

Public Opinion about Indigenous Australian Land Rights

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Abstract

This paper investigates the current attitudes of the Australian public towards Aboriginal Land Rights, in addition to discussing public opinion of Land Rights in a historical context. Specifically, we examine the social patterning of Australian public opinion towards Aboriginal Land Rights by using data from the 2004 Australian Election Survey. The variation in support for and against Aboriginal land rights among a number of social groups is analysed. Multinomial logistic regression models are used to explore socio-economic and demographic variations in attitudes towards Aboriginal land rights. Results show that tertiary education, living in Victoria, living in inner metropolitan areas, born overseas, renting a house, trade-union membership, and not proud or moderately proud being Australian increase the likelihood of supporting Aboriginal land rights.

Introduction

The issue of Indigenous Australian land rights is a historical and highly contentious issue in Australia. The contention exists between Australian government, Indigenous Australians, highly influenced by public opinion and the ever evolving and obscure ‘Australian identity’. The most important aspect of land rights is that it embodies the quest for independence and autonomy for the Indigenous Australians. In the words of the prominent QC Elliot Johnson, land rights not only empower Australian Indigenous people but also gives them ‘control of their lives, of their communities’ (Anonymous, 2000, p. 4).

Throughout the rich and detailed political history of the land rights battle the somewhat simple idea of obtaining land once taken, is hand in hand with concepts such as identifying and defining racism in Australia and reconciliation (McGlade, 1997). The land rights battle also epitomises the low standards of health, education and employment opportunities for the Indigenous Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Land Rights has become a concept and statement which embodies all these issues. Past research of public opinion and Indigenous Australian issues report Australians have various, sometimes hypocritical and confused attitudes. The Australian public support the theoretical idea of Land Rights, reconciliation and equal opportunity, however, there are many reservations (Kelly, 2000:1). An expression of support to recognise Indigenous Australians as the true land owners and equal citizens, is combined with fear and ‘false beliefs’ about the Aboriginal people, which is a common finding in this research area (Kondos and Cowlshaw, 1995; McCallum, 2007; Pederson et al., 2006). False beliefs include Indigenous Australians receive ‘special treatment’

such as more welfare and handouts from the government (Pederson et al., 2006), and the fear of financial and legal implications if Australia does acknowledge Indigenous issues such as land rights and the stolen generation (Newspoll, 2000:89).

Research conducted by Pederson et al. (2006, p. 87) found 11.5% of their participants were concerned with the issue of 'special treatment' and one third reported a negative attitude towards Indigenous Australians. Therefore, Pederson et al.'s (2006) research and others (see McCallum, 2007; Pederson et al., 2000) have identified negative or prejudice attitudes toward Indigenous Australians with 'false beliefs'. For instance, in 2000, The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation funded a Newspoll research project to explore the public opinion toward the Document for Reconciliation draft. Results indicated that:

... a large majority (84 percent) of Australians acknowledge that Aboriginal people were treated harshly and unfairly in the past, and approximately 60 percent also agree the nation should acknowledge Aboriginal people as the 'original owners of traditional lands and waters'; and also '... that Australia was occupied without the consent of Aboriginal people' (Newspoll, 2000, p. 29).

Further, the report found the younger participants were more likely to support the acknowledgment of the Indigenous people as the original owners of Australia (Newspoll, 2000, p. 29). Those who did not support the above notions, stated reasons reflecting the false beliefs concept such as 'implications concerning land claims, Aboriginal people get enough already/ don't do enough to help themselves' and the concept of special treatment, i.e., 'Aboriginal people should (only) have the same rights/ opportunities as everyone else' (Newspoll, 2000, p. 24). Finally, the idea of responsibility shifting, "we weren't responsible for what happened in the past" (Newspoll, 2000, p. 24).

Land Taken and the Land Rights Movement

The Land Rights Movement for the Indigenous peoples of Australia includes a complex and rich history to which the scope of this paper cannot give fair dealing. Therefore, the following section attempts to provide a brief overview of the beginning of the movement, and the sentiment for human rights within the movement.

The English arrived in Australia with the intent to settle in 1770, with the first fleet arriving in 1788 (Broome, 2001; Hemming, 1994). Colonisation of the Indigenous Australians was based upon the phrase of *terra nullius*, which was the legal doctrine upon which Colonial England justified claiming Australian land as their own, and dismissing the Indigenous people as its true title-holder. From the perspective of the Crown and as a widely held understanding of

terra nullius, land is unclaimed or ownerless if inhabitants are not “mixing labour with land” (Short, 2003, p.492). Australia was assumed a “Land of no-one” (Short, 2003, p. 491).

Cementing the colonisation of the Indigenous people was the activation of the Australian Nations Constitution in 1901 on New Years Day. This document presented Australia as a democratic country and therefore a country whose citizens enjoyed political equality. However, politicians, academics and others have long questioned if Aboriginal people, in the past or present, have benefited from the good fortune of equality this democratic country proposed to offer (Borrows, 2004).

The referendum of 1967 marked a fundamental expression of public support for equal opportunity for Australian Indigenous people. It is believed approximately 90% of Australians supported the referendum to include the Indigenous people in the census and under Commonwealth law instead of state law (Dillon and Westbury, 2007; Griffiths, 2006). Contrary to popular belief, it is argued by some, the referendum resulted in minimal changes for Indigenous issues (Attwood and Markus, 1997; Bennett, 1999; Rowse, 2008). Furthermore, the referendum was a political tool employed by the Menzies government to appease local and international criticism upon the treatment of Indigenous Australians (Attwood and Markus, 1997). This political event was perhaps not significant for what it changed in the constitution (Rowse, 2008) but it was significant for the overwhelming public support expressed to proceed with the proposed changes.

The referendum of 1967 coincided with the escalation of political activism for the Indigenous people. Although, Indigenous political organisations were established as early as 1920 (Short, 2003) an escalation was evident in events surrounding the 1965 basic wage decision, and the 1972 tent embassy (Broome, 2001; Griffiths, 2006). In 1965 it was determined that Indigenous people who were working on pastoral stations would be given a basic wage instead of being paid with food and shelter (Griffiths, 2006). A basic wage was considered a positive decision; however the amendment was not to take place for approximately three years (Griffiths, 2006). In response (in 1966) a strike was held by eighty members of the Gurindji tribe (Griffiths, 2006). It soon became clear paid wages was but one issue disquieting the Indigenous Australian people and signified what was really a general stirring of discontent. As apart of their strike the Gurindji tribe sent a letter to Gordon Bryant of Aboriginal Affairs, and asked for their land to be returned. In 1972, four Indigenous Australians placed a tent in front of Canberra’s parliament House named the ‘Aboriginal embassy’ marking a time of activism with ‘more direct protest methods’ (Broome, 2001, p. 189).

Mabo decision

Over many years, the activism discontent escalated to the High Court, in a case named ‘Mabo’ which became the most well known Aboriginal issue for the Australian public. The legal case was named after Edie Mabo, a man born and raised on the Murray Islands, who upon leaving the island as an adult, was denied access back to his homeland by the Queensland government (Griffiths, 2006). This incident was timely as it sparked an already growing interest in Land Rights. In 1992, at least a decade after first filing of the land claim, the High Court ‘exposed the myth of *terra nullius* and held that in certain situations indigenous groups might have rights to land or ‘native title’ that had survived colonisation’ (Short, 2003, p. 498).

At the end of the Mabo case in 1993, the Mabo decision led to the establishment of the Native Title Act, and the National Native Title Tribunal (Kondos and Cowlshaw, 1995). The High Court invited the Indigenous people to come forward with land claims and by 1997 approximately six hundred unsuccessful claims were made under the Native Title Act. Only a handful of land claims have been granted (Griffiths, 2006). It can be suggested that although Mabo was a momentous triumph for the Land Rights Movement, much resistance from the government and Australian public was immediately forthcoming.

From the perspective of Kondos and Cowlshaw (1995) the success of the Mabo decision seemed doubtful. They suggest explanations for the success was shifts in public opinion and the watchful global eye. This includes both international legal judgements addressing the validity of *terra nullius* and the ‘historical scholarship’ outlining the injustices resulting from *terra nullius* (Kondos and Cowlshaw, 1995, p. 2).

The Mabo decision occurred in the same manner that political change occurred for the Indigenous people due to the overwhelming support of the referendum in 1967. Kondos and Cowlshaw (1995) suggest the Mabo decision and the establishment of the Native Title Act reflected a change in national consciousness and a long awaited moderate unity between powerful institutions in Australia. Catchphrases such as ‘Mabo’ and ‘Wik’ are now embedded into public consciousness. Griffiths suggests (2006, p.135) that public opinion about land rights is found to be dependent on the emotional nature of the issue, and “...expressions of public support were generally associated with highly emotional issues...it was inevitable, however, that (such) support...would reach a plateau and begin to decline”.

The Australian Government

It is clear the Land Rights movement has met considerable resistance from the Australian government at certain points in time. The relationship between the government and the Land

Rights movement can be characterised by a push and pull trend. Although some governments have supported the concept of Land Rights, such as the Whitlam and Hawke government, this did not necessarily guarantee any genuine supportive action would take place (Goot and Rowse, 2007). Public opinion has been the common thread within this push and pull relationship. It is quite possible that public opinion has driven both the progress and the lack of progress in the Land Rights movement.

In taking responsibility for the colonisation of the Indigenous Australians and the stolen land, the government has often referenced the theory of leaving the past in the past, there should be no special treatment for Indigenous Australians, and that addressing the issue would agitate and work against national unity (Burrows, 2004, p. 2). A seemingly positive concept of 'national unity' has masked notions of assimilation which aims "...to maintain racial and cultural homogeneity as the basis of national unity" (Jayasuriya, 1998, p. 4). For instance, Peter Nixon (then Liberal Party Minister for the Interior), gave this speech in parliament demonstrating the Liberal government's position regarding the Land Rights movement, currently and historically:

The Government believes it is wholly wrong to encourage Aborigines to think that because their ancestors had a long association with a particular piece of land, the Aborigines of the present day have a right to demand ownership of it. The Government believes that it would be a hindrance and no help. They should receive ownership under the system that applied to the Australian community and not outside it (Griffiths, 2006, p.30)

Although the Labour government have consistently expressed a different outlook regarding the Land Rights movement in comparison to the Liberal government, public opinion has influenced any action. One such instance in 1983, the Hawke Labour government made grand election promises to drive forward the land rights movement (Goot and Rowse, 2007, p. 61). However, in 1984, Goot and Rowse suggest public opinion research commissioned by the Hawke government resulted in the government "backing down from its attempt to legislate national land rights" (Goot and Rowse, 2007, p. 2). For example, 22% of an ANOP survey in Perth, linked the state and its approach to Land Rights as one of the "two main things that the state has done or is doing that you don't like or worry you" (Goot and Rowse, 2007, p.70). This was coupled with overall conclusions that land rights was "causing real electoral problems among middle class voters who have recently supported Labour" (Goot and Rowse, 2007, p. 70).

The 1996 election which voted in the Howard Government highlighted a fresh era of difficulty for Aboriginal issues. The Howard government made every effort to undermine the historical success of Mabo and the High Courts decisions. In 1998, the government 'watered down 'the Native Title Act (Thackrah, 2005, p. 20) and "had introduced amending laws to

extinguish significant Aboriginal rights and to block the Racial Discrimination Act 1975” (Malezer, 2004, p. 1027). These actions attracted negative international attention to Australia and the treatment of the Australian Aboriginals.

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) identified three key areas of concern, two of these regarding Land Rights: ‘proposed changes to the 1993 Native Title Act; changes of policy as to Aboriginal land rights; and changes in the position or function of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner’ (Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, 1999, p.1).

Whilst the Australian government’s treatment of the Indigenous Australians (past and present) has been heavily criticised internationally, this paper intends to explore whether the Australian people share the government’s views.

Data and Method

This research uses relevant information from the Australian Election Survey (Australian Social Science Data Archive, 2004). This is the most recent one in a series of Election surveys that began in 1987, all of which were conducted after an Australian Federal Election. The purpose of these surveys was to investigate the attitudes and behaviour of the Australian people over time. The 2004 AES was conducted weeks after the federal election which voted in the Howard Government (October 2004). Hence, the 2004 AES could shed light on the issues which were important to Australians at this time, and perhaps the issues which influenced their vote in this election (Bean et al., 2004).

Participants in this study were drawn from the Commonwealth Electoral Roll through stratified systematic random sampling (see Bean et al., 2004, for survey methodology). The analysis reported here is based on a sample of 1489 respondents. We use the information on public opinion about Aboriginal land rights collected through the following question in the Australian Election Survey: whether you think the change that has been happening in Australia over the years has gone too far, not gone far enough, or is it about right? The five possible responses to this question were regrouped into three items: gone too far, about right and not gone far enough. The reported opinion on Aboriginal land lands is explored in terms of the following socio-economic and demographic characteristics or correlates: gender, age, marital status, rural/urban residence, state of residence, country of birth, education, social class, home ownership, trade union membership, attendance at religious service, and how proud to be Australian.

We use the conventional cross tabulation for the bivariate relationship between people's views on Indigenous Australian land rights (dependent variable) and the correlates (independent variables). As bivariate relationships do not take into account the influence or relationship of other correlate with the dependent variable, we use a multinomial logistic regression model to control for the confounding effects of other correlates. This will give us an estimate of the net effect of the independent variables or covariates on the dependent variable opinion about Indigenous Australian land rights.

In the multinomial regression, two models are estimated: one estimates the effect of covariates on the likelihood of saying the change in Indigenous Australian land rights *has gone too far* compared to saying the change is about right (known as the reference category); the second model estimates the effects on saying the change *has not gone too far* compared to saying the change is about right. The estimated effects are presented in odds ratios in Table 2.

Results

The percentage distribution of respondents by the selected covariates is given in Table 1. The sample is equally divided between males and females, majority of the respondents were born before 1970, about one in four respondents were from inner metropolitan areas and outer metropolitan and about one in three were from rural areas. Close to one in four were born overseas and the rest of the respondents were born in Australia. In terms of completed educational qualifications, about 2 out of every 4 respondents in the survey have not gone beyond secondary schools; on the other hand about one in four respondents had university level qualifications (bachelor degree or higher). A vast majority of the respondents either owned outright or were paying off mortgage on their home (74%). Three out of five respondents have never or rarely attended religious services in the past three years before the survey and the rest attended more frequently. Only a minority of respondents reported to belong to a trade union (23%). To the question 'how proud to be Australian', a vast majority (70%) said that they were 'very proud' to be Australian, another 25% reported that they were 'quite proud' and a very small minority of respondents (5%) said that they were 'not proud' to be Australian.

The variations in the opinions about Indigenous Australian land rights for the population sub-groups are given in Table 1. The percentage distribution in Table 1 shows that all the variables except for religious attendance are important in influencing people's opinion about the change in land rights over the years in Australia. People that are more likely to say the change in Aboriginal land rights has gone too far are: males, older people, those who are married or in a de facto relationship, those living in outer metropolitan, provincial town or rural areas, those

Table 1: Opinions about changes in Aboriginal land rights by selected characteristics (percentages), Australian Election Survey 2004 (N=1489)

Characteristics	Change in Aboriginal land rights in Australia			
	Gone too far	About right	Not gone far enough	All
Gender				
Male	47	31	22	49
Female	40	32	28	51
Year of Birth				
Before 1950	47	29	24	37
1950-69	45	32	23	38
1970-86	37	35	28	20
Marital Status				
Married/de facto	47	30	23	67
Divorced/separated	42	33	25	15
Never married	30	37	33	18
Rural/Urban residence				
Inner Metropolitan	31	33	36	28
Outer Metropolitan	44	31	25	29
Provincial town	43	38	19	12
Rural	54	28	18	32
State of residence				
New South Wales/ ACT	42	34	24	34
Victoria/Tasmania	39	28	33	28
Queensland	51	28	21	20
South Australia	48	37	15	9
Western Australia	44	35	21	9
Country of birth				
Australia	46	30	24	77
UK/NZ	38	35	27	10
Other	32	38	30	13
Educational qualifications				
Year 12 or less	47	31	22	37
Undergraduate diploma	45	29	26	11
Trade qualification	52	34	14	17
Non-trade qualification	49	38	13	11
Bachelor and above	29	30	41	24
Social class				
Middle class	41	30	29	52
Working class	48	32	20	40
No class	35	39	26	8
Home ownership				
Own--outright	46	31	23	45
Paying off mortgage	45	32	23	29
Rent from private landlord	37	30	33	14
Boarding/ public housing	39	35	26	12
Religious attendance				
At least once a week	41	35	24	14
Several times a year	40	34	25	27
Less than once a year	46	30	24	19
Never	45	29	25	40
Trade union membership				
Yes	40	29	31	23
No	45	32	23	77
Proud to be Australian				
Very proud	48	32	20	70
Quite proud	34	34	32	25
Not proud	26	17	57	5
Changes in Aboriginal land rights				
Gone too far				43
About right				32
Not far enough				25

in Queensland and South Australia and those born in Australia. Similarly, those with fewer years of education, working class background, home owners, those not members of a trade union, and those who feel 'very proud' to be Australian are more likely to report that the changes in Indigenous Australian land rights over the years have gone too far.

In contrast, those who felt that the change in Aboriginal land rights has not gone far enough had characteristics that were just the opposite of those that were important for saying that the change has gone too far. For the people who are likely to say that the change has not gone far enough are: females, younger Australians, those living in inner metropolitan, people from Victoria, those with university level education, renters, trade union members and those who felt that they were either not proud or just 'quite proud' to be Australian.

It is clear from the bivariate percentage analysis of opinions about Indigenous Australian land rights all the variables with the exception of just one variable (religious attendance) have some influence on the views about land rights. But as this is only a bivariate analysis, it does not simultaneously control for the effect of other variables that would eliminate confounding effects. Table 2 presents the net effect of covariates after controlling for the confounding factors in multinomial logistic regression models.

The estimated net effects (in odds ratios) of covariates are given in Table 2. Model 1 provides the estimates for the effect of covariates on the likelihood of reporting that the change in aboriginal land rights over the years *has gone too far* compared to the reporting of the change as being '*about right*'. For Model 2, similar estimates are given for the contrast '*not gone far enough*' vs. '*about right*'. The estimated net effects that are statistically significant are marked with an asterisk. An estimated effect of less than one for a covariate category (e.g., females) for the contrast 'gone too far' vs. 'about right' (model 1) means that that category of people (i.e., females) are less likely to report that the change has gone too far than the reference category (i.e., males) of a given covariate (gender). A value greater than one means that females are more likely than males to say that the change has gone too far. If the value is one, females are no more or no less likely than males to report that the change has gone too far.

Of the 12 covariates included in the multinomial model, only seven had statistically significant net effects on the likelihood of saying whether the change in Indigenous Australian land rights has gone too far or not far enough. The covariates of significant importance are: gender, rural/urban residence, state of residence, country of birth, marital status, educational level, self-reported class status, and how proud to be Australian.

Table 2: The estimated effects (in odds ratios) of socio-economic and demographic factors on the opinions about changes in Aboriginal land rights, Australian Election Survey 2004

Factors	Model 1 (Gone too far vs. About right) Estimated effects (odds ratios)	Model 1 (Not gone far enough vs. About right) Estimated effects (odds ratios)
Gender	1.00	1.00
Male ^R	0.79*	1.30*
Female		
Year of Birth		
Before 1950	1.35	2.28**
1950-69	1.12	1.37
1970-86 ^R	1.00	1.00
Marital Status		
Married/de facto ^R	1.00	1.00
Divorced/separated	0.80	0.93
Never married	0.53**	1.17
Rural/Urban residence		
Inner Metropolitan ^R	1.00	1.00
Outer Metropolitan	1.28	0.76
Provincial town	0.93	0.47**
Rural	1.58**	0.62**
State of residence		
New South Wales/ ACT ^R	1.00	1.00
Victoria/Tasmania	1.15	1.78**
Queensland	1.39*	1.18
South Australia	1.10	0.56*
Western Australia	1.05	0.75
Country of birth		
Australia ^R	1.00	1.00
UK/NZ	0.66**	0.87
Other	0.60**	0.85
Educational qualifications		
Year 12 or less ^R	1.00	1.00
Undergraduate diploma	1.03	1.22
Trade qualification	0.89	0.61**
Non-trade qualification	0.88	0.45**
Bachelor and above	0.68**	1.66**
Social class		
Middle class ^R	1.00	1.00
Working class	0.97	0.83
No class	0.61**	0.91
Home ownership		
Own—outright ^R	1.00	1.00
paving off mortgage	1.07	1.10
Rent from private	1.07	1.72**
Boarding/ public housing	1.19	1.26
Religious attendance		
At least once a week	0.72*	0.76
Several times a year	0.81	0.85
Less than once a year	0.99	0.92
Never ^R	1.00	1.00
Trade union membership		
Yes	0.97	1.49**
No ^R	1.00	1.00
Proud to be Australian		
Very proud ^R	1.00	1.00
Quite proud	0.76*	1.55**
Not proud	1.27	4.37**

^R Reference category against which other categories of a variable are compared; ** The effect is significant at $p < 0.05$; * The effect is significant at $p < 0.10$.

People in rural areas compared to those in inner metropolitan are over 50% more likely to say that the change in Indigenous Australian land rights has gone too far. It is interesting that of all the states, those living in Queensland are about 40% more likely to consider that the change has gone too far. Those born overseas, irrespective of whether born in mainly English-speaking or non-English speaking countries, are more likely to feel that the changes has not gone too far compared to the Australian born. The never-married Australians, most of whom are young, are more likely than others to have reported that the change in Indigenous Australian land rights has not gone too far. In general, females are about 20% less likely to say that the change has gone too far.

There is a clear educational gradient to people's opinion about Indigenous Australian land rights. The highly educated, particularly those with a bachelor degree or more are about 33% less likely to say that the change has gone too far. It is interesting that those who considered that they did not belong to any social class were much less likely (by about 40%) to say that the change in Aboriginal land rights over the years has gone too far. Compared to those who felt 'very proud' being an Australian, those who felt that they were 'quite proud' to be Australian were about 25% less likely to say that the change has gone too far.

Some social groups that are *less likely* to say that the change in Indigenous Australian land rights has gone too far are *more likely* to say that the change has not gone far enough. Thus, females and the university educated are more likely to say that the change has not gone far enough; those who reported to be not proud or quite proud to be Australian are more likely to say that the change has not been far enough. Those living in rural areas and in provincial towns are less likely to report that the change has not gone far enough; conversely they felt that the change has gone too far.

In terms of views about the change in Indigenous Australian land rights has not gone far enough there is no difference between the overseas born and Australian born, between social classes, and between various marital statuses. However, trade union membership and home ownership status are important correlates of whether one considered the change has not gone far enough. Trade union membership increased the likelihood of saying that the change has not gone far enough (by almost 50%), and renters are over 70% more likely to say that the change has not been far enough. While respondents from Queensland are more likely to say that the change in land rights has gone too far, those from South Australia are less likely to report that the change has not been far enough. In contrast, respondents from Victoria are over 75% more likely to say that the change in Aboriginal land rights has not gone far enough.

Conclusion

The central question for this research was to explore the attitude of the Australian public in regard to the ongoing issue of Indigenous Australian Land Rights. The analysis presented here shows that only 25% of the respondents in the 2004 Australian Election Survey felt that change in Indigenous Australian land rights has not gone far enough. Almost twice that many considered that change has gone too far. And about one third of the respondents were of the view that the change has been to the right extent. In other words, most of the respondents were either satisfied with the progress in land rights or were of the view that the progress has been too far.

The multivariate results of two models showed some interesting relationships between socio-economic characteristics and the attitudes towards land rights. Most of these are in the expected direction. Educational level is an important factor: the more educated, particularly university educated, are more likely to say that the change in land rights has not gone far enough. This is likely to reflect the post-materialist values that accompany tertiary education (Inglehart, 1977). On the other hand people living in rural areas are more likely to say that the change has gone too far. Similarly, people living in Queensland are more likely to say that the change gone too far. On the other hand Victorian respondents are likely to consider that the change has not been enough. The rural/urban and state specific differences in attitudes towards Indigenous Australian land rights might reflect a number of underlying considerations including: the possibility that land rights for the Indigenous people might affect their material interest; attitudinal predisposition; enduring and persistent or transitory political culture and prejudice (Denemark and Sharman, 1994; Marks and McDonnell, 1996).

Home ownership, social class and trade union memberships are also important covariates of attitudes towards land rights. In general, renters, those who consider themselves not to belong to any class, and member of a trade union are likely to say that the change in land rights has not gone far enough. This could arise from the commonality between these social groups and Indigenous Australians in terms of material and social disadvantage. This could also be due the political and family socialization of individuals in these social groups.

Females and those who were born overseas (whether in mainly English-speaking or non-English speaking countries) are more likely to be sympathetic to Aboriginal land rights. Similarly, those who were not proud or only moderately proud being an Australian are supportive of Indigenous Australian land rights.

There are a number of theoretical paradigms to explain attitude or opinion formation: post-materialism; attitudinal predisposition in terms of ideologies, values and prejudices; group socialization through social norms, political culture, interaction, discussion and persuasion; and

partisanship deriving from political party affiliation. As Mark and McDonell (1996) showed in another context, the variation in attitudes towards Indigenous Australian land rights in Australia is an outcome of the interaction among the various forces: social norms, political culture, ideologies, values and prejudices and contemporary political factors.

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