our caseload, and now 42% I believe is the current number of appearances in our courts, our three courts (Vann).

Although there are approximately 30 non-government organisations servicing just one region of Queensland, there seemed to be minimal or no interaction whatsoever between these services and state schools. There appeared to be no overall cohesive education strategy aligning with community service providers to support young Indigenous males who have been suspended or excluded from Queensland state schools.

7.4 Summary

The key themes that have emerged in Chapter's Five, Six and Seven have identified that the critical matters raised by participants cannot be considered in isolation in relation to education, cultural safety, health and wellbeing, the criminal justice system or the socio-economic barriers faced by some Indigenous children. The findings from the data indicate that a Westernised 'silo approach' have for the most part failed to address the unique experiences of Indigenous peoples and communities. Doyle, Cleary, Blanchard and Hungerford (2017) who established the Yerin Dilly Bag Model of Indigenist Health Research maintain that it is also "impossible to develop a single Indigenist approach or method to fit all Indigenous contexts or settings, given the diversity of Indigenous peoples" (p.1291). By providing an evidence based approach, which privileges Indigenous voices from individual communities at a local level, a more collectivist framework may evolve that will provide community based solutions to the complex issues raised by participants.

Section 7.1 explored the support structures in place at school for young Indigenous males who were being suspended or excluded. The data revealed a lack of support structures from within state schools and that there was a need to provide full-time Indigenous role models within schools. It was established that specifically, Indigenous male mentors were required to establish cultural connections for Indigenous boys as well as relational partnerships between their families and schools.

Section 7.2 examined the relationship between Indigenous males who are suspended or excluded from Queensland state schools and their subsequent incarceration in juvenile detention. The analysis of the data indicates that there may indeed be some indirect relationship between the suspension and exclusion of Indigenous boys from Queensland schools and their over-representation in juvenile detention.

Section 7.3 revealed that participants believed there were minimal connections between schools and non-government community service providers. Participants acknowledged that much more funding and support was necessary in this area to prevent young Indigenous males being suspended or excluded from school and in turn this support would assist to reduce the high numbers of young Indigenous males who are incarcerated in juvenile detention.

Chapter Eight will now bring together the information offered in Chapters One to Seven in order to discuss the overarching findings of the thesis, whilst providing detailed responses to each of the research questions presented in Chapter One (refer to section 1.5).

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION: THE BIG PICTURE

8.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings generated from the data analyses in Chapter's Five, Six and Seven. Importantly, this chapter provides responses to the four primary research questions underpinning this study and in doing so it considers the gaps in existing knowledge/s around the research phenomenon.   The key emergent themes identified from the data were:

- Inequitable power structures within hegemonic government systems
- Racism, lack of cultural safety for Indigenous students, and a lack of cultural capacity within the education system
- Socio-economic and cultural determinants affect the well-being and engagement of Indigenous boys at school
- School and community support structures for Indigenous boys are lacking.

Section 8.1 draws upon the major findings regarding the theoretical principles of power, hegemony and racism as discussed in Chapter Three. These concepts are examined in the context of the power that educational institutions preserve, and individual educators maintain, while knowingly or unknowingly discounting the cultural ideologies, practices and agency of certain individuals; in this case young Indigenous males in the Queensland state school system.

Section 8.2 then addresses the four research questions identified in Chapter Five, section 1.

Q1. How do Indigenous community representatives employed in education, youth justice and social services understand the educational experiences of young Indigenous males?

Q2. How do economic and social barriers affect school completion rates of young Indigenous males?

Q3. What is the relationship between Indigenous males aged 10 to 17 years who are suspended/excluded from state schooling and their over-representation in Queensland's youth detention?

Q4. What are the internal and external support strategies on offer that may assist to reduce the numbers of young Indigenous males who are suspended or excluded from schools?

Finally, an overall summary of the key considerations discussed in this chapter are presented.

8.1 Principle Theoretical Perspectives

Throughout this study specific theoretical perspectives have been used to critically analyse the data. Both Nakata's (2007) Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Gramsci's Theory on Hegemony (1971) were selected because they offered theoretical foundations to most effectively address the research phenomena. Utilising these theoretical concepts to analyse the data, it was found that hegemonic practices within government organisations contributes to the preservation of inequitable ideological agendas within educational institutions. It was also evident that when Indigenous boys are separated from culture at school, it may have a decidedly negative impact upon their individual power and agency. The data also suggests that racism in schools remains a critical issue that must be urgently addressed. The following areas of importance will now be discussed in more detail.

- How hegemonic power is maintained by educational institutions
- The ways in which the agency of Indigenous boys may be oppressed within educational institutions, and

- The impact of racism and its effect on Indigenous boys at school.

8.1.1 Educational Institutions: Power and Hegemony

As highlighted in Chapter Three, this study has identified that hegemonic power does appear to have a considerable bearing on the structures of education institutions. Hegemonic power is preserved by social and political institutions who impose dominant ideological beliefs to serve their own interests, thereby maintaining social stratification within society. Reducing educational disparity is a priority for federal, state and territory governments. Nevertheless, it appears that educational institutions do not always afford culturally equitable prospects for some minority groups, due to the deeply entrenched belief systems of the dominant other (Carr, 2016).

The findings indicated that there were a multitude of concerns which required further attention by educators and policy makers to prevent the high numbers of Indigenous boys, across all year levels of schooling from being suspended or excluded. As reminded in Chapter Five, Indigenous boys are 'quick to be suspended' as a solution to what is considered to be poor behaviour. This is despite the many other cultural, social or economic difficulties that they may be experiencing on a daily basis that may be a contributor to the 'poor behaviour'. The data exposed that in some instances, educators' enacted exclusionary policies which may prevent opportunities for Indigenous boys to continue their education in a mainstream school setting. It was also revealed that a majority of Indigenous boys who have been confined in juvenile detention have also been suspended or excluded from school at some point previous to their incarceration.

Although, Gramsci (1971) does not refer to 'race' in his theory of hegemony, his theoretical philosophy can be used to identify how dominant power structures are sanctioned to reinforce racism and discrimination within educational institutions, such as state schools. Consistent with the literature review, it was recognised that racialised practices play a significant role in the genesis of educational inequity for many Indigenous peoples in Australia. Historical and contextual impacts of past and current education policies [e.g. protectionism and segregation, assimilation and integration

policies; Stolen Generations and mission/dormitory education] have a direct bearing on existing racialised practices that continue within state education. Exclusionary practices such as the denial of a right to education up until the early 1970's, the delivery of sub-standard education in dormitory missions for Indigenous children, or the failure of governments to create culturally inclusive curriculums up until recently, has affected generations of Indigenous Australians. As noted by Perso (2012) the legacy of colonialist policies and practices which prevailed well into the 1970's meant that sub-standard education for Indigenous peoples was, in principle, readily accepted by many of those in power and within mainstream society. Another important finding was that due to previously enforced discriminatory policies, many Indigenous peoples still experienced an element of distrust of government institutions and their agents, including those employed within the education system (see, Davis, 2006; Habibis, Taylor, Walter & Elder, 2016).

Societal power in Australian institutions has not been established within a vacuum and is not free from politicization, propaganda or bias. This is also the case for compulsory state education. For the most part, this study has shown that the current state education system in Queensland continues to offer Western ontological and epistemological curriculums as the benchmark to be achieved contrary to all other knowledge systems. Concomitantly, it was found that Western systems of education also maintain superiority over all other knowledge systems and in doing so, may prevent independence for some Indigenous peoples.

McAllan (2013) suggests that political and economic agendas are significantly responsible for the hegemonic structures which are still maintained within our education systems today and that not much has really changed for Indigenous peoples over many years, simply because there is no 'real consultation' with community. McAllan (2013) argues that, "Australia's education system is one of the most powerful institutional mechanisms in constructing and maintaining white-dominated social hegemony" (p.4). The argument is a persuasive and controversial one and challenges us as educators to consider why our education system continues to maintain the privileges of a 'white' dominant society and sets the knowledge parameters for all people. Nevertheless, this study also identified that these privileges may not be consciously visible to non-Indigenous people within our existing educational settings,

and educators may not be fully aware of the ways in which 'white privilege' unfairly influences systemic decisions. An example of this are the ways in which Indigenous peoples are continually excluded from the decision making processes that affect the education of their children.

Yet, Nakata's (2007a) stance on Indigenous Standpoint Theory reminds us that political and social subjugation of Indigenous peoples can be examined and challenged through the lens of Indigenous Standpoint Theory to dismantle the hegemonic power that exists within dominant institutions. However, this study has established that this was an extremely difficult enterprise when those who are marginalised were excluded or prevented by the dominant other to engage in any robust dialogue from an Indigenist Standpoint. Moreton-Robinson (2015) suggests that power and hierarchical structures evident in Western systems of education are by their very nature reinforced so that privilege is upheld by the dominant majority. In other words, positioning oneself at the 'cultural interface' does not always afford an opportunity to engage in equitable vigorous dialogue if a power imbalance exists within this space. This finding supports Moreton-Robinson's (2015) critique of Nakata's cultural interface, where she argues that "the cultural interface becomes the site of Indigenous cultural entrapment whereby other facets of power/knowledge – including sex, gender, age and race – have no relationship to knowledge construction" (p.108).

The data revealed that there was nominal progression or accountability in the practical application of policies to 'close the gap' for Indigenous peoples at all levels of education. A majority of participants suggested that for the most part, it was seen as a tick and flick affair and according to one of the participants Claire, it raises concerns about the authenticity of governments', to improve real outcomes for Indigenous children. According to Freire (1972), in order for educators to break free from dominant ideological power structures which are upheld by educational institutions they must firstly challenge their own belief systems. For many non-Indigenous educators, transition from dominant hegemonic beliefs and practices can be a fearful process and consequently prevailing systems are extremely difficult to change and slow to evolve. Nevertheless, Freire (1972) suggests there is much more to consider at the macro-level of education. It is not enough that educators solely engage with culturally responsive best practice, they must also understand how deep-seated

constructs of power and oppression maintained within educational systems continue to adversely affect those from minority groups. For educators, the challenge then, is to disrupt these dominant power structures and ensure that just practices are embedded within educational policy and subsequently into praxis. Educators must identify, and continue to contest and challenge, inequitable practices within systems of education from a social justice perspective. They must also be given the opportunity to expand their understandings of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives through ongoing professional learning opportunities.

8.1.2 Educational Institutions: Power and Hegemonic Practices

There are relatively few contemporary studies that investigate why many Indigenous boys may be experiencing powerlessness in mainstream school settings. The data presented in Chapter Five identified that some young Indigenous males may feel a sense of alienation when they are at school for several reasons. A lack of cultural presence, racism, economics, poor cultural capacity of educators, limited culturally safe spaces and a lack of capacity to express individual agency were just some of the issues that contributed to these feelings of alienation. Previous literature and the data both confirmed that when compared to non-Indigenous students, there are high exclusion and suspension rates of young Indigenous males in Queensland across most year levels (Department of Education, 2018). Subsequently, the findings showed that a lack of cultural safety in schools as a significant negative contributor to this occurrence. The study highlighted that suspension or exclusion of young Indigenous males was not an uncommon experience during some stage of their schooling life (Anderson, 2012; Bourke et al., 2000). Further, many participants spoke of Indigenous boys 'falling through the cracks'. Apart from experiencing juvenile detention, some of these young boys had disconnected from family and their home life. Some found themselves on the 'streets' or in situations where they were reliant on drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism. Without proactive support systems in place at schools, and collaboration with community organisations, the results appeared to be extremely negative for many young Indigenous males once they had been excluded from school.

Consistent with previous research findings outlined by bell hooks (2003), this study also found that many young Indigenous males in school settings experienced anger, frustration, and a sense of powerlessness to 'fit in' to the current state education system. As highlighted by Patrick et al. (2008) in Chapter Three, cultural agency can empower young Indigenous males to understand who they are, in what many would consider to be the contested space of school. The data found that Indigenous boys appeared to be literally fighting for their agency and right of place at school, and if this was not achieved then there was either a sense of acquiescence to, or disengagement from education. Participants acknowledged that while the physical actions of Indigenous boys may be observed and punitively addressed by teachers, there appeared to be minimal repercussions for those responsible for inherently racist acts inflicted upon Indigenous boys (Martino, 2003).

Indeed, preclusion of Indigenous cultural capital whether deliberate or not (see Walter, 2010; Xu, 2018) in institutions such as schools can lead to a significant loss of cultural agency and feelings of alienation for many Indigenous boys. However, as Eurocentric establishments, state schools may not adequately provide the opportunity for young Indigenous males to be active agents in a school environment, and may in fact be preventing this from occurring.

Critical to Nakata's (2007) concept of Indigenous standpoint Theory are - the Cultural Interface as a contested knowledge space; the continuities and discontinuities of Indigenous agency, and the tension that informs and limits what can or cannot be said in daily life. Nakata (2007) insists it is where Indigenous peoples, "live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives – where we make decisions – our life worlds" (p.27).

Here, Nakata (2007) suggests that Indigenous peoples are 'active agents' in their own lives. Nevertheless, the negation of cultural agency through the enforcement of dominant hegemonic practices may result in young Indigenous males experiencing anger and frustration at their inability to safely express their cultural identity within the schooling space.

Expanding upon by Hascher and Hagenauer's (2010) findings, it was observed that many young adolescent males found that there was very little that connected them to school. They established that many young males believed the curriculum to be irrelevant and suggested that many young males experienced 'academic alienation'. Expanding upon Hascher and Hagenauer's (2010) research, this study has revealed that, particularly for young Indigenous males, classroom activities were also seen as culturally irrelevant and restrictive.

One interesting finding is that participants suggested that for Indigenous boys classrooms could feel like 'prison cells' or 'watch-houses' and that many young Indigenous males feared confinement or felt uncomfortable in such places. This explanation was acknowledged as a disaffecting factor towards school retention, engagement and completion for many of these young boys. This sense of individual powerlessness heightened the risk factors of suspension, exclusion or detachment from school. As previously established, this may have a significant bearing on the "quality of life, health status and the spiritual well-being" of Indigenous boys (Spry, 1999, p.3).

Despite this, participants revealed that in their involvement with schools, many educators appeared to have little understanding of Indigenous culture, or the cultural agency that many Indigenous boys bring with them into school. Participants maintained that Indigenous culture/s must be acknowledged and respected because young people then understand and value its importance.

Nakata (1998, 2007a, 2007b) recommended that Indigenous peoples be provided with a space where they can engage in critical and vigorous discourse at 'the cultural interface'. Although extreme caution must be exercised due to the relatively small data set, this study indicated that limited meaningful dialogue took place within schools. Consequently, in the 'contested space' of both Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledge systems, it was found that alternative ontological and epistemological worldviews were either ignored, or challenged as being less relevant, by those who maintain power [in this case educators.

Nakata (2002) eloquently points out that for many non-Indigenous peoples integration of Indigenous Knowledge systems is tied to a practical application. He suggests that, "addressing the theoretical underpinnings of practice is critical to any substantive understanding of Knowledge systems" (Nakata, 2002, p.4) should not be undervalued. Nakata claims that rarely are the theoretical foundations examined within this context. Hence, if we seek to reconstruct culturally responsive epistemological foundations, we must firstly acknowledge that there will be severe limitations on what can be achieved if educators lack cultural knowledge to engage with this reformation. The findings also highlighted the inability of some educators to set aside their power and authority and enter into a space where shared inquiry takes place, and consequently this has stymied progress from occurring within educational institutions, such as schools. Hayward and Lukes (2008) intimated that "the power debate, after all, is a debate driven by a commitment to human freedom and political equality: to the idea that people should have a hand, and that they should have a roughly equal hand, in helping shape the terms that govern their existence" (p.9).

Corresponding with Gramsci's (1971) theory of societal preservation of dominant hegemonic control the study has identified that for the most part that Indigenous voices were silenced. Including Indigenous voices and Indigenous standpoints in the decision making processes that determine the reforms needed within education may accelerate change. Indigenous support workers often felt that there was an imbalance of power during conversations with non-Indigenous teachers when acting to improve outcomes on behalf of Indigenous boys at school. One of the issues that emerged from this finding was that some educators demonstrated paternalistic attitudes and chose to use their position of authority to diminish the professionalism and knowledge of Indigenous support workers, rather than collaborate equitably to ensure the best outcomes for the child. This revealed that the power dynamic that educators continued to maintain whether sub-consciously or consciously, effectively prevented self-determination for Indigenous peoples who were working in this space.

As Gramsci (1971) determined, we cannot dismiss the connectedness of the state to our systems of education and we must not overlook the reasons why, and how, public educational institutions were created. The State and the education system are inextricably linked and exist to produce citizens who can deliver the economic

outcomes required to govern as well as support the political machinations of those who hold power. Indigenous peoples are consistently excluded from engaging in any cross-cultural dialogue, which seeks to shift this balance of power and create opportunities to move forward.

Another important finding was that while the current state education system in Queensland develops policies to create suitable avenues to advance inclusive practices for Indigenous children, there appears to be insignificant delivery of essential reform at the school level. In their report, *Obstacles to Success*, O'Keefe, Olney and Angus (2012) highlighted that achieving reform is complex and challenging and that there are many obstacles that contribute to the success or failure of schools meeting the needs of Indigenous children. O'Keefe, Olney & Angus (2012) suggested that, the obstacles found in each school were multifaceted and deeply rooted in the circumstances of the school's history and location. This made it difficult to focus on one problem at a time or alternatively to solve all the problems at once" (p. ix).

Although Education Queensland does refer to working at the community level to provide the necessary support for inclusive and supportive educational experiences for Indigenous children, there appears to be no specific framework for how this is carried out or implemented at the local level by schools. Rather than being able to participate in education which values the diversity and uniqueness of each student, it appears that minority groups (in this case Indigenous boys) may feel that they are expected to conform to a system that does not always value their culture/s or empower them to safely express their individual identities (Shipp, 2013). This was confirmed by Adam, when he alluded to seeing education as "white privilege, white mentality and a white system" asserting that many young Indigenous males do not feel that they belong in the current mainstream school environment.

8.1.3 Racism

Institutional racism, such as the exclusion of culturally inclusive curriculums and the continued promotion of a Eurocentric curriculum also impacted upon Indigenous children. The data found that both institutional and individual racism was a salient factor affecting Indigenous boys at school. It appeared that racism was not easily identifiable to many non-Indigenous educators, but for many Indigenous boys it was reported by participants to be a daily manifestation (Hatchell, 2004). Participants believed that harsher punitive measures, racist comments by either teachers or their peers, and inaction by teachers to act upon racist situations at schools, were just some of the factors affecting Indigenous boys.

Concurring with the literature, institutional racism seemed to be built into the education system (Blagg, Morgan, Cunneen & Ferrante, 2005; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2017). Government institutions within Australia, including the education and criminal justice systems have not as yet been decolonised (see, section 2.2.1.3, Coram, 2008; Tikley, 1999). This was evident in the constant surveillance, racial profiling, and continued political ideological interference in the lives of Indigenous peoples.

According to all participants structural racism still exists within many institutions, such as schools. When asked, *does racism exist in schools?* Claire commented, "I think racism exists, full stop. Not just at school. But yes, I do believe racism exists at school." Another participant, Susan suggested that what was being dealt out to Indigenous children by the courts "wasn't equal and that could be seen by anybody who wanted to look and listen." These comments correspond with writings of Behrendt, Cunneen and Libesman (2009) who suggested that systemic racism was still a huge problem within institutions such as schools, and that systemic bias towards Indigenous peoples still exists within the criminal justice system. Historically, within Australia, governments created laws, systems and rights that empowered non-Indigenous peoples (the colonisers) and oppositely excluded, demonised, pathologised and infantilised Indigenous peoples. The political, social and economic structural power throughout Australia's 'nation building' in many instances has had an antithetical effect on many Indigenous peoples lives. Findings from this research indicated that many of the

participants believed that structural racism would not be eliminated until policy makers and educators genuinely collaborated with Indigenous peoples.

While institutional racism was found to be a significant problem, in this study, individual racism towards Indigenous boys in schools was also identified as being prevalent. Rather than educators combating racism as a separate issue to bullying, it was somehow defined by those in authority as indistinguishable and solely an individual experience, thereby downplaying its existence within the confines of the school environment (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). It was revealed that it was not an unusual practice for parents to try to resolve racist matters at school, only to be advised that 'it' [racism] was being dealt with. However, it appears that in many instances no action was taken against those who perpetrated racist acts and that young Indigenous males became exceedingly frustrated, not knowing how to cope with, or respond to, the unresolved circumstances that racism provoked.

According to the study, racist comments and attitudes towards Indigenous boys, both by teachers and students was not an uncommon occurrence. Continually dealing with racism can result in extremely negative outcomes and may contribute to ongoing psychological effects on the well-being of Indigenous boys (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). Unfortunately, all participants felt that educators underestimated and undermined the importance of this issue

The findings revealed that young Indigenous males who experienced racism on a daily basis eventually addressed the situation through some form of belligerent act towards the perpetrator/s resulting in suspension or exclusion of the Indigenous boy. While the Queensland government's *Inclusive Policy* requires that the department and all state schools comply with the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (Qld) and state and commonwealth discrimination laws (Department of Education Queensland, 2018), it remained unclear as to how this policy was monitored or enforced for its efficacy within schools.

8.2 Principal Research Questions

The objective of this study was to examine the educational experiences of Indigenous males who were suspended or excluded from Queensland state schools and the possible link to their over-representation in juvenile detention centres in Queensland. The four research questions defined in Chapter One established the basis for the research (see section 1.5). Section 8.2 will now provide responses to each of the research questions.

8.2.1 *How do Indigenous community representatives employed in education, youth justice and social services understand the educational experiences of young Indigenous males?*

There are three critical areas that were of most concern to the research participants regarding the educational experiences of some young Indigenous males attending Queensland state schools: cultural safety, cultural capacity of educators and culturally inclusive practices at school. These issues were flagged by participants as decidedly significant factors in the engagement of young Indigenous males at school. However, before proceeding an important caveat is necessary here to ensure that the responses garnered from the participants are not perceived to be essentialising all young Indigenous males in relation to these research findings or this discussion. It is imperative to reiterate that this research was centred on a specific group of young, at-risk Indigenous males who have been suspended or excluded from a state school in Queensland and the possible links to incarceration in a juvenile detention facility.

Since the late 1960's when reports of Indigenous disadvantage in education came to the fore, a multitude of government policies surfaced to address the inequitable and disparate educational outcomes experienced by Indigenous children (Patrick & Moodie, 2016). However, it is interesting to note that that while educational policy around culturally responsive frameworks in state schools do exist, practical application of these policies is severely lacking and according to participants in this study is rarely actualized within state schools with which they engaged. Although marked

improvements have been realised in the area of early childhood education and Year 12 completion, to date there has been slow or no progress at all in other Closing the Gap target areas (Closing the Gap, Prime Minister's Report, 2018). Nationally, educational improvements for many Indigenous children remains unmet.

Cultural Safety

In Chapter Two, Perso (2012) and Bin-Sallik (2003) indicate that the provision of culturally safe spaces in schools for Indigenous children was important for their well-being and educational advancement. Cultural safety was established by Māori nurse and educator Irihapeti Ramsden (2002) as an important aspect to improve the health and well-being of Māori peoples. Cultural safety is grounded in three tenets – reflection, recognition and respect (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2011). This notion has since been adopted in Australia and has been implemented to promote culturally safe frameworks for clients within the health fraternity, and more recently within the domains of education. However, the data showed that there was an insignificant focus and promotion of culturally safe practices in the area of education for Indigenous children and their families.

Unsafe practices at a systemic, institutional and individual level in education have been identified within this research. In education, negation of these three principles of cultural safety can be linked back to the ways in which power has been distributed and maintained by inherent hegemonic practices as identified in Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony (see, Chapter Three). The findings revealed that while cultural safety was identified as a crucial component of inclusivity promoted by Education Queensland, there were no formal, mandated requirements to offer or provide any cultural services to Indigenous students when at school. It was also clear that although Indigenous curriculum is mandated in schools by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2011), there appeared to be no provisions for any other culturally inclusive practices to be implemented within schools for Indigenous children.

Statistical data in Chapter Two demonstrated that there was a higher disengagement of Indigenous males from state schools than any other cohort, indicating that participation rates at school may be negatively impacted upon due to an absence of

cultural safety practices within schools. The provision of culturally safe practices was totally reliant upon school leadership and each individual schools' priorities, and in some cases highlight the sporadic nature of the delivery of culturally safe practices for Indigenous children. This raises many concerns, particularly if there is no understanding by school leaders, or staff as to why these services are critical for the well-being and the empowerment of Indigenous children.

Cultural safety also related to other contexts such as schools engaging meaningfully with parents and embedding culturally appropriate programs within the school curriculum. Importantly, the need for educators to understand the roles that Indigenous males played within their communities was perceived as not being valued. Overall, the data found a lack of cultural safety and minimal connections established between schools and parents and very limited evidence for the inclusion of cultural inclusive programs.

Cultural Capacity

The ability to establish quality culturally responsive teaching practices for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students has been the focus of much research (see, Mulford, 2011; Nakata, 2011; Sarra, 2011; Vass, 2017). Similar to what has been uncovered in other studies, this study has found that the capacity of educators to implement Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives from the curriculum into the classroom, had in most cases been exceedingly inadequate. The data showed that many educators did not have an explicit comprehension of the historical impacts, or the contemporary policies and practices that have been and are still being imposed upon Indigenous peoples. Policies and practices such as children being removed from their families and placed in mission dormitories while receiving sub-standard education up until the early 1970's, or more recently the removal of approximately 18,000 Indigenous children who have been placed in out-of-home care (AIHW, 2018), were not readily known by many educators according to research participants.

The data consistently pointed to the repercussions of intergenerational trauma experienced by families and the ways in which this continues to affect Indigenous boys coming to terms with their masculinity and role within mainstream society. However,

it appeared that educators rarely considered this factor when making decisions about the educational exclusion of Indigenous boys.

In order to deliver best practice, there must be a comprehensive understanding of why this knowledge and the cultural capacity of educators in schools is important. Reflecting upon this in relation to Nakata's (2011) question, "How can non-Indigenous teachers do this when they have their biases and may already be challenged in this area?" (p. 2) requires educators to re-consider the dominant ideological perspectives and practices that they bring with them into the classroom. It is clear that teachers must reflect upon who they are and their ideological beliefs, as well as their own professional teaching practice to gauge what is necessary to establish a robust and culturally appropriate learning environment in schools.

The leadership of principals was foregrounded as being pivotal in the process of establishing a school which was culturally responsive to the needs of Indigenous boys. However, the data revealed that educators have a choice as to whether they actively engaged with culturally responsive practices at school. This was an interesting finding, as it was proposed that educators (particularly school leaders) had discretion to engage with, or remain indifferent to, Indigenous cultural contexts. As a result, it highlighted that the parameters of power and agency of Indigenous boys and their families was still being determined by non-Indigenous people within the schooling space. This presented a critical barrier to the positive transformation of the current status of the education system for Indigenous children.

The research showed that there was "resistance" by some educators to become more culturally aware, which aligned with the research of Gray and Beresford (2008). Adding to previous literature, it was found that this resistance may exist for several reasons. Some of these factors included:

- Racist beliefs and attitudes,
- Lowered expectations of Indigenous students,
- Insufficient understanding or fear about how to implement Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives (Cultural incapacity),
- Inadequate training, resources or support mechanisms in place for educators,

- Little, or no value placed upon the cultural significance of embedding Indigenous Knowledges or perspectives into the school curriculum, and
- Lack of genuine relational connections with the Indigenous community.

The cultural incapacity of schools is not a new concept. Over two decades ago Lippmann (1994) suggested that educators needed to be "sensitive and skilled" to meet the needs of Indigenous children and their families (p.143). The data indicates that teachers could be insensitive and were reluctant to acknowledge cultural protocols such as 'Sorry Business' (see, Chapter Six). However, it was also revealed that many educators still fall far short of achieving these competencies, which may point to the differences between individual practices of teachers and strategic education policies. Perso (2012) suggests that an ongoing commitment and engagement by teachers to provide culturally sensitive and responsive schooling is a necessary proviso in order to achieve advancements in this area, thus eliminating discrimination and disparity for Indigenous children.

The data analysis found that schools were complex contested spaces for Indigenous boys, reflecting a lack of culturally safe spaces, requiring conformity to a Eurocentric curriculum, and minimal cultural representation with schools. Although the notion of mandatory reform has been questioned and debated in the past, it may be argued that only by incorporating compulsory policies and practices will we see the government and educators held accountable for the cultural safety of Indigenous children at school.

Culturally Inclusive Practices

Although Chapter Six, Section 1.3 identified a range of divergent interpretations as to whether schools provided culturally inclusive practices, overall participants expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of inclusive practices at most schools. In accordance with Rigney's (2011) consideration of funding accountability for schools highlighted in the literature review, this study identified that it was necessary to tie the accountability of school funding to the improvement of contextualising the curriculum in order to meet the needs and aspirations of Indigenous boys. However, the data also revealed that many schools did not have appropriate plans or goals about how to develop a culturally inclusive curriculum to address or meet the needs of Indigenous boys. It was suggested that there were many Indigenous boys who simply disengaged from their

learning as they did not see themselves represented in what schools were offering. This may be argued as strong evidence for the explicit development of long-term planning by educators, especially if the expectation was to achieve equity for Indigenous boys.

It is important that Indigenous students are given an opportunity to organize cultural programs to instil a sense of leadership at school, however the analysis found that this rarely occurred. Nevertheless, participants taking part in this research perceived that there were minimal opportunities to be the decision-makers regarding culturally appropriate programs that could be of benefit and simultaneously engage Indigenous boys at school. It was found that many of the Indigenous boys who were disengaged from school were not overly interested in academia. Participants expressed, that many of the Indigenous boys who were excluded from school had extremely poor literacy and numeracy skills, emphasising this as a highly probable contributory factor to their disengagement from learning.

The data suggested that physical and outdoor cultural activities should be offered as a way to engage Indigenous boys both at primary and secondary levels of schooling. Nonetheless, not all of the participants accepted that physical activity should be seen as the panacea to engage Indigenous boys at school. The research found that teachers also needed to validate the importance of an academic education for Indigenous boys by promoting the important leadership roles held by many Indigenous peoples throughout Australia, other than those involved in sport.

This study has shown that while some government schools may be embedding culturally appropriate practices, there appeared to be no specific requirement to do so. Since the early seventies, many educators have advocated for changes to support culturally inclusive practices. Nonetheless, it was found that there was still a formidable challenge ahead to achieve any substantial improvements within this area. The findings also indicated that the educational experiences of Indigenous boys was likely to differ considerably from one child to the next and was dependent on a number of factors including their choice of school, family life and socio-economic barriers.

8.2.2 *How do economic and social barriers affect school completion rates of young Indigenous males?*

The data indicated the main socio-economic determinants affecting school completion rates for young Indigenous males who were suspended or excluded from school were:

- Economic disadvantage
- Well-being (Health), and
- Social identity.

Each of these determinants will now be discussed in more detail.

Economic Disadvantage

Many Indigenous peoples experience ongoing financial distress as a result of past and present colonialist policies. Political and socio-economic legacies amongst other things, have affected education, employment, health and housing and mortality rates for many Indigenous Australians and all of these facets have had a substantial intergenerational impact upon the economic and social wellbeing of many Indigenous peoples. Since the 1960's, there has been a range of socio-economic interventions aimed at alleviating the disparate outcomes experienced by many Indigenous Australians. Although some Indigenous peoples who have obtained financial security and social independence, there are others who continue to encounter societal and economic exclusion (see, Atkinson, Taylor & Walter (2008).

While a considerable amount of Federal government financial support (Australian Government, 2018) was given to the private and public education sectors, across all state and territory jurisdictions, to support Indigenous children at school, it remains unclear how this funding is being utilized by each school. There appears to be no publicly available quantitative data as to how Queensland state government funding is being expended to contribute to the overall explicit needs of Indigenous children attending state schools. Furthermore, this is left up to the principals of each individual state school as to how funding will be utilised to support quality education outcomes for Indigenous children.

The findings from this study indicate that financial hardship may be one of the causal factors of suspension and or exclusion from school for young Indigenous males. The data analysis presented in section 5.4 identified that ongoing intergenerational welfare dependency for many Indigenous peoples does have a bearing on achievement of financial independence and that in some instances this had led to a strain on family households to provide the basic necessities for children to attend school, e.g., purchase of a school uniform.

This study found that the unfortunate pre-eminence and sometimes rigid enactment of school policies to punitively suspend or exclude for non-compliance of minor infringements, such as incorrect uniform attire was often experienced by Indigenous boys. Although it may seem simplistic, this appeared to affect Indigenous boys' choice to attend school and did have some bearing on their exclusion from school. The data also revealed that not being able to have the necessary clothing, or being able to fit in with their peers resulted in feelings of isolation being experienced by some Indigenous boys. According to participants taking part in this research, the social standing and desire for peer approval within the mainstream school community was perceived to be an important issue for Indigenous boys. Nevertheless, it was of great concern that some educators were not able to comprehend that some families were experiencing extreme financial hardship and that although this economic situation was out of the control of the child, it may still result in the suspension or exclusion of the child from school.

Participants noted that the provision of meals at home or school lunches for some Indigenous children was at times difficult due the financial stresses placed upon families. Previous research found that being able to provide breakfast or lunches at school if necessary, gave schools an opportunity to encourage students to not only attend school, but also ensured that they were being adequately nourished (Pascoe, Shaikh, Forbis and Etzel, 2007). Furthermore, children who could access these support services were more inclined to attend and remain at school (Edward & Evers, 2001). By providing this support it had a more positive influence on children's continued attendance and learning at school. However, it was also critical to note that schools do have limited budget constraints and provision of these services was not considered an authorised responsibility of state schools.

The data found that it was not necessarily an easy task for Indigenous support workers to convince educators, both school leaders and teachers, that there were more urgent and pressing needs that required prioritization for some Indigenous families, such as secure housing, employment and financial security. Providing support and resources for Indigenous children must be considered a high priority, rather than an add-on by schools. The data indicated that substantial positive outcomes could be experienced by all stakeholders if this was to occur.

Well-being

In this section, the use of the word well-being is used in conjunction with health, as it provided a more culturally holistic view of the needs of Indigenous children, in this case, Indigenous boys (Atkinson, 2001, 2002; Henderson, Robson, Cox, Dukes, Tsey & Haswell, 2017). Data revealed that there were health factors that may well contribute to the disengagement and exclusion of some young Indigenous males from school. Figure 8.1 shows the health and well-being issues identified in this study as affecting school retention and engagement of Indigenous boys. These health issues are interconnected and complex and require the development of holistic practices and approaches by schools to specifically support the well-being of Indigenous boys. Participants maintained that adverse health factors, such as homelessness, drug use and intergenerational trauma may at times result in the suspension or exclusion of young Indigenous males from school. Participants also associated disconnection from family with exclusion from school. There appeared to be a lack of understanding by schools and their agents, as to how these inter-related factors impinge upon the ability of young boys to attend, engage with, and remain in, school.

Another concern raised in this study was what appeared to be teacher indecisiveness, or eagerness, to refer Indigenous boys on, for professional evaluation of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It was suggested that the independent behaviour of Indigenous boys may at times mistakenly be perceived as ADHD by some teachers.
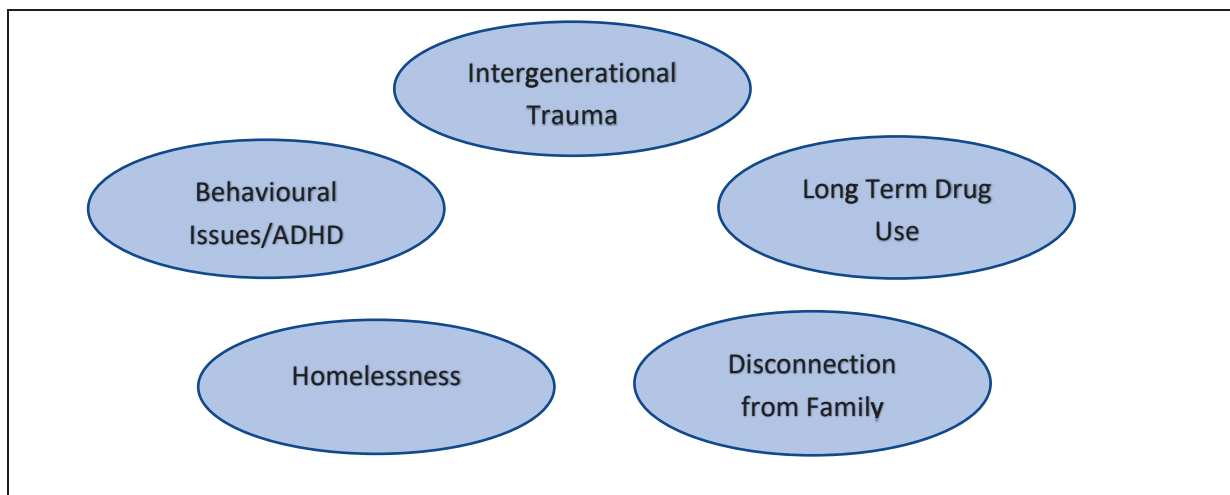
Figure 8.1 Interrelated health and well-being factors associated with the exclusion of Indigenous boys from school.

It was suggested that the independent behaviour of Indigenous boys may at times mistakenly be perceived as ADHD by some teachers. Rather than getting to the underlying causes of behavioural proclivities (see, de Plevitz, 2006), some teachers were quick to recommend that Indigenous boys should be medically assessed to ascertain whether they presented with ADHD. Interestingly, there was a noted increase in Indigenous children being diagnosed with ADHD and many diagnosed with ADHD were also over-represented in the criminal justice system (Miller & Spooner, 2003; Moore, Sunjic, Kaye, Archer & Indig, 2013). It must be stated that while teachers do have a responsibility to ensure the welfare of all students, not all teachers have the specific knowledge to identify the underlying symptoms of ADHD, or understand the assessment frameworks to determine whether children should be required to be medically assessed. In fact, in their study, Loh, Hayden, Vicary and Mancini (2017) identified that there may be several cultural factors that are not taken into consideration in the diagnosis of ADHD amongst Indigenous children, such as a more lenient approach to "hyperactive behaviour within the Aboriginal community" (p. 2), as well as a loss of self/identity once ADHD medication had been administered to Indigenous children. It has also been established that diagnosis of ADHD is more prevalent in areas where people experience socio-economic disadvantage (Russell, Ford & Russell, 2015) suggesting that Indigenous children are much more likely to fall into this category.

Nationally there is concern about the increasing administration of medication to children to regulate their behaviour, particularly for boys between 10-14 years of age,

who are four times more likely than girls to be prescribed ADHD medication (Hollingworth et al., 2011). Importantly, in their comprehensive longitudinal research, Hollingworth et al. (2011) pointed to the retention and increased expectations of children at school as one of the explanations for a rise in prescribing ADHD medication. Ghosh, D'arcy, Holman and Preen (2015) suggested that caution should be observed when diagnosing ADHD in Indigenous children and maintained that cultural and environmental factors must be taken into consideration to prevent misdiagnosis.

While not all of the health factors have been addressed here, it is likely that for some Indigenous boys, poor health and well-being contributes to the likelihood of suspension and exclusion from school, specifically for the reason that educators do not understand the ramifications relative to the social and economic experiences of many Indigenous families.

Social Identity

As highlighted in Section 5.4.3, the independence of Indigenous children is established by kin and family at an early age through the teachings of family and community. In their research paper, *Strengths of Australian Aboriginal cultural practices in family life and child rearing*, Lohoar, Butera and Kennedy (2014) described a collectivist approach to the learning and independence of Indigenous children in the following way,

> Children need the freedom to explore and experience the world—Aboriginal communities offer their children every opportunity to explore the world around them, to help them develop the necessary skills to successfully negotiate their pathways to adulthood (p.1).

This study revealed that the manner in which Indigenous boys managed their own independent pathways through mainstream schooling was extremely complex. At home young Indigenous males are given much more autonomy and responsibility than when at school, where there is often a sense of having to conform to the rigidities of mainstream hegemonic requirements of the institution. This aligns with participants

observations, that many young Indigenous males relate the confinement of a classroom to that of being incarcerated. The enculturation of Indigenous children into Eurocentric style schooling was seen to be highly problematic. It was also suggested by participants that many Indigenous boys tended to rebel against the school system if they were not afforded their independence, given the opportunity to develop their sense of self, and express their social identity and Indigeneity without fear or shame.

Knowing your identity and where you are from is seen to be critical for the self-empowerment of Indigenous boys. It is maintained that many boys who had experienced exclusion, "were not comfortable in their own skin." The agency of many Indigenous boys was affected by dominant power structures and systemic oppression in their social domain.

There was also a distinct lack of Indigenous male role models available to assist Indigenous boys going into, and coming out of, juvenile detention.

So, if anything, that would be their first thing (Indigenous boys), "Where's my Dad?" It's all about identity, back to that identity, that spiritual, making sure their spirit is in-tact (Adam).

Meiners (2007) explains that the loss of Indigenous male role models may have significantly devastating consequences, resulting in feelings of resentment and disillusionment and can also contribute to an absence of cultural identity. It was suggested that Indigenous male role models in schools could have a positive influential impact upon the cultural well-being of young Indigenous males. The employment of Indigenous males in schools by DET to support young Indigenous males was highlighted as an urgent priority by most of the research participants.

The data indicated that many Indigenous boys felt a sense of disempowerment at school, as they did not see their culture valued. Seldom did Indigenous boys see their culture celebrated at school and there was a distinct lack of understanding, and at times overt disrespect, from teachers and students towards Indigenous cultural protocols.

The study found that the social and economic disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous families resulted in poor health outcomes, which may prevent ongoing attendance at school. The consequences of inadequate access to holistic health care services for Indigenous children was identified as affecting their participation at school, and therefore accounted for sustained and continued absences from school. It was also noted that for some Indigenous children this may then result in their exclusion from school. All of these factors were acute obstacles to be manoeuvred by Indigenous children, particularly boys. Subsequently, some school establishments appeared to be delivering unsatisfactory and unsafe spaces for Indigenous boys through which to navigate.

8.2.3 *What is the relationship between Indigenous males aged 10 to 17 years who are suspended/excluded from state schooling and their over-representation in Queensland youth detention?*

There are many similarities between the school and prison system. State schools and juvenile detention facilities are places that are controlled by government employees and whose rules are reinforced by official government policies sanctioned by the State. Foucault (1995) stated, "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (p.228). Ivan Illich in his ground-breaking work *Deschooling Society* (1970) characterised schools as analogous to prisons and factories, where industrialisation has carved out institutional order, rules and ideological conventions that are comparable, and in this process the dominant culture maintains social control over how knowledge is constructed and how power is disseminated throughout society.

It was identified in the national literature that Indigenous boys were over-represented in juvenile detention in every state and territory of Australia. The ways in which Indigenous boys are or are not supported at school and within the community is worthy of further consideration. Meiners (2007) suggested that everyday practices in Eurocentric schools, 'set in motion a series of actions, that "function to normalise an 'expectation' of incarceration" for growing numbers of youth" (p.31).

Although it is important to note that the evidence from this study relied on a relatively small sample, the findings indicated that there may be some causal relationship between the suspension and exclusion of Indigenous boys from state schools and their over-representation in juvenile detention. The literature identified that Indigenous boys 10-17 years of age made up approximately six to seven percent of the Queensland state school student cohort, but represented approximately 20% of all student suspensions and exclusions from Queensland state schools. It was also found that a majority of young people in Queensland detention centres, sentenced and un-sentenced, were young Indigenous males aged between 10-17 years.

All participants who took part in this study had observed young Indigenous males being suspended or excluded from state schools at alarming rates, and all indicated that many of these young boys eventually ended up in the criminal justice system. The data found that suspension or exclusion from school usually resulted in predominantly negative consequences for young Indigenous males. The findings indicate that the causes of young Indigenous males being excluded from school varied. Even in early childhood scenarios within school settings, very young Indigenous males were being excluded and isolated from classroom and social activities for long periods of time by teachers. However, many of the suspensions or exclusions may be as a result of several underlying factors that at times led to behavioural issues at school. Issues such as health, economic security, home life, racism, and little understanding by educators as to how their own cultural incapacity may impact upon their decision to exclude Indigenous boys from school were identified as significant.

The literature and findings also highlighted that there is hyper-surveillance of young Indigenous males and they came into contact with police at substantially higher rates than their non-Indigenous peers. Therefore, it may be concluded that those young Indigenous males who have been suspended or excluded from school were much more likely to be highly visible to police if they are congregating in public spaces during school hours. As maintained by one of the participants, Vann, "a breakdown of education is one of the key areas of young people entering into offending" and for young Indigenous males this may result in very different outcomes to their non-Indigenous peers, affecting future education, well-being and employment opportunities.

8.2.4 *What support strategies could reduce the numbers of young Indigenous males who are suspended or excluded from state schools?*

The following support strategies may reduce the high numbers of young Indigenous males being suspended or excluded from state schools:

- The immediate employment of Indigenous male mentors in schools,
- More full-time Indigenous education workers and teacher aides at school, both males and females,
- Culturally appropriate curricula – e.g. connecting with Country, Indigenous language programs,
- Culturally safe spaces for Indigenous students at schools,
- Improved connection with families of Indigenous children,
- Accessing 'Wrap-around services' in schools – e.g. Indigenous health, Indigenous led wellbeing teams and other Indigenous led community support services, and
- Improved cultural capacity of educators.

Each of these points will now be discussed briefly.

The role of Indigenous male mentors being employed by schools was a high priority for most of the participants. The study found that there was a severe lack of direct support for young Indigenous males and that the employment of Indigenous mentors was necessary to support young males to transition throughout difficult stages of their schooling life. Having the presence of Indigenous males in schools, such as those offered in Indigenous men's community support groups, could provide cultural support and guidance around Men's Business and gender related practices (Tsey, Patterson, Whiteside, Baird, & Baird, 2002). In turn, this could have a direct positive impact on the well-being, empowerment, agency and social identity of Indigenous boys at school (Andrology Australia, 2015).

The data showed that part of the solution may require the employment of more full-time Indigenous Australians in mentoring and support roles in schools. It was also noted that many Indigenous community workers were providing their services free of

charge to schools, and were doing so because there was no other dedicated professional employment of Indigenous support workers by Education Queensland. Rather than leave children unsupported, these community members were shouldering the responsibility for the welfare of Indigenous children at school and some of the participants identified this as an ongoing dilemma. This is supported by the research of Kerr, Savelsberg, Sparrow and Tedmanson (2001) who found that many Indigenous peoples were continually volunteering their services within communities and are not being remunerated for their contributions or services.

Participants' voiced that engagement of Indigenous boys at school was critical and identified that connecting boys to 'Country' through school programs was one of the ways that Indigenous boys were engaged at school. This corresponded with current programs listed below that were being made available across Queensland and other states and territories in Australia.

- Boys on the Bounce, located in Dandenong, Victoria is a ten week program supporting the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys at school. http://ddacl.org.au/boys-on-the-bounce/
- Returning to Country, a support program for Indigenous children at the Gold Coast in Queensland. Organised in partnership with Kirrawe Indigenous Corporation and the ETC Community Support Fund. http://www.kirrawe.com.au/
- Balunu Foundation, which is an Indigenous owned and led charity organisation situated in Casuarina, Northern Territory, providing opportunities to young people to break the cycle of disadvantage. https://www.balunu.org.au/
- Pathfinders Innovative Cultural Camp, situated in Glen Innes, New South Wales provides youth with connection to traditional values, were all of those involved at the camps are Aboriginal and 'the teachings are culturally sensitive and localised to conform to local cultural protocols. http://www.pathfinders.ngo/innovative-cultural-camp-to-revive-traditional-connections-for-aboriginal-youth/

- Mona Horsemanship Program in Mt Isa, Queensland where the Chairperson, Patrick Cooke believes getting kids back onto country is vital for their well-being (see, https://www.amnesty.org.au/mona-horsemanship-program/).

All of these programs are Indigenous led, and are achieving high success rates for Indigenous boys to remain at or re-engage with school and also in the prevention of incarceration. In the Moreton Bay Regional area, there are considerably more non-Indigenous led support organisations (30 in total), than Indigenous led organisations (seven in total) where this study took place. It has been shown that Indigenous led programs can be particularly successful if the decision-making processes are controlled by Indigenous peoples from community (Morley, 2015; Tsey & Every, 2000; Tsey, McCalman, Bainbridge & Brown, 2012). While this study does not permit an opportunity to explore this finding in more depth, the implications for future research in this area were certainly worthy of further consideration.

Parallels may be drawn between this study and the work of Munns and McFadden (2000) which investigated resistance as a device used by young Indigenous peoples towards the inequalities they faced at school. They found that when Indigenous children resisted against what they saw as an education system that was failing them, successful outcomes eventuated by providing appropriate cultural support structures to prevent children disengaging from school. Likewise, in this study participants highlighted the need for more involvement of Indigenous led community support organisations engaging with schools. Participants indicated that support services provided by Indigenous led organisations could offer Indigenous boys' better prospects of remaining at school and assist with positive and engaged learning. However, it appeared that state schools were not readily establishing meaningful associations with Indigenous led community support organisations, therefore negating the cultural expertise and knowledge which could be shared by these wrap-around services.

One of the major findings of this research was the overwhelming response from participants regarding the cultural incapacity of many educators, both leaders in schools and classroom teachers. This finding was specified by participants as an area that required urgent attention. It was identified that without knowledge of Indigenous

histories and cultural perspectives, very little clarity or understanding of the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples would be achieved by educators and those who were creating education policies at an executive level.

Although previous literature identified that basic foundations existed to implement culturally responsive practices, such as the 2008 Education Queensland initiative, *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools*, there remained an extremely slow take up to address this deficit. It was also established that there was an implicit indifference to Indigenous parental input into the well-being of Indigenous children. The data identified that for the most part many educators seemed content to maintain the status quo, thereby preventing any significant progress in improving the outcomes for many Indigenous children.

The cultural capacity of many educators and those developing policy appeared to be severely lacking. This finding emphasized the absence of vital progress that was required to implement culturally responsive educational practices for Indigenous children. Without urgent advancement in this area it will be extremely difficult to move forward collectively. Indigenous children must be embodied positively and inclusively within the education system.

O'Brien and Trudgett (2018) suggest that there have been some promising advances by individual schools who have established meaningful relationships and partnerships with their local communities. Correspondingly, the *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership* (AITSL) (2010) standards 1.4 and 2.4 promote important strategies for teachers to develop their professional practice across all stages of their teaching career' (p.11,13). However, current and future educators must be given continued opportunities for professional learning to occur to support the implementation of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges within schools. Policy makers and universities must work in partnership to achieve theoretical and practical application of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Martin, 2003) in order to progress within this space.

8.3 Summary

Findings from this study identified that one of the key failures, particularly around education was the significant disconnect between systems of government, policy development and those implementing educational policy at the school level. The data also indicated that there was a considerable disconnection between schools and the families of Indigenous children and significant progress in this area was warranted.

It was revealed that the ability of Indigenous boys to freely and safely express their Indigeneity, without discrimination or question, may foster positive identity and self-esteem and inspire improved connections to engage with school. The study also found that the employment of male mentors to support Indigenous boys could make a significant and positive impact and support school retention and completion.

Educators were disinclined to engage in culturally sensitive relationships and that parents' contributions were not always valued. The findings illustrated that educators could also be dismissive of parents' concerns regarding their aspirations for their children's educational outcomes, as well as their safety at school particularly with regards to experiences of racism.

A lack of input from Indigenous and non-Indigenous community organisations was also determined as a barrier to successful outcomes for Indigenous children at school. This data revealed that in order to proffer workable, practical solutions, Indigenous peoples must be involved directly in educational policy making at each level of government. Parents of Indigenous children must also have greater access and input into school decision making processes that affect their children at the local level.

This chapter has provided insights into the hegemonic power structures at play within government systems and provides a response to each of the four questions set out in Chapter One. Chapter Nine will present the conclusion and recommendations of this research and identify opportunities for future research considerations.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

9.0 Introduction

This final chapter commences with Section 9.1, a conclusion which provides a brief summary of the data presented in this thesis. Several recommendations that emerged from the research are then offered in section 9.2. Next, section 9.3 advocates for future research which stems from findings of this study and finally, section 9.4 provides a concluding summary. The implementation of some of the recommendations may be reliant upon the employment of other commendations across the three sectors identified. These sectors comprise of, The Department of Education Queensland, Individual State Schools located in Queensland, and Community Organisations.

9.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to identify whether the education experiences of young Indigenous males attending state schools in Queensland may contribute to their over-representation in the juvenile justice system. In order to best understand this problem, this study specifically focussed upon the comparatively high numbers of Indigenous boys who were being *excluded* from mainstream education.

The literature illustrated the historical and contemporary background of the education experiences of Indigenous peoples from invasion to the present-day scenario. International, national and state data on males from minority groups exposed that the school to prison pipeline is an international dilemma and not necessarily specific to the Australian context (see, Behrendt, Cuneen & Libesman, 2009; New Zealand Department of Corrections, 2007; Howard, 2008; Noguera, 2003; Rudin, 2007;

Owusu-Bempah & Miller, 2010). Exclusion from Queensland State Schools has serious repercussions which may contribute to the over-representation of some minority groups in the juvenile justice system.   While it cannot be conclusively ascertained that the negative education experiences of some Indigenous boys do result in over-representation in juvenile incarceration, overall, the findings suggest that a cluster of adverse schooling practices may well contribute to this proposition.

The theoretical perspectives of Martin Nakata and Antonio Gramsci were used to provide a foundational theoretical framework to privilege the voices of those who are consistently marginalised from these discussions.   Nakata's (2003) Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Gramsci's Theory of Cultural Hegemony (1971), both provided an appropriate platform to do this. The results revealed that Eurocentric hegemonic proclivities still dominate and dictate how institutional systems are maintained and preserved within the state and that this can have serious negative implications for Indigenous boys. By examining, what is taking place at the cultural interface in an educational setting, it was important to consider that in order to have any meaningful dialogue, there must firstly be an understanding that power imbalances exist within this contested space. Gramsci's (1971) theory of cultural hegemony allowed for examination of hegemonic control, power and privilege that may initially need to be considered so that a balanced dialogue may occur at the cultural interface.

The research methodology utilised Rigney's three principles of Indigenist research and foregrounded the importance of resistance to Eurocentric practices.   Previous research has identified that any study conducted in Indigenous spaces must seek to achieve political integrity and give voice to those who are situated within the research process (Gillan, Mellor & Krakouer, 2017; Hogarth, 2018; Maddison, 2009). It was revealed that resistance to dominant institutional practices by Indigenous peoples has been ongoing since settler colonisation and that the dismantling of inequitable government systems is required to achieve self-determination and cultural emancipation for Indigenous peoples. Therefore, Indigenous voices must be heard and there must be a substantial increase in the representation of Indigenous peoples at all levels of the education system to achieve political integrity and for significant transformation to occur. Consideration was given to both the functionalities of the education and the legal systems in the contexts of this study.

Overall, the research has shown that the suspension and exclusion of young Indigenous males needs to be urgently addressed by Education Queensland and an inquiry by the Queensland State government into the over-representation of young Indigenous males in Queensland's juvenile detention centres must be forthcoming. Although recognising the limitations of the study, this research found that there were relatively high rates of Indigenous students, particularly males, who did not complete the necessary schooling requirements due to disengagement, suspension and or exclusion from mainstream state schools in Queensland. The retention and engagement of young Indigenous males must be a priority for Education Queensland. To ensure that Indigenous experts have a voice in the decision making processes regarding strategic planning and implementation of policy around this issue, there must be appropriate and ongoing opportunities for this to transpire.

The implementation of some of the recommendations may be reliant upon the employment of other commendations across the three sectors previously identified.

The Department of Education Queensland

Recommendation 1:

The Department of Education Queensland immediately set up a taskforce to investigate the high numbers of Indigenous boys being excluded from mainstream state schools across Queensland. This taskforce must engage with Indigenous education experts and review current Student Disciplinary Absence policy and practice.

Establishing a taskforce to investigate current policy and practice will present an opportunity to investigate multifaceted issues, including the high number of School Disciplinary Absences of Indigenous children across each region.

Recommendation 2:

The Department of Education Queensland establishes an Indigenous led educational advisory group in each of the seven education regions in Queensland, to address complex issues around the retention and

engagement of Indigenous children at school.

Establishing an Indigenous Advisory Group for each region of state education in Queensland, may provide support mechanisms to meet the needs and requirements of Indigenous children and their families from a more regional and locally based level.

Recommendation 3:

The Department of Education Queensland commits to the development of a quantitative, data driven report including the identification of specific culturally inclusive key performance indicators (KPI's) to support Indigenous children, that aligns with the qualitative data currently provided. This report should include data for all state schools receiving state or federal Indigenous grant funding. The report must be made available to the public. These will be measurable through the achievement of specified annual key performance indicators developed by Education Queensland and Indigenous stakeholders (eg. Indigenous Education Advisory Groups).

While several of Education Queensland's policies align with the mandate to close the gap of educational disparity for Indigenous children, this study revealed that apart from Education Queensland School Improvement Unit reviews (Department of Education, 2017) there does not appear to be any specific structural framework, or explicit quantifiable accountability as to how this is to be achieved by all individual state schools across Queensland. Although the Department of Education Queensland has engaged in the development of policy around supporting improvements in schools for Indigenous children, there appears to be no specific quantitative data that measures what is occurring in state schools at a local level to achieve these targets.

Recommendation 4:

Queensland State Schools establish genuine connections to Indigenous led community organisations in their local area. The benefits and outcomes of such partnerships should be documented through School/Community Partnership obligations, established by Queensland

State Schools and the Indigenous Education Advisory Group. These should be conducted on a regular basis ie. at least twice per year.

This study uncovered that there appeared to be limited cultural relationships established between many schools and local Indigenous communities, and Indigenous led organisations. It revealed minimal understanding by educators of the socio-economic and cultural complexities that exist for many Indigenous families. Therefore, to support Indigenous students, all Queensland State schools must be required to detail in their strategic plans what connections to local Indigenous led community organisations is occurring and indicate the benefits and challenges of the development and establishment of such partnerships.

Recommendation 5:

The Department of Education Queensland works intensively with other government departments (such as the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Department of Child Safety, Queensland Health, Department of Housing and the Department of Youth Justice) to establish a holistic support network for families of Indigenous children, and provide access to wrap-around support services.

The Department of Education must institute considered and holistic partnerships with other government organisations to support Indigenous children and their families, rather than the current 'silo approach'. In other words, government departments must endeavour to work in partnership with each other, rather than adopting an individualistic approach, they should endeavour to share their knowledge and information across departments in order to support Indigenous children more fully to support to Indigenous families in a culturally safe way.

This study has identified the urgent need to provide more opportunities to employ both male and female Indigenous peoples in the Queensland Education Department. There are currently significant numbers of local Indigenous people volunteering substantial amounts of personal time to support Indigenous children who are being excluded or who are disengaging from schools, identifying a serious gap in

remunerated Indigenous professional support workers. Having the presence of long term Indigenous male mentors in schools could provide cultural support and guidance around gender related practices, and in turn could have a positive impact on the empowerment, agency and social identity of Indigenous boys.

Recommendation 6:

Education Queensland introduce full-time employment target quotas for Indigenous male and female mentors in schools to guide and support young Indigenous males and females throughout all stages of their education, connecting them with culturally suitable programs and services when required.

The establishment of these employment targets will ensure that the Queensland Education Department is committed to the Queensland Government's Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2021. Long term employment of Indigenous male and female student mentors must be considered a priority, with parents involved wherever possible, to ensure that the best interests of each individual child is considered.

Individual State Schools Located in Queensland

It was identified in this research that there was a lack of culturally specific planning or focus within schools on the education priorities for Indigenous children and their families.

Recommendation 7:

All Queensland State schools establish a core planning team, which includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons, to focus on Indigenous education priorities for students and their families. It is important that the progress is monitored and evaluated in relation to key performance indicators developed at the local school level.

These planning teams should include representatives from the Indigenous community and parental representation wherever possible. This team should also have at least

one representative from the school's administration – that is, Principal or Deputy Principal representation.

Recommendation 8:

Schools consider alternative prevention and intervention options to suspension and or exclusion of Indigenous boys, to avoid interruption to their education programs.

At present there appears to be no specific strategies developed from a cultural perspective to prevent Indigenous boys avoid suspension and or exclusion from school. The study revealed that there needed to be a more structured and formal approach taken by schools and educators to ensure that young Indigenous males felt positively supported and were provided with a culturally safe space at school. The data also indicated that many young Indigenous males who disengage from their schooling may not necessarily feel safe to express their individual or collective identity.

Recommendation 9:

Schools immediately provide all staff with on-going cultural capacity and cultural safety training, to ensure understanding of historical and contemporary experiences for Indigenous peoples. Schools will respectfully embed Indigenous programs into their curriculum, in partnership with Indigenous community experts and stakeholders.

The study found the lack of educator knowledge of Indigenous histories, policies and practices have in some instances contributed to disadvantage for Indigenous boys at school. Culturally responsive teaching practices were also found to be an area were many teachers were eminently lacking. Nonetheless, it was recognised that teachers must be provided with ongoing professional support opportunities to improve their cultural capacity throughout their teaching profession, not just in their initial teacher education training where there is now mandated Indigenous curriculum units for pre-service teachers. Training of teachers and school staff must be a priority for all Queensland State Schools. This training must be Indigenous led and ongoing. Professional learning documentation must be held by schools indicating what specific

training staff have undertaken in relation to building cultural capacity to support Indigenous children and their families.

Recommendation 10:

Primary and secondary schools identify and establish genuine partnerships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous community organisations that can offer wrap-around services to support Indigenous children and their families.

It was highlighted that schools need to establish genuine partnerships with community organisations who can offer support services that schools may not be able to provide to Indigenous children and their families. These partnerships should be acknowledged and outcomes of these partnerships documented in each schools' annual review.

Community Organisations

These recommendations are provided for both government and non-government organisations. Based on the findings of this research, it is important to acknowledge that while communities are providing valuable services, a gap has been identified between community organisations and the services provided directly to schools.

Community organisations must establish constructive partnerships with local State primary and secondary schools. Critically, Indigenous led community networks who are adequately funded, must have more access into schools to provide necessary support services for Indigenous children.

It is important for Community Organisations to engage in proactive, rather than reactive responses to issues within the community. In order to do this, meaningful and respectful relationships must be formed, and organisations must be supported and encouraged to develop Reconciliation Action Plans so that they can move forward in partnership with Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 11:

Community organisations formally profile their services to schools proactively, to meet the support needs of families and Indigenous children.

Community organisations must seek to adopt a culturally collectivist and preventative, rather than mainstream, interventionist approaches to their services in supporting Indigenous families, ensuring the input and support of Indigenous organisations and Indigenous community leaders and Elders.

Indigenous led community organisations are funded to receive relevant training for their staff in disengagement, suspension and exclusion of Indigenous boys and, re-integration back into community after incarceration.

Recommendation 12:

Community organisations that are established to support Indigenous communities ensure that they are controlled and led by Indigenous community members, or maintain an Indigenous majority of Boardmembers and Indigenous representatives in leadership roles to achieve self-determination.

To achieve self-determination, community organisations must be able to offer effective support measures, which include, culturally strong and local methods of practice and implementation. These organisations must have a connection with local community and have the capabilities to engage with young men and their families.

9.3 Limitations of the Study

Initially the research objective was to speak with young Indigenous males, however attempting to obtain all three ethical approvals to from the University of Technology Sydney, the Department of Education and Training Queensland and the Department of Justice, Queensland, within the limits of a three-year PhD project was not deemed

practicable after intensive discussions with my supervisors. Instead, it was decided in consultation with my supervisors to interview adults who support Indigenous boys in their professional capacity in the spaces of education, social welfare and justice. This research reflects deep, rich, storied findings which illuminates the professional experiences of the Indigenous participants who support and care for young Indigenous males within the community on a daily basis.

9.4 Future Research

A number of areas emerged during this study which would benefit from further research. Statistics could not be located during the course of this study relating to the numbers of Indigenous peoples (teachers or teacher support workers) who were employed in schools by Education Queensland. An investigation into how Indigenous peoples are recruited, retained and trained for employment advancement may provide an opportunity for Education Queensland to consider enhancing its future recruitment programs, and how this may assist Indigenous peoples to gain more full-time employment within the department. This may provide discrete benefits for Indigenous Australians residing in Queensland and also provide Education Queensland with a workforce who has the cultural expertise, competence and knowledge to provide safer and more culturally inclusive schools across the state for Indigenous children.

Another issue which related to employment of Indigenous peoples in schools, were the short term contracts of those Indigenous education workers currently employed by individual schools. Most of the contracts of Indigenous education support workers were given on a six month basis, and these temporary contracts placed considerable stress upon employees during the course of their employment and particularly at the end of the school year, when many contracts expired. It may be worth examining the long-term social and economic consequences that result from insecure employment in this area.

Given that this research centred around the exclusion from school of Indigenous boys and their over-representation in the Queensland juvenile justice system, it is worthy of

noting that statistical data indicates that there is an increasing rate of Indigenous females now experiencing incarceration in Queensland and across Australia (Law Council of Australia, 2017). Particular examination of the causes for this increase in incarceration of Indigenous females may circumvent further disparity in this area.

It is suggested that a larger study is conducted on a national scale to investigate how the state and territories compare in relation to the exclusion of Indigenous males from schools and their over-representation in the juvenile justice system.

9.5 Concluding Summary

This thesis set out to ascertain the connections between the exclusion of Indigenous boys from mainstream schools in Queensland and their subsequent over-representation in the juvenile justice system. Four research questions were posed, and a qualitative methodology was adopted which sought to privilege Indigenous voices and Indigenous Standpoints as central to this research. The key findings that emerged were:

- Inequitable power structures within hegemonic government systems
- Racism, lack of cultural safety for Indigenous students, and a lack of cultural capacity within the education system
- Socio-economic and cultural determinants affecting the well-being and engagement of Indigenous boys at school
- School and community support structures for Indigenous boys are lacking.

The findings resulted in a set of 12 recommendations that are aimed at ensuring the development of culturally safe educational strategies and policies be implemented within the education sector and in schools in order to disrupt the school to prison pipeline for Indigenous boys. It is vital that Indigenous led community solutions are initiated and supported to address the current existing challenges within this space at a local and state level.

The power of institutions to exclude language, culture and other knowledge systems

to the detriment or advancement of Indigenous peoples over non-Indigenous peoples is a provocative dilemma. However, this study has sought to challenge entrenched dominant hegemonic powers such as those that exist within state education and the justice system.

As Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, we must seek to question how identities are constructed, and in turn how and why Indigenous peoples remain 'Othered' and marginalised by upholding policies and practices of assimilation and integration, particularly in the dominions of education and justice. To implement transformation, educators must understand and engage with social justice issues in the context of the ways in which education is delivered in schools. Non-Indigenous educators must challenge their own belief systems, hegemonic power structures and existing dominant ideological practices. By doing so, educators can contribute to the advancement of an equitable and culturally responsive education system and support self-determination for Indigenous Australians.

In the process of this research the voices of Indigenous peoples are considered, valued and included to ensure the advancement of Australia's education system for Indigenous children. Indigenous peoples cannot, and should not be denied an equitable place in society, nonetheless by ignoring or devaluing Indigenous cultures in the dominions of state institutions, such as schools, regrettably this is still occurring. There can be no longer be an acceptance of the high rates of suspension or exclusion of Indigenous boys from school and concomitantly we should vehemently refuse to accept the high rates of young Indigenous males who continue to be incarcerated throughout Australia.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: UTS Ethics Approval

Thank you for your response to the Committee's comments for your project titled, "Educational Experiences of Young Indigenous Males and their Over-representation in the Queensland Juvenile Justice System.". Your response satisfactorily addresses the concerns and questions raised by the Committee who agreed that the application now meets the requirements of the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). I am pleased to inform you that ethics approval is now granted.

Your approval number is UTS HREC REF NO. ETH16-1078.

Approval will be for a period of five (5) years from the date of this correspondence subject to the provision of annual reports. Your approval number must be included in all participant material and advertisements. Any advertisements on the UTS Staff Connect without an approval number will be removed.

Please note that the ethical conduct of research is an on-going process. The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires us to obtain a report about the progress of the research, and in particular about any changes to the research which may have ethical implications. This report form must be completed at least annually from the date of approval, and at the end of the project (if it takes more than a year). The Ethics Secretariat will contact you when it is time to complete your first report.

I also refer you to the AVCC guidelines relating to the storage of data, which require that data be kept for a minimum of 5 years after publication of research. However, in NSW, longer retention requirements are required for research on human subjects with potential long-term effects, research with long-term environmental effects, or research considered of national or international significance, importance, or controversy. If the data from this research project falls into one of these categories, contact University Records for advice on long-term retention.

You should consider this your official letter of approval. If you require a hardcopy please contact Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor Beata Bajorek

Chairperson

UTS Human Research Ethics Committee

C/- Research & Innovation Office

University of Technology, Sydney

E: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG INDIGENOUS MALES AND
THEIR OVER-REPRESENTATION IN THE QUEENSLAND JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM
UTS HREC APPROVAL NUMBER - ETH16-1078

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

My name is Grace O'Brien and I am a PhD student at the University of Technology Sydney – Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges. My supervisor is Professor Michelle Trudgett (an Indigenous academic from the Wiradjuri Nation in NSW) and her contact telephone number is: 0295143077.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research is to find out about the impact of exclusion and suspension of young Indigenous males and their subsequent over-representation in Queensland juvenile detention. To date, there has been no research conducted documenting the views of the Indigenous community about the effect this has on the lives of Indigenous children, their families and the community. This research focusses specifically on the voices of the Indigenous community and their right to express their views freely about this important issue.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

There are two ways you can participate in the research:
I will invite you to participate in:

- An individual interview – Face-to-face (one on one) interview, which will take 60-80 mins maximum, and will take place in a centrally selected and culturally safe community space within a convenient location to you.

OR

- Part of a focus group – There will be two focus groups organised, consisting of no more than 10 people in attendance at each of the focus group sessions and will take 60-90 mins maximum, and will take place in a centrally selected and culturally safe community space within a convenient location to you.

Data will be audio-recorded during the individual interviews and focus group sessions and will be transcribed for analysis at a later date.

You may agree to be part of both an individual interview and a focus group session.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

Yes, there are some risks/inconvenience. This research has the potential risk to bring some discomfort for some of the people participating. As the research involves discussion about vulnerable children and sensitive information, participants are likely to have established close relationships with these children. Therefore, participants may find it difficult to speak about the negative aspects children have experienced within the education and juvenile justice systems. The researcher will ensure that participants in the research will have adequate access to support services, such as Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Counselling Service, 57 Southgate Ave, Cannon Hill QLD 4170; Ph: (07) 3899 5041 and Lifeline, Ph:131114, both of which can offer culturally appropriate support following any interviews should this be required.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?

You have been approached because you have had first-hand experience of caring for, supporting or working with young Indigenous males between the ages of 10-17 years who have been excluded from a Queensland State school and subsequently been incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility in Queensland.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?
Participation in this research is voluntary.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?
You are free to withdraw from participating in this research at any time without consequences. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?
You can change your mind at any time. However, changing your mind after data collection may affect analysis and research outcomes. Please advise as soon as possible of any intention to withdraw. I will thank you for your time so far.

DATA STORAGE
Data must be stored and secured for a minimum of 5 years after publication and will be stored so as to ensure maximum privacy for participants. The anonymised data will be archived at a secured facility at UTS and will only be accessible to the research team.

DISCLOSURE
I understand that everyone participating in a focus group session will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. At the commencement of the focus group session the researcher will begin explaining to the group that it is expected that everyone maintains each other's confidentiality and does not share any information revealed during the session to anyone outside of the focus group. I understand that the researcher will not share any information outside the research team and that they cannot take responsibility if a participant does not maintain confidentiality. I understand that the researcher will inform participants at the commencement of the session that everyone is mindful of this when choosing what information, they would like to share with the group.

While the design of this research is not intended to expose illegal activity, participants will be advised that where any criminal disclosure is identified during research process, whether intentionally or incidentally, that the names and identifying details will not be recorded as part of the research. However, participants will also be advised on the participant consent form that where mandatory reporting exists regarding criminal acts against vulnerable third parties (ie. Children) and where it is necessary to prevent a serious and imminent threat to anyone's life, health, safety or welfare, disclosure may be necessary (The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 4.6.6).

USE AND PUBLICATION OF DATA
At the end of this research approval from the community will be sought as to how the data will be communicated to policy makers, academics and other relevant organisations. Upon agreement from the community, the researcher intends to seek publication of the findings in high quality journals (for example, The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education) and in doing so will maintain the anonymity and privacy protection of all participants involved, preventing the identification of any individual participant.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?
If you have concerns about the research that you think I, or my supervisor can help you with, please feel free to contact me on _____ or Professor Michelle Trudgett at Michelle.Trudgett@uts.edu.au

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (UTS HREC). If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph.: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au), and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

UTS
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG INDIGENOUS MALES AND THEIR OVER-REPRESENTATION IN THE QUEENSLAND JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

I _____ agree to participate in the research project *Educational Experiences of Young Indigenous Males and their Over-representation in the Queensland Juvenile Justice System* (ETH16-1078) being conducted by *Grace O'Brien* - Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges – University of Technology Sydney, Building 10, Level 3, Room 561, Jones Street, Ultimo NSW, Phone: 0421990049.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to obtain the views from Indigenous communities about the impact of exclusion and suspension of young Indigenous males and their subsequent incarceration in juvenile detention.

I understand that I have been asked to participate in this research because I have had first-hand experience of caring for, supporting, or working with young Indigenous males between the ages of 10-17 years who have been excluded from a Queensland State school and subsequently been incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility in Queensland. I further understand that my participation in this research will involve either a one-on-one interview with the researcher, or as part of a focus group which will consist of no more than ten people.

Individual Interviews: One-on-one interviews will take place with the researcher. It is expected that these interviews will last approximately 60 – 80 minutes per interview.
Focus Groups: Two focus group sessions will take place and last approximately 60-90 minutes per session. They will include no more than 10 people per session.
Research/data collection will take place in a centrally selected and culturally safe community space local to where participants live. Individual interviews and focus group sessions will be audio-recorded and data will be transcribed for analysis at a later date.

This research has the potential risk to bring some discomfort for some of the people participating. As the research involves discussion about vulnerable children and sensitive information, participants are likely to have established close relationships with these children. Therefore, participants may find it difficult to speak about the negative aspects children have experienced within the education and juvenile justice systems. The researcher will ensure that participants taking part in the research will have adequate access to support services, such as Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Counselling Service, 57 Southgate Ave, Cannon Hill QLD 4170; Ph: (07) 3899 5041 and Lifeline, Ph:131114, both of which can offer culturally appropriate support following any interviews should this be required.

I understand that everyone participating in a focus group session will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. At the commencement of the focus group session the researcher will begin explaining to the group that it is expected that everyone maintains each other's confidentiality and does not share any information revealed during the session to anyone outside of the focus group. I understand that the researcher will not share any information outside the research team and that they cannot take responsibility if a participant does not maintain confidentiality. I understand that the researcher will inform participants at the commencement of the session that everyone is mindful of this when choosing what information, they would like to share with the group.

Appendix D: Community Letter of Support

**BURANGA WIDJUNG JUSTICE GROUP
ATSI CORPORATION**
ABN 44 848 535 514

8-10/20 King St,
Caboolture 4510
P O Box 294 Caboolture 4510
Fax: 5499 0120

Ph: 54 994 133

E: bwjustice@datawave.net.au

23 February 2017

To Whom It May Concern

Our organisation wishes to advise that we support Grace O'Brien who is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Technology in Sydney – Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges. Her current research is:

Educational Experiences of Young Indigenous Males and their Over-representation in the Queensland Juvenile Justice System.

We understand that Grace will be engaging with the community throughout the research process and that any research undertaken will be conducted sensitively and respectfully, and that the privacy of the participants involved will be upheld at all times.

In the research context, those groups and individuals from the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities who have contributed to the research will be acknowledged and that findings from the research will be shared for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or individuals.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Pye CEO

Buranga Widjung Justice Group

phone: 07 54994133

email:bwjustice@datawave.net.au

I acknowledge the traditional owners and Elders both past and present and the custodians on whose land I walk and live and work.

Appendix E: Community Letter of Support

Pamanyungan Elders Alliance Inc

Strong Leadership for the Community

PO Box 902, Caboolture, Qld 4510

27th February 2017

To Whom It May Concern

Our organisation wishes to advise that we support Grace O'Brien who is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Technology in Sydney – Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges. Her current research is:

Educational Experiences of Young Indigenous Males and their Over-representation in the Queensland Juvenile Justice System.

We understand that Grace will be engaging with the community throughout the research process and that any research undertaken will be conducted sensitively and respectfully, and that the privacy of the participants involved will be upheld at all times.

In the research context, those groups and individuals from the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities who have contributed to the research will be acknowledged and that findings from the research will be shared for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or individuals.

Uncle Eric.J.Beutel O.A.M. J.P. [Quail]

Chairperson

Per

Aunty Fiona Arnold

Secretary

This Organisation would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. This organisation pays its respects to Elders past, present and emerging for they will hold the knowledge.

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