Minutes of the Meeting of the TASA thematic group: Indigenous Sociology

Date: December 3rd

Present: Eileen Willis, Maggie Walter, Deirdre Howard-Wagner

1 **Plenary Session on Illuminating an Indigenous Sociology for the 21st Century.** Agreed to report back to thematic group members the success of the plenary session. See Appendix A. The session was highly successful in terms of raising stimulating and provocative ideas. The speakers met after the session to consider how the work might continue. We have extended our thanks to all the speakers, but especially to Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Professor Kalthleen Clapham who managed the change of date and their own busy schedules to attend TASA.

2 **The Plenary led to discussion on a name change.** It is proposed that we consider changing the name of the thematic group to:
   - Indigeneity, whiteness and race studies
   - Indigeneity, whiteness and race.
   - Sociology of colonisation

   There was also discussion on encouraging members to submit papers to the International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies through the Indigenous Studies Network.

3 **Conference papers:** Discussion was had on the low numbers of papers for the Indigenous thematic group. It was clear there were more than two papers on Indigenous sociology, but these papers were placed in other thematic groups. It was agreed we would approach the Health and Crime and Justice thematic groups with a suggestion for shared sessions in 2010. Both Maggie and Eileen did this and the Health, and Crime and Justice thematic groups were very positive about the proposal. Deirdre and Eileen will negotiate with these two thematic groups in 2010 with a view to establishing a process for collaborating on a shared day/session. It is assumed we would advertise through our own networks and then assist these two thematic groups in refereeing papers and planning the session/day at the TASA conference in 2010. This proposal is consistent with one of the ideas that came from the Plenary session that called for a more broadly position Indigenous sociology.

4 **Conference referee process:** this year papers were refereed by the thematic groups. Eileen organised this. It was not an onerous task given the low numbers of papers. We note that one paper we would have accepted was rejected by another thematic group. We plan to write to the TASA exec about the process for authors to follow where their paper is rejected.

5 **Webpage update.** The minutes will be posted on the web page. There was a proposal that members may like to nominate 5 relevant publications and provide them for posting on the web page (Within the TASA web page). This is to be discussed with members over the next few months to devise
appropriate way forward. It is also possible that past Abstracts from TASA conference could be posted on web page.

Appendix A

TASA Plenary Session

Thursday 3\textsuperscript{rd} December 9 am – 10.30 am

Title: Illuminating an Indigenous Sociology for the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century

Venue: Coombs theatre

Australian sociology, based as it is socially and geographically within Australia, should:

- Be fundamentally influenced by Indigenous scholarship, research and issues
- Reflect our two sets of peoples: non-Indigenous and Indigenous within its entire theoretical and empirical base
- Incorporate the terrain of non-Indigenous/Indigenous relations in its scope

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>Chair introduces speakers and topic</td>
<td>Associate Professor David McCallum</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.05</td>
<td>Speaker one</td>
<td>Dr Maggie Walter</td>
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<td>9.15</td>
<td>Speaker two</td>
<td>Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson</td>
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<td>9.25</td>
<td>Speaker three</td>
<td>Professor Raewyn Connell</td>
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<td>9.35</td>
<td>Speaker four</td>
<td>Professor Mark Western</td>
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<td>9.55</td>
<td>Speaker five</td>
<td>Professor Kathleen Clapham</td>
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<td>10.05</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Each speaker may ask one of the other speakers a question for clarification of ideas</td>
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<td>10.25</td>
<td>Two questions from the floor</td>
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Chair:
Associate Professor
David McCallum

Speakers:
1. Dr Maggie Walter

Biography:
Maggie Walter (PhD) is a senior lecturer at the University of Tasmania and an Aboriginal Tasmanian with lineage to the trawlwoolway people of north eastern pyemmairrener lands. With a scholarship focus on inequality and social policy Indigenous peoples are central in this work. Recent publications include Social Inequality in Australia: Realities, Discourses and Futures (Oxford with D. Habibis). Maggie is also the co-editor (with A. Moreton-Robinson) of the International Journal
of Critical Indigenous Studies, a member of the AIATSIS Research Council and secretary of the Native American Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA).

Title:

The Terrain of Australian Race Relations

Abstract

Despite the 2008 Apology to the Stolen Generations the terrain of race relations remains banal and contested. Empirically, a small majority of the non-Indigenous population hold egalitarian attitudes towards Aboriginal people and culture but these do not extend to advocating restorative action. Such dissonant findings can be explained as an outcome of a deep spatial and social separation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australia: a separation that encompasses the actions, and inactions, of the nation state. Drawing on segregation literature and Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, extended in race relations literature to a white habitus, I propose that non-Indigenous lives performed within cellular and exclusive spaces shape a spatialised understanding of Indigenous reality. Combined with media and political discourse this boundedness simultaneously pejoratively positions the Indigene and prevents the consequences of underinvestment and exclusion being witnessed.

2 Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson

Biography

Dr Moreton-Robinson is a Geonpul woman. She was appointed Professor of Indigenous Studies at the Queensland University of Technology in 2006 and is currently Director of the Indigenous Studies Network [www.isrn.qut.edu.au](http://www.isrn.qut.edu.au) Professor Moreton-Robinson has held posts at Flinders University and Griffith University teaching in Sociology, Women's Studies and Indigenous Studies. She is author of *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, University of Queensland Press and editor of several books including *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism in Australia*, 2004 Aboriginal Studies Press, *Sovereign Subjects: Indigenous Sovereignty Matters* 2007, Allen & Unwin and *Transnational Whiteness Matters*, 2009 with Maryrose Casey and Fiona Nicoll, Lexington books. Her research interests are in critical race and whiteness studies, Indigenous studies and feminism. She has published widely in anthologies and journals in Australia and abroad. Professor Moreton-Robinson holds a Bachelor of Arts (hons) (ANU) and a PhD (Griffith University). From 2003 to 2005 she was the founding President of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association. She is currently on the advisory board of the Academe Itinerante des Echanges Arts et Langues Europeennes (AILAE), the Nominations Committee of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) and is Deputy Chair of the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC).

Title:

Raising questions about race theory within Australian sociology.

3 Professor Raewyn Connell
Bibliography

Raewyn Connell comes from an Irish, Scots and Welsh settler family; she was born in, and makes her home in, country once cared for by Darug people. She is University Professor at the University of Sydney, a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, and recipient of the TASA award for distinguished service to Australian sociology. Her recent books are Southern Theory, a study of social thought beyond the global metropole, and Gender: In World Perspective. She has done well-known research on class structure, on educational inequality, and on men and masculinities; and has worked with the United Nations, Australian governments and social movements on gender equity, social justice in education, and other problems. Raewyn is a long-term participant in the labour and peace movements. Her work has been translated into fourteen languages other than English.

Title: Settler Colonialism and Social Science: Indigenous issues and the path forward for Australian sociology.

Abstract

Modern Australia is part of the modernity created by settler colonialism and its violent impact on Indigenous societies, a fact with which Australian social science is slowly, agonizingly, coming to terms. I will make some suggestions about the character of this modernity, especially as it affects intellectuals, drawing on the work of the Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji and the Brazilian sociologist Jose Mauricio Domingues. The recent attention to Indigenous issues in Australian sociology may be a turning-point for our thinking about the nature of our discipline and its relation to global social order.

4 Professor Mark Western

Biography: Mark Western (BA Hons, PhD, UQ) is the Director of the Institute for Social Science Research and a Professor of Sociology at the University of Queensland. He is a Fellow of the Centre for the Study of Poverty and Inequality at Stanford University, a member of the ARC College of Experts, and in 2006–2007 was awarded a Hallsworth Professorship in Political Economy to visit the University of Manchester. He has also held visiting appointments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Institute of Education, University of London.

Mark Western's research spans a number of areas including social stratification and inequality, political behaviour, education, the demography of families and households, and developments in quantitative methodology, especially longitudinal data analysis.

Topic: Can social stratification research contribute to a sociology of Australian Indigenous peoples?

Abstract:
Social stratification research examines the structures and processes that generate inequality and social divisions. This presentation will outline, in a stylised way, the research questions, theories, conceptualisations and empirical strategies of stratification research and ask if these approaches can usefully contribute to a sociology of Australian indigenous peoples.

5 Professor Kathleen Clapham

Biography:

Kathleen is the Director of the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre and the Coordinator of the Aboriginal Studies Honours Program. Kathleen is a descendent of the Murrawarri people of New South Wales. She has a PhD in Anthropology and has worked in higher education and research since 1985, specialising in Indigenous health research and education.

Prior to this taking up the position of Director of Woolyungah Indigenous Centre in June 2007, she worked as Senior Research Fellow at The George Institute for International Health (2003-2007). From 1995 to 2002 she held leadership positions in Indigenous health at The University of Sydney, including the position of Head of Yooroang Garang: School of Indigenous Health Studies.

She has a strong record of leadership in Indigenous health teaching. Her current research interests include injury prevention in Indigenous communities; Indigenous community development; health and social disadvantage; and Indigenous health workforce development. The focus of her present research is the development of resiliency based interventions to prevent injury among Aboriginal children and youth in NSW.

Awards:

2006: Australian Injury Prevention Network Meritorious Award for Research

Topic:

Abstract
Between the disciplinary gaps: Indigenous health and the academy

In recent years research in Indigenous health has flourished within disciplines such as public health, epidemiology, medicine, nursing and allied health, with some success given the current policy focus on meeting targets and measuring health gains in order to ‘Close the gap’. But how far have we come with advancing sociological analyses of contemporary Indigenous health issues? What interdisciplinary collaborations have emerged between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars to progress an Indigenous health agenda and what is the role and experience of Indigenous academics in such projects?
Indigenous scholars working in health and related have had to negotiate their place within both the academy and the Indigenous community. They have developed models for furthering research and scholarship which is both theoretical and has practical outcomes in the form of real and tangible benefits to Indigenous communities. But the scholarship is new; there are small numbers of Indigenous academics, few postgraduate students and too few examples of truly interdisciplinary collaborative projects, particularly those which are based around Indigenous perspectives. Moreover, Indigenous scholarship remains at the margins of the academy, in terms of the relatively junior position of Indigenous academics, in terms of their voices being heard and heeded, and in terms in their marginalised positions within Universities.

Drawing on Indigenous health literature as well as personal reflections from an Indigenous scholar working across disciplines this presentation will highlight some of the challenges of living between disciplines and some of the opportunities for mutual learning, for engaging with an emerging Indigenous scholarship and for collaborations which would support Indigenous scholarship and research.