INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AND UNIVERSITIES:

A STUDY OF

POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES
IN LEARNING RESEARCH

BY

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that any help received in preparing this, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with conceptualizing the Social World of Learning of Australian Indigenous postgraduates to determine the quality of research training provided for them. The learning experiences of a group of twenty Indigenous postgraduates in eight Australian universities across ten campuses co-operatively contributed to the information base of this Study.

Indigenous entry into the Australian postgraduate sector of education is a recent event, consequently little is known about the area inasmuch as only one Study exists. I used a Democratic Evaluation process to find the answer to the research focus question which guided this Study:

How do Australian Indigenous postgraduates experience learning research?

Two primary sources of data were used. First, a literature review wherein the situational context of postgraduate program provision was documented. Features of program provision and published accounts of learning experiences were outlined. Second, participants' interpretive accounts of their learning experiences were documented via a narrative description, in three data chapters.

Subsequent analysis of the two sources of data resulted in a conceptualization of this new phenomenon, the Social World of Learning of Indigenous postgraduates. The quality of program provision was determined through value judgments about program congruence and learning constraints.

The research findings showed that program quality was poor/unacceptable for these students because of serious deficiencies in key Standard program components and virtual abrogation of Equity provision responsibilities. Significantly, structural violence and institutional racism, legitimated in the 1988 Australian Higher Education Policy, permeated and constrained students' learning experiences. Program improvement is achievable through co-operative action between program stakeholders interacting in principled agreement.