

## Week 1: The Organisation of the Social

### The Organisation of the Social

**Sociological imagination - from 'me' to 'we':** The ability to see how personal experiences are connected to wider society - how "my problem" might actually be a shared social issue

- People don't make choices in a vacuum - society influences them
- Sociological imagination = seeing how personal problems are linked to social forces (e.g. class, gender, laws etc.)
- Helps explain why things happen to individuals by looking at the bigger picture

### Whose imagination is this?

Early sociology came from 19th-century European thinkers, and grew in 20th-century North America → its Western-centred

- It is important to question who shaped sociology, and whose experiences it represents

### Modernity/Coloniality and Sociological Thinking

**Positivist Approach (Modern Western Science):** Find universal truths using empirical data and rational thinking

**Core ideas:** reason, empiricism (knowledge through observation), objectivity, generalisability/universality

**Positivist = Objective** → No personal bias or values, neutral, fact-based observation, conclusions based only on data - not opinion

### Assumptions behind this approach:

- Human exceptionalism (humans are separate/superior)
- Hierarchies and separations (dualisms) e.g. Men vs women, White vs non-white, Humans vs nature

### Studying the Social World - being aware of our assumptions

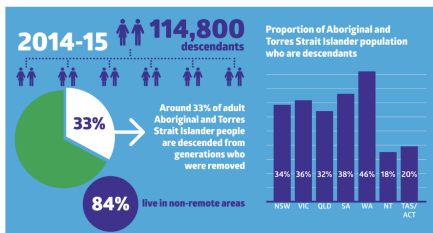
- 1. Knowledge is not neutral → It is shaped by social and cultural contexts**
  - a. Entanglement of the material (political-economic, ontological, and existential) with the symbolic (social, cultural, and epistemic) ('Coloniality of power', Anibal Quijano)
- 2. No such thing as a neutral researcher**
  - a. You bring your own background, assumptions, and biases into research.
- 3. Reflexativity**
  - a. Being aware of how your thoughts, feelings, and position affect your research.
  - b. Ask: How might I be shaping what I'm seeing or saying?
- 4. Positionality**
  - a. What's your social position (race, class, gender, etc.) and how does it shape your view?
  - b. Your background affects how you interpret what you study
  - c. **E.g** If you study a protest but grew up in a culture that feared dissent, you might see protestors as "aggressive". Someone from a background that values civil resistance might see them as "brave."

## Week 2 - Race 1: Indigenous Dispossession and Resistance

### ATSI inequality statistics

National rate of imprisonment is 15x higher for ATSI people, Life expectancy is 10 yrs less than non-indigenous Australians, higher unemployment rates

### Stolen generation (1900-1970s)



## Reasons for inequality and disadvantage

- Historical legacy of genocide and dispossession
- Ongoing racist discrimination and structural exclusion under settler colonial society
- Lack of sovereignty, land rights and self-determination
- Breakdown of traditional cultural practices and kinship through the forced removal of aboriginal children from parents, imposition of european culture

## Dispossession of aboriginal peoples

**1788** → First convict ships arrive and established a white settle society - they claimed the land as *Terra Nullius* (means the land belongs to no one)

**1790s** → The Bidjigal warrior Pemulwuy led a fourteen-year guerrilla war against the invaders

- He united people from different clans to carry out raids, burn crops and spear the settlers' invasive cattle
- Pemulwuy was later killed by a mercenary - his head was cut off and sent to England

**1800s** → Governor Macquarie ordered military campaigns across the sea country to clear land for settlement

- Soldiers forced Aboriginal people off their land, shooting resisters and hanging bodies in trees as warnings
- River Massacre (Muringong Country): Soldiers attacked a sleeping D'harawal clan; survivors fled into a deep gorge and died → Fourteen bodies recovered, many more likely killed
- *After the massacre*: Colonial order imposed, convicts organised as labour to clear bushland and build rural estates for free settlers, free settlers received large grants of Aboriginal land, fences erected to divide land, trespass laws punished those who entered private property

## Aileen Moreton-Robinson (discusses the “possessive logics of white sovereignty”)

- Maintenance of Canada, US, AUstralia, Hawaii and NZ as white possessions requires constant activity to dispossess Indigenous people → needs constant reinforcement of white ownership, control and domination

**Possessive logics are/have been embedded in the law** e.g. Immigration Restriction act 1901, White Australia policy until the 1940s to preference white migrants, definition of indigenous people as non-citizens until 1960s

## Colonialism

**Colonial:** colonisers are still there eg. AUS, NZ, US

**Post-colonial:** colonisers returned home

## Aboriginal resistance to settler colonialism (1960s & 70s) - Timeline

- **Global era of anti-racism resistance:** Civil rights and Black Power movements in the United States
- Period of heightened anti-racism and land rights activism among Aboriginal people in Australia

### 1965 Freedom ride - Writings of Aboriginal Activist Gary Foley

- Charles Perkins (Aboriginal student USYD) + Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA) organised a freedom ride - took a Bus tour through some of the most racist country towns in NSW
- Publicity exposed Australian racism against Aboriginal people globally

### **December 1955 - Moree Municipal Council Minutes**

- Explicit ban on Aboriginal people from using or being present at Memorial Hall and all ancillary areas (Supper Room, Kitchen, Sundry, Toilets, Passages), Bore Baths and all related buildings/areas - ATSI were excluded from public facilities

### **Late 1960s–1970s - Black Power Movement - Redfern: “Aboriginal control of Aboriginal Affairs.”**

- Redfern - largest Aboriginal community in Australia - Heavy police surveillance
- Established local self-help community organisations, including: Legal aid centre, community-controlled free health clinics, housing cooperatives, children’s breakfast program

### **1972 Aboriginal Tent embassy**

- PM William McMahon denied Aboriginal land rights claims → sparked widespread outrage
- Black Caucus activists established a Tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House, Canberra
- Gained significant international attention - TV crews from 30+ countries covered it
- BIG IMPACT → By the 1980s, Aboriginal political movement became strong and effective

### **1992 Mabo Decision**

- Eddie Mabo won a High Court case proving they had lived on and cared for their land for generations - Court rejected the idea of Terra Nullius (“land belonging to no one”), recognised ATSI peoples ownership of land prior to colonisation

### **1993 Native Title Act**

- Created rules (corrupt ones) for how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could claim land
  - ◆ Gave big protections to farmers/mining companies by letting them keep renewing leases, even without asking traditional owners
  - ◆ Made Aboriginal people prove their connection to land in court, often using records made by non-Indigenous people

### **1996 Wik Decision**

- A pastoral lease lets someone use land for grazing → Wik Decision said Indigenous people’s traditional land rights can still exist there (native title) unless the lease and those rights directly conflict

Conservative governments responded to the Mabo (1992) and Wik (1996) High Court decisions by creating laws that, while recognising some Native Title, still kept most land under white control - what scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson calls “white possessive logics.”

### **GOV policies - reconciliation**

PM Bob Hawke created council of aboriginal reconciliation (CAR) - 1990s → aimed to improve relations between ATSI → was largely a top-down initiative by politicians that many Aboriginal activists saw as a distraction from land rights setbacks

### **First Nations Law Alternative - Irene Watson**

- Advocates “Raw Law” → revive First Nations legal systems rooted in stories & songs
- Pre-invasion law cared for country through sustainable practices

### **Adani Coal Mine Resistance (2000s–present)**

- Wangan & Jagalingou peoples oppose mining on sacred wetlands (Doongmabulla Springs)