Allies and Adversaries:
Categories in Murrinhpatha speaking children’s talk

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For Ernest Mawurt Perdjert

So missed, by so many

May your grandchildren and those to come keep your language strong, your country beautiful, and your people proud.
Abstract

This thesis investigates the linguistic and cultural resources that eight Indigenous children draw on when they pursue affiliative and disaffiliative actions in talk with peers. These children are L1 speakers of Murrinhpatha, a traditional Australian language spoken in and around the remote Aboriginal community of Wadeye, in the north of Australia. Just as the linguistic context these children are growing up in is unique, so is their sociocultural context. While increasingly informed by Western culture, Murrinhpatha speaking society at Wadeye is still to a large degree organised around traditional Aboriginal identity categories, involving connections to ‘country’ and ‘totem’, as well as more universal categories such as gender.

Communicative exchanges between children are thought to be highly revealing of their linguistic and socio-pragmatic abilities. Peer talk is also viewed as a site in which children’s understandings of the world play out. This is particularly true when category terms are employed in spoken interactions. Categories are held to index local common-sense knowledge about ‘types’ of people or personae and how they behave. In any given interaction, the category term an individual selects, and the action they pursue with it, offers a window onto that speaker’s sociocultural world, as does the way in which their interlocutor responds to its use. By investigating children’s productions of category terms in interactions with peers, not only are children’s linguistic capabilities illuminated but also aspects of their cultural understandings.

The data drawn on in this study is spontaneously occurring speech, which was recorded at four regularly spaced intervals over 21 months, resulting in a corpus of child speech spanning the ages of 2;10 to 7;2 years. The data was analysed using Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), and was done so to produce a broad description of how the cohort uses categories when pursuing affiliative and disaffiliative actions with peers at different ages.

This study is one of the very few on Indigenous children’s interactions, and the first to apply MCA. It also appears to be the first MCA study to investigate the use of social categories which do not exist in the Western world. The application of MCA in this thesis is also novel in terms of the scope of its analysis and its descriptive aims. A secondary goal for this study was to maximise comparability with existing studies on children’s talk, a task that, owing to the specific nature of interactional analyses, is often a challenge.

While this study does not focus on children’s individual development, findings appear to indicate certain age-related uses of categories in talk. The use of categories by the cohort suggest that from 3 to 6 years of age children move from a focus on themselves as individuals, to experimenting with categories and the interactional clout they can afford, to operating as a member of the broader social group, using categories predominantly to maintain the local moral order. Comparisons with descriptions of children from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds reveal numerous
similarities and differences in terms of the selection and application of categories. For example, Aboriginal categories of land appear to be used by some of the Murrinhpatha speaking children in a similar way to notions of friendship by children in Western societies. Through the analysis of children’s use of categories, this study reveals these Murrinhpatha speaking children to be at once ‘just’ children as well as children from a highly specific cultural and linguistic context, and impresses the need to examine language in relation to a speaker’s sociocultural environment.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

a) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD
b) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used
c) full ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed
d) the thesis is fewer than 100 000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, examples, bibliography and appendices

Lucinda Davidson
Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the people of the Yek Diminin clan, the traditional owners of the land on which Wadeye is located. I am indebted to all Murrinhpatha speakers in the community; those who were directly involved in this project and those who were not. I felt that my presence in town was not simply tolerated but that it was welcomed, despite no one owing me, a random whitefella, any such warmth.

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## Abbreviations and transcription conventions

### Glossing conventions and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>first person, second person, third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1-38)</td>
<td>classifier stem number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANIM</td>
<td>animate non-human, non-Aboriginal person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>br</td>
<td>brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>clitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da</td>
<td>daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td>discourse marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DU</td>
<td>dual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPH</td>
<td>emphatic marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXC</td>
<td>exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXIST</td>
<td>existential mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>non-masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOC</td>
<td>focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUT</td>
<td>future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hu</td>
<td>husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO</td>
<td>indirect object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>masculine</td>
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<tr>
<td>mo</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>noun class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFUT</td>
<td>non-future tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSIB</td>
<td>non-sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSS</td>
<td>possessive</td>
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<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>past</td>
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<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>paucal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROX</td>
<td>proximal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>reflexive/reciprocal</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>singular</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIB</td>
<td>sibling</td>
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<tr>
<td>so</td>
<td>son</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi</td>
<td>wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zi</td>
<td>sister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key to transcription symbols

**word**  a category term produced by a child (unprompted by an adult)

(.)     0.1 second of silence

(0.3)  silence in seconds (i.e. 0.3 seconds)

text   lengthening (degree of lengthening shown by number of colons)

TEXT  stressed element of speech

*text*  utterance is louder than surrounding talk

<text>  utterance is quieter than surrounding talk

>text<  utterance is slower than surrounding talk

<text>  utterance is faster than surrounding talk

utter[ance]  overlapping speech

[utter]ance

=     latching

-     speech cut off abruptly

?     rising terminal intonation

***    indiscernible speech

((actions))  non-verbal behaviour

Line numbers in transcriptions: are continued across different excerpts if they are part of the one, uninterrupted activity.

Key to symbols used in kinship diagram

△ male

○ female

----- sibling relationship

----- spouse relationship

Key reproduced from Blythe (2009)
1. Introduction

I’m Batman. You’re lady Batman

-Acacia (5;0)

Acacia lives in the remote Aboriginal community of Wadeye, in the north of Australia. Her mother tongue is the traditional, polysynthetic language of the area, Murrinhpatha. As the above utterance suggests, Acacia’s world is a hybrid of influences; Indigenous and non-Indigenous, old ways and new.

In this study I investigate what Acacia, and seven other Murrinhpatha speaking children, do with language in interactions with peers. A broad interpretation of ‘peer’ is taken in this thesis. It refers to any other child, including siblings or cousins. Drawing on spontaneous speech, recorded over a period of 21 months, I explore the linguistic strategies the children employ at different ages. This research offers a glimpse into the lives of eight children, and how they use language to manage and participate in their social worlds.

Very few traditional Australian languages are in use today, and even fewer are being acquired by children. Of the 250 or more Indigenous languages that were spoken in Australia before colonisation, only around 120 are spoken today, and just 13 of these are being learnt by children (Marmion, Obata, & Troy, 2014). Murrinhpatha is one of these 13 languages, and it is therefore considered ‘strong’ according to scales of linguistic endangerment (McConvell & Thieberger, 2001). However, certain aspects of the language appear to be changing rapidly, with each generation (Mansfield, 2014). Compounding this is the relatively small number of people who speak the language. The vulnerability of a language such as Murrinhpatha adds additional importance to documenting and describing its contemporary usage. As they are the new generation of speakers, it is imperative to include children’s language use in the documentation process.

The present study is part of a broader project, which ran from 2013-2017, based at the University of Melbourne. The larger project, entitled Language Acquisition in Murrinhpatha (LAMP), involved a number of researchers. Each investigated, and continue to investigate, a different aspect of the question, ‘How (on earth) do children learn a language such as Murrinhpatha?’ The lines of research include the nature and form of child directed speech (Kelly & Davidson, 2015; Kelly, Mansfield, Forshaw, Nordlinger, & Wigglesworth, 2014), an exploration into children’s understanding of kinship terms (e.g. Blythe, Tunmuck, & Rácz, 2018, in prep), and the acquisition
of bipartite stem verbs (Forshaw, 2014, 2016; Forshaw et al., 2017). In Forshaw’s (2016) study he suggests that children’s engagement with and understandings of the social world could “potentially underpin the pathway of development” (p.324) of key aspects of the morphological system of Murrinhpatha. The focus of the present study connects with this theme, in that it examines children’s linguistic practices and the cultural resources they draw on within them.

I approached this study with various assumptions about children and their speech, which align with those outlined in the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 2015[1990]). A central premise of this new sociology is that children are able communicators, in that they draw on linguistic and cultural resources to achieve social goals. Children are also considered to be agentive social collaborators, who use language to participate in and manage their own social worlds. Another assumption is that children are individuals at different stages of development, rather than examples of a generalised ‘child’. Applying these assumptions to the present study, I analyse the speech data in its own right. I do not assess the children’s language in relation to an adult ‘target’, but instead describe what the children do with language in their peer interactions. The aim of this study is not to highlight what children can or cannot do ‘properly’, but to describe what speakers themselves choose to do with language.

With a few noteworthy exceptions (e.g. Corsaro, 1985; Ervin-Tripp & Mitchell-Kernan, 1977; Goodwin, 1978), little research had focused on spoken interactions between children until relatively recently. The last decade has seen an increase in the attention paid to children’s peer talk, with greater amounts of research devoted to its investigation. Talk amongst children provides insights into their linguistic and social abilities (Cekaite, Blum-Kulka, Grøver, & Teubal, 2014a). It is also held to promote development of discursive strategies (Zadunaisky Ehrlich & Blum-Kulka, 2010) and to inform processes of socialisation (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007). In Dor’s (2015) theory of language as a ‘social communication technology’, children’s peer talk is positioned as more important still. Dor proposes that the interactions children engage in amongst themselves are fundamental to their acquisition of language (p.164-183). However, despite the growing number of studies on children’s peer talk, and the various acknowledgements of its importance, there remains much to learn.

Crucial to addressing these gaps in knowledge is broadening the diversity of children who are studied. In the majority of existing child studies, interactional or otherwise, participants are Western, middleclass speakers of Indo-European languages. Given the interwoven nature of language and culture (e.g. Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), what holds for a child of one linguistic and cultural background cannot be assumed to hold for a child of another. It follows then that the greater the diversity of children studied, the richer the field of research and more robust the findings will be.

The desire to know more about what children do and think reaches beyond the world of linguistic research. Calls are being made to include children’s voices in policy developments and matters of
education (e.g. Grewal & Singh, 2011; Theobald, Danby, & Ailwood, 2011), and the value of doing so is increasingly demonstrated in research (Breathnach, Danby, & O’Gorman, 2017; Einarsdottir, 2011; Farrell & Danby, 2015; Johansson et al., 2014). In ‘The NSW strategic plan for children and young people’ (Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, 2016), for example, repeated statements are made as to the importance of children being heard in decision making processes in Australia. Also included is an acknowledgement of the need to include disadvantaged children, “the voices of those who may not normally have an opportunity to have a say” (p.3). A better understanding of children is crucial when making decisions regarding their wellbeing. Linguistic research, particularly studies on interaction, can aid children being ‘heard’.

As an Indigenous child, living in a remote community and speaking a language other than English, Acacia is one of those children who do not normally ‘have a say’. Furthermore, the need to listen to her and her peers is becoming ever more pressing. An alarming disparity exists in Australia between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in terms of education, health, and economic and political participation (Gracey & King, 2009). In 2008, the Australian government implemented a strategy called ‘Closing the Gap’ (Council of Australian Governments, 2008) in order to address the disadvantage amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The measurable targets of this strategy included halving the gaps in access to education and employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations within a decade and achieving equality in terms of health and life expectancy across the country by 2030. The sobering ten-year report of this strategy suggests that little progress has been made (The Closing the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, 2018). The present linguistic study on its own cannot of course address these broad social issues, which affect adults as well as children. However, surely the same logic that is applied to children in general ought to be applied to children like Acacia. That is, the more nuanced an understanding there is of Aboriginal children, the better they can be served, in both educational and sociocultural terms.

There is an acute need for better understanding of Aboriginal children’s communicative abilities. Children, generally, are at risk of being viewed from a deficit perspective, in the arenas of research, education, and policy. Yet this risk is considerably greater for Indigenous children. Much of what is ‘known’ in Australia about Aboriginal children comes from reports on their poor performance in the national standardised numeracy and literacy assessment, NAPLAN1 (Osborne & Guenther, 2013). William Tilmouth, chair of Children’s Ground2 and a member of the Stolen Generations3, rejected this discourse of deficit in a recent speech he gave, saying “our children don’t need to be fixed. Our kids need to grow up as Aboriginal children with rights and opportunities, with a voice and the ability to control their own destination” (Tilmouth, 2018). Tilmouth also adds that it is not

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1 The many problems inherent in administering this test to Indigenous children in remote communities are detailed in Wigglesworth, Simpson, & Loakes (2011), and the inaccurate data collected with respect to children’s language backgrounds in Dixon & Angelo (2014).

2 An organisation that tackles social issues in Aboriginal communities, with the communities.

3 This term refers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families between 1869 and 1969 as a result of government policies (Read, 1981)
only a matter of having a voice, but to have that voice “heard” and “understood”. As Eades (e.g. 1993, 1994, 2000, 2013) has shown in her work on Aboriginal people in the legal system, the consequences of a lack of understanding around cultural and linguistic differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can be dire. The current situation in Australia impresses the need for descriptive work that demonstrates children’s linguistic competence in their first language.

In describing how eight Murrinhpatha speaking children interact in their everyday lives, this study not only adds to the existing literature on children’s talk, but it also adds to understandings of Aboriginal children in Australia and their linguistic and social practices.

In order to explore what the children in this study do with language, I analyse their productions of category terms. In her earlier utterance, Acacia uses the category terms ‘Batman’ and ‘lady’, just as I have described her in relation to the categories ‘Aboriginal’, ‘Indigenous’, and ‘child’. Speakers’ use of category terms are held to act as a key into their understandings of the world and its routine workings (Fitzgerald, Housley, & Butler, 2009, p.47). Part of speakers’ cultural ‘toolkit’ (Laz, 1998, p.102), categories “short-cut and package common-sense knowledge” (Stokoe, 2012, p.300) about different kinds of people or personae, and how they are expected to behave. The insight gained from categories in talk is not through any inherent quality of their own, but through their empirical use by speakers (Stokoe & Attenborough, 2014, p.176). People’s use of category terms is thought to offer a window onto their sociocultural worlds.

The analytic approach applied in this study, Membership Categorisation Analysis (Sacks, 1992) (MCA), examines people’s use of categories in naturally occurring speech. The primary focus of MCA studies is to investigate what actions speakers are trying to accomplish when they produce category terms in their talk. The specific choice of category affords insights into their understandings of the social worlds they operate within. MCA allows for a detailed study of language in use, and the relationship between language, society, and culture. While the majority of MCA research looks at adult speech, in the last decade or so this approach has been increasingly applied to children’s interactions.

MCA is an appropriate tool to undertake an interactional analysis of the particular data collected for this study. Unlike Conversation Analysis, which is often applied to large corpora of data, MCA is suited to the close analysis of fewer interactions (Stokoe, 2012, p.278). With just eight focus children, the present work is small in scale. However, in this study MCA is applied more expansively than usual. All explicit uses of categories by the children are analysed, in order to provide a broad description of the cohort’s use of categories in talk. This study can therefore offer a new perspective on MCA as not only an analytic but also a descriptive tool.

The data itself in this study is quite different to that which is typically analysed from an MCA perspective. Very little research on children’s peer talk draws on longitudinal data, and an even smaller number applies MCA to such data. A key reason for this is that undertaking interactional
analyses of longitudinal speech data is highly problematic, in terms of being able to present robust evidence of development, in the face of contextual variability (Doehler, Wagner, & González-Martínez, 2018). As such, while this study draws on longitudinal data, it does not focus on individual development, but instead examines children’s uses of categories at different ages. In providing a description of age-related talk-in-interaction, this study serves as a solid platform for future research in which the development of individual children can be explored.

Another way in which this Murrinhpatha data is novel in terms of applying MCA relates to the particular sociocultural context in which it is spoken. In any society, the ways that an individual speaker uses categories can be directly linked to their understandings of the social world in which they live (Butler, Fitzgerald, & Gardner, 2009). However, the Murrinhpatha speaking context of Wadeye provides an additional element to the study of categories in talk. This is due to the existence of categories which relate to traditional elements of Aboriginal identity, and the salience of these categories within the community.

Although Wadeye is a relatively urbanised environment, the organisation of adult society is nonetheless informed by traditional kardu thipam, ‘Aboriginal’, categories. These categories, involving connections to land, and to entities within that land, situate an individual in relation to all other Indigenous people in the area (Ward, 1983). Personal connections to these categories influence who one does and does not interact with, and the nature of these interactions. Contemporary categories, including football team allegiances and associations with particular heavy metal bands, also play a role in organising adult social interaction in Wadeye (Mansfield, 2014), as do more universal categories, such as those of gender. Wadeye is a town in which categories, and the social alliances and divisions they inform, are at the fore.

At times, category-based affiliations and enmities play out violently amongst adults in Wadeye. Scuffles occur fairly regularly between the young men in town. Often the reason relates to competing claims over traditional lands; being ‘jealous for country’. Category based divisions are also evident amongst children in the community. In fact, a common reason for children refusing to go to school is that there will be thu kuy, ‘fighting’ or ‘bullying’, relating to Aboriginal category membership. While Wadeye is a predominantly peaceful town, its internal social divisions can at times function like a tinder box.

Children like Acacia are born into this world of category-based affiliations and disaffiliations. They grow up as members of an extended family group, linked to particular Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal categories. These associations foster close ties to certain other households and a wariness, if not animosity, towards others. A child’s own kardu thipam, ‘Aboriginal’ identity, in relation to traditional categories, tends to be explicitly taught to them from a young age, through socialisation routines. With these linguistic practices, adults impress upon children their difference from others in terms of category membership. Children also witness linguistic manifestations of social distance in adult society along gender category lines, through the naming taboos practised
by post-pubescent siblings of the opposite sex. The role that categories play in adult social organisation prompts questions as to their degree of salience for children. Do children implement categories to organise their own social worlds? And if so, how do they use them? The aim of the present study is to investigate children’s use of categories to affiliate and disaffiliate with other children, and what this looks like at different ages.

This study applies Membership Categorisation Analysis to longitudinal, spontaneous speech data from children who speak the traditional Australian language, Murrinhpatha. Aged between 2;10 and 5;6 at the study’s outset, the resulting speech corpus includes speech from children just shy of 3 years old to children around 7. By investigating the use of categories, I describe the linguistic practices of eight young individuals, as they pursue particular affiliative and disaffiliative actions with peers. The goals of this study are to add to the knowledge of children’s communicative abilities and practices, to address the lack of diversity in such studies, and to provide a description of these children’s talk that encourages comparisons with existing work in the field. A central hope for this study is that, by presenting a small window onto these children’s lives, their worlds are made somewhat familiar to readers, and their voices heard far and wide.

1.1. Organisation of the thesis

In this chapter I outlined the premise and motivations of the present study. I introduced the overarching question explored in this dissertation (how do children use categories to manage their peer worlds?), and the analytic approach applied in order to do so. Also included in this chapter is a description of the theoretical standpoint from which I view children and their language.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature that relates to the topic of this thesis. The chapter begins with a review of how children and their language have been conceptualised and treated within research in recent history. I then review existing studies on children’s peer talk, outlining relevant findings, challenging certain practices, and highlighting questions that remain unanswered. This chapter also introduces the analytic approach I apply to the data, Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA). The approach is first sketched in terms of Sacks’ (1992) original ideas, followed by a description of more recent developments. Following this, I detail existing analyses of children’s language which apply MCA, and provide examples of how studies which do not use this approach can in fact be interpreted through such a lens.

Chapter 3 introduces the field site for this study, the remote Aboriginal community of Wadeye. I describe Wadeye in terms of its location, layout, history, and social make up. Residents of Wadeye are described with respect to their living arrangements, naming practices, and contemporary patterns of social organisation. A brief description is then provided of the traditional Australian language, Murrinhpatha, which is the language of the Wadeye area. The chapter concludes by outlining various socialisation routines that Murrinhpatha speaking caregivers commonly use with young children.
In Chapter 4 the logistical issues that arose from conducting research at Wadeye are noted. I outline the data collection process, before describing the resulting data itself. Following this, I detail the steps followed in analysing the data. Included in this section of the chapter are definitions of the specific ‘affiliative’ and ‘disaffiliative’ actions that each child’s category mentions are classified in relation to. The chapter concludes with an introduction to each of the eight focus children.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are the results chapters of the thesis. Chapter 5 serves as an introduction to the study’s results, by providing a brief overview of each child’s use of categories and highlighting aspects that are unique to each speaker. The specific category terms produced by each child are listed, as are the particular actions they pursue with the terms at different time points. Also included in this chapter are relevant contextual details, such as the child’s co-participants in recordings, and caregiver behaviour.

Chapters 6 and 7 detail the use of categories by the cohort as a whole. While examples are provided from individual children, the focus of these two chapters is more on the use of categories in particular actions and less on the individual speaker. Chapter 6 describes the children’s use of category terms when pursuing actions classified as ‘affiliative’, and chapter 7 reports the ways in which categories are employed when pursuing actions deemed ‘disaffiliative’.

In chapter 8 the children’s category work is presented from a different angle again. The use of categories when pursuing affiliative and disaffiliative actions is described in relation to the age of speakers. Age-specific differences are highlighted with respect to numerous particular actions. Drawing from these examples I propose a tentative developmental trend for the ages of 3 to 6 years.

In chapter 9, I note the various challenges of the present work, before discussing key results presented in chapters 5 to 8 and situating them within the existing literature on children’s spoken interactions. The contribution that this thesis makes to the field is then discussed, as are future research endeavours that this study could lead to. The dissertation concludes with a recontextualisation of findings with the study’s original aims and premise.
2. Literature Review

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first section provides an overview of research perspectives and priorities with respect to children and their language. The field of children’s peer talk is the topic of the second section. Here the overarching line of inquiry in the area is described, together with some examples of existing findings. This leads to the third section, which introduces the specific interactional approach used in the present study, Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA). Following this is a survey of existing research on children’s peer talk, through the lens of MCA. The chapter concludes with a summary of what remains unanswered in the field, and the ways in which this study aims to address this.

2.1. Approaches to children’s language

Today, research on children’s peer talk is a vibrant, growing field. Yet focussed attention on spoken interactions amongst children is relatively recent. The past fifty years have seen dramatic shifts in the treatment of children’s language in the field of Linguistics. These changes can be seen in terms of theoretical perspectives of children as speakers, the aspect of children’s language that is focussed on in studies, and the degree to which context is taken into consideration in the analysis.

2.1.1. Language acquisition research

Up until the 1980s, research on children’s speech tended to centre on structural aspects of language. Its focus lay in investigating when children produced specific grammatical inflections in an adult-like way, for example, plural forms of nouns (e.g. Anisfeld, Barlow, & Frail, 1968; Anisfeld & Gordon, 1968; Berko, 1958), and past tense forms of verbs (e.g. De Villiers & De Villiers, 1973; Kuczaj, 1977; Slobin, 1971). Researchers drew on elicited data and naturally occurring speech to map the point at which children demonstrate a mastery of particular aspects of grammar. Brown’s (1973) proposed order of acquisition of the first 14 morphemes in child speech exemplifies the general research focus of this time. The key motivation behind these studies of children’s language was to establish universal developmental patterns as to how ‘the child’ learns their first language.

Investigations into when children produce grammatical forms ‘correctly’ involved comparisons of children’s language with an idealised adult target. Language learning was treated as a telic action. Furthermore, by focussing on the ‘endpoint’ of acquiring a language, children were essentially treated as small adults-in-training (Schwartzman, 2001). Researchers analysed data less for what children can do with language, and more for what they cannot (yet) do; they were viewed in terms of their future competencies, rather than their current abilities. Children’s language was often described in terms of the “errors” (e.g. Cazden, 1968, p.436) made, and what they “omit” or use
“redundantly” (e.g. Menyuk, 1964, p.541). In this sense, children’s language was analysed from a deficit perspective. Sidnell (2010) describes this approach to children’s language as the ‘developmentalist hegemony’ (p.107), and argues that it is still entrenched in the field today. Within this tradition of language acquisition research, children tended to be seen as generalisable adults-to-be, who do not yet use language properly.

It must be noted, however, that a number of researchers in the 1960s explored the possibility of children’s language being systematically different to that of adults (e.g. Braine, 1963; Brown & Fraser, 1964; Miller & Ervin, 1964). They described children’s speech with little direct comparison to adults’ use of language. In discussing one of the three young children they recorded longitudinally, Brown and Fraser reason, “It is clear that Eve does not speak adult English, and so we cannot use an adult English grammar to describe her speech (Brown & Fraser, 1964, p.71). These studies indicate that certain linguists at this time viewed children’s language as worthy of attention in its own right. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal for these researchers, too, was to find the point at which children demonstrated an adult-like grammar.

Irrespective of whether children’s language was viewed as an impoverished version of adult language, or a discrete system of its own, most studies in the sixties and early seventies focussed on linguistic form rather than function. Context was rarely incorporated into analyses. This decontextualised look at language was challenged early on by Hymes (1964), and again later, when he argued for research into speakers’ ‘communicative competence’ (1972). Communicative competence, the ability to use language appropriately in everyday situations, was contrasted with ‘linguistic competence’, which relates to people’s knowledge of the semantic and syntactic rules of a language. The notion of communicative competence also challenged the Chomskian (1965) paradigm of ‘competence’ versus ‘performance’. Speakers’ realisation of their abstract knowledge of language was described in terms of sociopragmatic complexity. By the late seventies, many researchers had begun to address social and interactional factors in their analyses of children’s language (McTear, 1985, p.7), moving from a strictly structural approach to one that was more functional.

This move, to address contextual factors in speech, resulted in considerable discourse pragmatic work on children’s language development (e.g. edited volumes by Ervin-Tripp & Mitchell-Kernan, 1977, and Ochs & Schieffelin, 1979). Many researchers focussed on children’s or infants’ interactions with adult caregivers (e.g. Bates, 1976; Greenfield & Smith, 1976; Wells, Montgomery, & Maclure, 1979), while certain others explored children’s use of language with other children (e.g. Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; McTear, 1979). By the late 1970s, a large portion of research into children’s language investigated communicative function as well as linguistic form.

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4 That is not to say that the authors analysed children’s speech entirely without judgement. A few pages later, Brown and Fraser state that Eve’s language “is not good English” (p.77).
Another aspect of the inattention paid to context in early language acquisition research relates to the lack of speaker diversity. The vast majority of participants in studies conducted prior to the 1980s were children of a highly specific linguistic and cultural background: Western, middle-class, and learning an Indo-European language, frequently English. Given that a major research aims of language acquisition studies is to uncover universal trends in children’s development of morphosyntax, this lack of speaker diversity proved problematic. Patterns of morphological development, drawn from the speech of a two year old child learning English, for example (e.g. Brown (1973)’s order of acquisition of the first 14 morphemes), cannot be assumed to be relevant for children of the same age who are learning typologically different languages, such as Hungarian, Tamil, or Cantonese.

The need to base developmental claims on more than a handful of structurally similar languages was highlighted by Slobin and colleagues (1967), and demonstrated in their research that followed. The most comprehensive example of this is the five volume series on language acquisition, conducted in over twenty typologically diverse languages, edited by Slobin (1985a, 1985b, 1992, 1997a, 1997b). Studies of children’s development in non-Indo European languages, such as Cree (Rose & Brittain, 2011), Chintang (e.g. Lieven & Stoll, 2013), Inuktitut (e.g. Allen, 1996), and Bantu languages (e.g. Alcock, Rimba, & Newton, 2012; Demuth, 1992) continue to be drawn on heavily in comparative work.

The appeal to study children’s development across a broader selection of languages has been expressed numerous times since Slobin’s initial call (e.g. Bittner, Dressler, & Kilani-Schoch, 2003, p.xi; Slobin & Bowerman, 2007, p.215) and with fair reason: it is estimated that only 1% of the world’s languages, and 7% of language families, are represented in acquisition studies (Lieven, 2010, p.91). As these figures indicate, there remains an enormous amount of work to be done in Linguistics with children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

A lack of participant diversity not only impacted on the validity of claims as to the development of children’s morphosyntax, it also problematised beliefs about caregiver practices. An example of this relates to ‘babytalk’, a register of infant directed speech that is said to involve simplified utterances (Phillips, 1973), delivered with exaggerated intonation and an overall higher pitch (Fernald & Simon, 1984; Swanson, Leonard, & Gandour, 1992). Observed amongst Western, middle-class, urban caregivers (e.g. Remick, 1973; Snow, 1972, 1977), the use of this particular speech register was believed to be universal and essential to children’s language development. Another example is book-reading, which was posited as being crucial to the development of labelling skills in children (e.g. Ninio & Bruner, 1978). However, pioneering research on children growing up in Samoa (Ochs, 1988), Papua New Guinea (Schieffelin, 1990), and in lower-socioeconomic families in America (S. B. Heath, 1982, 1983), provided counter-evidence for the assumed universality of these caregiving practices. This new wave of studies, involving children from diverse cultural backgrounds, demonstrated that what is considered ‘normal’ speech behaviour in one particular culture cannot be generalised to other cultural groups.
2.1.2. Language socialisation

This shift to studying children’s language in relation to their specific cultural context was spearheaded by the development of a new theoretical framework, language socialisation (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). This research paradigm foregrounded the connection between language and culture, contending that all interactions are socially and culturally organised (Ochs, 1999, p.230). Language socialisation studies impressed the need to incorporate sociocultural context into research on linguistic development. Rather than investigating language of ‘the child’, they describe the development of children in culturally specific terms.

Language socialisation brought with it a change in research focus on children’s language. Instead of trying to locate an endpoint of language development, and identifying discrete developmental stages leading up to it, language socialisation studies explore the process of development. The nature of this development is not only linguistic but also sociocultural; it refers to how children become “culturally intelligible subject[s]” (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004, p.351). In this sense, the language socialisation paradigm builds on Hymes’ (1972) idea of communicative competence. Children are viewed as developing communicative competence through their participation in interactions with more experienced cultural members, who facilitate their learning (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012, p.4). In interactions, children are socialised “through the use of language and... to use language” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p.163). Masters facilitate novices’ learning by encouraging them, both overtly and tacitly, to speak and act in locally appropriate ways. It is this process that language socialisation studies seek to describe. Early language socialisation work shifted the focus of inquiry from ‘when’ children learn to speak to ‘how’ they learn to behave.

The language socialisation paradigm also added to the available theoretical perspectives on children and children’s language. Rather than explaining the differences between child and adult speech in terms of children being less able than adults, the variation is understood in terms of social roles. Children are viewed as performing a culturally specific role of ‘child’, which they learn, and which marks them as different from adults. In other words, “before children learn to be adults, they learn to be different from adults” (Berman, 2014, p.113). From a language socialisation approach, children behave differently to adults in part because they are expected to do so. Children’s use of language is one way in which they display their non-adult status.

From this perspective, children are also positioned as active participants in interactions, and agents in their own development (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012, pp.5–6). This is held to be the case irrespective of a child’s age. Even preverbal infants are considered to actively engage in interactions in a manner that is appropriate for a social member of their status. Babies are viewed as socialising their mothers into the role of caregiver as much as they are being socialised by their caregivers into the role of child (de León, 1998). An individual’s agency in the socialisation process therefore does not depend on an awareness of one’s own agency. Children are active social participants, according to a language socialisation perspective, and their use of language is taken to reflect the particular social role that they are encouraged to occupy.
However, despite the active role that is theoretically assigned to children within the language socialisation framework, their agency in the socialisation process is rarely discussed in studies from this approach. Equally, although children’s language is described as being a demonstration of their knowledge of social roles, it is rarely foregrounded. The central focus of most language socialisation work, particularly the early studies in the eighties and nineties, is on adult-child interactions (Garrett & Baquedaño-López, 2002, p.341). In studies that talk of peer socialisation, the emphasis lies on different iterations of the master-novice relationship, such as between children of different ages (e.g. García Sánchez, 2010; Goodwin, 2017; Howard, 2009; Minks, 2010; Rabain-Jamin, Maynard, & Greenfield, 2003; Reynolds, 2007), or amongst children with different levels of local sociocultural knowledge (e.g. Tarım, 2016).

An asymmetry of knowledge and power is fundamental to all socialising interactions (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012, p.6). However, language socialisation studies attend predominantly to the linguistic practices of the ‘masters’, the adults or older/more experienced children. With a few noteworthy exceptions (e.g. Ahn, 2016; Ciesielski, 2015; Tardif & Wan, 2001), studies rarely describe in any detail the language of ‘novices’. While the language socialisation paradigm highlights children’s competence in interactions, theoretically, in practice the research focus of this approach impedes children’s talk from being analysed in its own right. Studies from within a language socialisation framework look less at what children do and more at what caregivers encourage children to do.

2.1.3. Interactional approaches

This theoretical attribution of agency to children in their own development paved the way for a new approach to children’s language, which focuses on talk-in-interaction (Kyratzis, 2004, p.626). As with language socialisation research, interactional studies apply constructivist views to language use and socialisation, and view children as active and agentive social participants. However, interactional approaches differ with respect to the application of this theoretical stance, and the degree of focus on children’s speech productions.

Interactional studies, on child and adult data alike, involve fine-grained analysis of naturally occurring talk, usually from an ethnomethodological standpoint (Selting & Couper-Kuhlen, 2001). This entails treating “even the most apparently mundane or ordinary events as puzzling enough to be worthy of serious analytic attention” (Pomerantz & Atkinson, 1984, p.287). In Garfinkel’s words, ethnomethodology treats the commonplace as “anthropologically strange” (1967, p.vii) and thus worthy of study. Applying this to children’s talk, interactional studies aim to describe the mundane, everyday activities “that are so easily glossed as ‘childhood’” (Cromdal, 2009, p.1474). Children’s talk is treated seriously in interactional studies, and worthy of focussed attention. In fact, children are treated simply as ‘speakers’, rather than ‘child speakers’. Their child status is only relevant if made so through what they say and do (Danby, 2009, p.1598). Talk-in-interaction is of analytical interest irrespective of speaker age.
The theoretical treatment of children within interactional research aligns with contemporary sociological ideas. The ‘new sociology of childhood’ (James & Prout, 2015 [1990]) contends that children are, amongst other things, diverse individuals, and able communicators. Their communicative skills are assumed, irrespective of their stage of development. Children’s competence can be gauged from their use of culturally available resources to manage their social environments, and to pursue social goals in interactions (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998, p.16). Interactional studies bring current sociological understandings of children to the analysis of speech data, and produce descriptions, not assessments, of children’s talk (Butler, 2008, p.5).

From an interactional perspective, speakers do not simply convey meaning when they produce utterances in talk; they also pursue actions (e.g. Levinson, 2013). Language is viewed as a tool for social action; one that helps shape speakers’ reality (Gaskins, Miller, & Corsaro, 1992). Speakers manage their local social and moral order (that is, the practices and norms of the group) in communicative exchanges with others. This management is viewed as a collaborative, interactive achievement (Danby & Baker, 2000a, p.91). Participants construct, negotiate, and maintain the local social order in their moment-to-moment interactions (Niemi, 2014, p.109). The goal of research within this area is to identify the actions that speakers pursue in talk and the linguistic strategies they use to do so.

To achieve in-depth studies of talk and action, speech data is examined from the perspective of participants, rather than from that of the researcher (Pomerantz & Atkinson, 1984, p.286). An emic approach limits the number of analyst-driven decisions with respect to data, and keeps the focus on what is relevant to those involved in the interaction (Stokoe & Attenborough, 2014, p.162). Two key ethnmethodologically-grounded approaches that are used in interactional studies are Conversation Analysis (CA) and Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA). CA tends to focus on “the turn by turn sequencing and organisation of talk” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p.38) while MCA examines speakers’ use of category terms in interactions. (For a systematic comparison of the two approaches, see Stokoe & Attenborough, 2014, pp.163–164.)

Many interactional analyses of children’s language look at exchanges between children and their adult caregivers (e.g. Filipi, 2009; Forrester, 2008; all studies in Gardner & Forrester, 2010 with the exception of one; Hutchby & O’Reilly, 2010; Kent, 2012; Kidwell, 2009; Kidwell & Zimmerman, 2006, 2007; Wootton, 2007). In such work, children are treated as able communicators and equally worthy of analytic attention as adults. As adults are active participants in the exchanges studied, it follows that research on child-adult interactions also involves considerable analytic work on adult speech.

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5 In doing so, interactional studies also work to bolster this theory, by providing a key element that it lacks: empirical insights from children’s worlds (Cromdal, 2011, p.295).
Interactional analyses that focus on children’s peer talk instead bring children’s language squarely into the spotlight. Children have been found to interact differently when talking to their caregivers as opposed to other children (Dunn & Dale, 1984; Sawyer, 1995, p.144). It is important, then, to analyse children’s peer talk for a fuller picture of their linguistic behaviour. Just as with interactional studies, generally, research on children’s peer talk focuses on the actions speakers accomplish through language, and the resources they apply to do so.

In peer talk “it is clear that... children understand one another” (Kyriazis, Tang, & Koymen, 2009, p.283), however, to adults, aspects of exchanges between children can often present as rather opaque. For example, a study on four year old English speaking children in Wales describes a child who proposes an activity to a peer, by asking, ‘Kerry, do you want to play mums and dads?’ The child is rebuffed by her interlocutor, who replies: ‘No, we’re playing families’ (Bateman, 2014, p.237). From an adult perspective, ‘playing families’ does not sound inherently at odds with ‘playing mums and dads’. In fact, they sound like highly compatible themes. Yet the justification of Kerry’s opposition suggests that, for her, if not for both children, ‘families’ and ‘mums and dads’ operate as discrete, contrastive themes. An example such as this impresses the need for an emic perspective when analysing children’s peer talk, which interactional approaches call for.

What aids an emic analysis of children’s peer talk is the incorporation of ethnographic data about the participants. While not unheard of in adult studies (e.g. Blythe 2009), it is not the norm for interactional studies on adult conversation to draw on details from the broader context (Psathas, 1995, p.36). This is particularly the case for studies employing CA (See Hamo, Blum-Kulka, & Hacohen, 2004 for a discussion). Herein lies a key point of difference between interactional analyses of child-only data versus adult data: it is common for ethnographic information to be incorporated into contemporary studies of children’s talk.

This incorporation of ethnographic detail promotes a focus on individual speakers, which in turn facilitates an exploration of individual differences. However, attending to individual differences amongst children is not specific to interactional analyses of language. Certain early (e.g. Brown, 1973; Miller & Ervin, 1964) and more recent (Allen, 1998; Allen & Crago, 1992, 1996; Bates, Dale, & Thal, 1995; Family & Allen, 2015) language acquisition studies describe the differences in rates of linguistic development seen between child participants. While interactional analyses of children’s talk encourage a focus on individual speakers, explorations into individual differences between children is not exclusive to studies from this approach.

2.1.3.1. Limitations of interactional studies
Some interactional studies on children’s talk investigate the topic of peer socialisation. In fact, all of the studies listed in the section 2.1.2 in relation to this involve interactional analyses. However, while these studies use the term ‘peer socialisation’, few actually articulate the socialisation processes that are occurring. Readers are often left to work out for themselves what constitutes the socialisation work that is mentioned. This suggests that interactional analyses of children’s peer
talk provide the scope to highlight a broad range of phenomena, yet perhaps not to fully explicate all of them.

**Comparability**

Another potential drawback of interactional studies is their high degree of specificity. This specificity is a strength in that it allows for deep, detailed analyses of talk-in-interaction, but it is also a weakness in that it often does not facilitate ready comparison with other studies. Compounding this is the fact that most peer talk studies examine one particular aspect of discourse only, and at one particular time (Blum-Kulka, Huck-Taglicht, & Avni, 2004, p.294). Salonen & Laakso’s (2009) work on self-repairs by four year old Finnish children, which they compare with that of reports on English speakers of the same age, is one of the very few studies of its kind, if not the only one.

Yet cross-study comparisons are crucial (Sidnell, 2009, p.21), and addressing questions around universality is important in the field of child language research, irrespective of a study’s particular focus. Without comparative work, peer talk studies offer rich but disparate glimpses onto small numbers of children, in specific contexts. Zimmerman (1999, p.195) argues not only for the need for more comparative research on children’s talk-in-interaction but for greater attention to two specific types: “horizontal (i.e. cross-cultural, cross-language) and vertical (i.e. developmental) comparative research”. He offers no suggestions as to how this should be done, however. Having briefly addressed the impediments to ‘horizontal’ comparisons of interactional studies, I now move to the ‘vertical’.

2.1.3.2. Longitudinal studies

Unlike studies from language acquisition and language socialisation camps, few interactional studies of children’s talk analyse longitudinal data. Certain studies draw on data collected over fairly short periods of time, such as 1 month (Goodwin, 2001), or a school year (Farris, 2000; Kyratzis, 2001b; Svahn & Evaldsson, 2011), and describe how aspects of children’s peer interactions and group dynamics change over these time frames. Svahn & Evaldsson (2011), for example, document the three different phases of exclusion of one 11 year old Swedish girl by her peers over the course of an academic year. Other studies use data collected over longer periods of time, for example 12 months (García Sánchez, 2010), 18 months (Ioannidou, 2017) or 1-3 years (Nakamura, 2001), but do not explore questions of development. Two scholars have produced longitudinal, interactional work that is also developmental, yet their’s is between children and adults: Filipi (2018) tracks the development of a young child’s use of the response token ‘yes’ with her father over the course of 14 months, and Wootton (1997) describes the emergence of requests by a child in interactions with adult caregivers across 27 months.

More longitudinal, interactional research on children’s talk is needed (Doehler et al., 2018, p.29). Calls have been made for comparative, ethnographically informed studies of children’s peer talk to explore how children’s interactional strategies develop over time (Tholander, 2002, p.336), and also
to investigate the degree of universality in how children use particular strategies, such as invoking
notions of gender (Aydt & Corsaro, 2003, p.1311). However, there are numerous methodological
challenges, namely the issues of comparability (across contexts, activities, participants, etc.), and of
gathering adequate empirical evidence of development (Doehler et al., 2018, p.23). Interactional
analyses of longitudinal data have the potential to provide valuable insight into children’s use of
language, however it is difficult to present robust findings.

2.1.4. Indigenous children and their language

Until recently, very little research had looked at language use by Aboriginal children in Australia.
Given the race against time to document traditional languages and cultures while it is still
possible, most anthropologists and descriptive linguists have focused on their own learning, rather
than that of local children (Heath, 2008, p.ix). In fact, most descriptions of Australian languages
tend not to mention children and their language use at all, concentrating solely on the speech and
speech practices of adult Indigenous speakers.

Much of the work that exists on Aboriginal children’s language use directly reflects the current
situation in Australia; that is, a postcolonial context in which Indigenous children tend to be
viewed in terms of deficits. Many studies focus either on language shift (e.g. Langlois, 2004; Lee,
1983; Meakins, 2011; O’Shanessy, 2006) or on redressing particular misconceptions about
Indigenous children’s linguistic abilities. An example of the latter is work with Fitzroy Valley Kriol
speakers in Yakanarra, WA (Moses, 2009; Moses & Yallop, 2008), which discredits the myth that
Indigenous people do not use questions (e.g. Christie, 1985; Harris, 1984b). The deficit perspective
has also been challenged by studies within the large project, Aboriginal Child Language
Acquisition (ACLA phase 1 and 2)6 (see Simpson & Wigglesworth, 2008). These studies detail the
different linguistic environments that children are exposed to at home and at school, thereby
illustrating the need for a more nuanced perspective on Aboriginal children’s language.

Studies that fall outside of these two themes include investigations into children’s abilities in
elicited narratives in Warlpiri (Bavin, 2000; Bavin & Shopen, 1985) and in Wumpurrarni English
(Disbray, 2009), and the acquisition of verbal morphology in Murrinhpatha (Forshaw, 2016, as
mentioned in the introduction). In terms of more socioculturally-oriented research, language
socialisation practices have been described for Warlpiri speakers in Yuendumu (Bavin, 1993), a
study on Elcho Island examines Yolngu teenagers’ understandings of social roles and traditional
Aboriginal identity categories (Williams, 1971), young people’s use of digital media has been
investigated (e.g. Kral, 2011, 2014) and a recent collection of anthropologically informed studies
explores “how Aboriginal children, teenagers and young adults make and sustain their own social
world and identity” (Eickelkamp, 2011, p.4), by detailing the social practices of young people in
Central Australian communities.

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6 based at The University of Melbourne and The Australian National University, Canberra.
In terms of interactional work on Australian languages, a modest number of studies have been conducted on adult speech (e.g. Blythe, 2009; Garde, 2013; Liberman, 1985; Mushin & Gardner, 2009). This number drops even further with respect to studies on Indigenous children’s language. Dixon (2015) looks at object requests in an activity between a group of 5-7 year old Alyawarr English speaking children, and Rendle-Short and Moses (2010) examine spoken interactions between a 3 year old, a 4 year old, and two adults in Yakanarra. A larger scale study is currently being undertaken in Queensland, looking at language use in the classroom of young Indigenous children and their non-Aboriginal teachers (Gardner & Mushin, 2013). As this very brief round-up of studies demonstrates, there are very few interactional analyses of Aboriginal children’s talk, and just one on children’s talk with peers.

The growing number of studies on Indigenous children’s language is only positive. However, little research thus far has been conducted from a child-oriented perspective, with many studies looking at caregiver speech as much as, if not more than, children’s own productions. Given the negative discourses in circulation in Australia with respect to Aboriginal children’s linguistic competencies, more examples of what children can do with language are needed, and urgently. An ethnomethodological approach is the ideal vehicle for such work. Speaker-centred, it allows children to demonstrate their communicative abilities through their own words.

2.2. Children’s peer talk

Children’s peer interactions have been investigated within a number of different fields; not only Linguistics, but also in disciplines such as Psychology, Sociology, and Education. The majority of this work can be described in relation to two key foci. One is the role that the peer group and interactions amongst peers play in children’s cognitive and sociocultural development (e.g. Brenner & Mueller, 1982; Eckerman, Davis, & Didow, 1989; Göncü, 1993). The other investigates children’s peer interactions with respect to the management of interpersonal relations (e.g. Broekhuizen, Mokrova, Burchinal, & Garrett-Peters, 2016; Fanger, Frankel, & Hazen, 2012; Prinstein & Giletta, 2016).

The influence of the peer group on young people’s linguistic behaviour and cultural understandings has long been recognised. The importance of children’s interactions on development was theorised by Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1978) and remarked upon by the anthropologist, Malinowski (1959, p.283). The sociolinguist Labov (1970, p.34) noted that children learn to speak like their peers, rather than their parents. Despite these early observations, focussed research into children’s peer interactions is a relatively new phenomenon.

The first ‘wave’ of linguistic studies on children’s peer interactions can be located with the publication of Ervin-Tripp and Mitchell-Kernan’s (1977) edited volume, Child Discourse (Kyratzis, 2004, p.625). A primary aim of this collection was to redress the “marginal” (Ervin-Tripp & Mitchell-Kernan, 1977, p.23) status afforded to children in research at the time. Work such as the
papers in this volume positioned children’s peer talk as a topic worthy of focussed linguistic study.

Early peer talk research analysed children’s use of language in context. However, ‘context’ was limited to that of the speech situation. Unlike adolescents, groups of children were considered to operate within the same social world as that of adults (Corsaro, 2009, p.301). A number of studies published within Anthropology7, offered a broader notion of children’s contexts. These studies were ethnographies of children’s peer worlds, and provided detailed descriptions of children’s social practices and oral traditions (e.g. Furth, 1996; Goldman, 1998; Katriel, 1987; C. Katz, 1986; Lancy, 1996; Martini, 1994; Opie & Opie, 1987 [1959]; Schwartzman, 1978; Thorne, 1993; Whiting & Edwards, 1973). In these works, children are positioned as members of their own child cultures, separate from the broader, adult world, to which they also belong. Children’s peer worlds are described as being rich in lore, traditions and culture. What tends not to be discussed in this ethnographic work, however, is what children accomplish, socially, when they engage in their peer activities and rituals.

This attention to children’s cultural routines is also seen in Goodwin’s ground breaking research on ‘the Maple Street children’, a group of African-American children, aged 4-16 living in inner city Philadelphia. In her doctoral thesis (1978), and subsequent work (Goodwin, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1990a, 1990b), Goodwin combines ethnographic and linguistic methods to detail the speech practices of these children. Similar to the anthropological work cited above, Goodwin describes the particular speech activities that the children engage in. These include various kinds of oppositional talk, stories, and linguistic routines involved in jump rope games. Children’s speech behaviour in these activities is depicted as ordered, and different to that of adult speakers. Some speech activities are unique to the children, for example, the ‘he-said-she-said’ gossip routine. Other activities, such as disputes, are not exclusive to the children, but the children’s version differs markedly from that of adults. Through her work with the Maple Street children, Goodwin added to descriptions of linguistic practices that children engage in away from the company of adults.

However, Goodwin’s work extends beyond description. It discusses the Maple Street children’s talk, not only in terms of its form, but also its function. Goodwin explores the ways in which speech practices are “utilized” (Goodwin, 1978, p.2) by the children, and the social goals that they accomplish through participating in these practices. For example, the he-said-she-said gossip routine is outlined in terms of its structure, and it is also discussed in terms of how children use it as an interactional resource, to affiliate with co-participants. Goodwin analyses children’s language as “a functionally integrated component of a group’s social organisation and culture” (Goodwin, 1978, p.617). The Maple Street children’s peer talk is discussed in relation to their active construction and maintenance of their own social worlds.

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7 A field accused of largely ignoring children (Hirschfeld, 2002)
Goodwin’s early work was pioneering on a number of different fronts. She analyses mundane speech behaviour between children, and between children who are neither white nor middleclass. She also demonstrates the compatibility of ethnographic details and linguistic analysis. Lastly, Goodwin presents children as agentive members of their own peer cultures, who accomplish interactional work when participating in their everyday social and linguistic practices.

### 2.2.1. Recent peer talk research

At the time that Goodwin was publishing work on the Maple Street children, dedicated investigations into children’s peer talk were scarce (Goodwin, 1990a, p.12). Since then, however, there has been a surge of child-centred, interactional studies on children’s peer talk. Much of this research has been conducted with preschool aged children (e.g. Aronsson & Thorell, 1999; Bateman, 2016; Björk-Willén, 2007, 2012; Butler, 2008; Cekaite, Blum-Kulka, Grøver, & Teubal, 2014; Cobb-Moore, 2012; Cobb-Moore, Danby, & Farrell, 2009; Danby, 1998; Danby & Baker, 2000, 2001; Danby & Theobald, 2012; Evaldsson & Corsaro, 1998; Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009; Farris, 2000; Ioannidou, 2017; Karlsson, Hjörne, & Evaldsson, 2017; Karrebaek, 2011; Kyritzis, 2007; Kyritzis, Tang, & Koymen, 2009; Kyritzis & Tarım, 2010; Sheldon, 1990, 1996). Interactions between older, preadolescent children have also been analysed (e.g. Adler & Adler, 1998; Cromdal, 2001, 2004, 2011; Evaldsson, 2002, 2007; Evaldsson & Cekaite, 2010; Goodwin, 1994, 1998, 2006; Loyd, 2012; Maybin, 2006; Morek, 2014; Rizzo, 1989; Svahn & Evaldsson, 2011, 2013), as has talk amongst teenagers (e.g. Eder, 1990, 1991; Greer, 2007; Tholander, 2002, 2003). Today, children’s peer talk is a vibrant topic of linguistic research.

In contemporary interactional studies on children’s peer talk, children are positioned not only as able communicators and agentive parties, but as operating within two different worlds; the broader social (adult) world, and also separate, child cultures\(^8\) (Cook-Gumperz & Kyritzis, 2001, p.591). These peer worlds are assumed to have their own social and moral orders, different from those of the adult world (Cromdal, 2009, p.1474). While teenagers have long been considered members of their own private social worlds, displaying particular modes of speaking and behaving (e.g. Bucholtz, 1999; Cheshire, 1982; Eckert, 1989), in contemporary peer talk research even very young children are treated as such. In line with another tenet of the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 2015), children are treated as collaborative architects of their own social worlds, constructing and managing their worlds in their peer interactions.

### 2.2.2. Main foci of peer talk studies

As previously mentioned, studies on children’s peer interactions across disciplines can be divided into two main research foci, that of development, and that of interpersonal behaviour. The primary concern of research into children’s spoken interactions amongst peers relates to the latter. The majority of contemporary peer talk studies focus on how children use language to manage the

\(^8\) No single, cohesive peer culture could span childhood, due to the rapid and continuous development that this period covers. Instead, children can be thought of as being members of a series of peer cultures (Nelson, 2014).
social dynamics of their peer worlds, with the aim of elucidating the “minipolitics” (Griswold, 2007, p.293) of children’s interactions. This entails describing how children use language to create and negotiate power hierarchies with each other as well as how children reference and police the group’s local behavioural norms (Goodwin & Kyritzis, 2014, p.521). In broader terms, the key focus in peer talk research concerns how children affiliate and disaffiliate with peers; how they forge allegiances and cultivate divisions.

While children’s management of social organisation is the primary concern of most contemporary peer talk research, a second major line of inquiry is also apparent in the field. This other focus explores the ways in which children incorporate aspects of adult culture into their peer interactions. Referred to as an ‘interpretive’ (Gaskins et al., 1992) perspective on children’s talk, such studies focus on “the interface between the adult world and the world of peer-group interaction” (Streeck, 1986, p.298). Examples of this approach include studies by de León (2007) and Reynolds (2007), which describe how young Mayan children (Zinacantec and Kaqchikel, respectively) adapt adult greeting routines to engage in insult exchange activities with siblings and other close child kin. However, this sub-area of peer talk research is not at odds with the overarching concern of the field, of how children manage interpersonal dynamics. In fact, one of the main proponents of ‘interpretive’ approaches, Corsaro (1985), notes the centrality of social hierarchies and alliances for children as they engage in peer interactions. When children do adopt adult speech routines and apply them in talk with peers, they invariably do so as a resource to affiliate or disaffiliate with others.

2.2.3. Discourse ‘types’ versus activities

Despite the common lines of inquiry explored in peer talk research, it can prove difficult to compare findings across studies. This was mentioned earlier, in 2.1.3.1, with respect to the highly contextualised nature of interactional studies, and the focus on specific actions. Another aspect of peer talk research also limits cross-study comparisons, which is the practice of analysing children’s discourse with respect to particular ‘types’ of talk.

Explorations into how children manage interpersonal relationships in their talk, tend to be framed by the ‘type’ of discourse that children are engaged in (Cekaite et al., 2014a, p.12). These types are most commonly ‘play’, ‘conflict talk’, and ‘narrative’. Such divisions are problematic in that they are often made from an analyst’s perspective, rather than that of speakers. This potential disjunct between analyst and speakers is highlighted in the concept of ‘play’, which, if not “a fiction from the adult world” (Denzin, 1982, p.192), is often an adult construction of children’s interactions (Cobb-Moore, 2008, p.43). It cannot be assumed that the divide which adults perceive between different instances of talk is equally apparent, or equally as meaningful, to children (Thorne, 1987, p.100).

The nature of children’s peer interactions also suggests that classifications of different speech activities are a projection of outsider (adult) assumptions onto the data. Children are described as
shifting seamlessly from arguing, to telling a story, to ‘playing’, and back again (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007, p.287). What’s more, they appear to achieve the same social goals in each of these discourse ‘types’. Children are described as constructing, negotiating, and maintaining the organisation of their peer cultures when they tell stories (e.g. Goodwin, 1990; Kyratzis, 2000; Theobald & Reynolds, 2015), when they engage in disputes (e.g. Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Katriel, 1985; Maynard, 1985; Rizzo, 1989), and when they take part in ‘play’ (e.g. Cobb-Moore, 2008; Kyratzis, 2007; Thorell, 1998). Children’s fluidity of movement between genres of talk, coupled with the common aims that they pursue within them, suggests that defining children’s peer talk into these various discourse ‘types’ is merely an analyst-created convenience.

This convenience, while no doubt providing useful parameters for analysis, also works to inhibit cross-study comparisons. Rather than descriptions of how children affiliate and disaffiliate in their peer interactions, generally, the library of peer talk studies consists of parallel descriptions of such behaviour on separate ‘play’, ‘conflict’ and ‘narrative’ shelves.

A way around defining children’s talk into discourse types, which better aligns with an emic analysis, is to organise the data in relation to participants’ manner of engagement. That is, communicative exchanges can be defined as either occurring within (and constituting) ‘activities’ or not. An activity is defined in this thesis as a joint engagement in which participants demonstrate a shared visual and cognitive focus. This could involve children speaking on the same topic, and/or occupying themselves in physical behaviour for a common goal. This definition draws on ideas of co-construction (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995), and can also be linked to Goffman’s (1961) notion of social arrangements which he calls a ‘focussed gathering’. Activities stand in contrast to interactions where there is no discernible shared focus or goal between participants. Looking at activities in relation to a shared focus/goal, rather than genre types, reduces analyst-driven judgements of the data. It also more readily facilitates comparisons across studies, as utterances can be looked at with respect to the actions speakers are pursuing as opposed to the ‘type’ of interaction they are produced within.

### 2.2.4. Affiliating and disaffiliating with peers

Some existing findings for how children manage their social relationships in peer talk are now reviewed. They are not divided into discourse types but instead they are organised in relation to actions; those that promote affiliation with others, and those that promote social discord. ‘Affiliation’ and ‘disaffiliation’ contrast with ‘alignment’ and ‘disalignment’, in that the former two refer to affective coordination between speakers, while the latter two refer to structural coordination (Stivers, 2008). The present study focuses on affective (dis)coordination only.

#### 2.2.4.1. Affiliative actions

One way in which children forge an allegiance with one another is to explicitly group themselves together, by constructing a “we-ness” (Thorell, 1998, p.250). This may be through the use of
collective pro-terms, or positioning themselves as similar in some way. The example below shows two Swedish pre-schoolers using the pronoun *vi, ‘we’, to establish an allegiance with one another:

John:  
Ja, vi är dom starkaste  
Yes, we are the strongest

Dan:  
Ja, vi är lika starka  
Yes, we are just as strong  
(Thorell, 1998, p.250/123)

While their perspective on their strength is perhaps not shared, the boys’ use of ‘we’ indicates that their affiliation with one another is mutual. Four year old English speaking Welsh children (Bateman, 2012), and a pair of American children of this age (Kyratzis, 2007) are also reported as using collective pro-terms to establish a group with themselves and their peers, as are pre-adolescent African-American children (Goodwin, 1990). In the following excerpt, a preschool aged American child pursues an allegiance with a same aged peer by orienting to the same topic of her interlocutor’s previous utterance. Lynn affiliates with her interlocutor, Grace, by mirroring her utterance and claiming to also be Batman’s girlfriend. Grace demonstrates her support for this affiliation in her subsequent turn by explicitly grouping them both together, through the use of *we*.

1 Grace: oh I’m batman’s girlfriend
2 Lynn: I’m- I’m- I’m batman’s girlfriend, too
3 Grace: we- we- we live in different houses. I have to visit batman now  
(Kyratzis, 2001, p.378)

Continuing the theme of affiliating through relationships, a pair of girls at an American preschool affiliate with one another by having the figurines they are animating get married to one another: “Yeah, we both wanted to get married, right?” (Sheldon, 1996, p.62).

Instances of grouping together often involve a request for confirmation of the collective, as demonstrated by the American preschool girls above. For example, a 6 year old Australian child orients to group membership with a peer by seeking confirmation that he is in fact on the child’s ‘team’: “I’m on your team aren’t I John” (Cobb-Moore et al., 2009, p.1484). Another example sees a preschooler inviting a peer into an alliance through his switch from ‘I’ to ‘we’ in the utterance, “yes I’m a very strong aren’t we” (Danby & Baker, 2000b, p.104), through which he also appears to be prompting confirmation.

Numerous other actions that children pursue to affiliate with peers relate to activities, for example, demonstrating one’s participation in an activity. The precise nature of the activities children engage in appears to differ with age. Preschool-aged English speaking children are reported as engaging in activities based predominantly on sound or word play (Garvey, 1974), German 3-6 year olds and Australian 4-5 year olds engage in activities described as ‘competitive narratives’ (Stude, 2014; Theobald & Reynolds, 2015), whereas preadolescent children are more commonly described as affiliating with one another through activities of collaborative tellings and gossip talk (e.g. Cheshire, 1982; Goodwin, 1990).
In speech-based activities, various groups of English speakers use inclusive pro-terms such as ‘everybody’ in relation to activities. For example, 7-8 year old English speakers from England use such terms to improve the chance of their activity idea being taken up by peers (Butler, Duncombe, Mason, & Sandford, 2016), as do English speaking 4-5 year olds when making a bid for the floor in a speech activity (Theobald & Reynolds, 2015).

Another affiliative action described in the literature is that of seeking entry into an activity, which has been shown to be a challenging, nuanced action amongst children (Corsaro, 1979; Cromdal, 2001; Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009; Löfdahl & Hägglund, 2006; Strandell, 1997). Children orient to the themes of the activity. For example, in an interaction between Swedish 4-5 year olds, a child’s request to enter an activity is rejected with the utterance, “we have to make a cake”. The child trying to enter then orients to this theme and asks, “shall I make tea for you?” (Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009, p.16). While this child is not successful in her attempt, she nonetheless demonstrates how the action can be pursued.

2.2.4.2. Disaffiliative actions

Considerably more disaffiliative actions are described in the literature than affiliative. However, when children pursue disaffiliative actions with one child, they often simultaneously affiliate with another peer through this. Children of a variety of ages also engage in disaffiliative actions towards one peer so as to affiliate with another/others. This appears to be concentrated from the age of around five years up.

When children exclude a peer they often do this by affiliating with another. Just as the collective pro-terms ‘we’/’us’ can be used by a speaker to create an inclusive group, they can also be used to create an exclusive group, from which certain peers are excluded. In an interaction between three English speaking Welsh children, one child simultaneously groups herself with one peer and excludes another, in relation to one of them wearing a coat: “I- we don’t need our coats on look (0.6) we don’t need our coats on it’s not that cold?” (Bateman, 2012, p.174). In an interaction described by Evaldsson and Tellgren (2009), Swedish pre-schoolers exclude a same-aged peer from an activity by attributing real life age to her and contrasting ‘grown up’ status to themselves. She is told that it is too scary and too dangerous for her to join in the activity, because “we are grown ups and you are only four years“ (p.16).

Some preadolescent American girls exclude a group of boys from joining their jump rope activity, with the utterances, “No:: us” and “You’re not part of our gang. So you can’t!” (Goodwin, 2011, p.258). Here ‘us’ is used exclusively by the speakers, as is ‘our gang’. They present these collectives as closed groups, and use the boys’ lack of membership as justification for their exclusion. Another way in which children disaffiliate with peers is to assert joint authority over a particular physical entity. Two 7-8 yr olds English boys exclude a peer by claiming that a box is “OU:R HOU::SE!’ and ‘not you:rs” (Butler et al., 2016, p.58).
In terms of older children, preadolescent American and Swedish children are described as excluding peers by treating them as a ‘non-friend’ (Evaldsson, 2007), a non-member of the friendship group (“tagalong”, Goodwin, 2002, p.406) or type of ‘non-person’ (Goodwin, 2002; Svahn & Evaldsson, 2011). They do so with utterances such as “You’re not even here!” (Goodwin, 2002, p.406) which delegitimise if not negate the ostracised child’s presence.

Exclusion on the grounds of gender appropriateness is also seen in many different studies. For example, in an interaction between a group of middleclass, North American English speaking boys, one child is threatened with expulsion from an activity when he expresses his wish to be the pink power ranger, which is the ‘girl’ (Kyratzis, Marx, & Wade, 2001). He is permitted to remain a participant in the activity on the condition that he orients to the blue (‘boy’) power ranger instead. A ten year old Miskitu girl on Corn Island is engaged in an activity involving dolls, to which the participants perform ‘mother’ roles. She excludes a four year old boy from joining in due to his lack of membership to the category, mujer, ‘woman’ (Minks, 2013). Later he is permitted to join as a member of ‘shop keeper’.

Age and gender are common topics of negative assessments amongst children. For example, a Swedish five year old reproaches a peer for behaving “just like a little baby” (Hellman et al., 2014, p.337). A preschool aged Turkish child rebukes two peers for telling secrets to one another and marginalising her. The child does so with the utterance: kızlar herşeyi paylaşır, di mi?, ‘girls share everything, right?’ (Kyratzis & Tarım, 2010, p.484). Through this the girl positions her peers’ behaviour as at odds with what is locally appropriate for girls, who, according to her, ‘share everything’.

In terms of threatening peers, Australian and Taiwanese preschoolers are described as calling on outside authorities in threats (Church, 2009; Farris, 2000). Australian 4 year olds are also described as threatening to withdraw their friendship or to rescind a birthday party invitation (Church, 2009). Friends are also invoked by a Finnish 7 year olds, who threaten the end of their friendship plus physical violence from other ‘friends’:

O mulla paljo a a muitaki kavereita. () Ja ne voittaa sut
‘I have so many friends too () And they will beat you’  (Niemi, 2014, p.116)

What is evident in the examples of these affiliative and disaffiliative actions that children pursue with peers is that children often use category terms as a resource within them. Examining the use of terms such as ‘friend’, ‘girl’, ‘grown up’, and ‘we’ in children’s peer interactions offers a “way into” (Butler & Weatherall, 2006, p.466) understanding how children coordinate these actions with one another, whether it be to pursue solidarity with others or division. Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) is a tool that affords a close examination of both actions and categories. Through this, MCA offers an exploration of “the social organisation of cultural knowledge” (Stokoe 2009, p.76) of children within their child social worlds.
2.3. Membership Categorisation Analysis

This section begins with an outline of the key concepts of membership categorisation, as first put forward by Sacks (1992). Following this, the development of what is referred to as Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) is described. The section concludes with an overview of work in the field of MCA that examines children’s talk.

2.3.1. The origins of membership categorisation

The idea of membership categorisation as a topic of inquiry was first proposed by Harvey Sacks in the lectures he gave during 1964-8. His aim was to elucidate the way in which people within the one culture “use norms to provide some of the orderliness... of the activities they observe” (Sacks, 1972, p.339). He identified people’s use of categories as a window onto these norms. A recurrent example Sacks used to map out his perspective was a short story produced by a North American child aged 2;9:

_The baby cried. The mommy picked it up._

Applying ideas of membership categorisation to this story, Sacks attempts to explain how hearers can and do assume that ‘the mommy’ here is the baby’s mother, without it being explicitly stated. Membership categorisation investigates how members use and understand cultural norms via category terms.

Speakers’ use of category terms are held to “short-cut and package common-sense knowledge about category members and their actions” (Stokoe, 2012, p.300). That is, the category terms that an individual produces (e.g. ‘sister’, ‘old man’, ‘teacher’) and the ways in which they are used in talk, convey information about local understandings of particular ‘types’ of people. The expected behaviours of a category member are referred to as ‘category bound activities’ (Sacks, 1992). Today analysts tend to also talk of attributes and predicates associated with particular categories (e.g. Butler, 2008; Watson, 1983).

An individual can claim or be assigned membership to innumerable different categories. Certain categories can apply to every member of a given population, for example, categories relating to stages of life (e.g. baby, child, adult). Other categories exist in pairs, with one implying the existence of the other. For example, ‘parent’ makes relevant its paired category, ‘child’, as ‘wife’ does with ‘husband’. Sacks refers to these inherently connected categories as ‘standardised relational pairs’. Different again, certain categories are ‘positioned’, in that they naturally exist in a hierarchical relationship with other categories. Examples of ‘positioned’ categories are ‘boss’ and ‘employee’, or ‘adult’, ‘teenager’, and ‘baby’. These categories can be used to assert power asymmetries between speakers, to praise (e.g. calling a young child a ‘big girl/boy’) or to shame (e.g. labelling a an older child a ‘baby’).

All categories are held to belong to ‘sets’ or ‘collections’. These are natural groupings or aggregates
of categories, similar to semantic domains. The terms ‘baby’ and ‘mommy’ both belong to the
collection ‘family’, for example, while ‘baby’ can also belong to the ‘stage of life’ collection. Just as
an individual can be seen as a member of many different categories, so can any one category
belong to numerous collections.

2.3.1.1. Rules in Sacks’ membership categorisation
Sacks also outlines a number of ‘rules’ that organise the ways in which people engage in
membership categorisation. The ‘economy rule’ states that the application of one category is
referentially sufficient in a communicative exchange. Speakers can use more than one category
(e.g. ‘the middle-aged, female acrobat’), however a single term is, in principle, adequate in any
given situation. Another key rule that Sacks defines is the ‘consistency rule’. It applies to contexts
in which categories are being used in relation to numerous people. According to this rule, the
category term used for the initial person influences those used for subsequent people. For
example, if the term ‘teacher’ is used in relation to one person, others might be categorised as
‘students’; if an individual is described as being ‘Italian’, subsequent descriptions of people are
likely to involve other nationality category terms. When a particular set of categories is made
salient, subsequent category mentions tend to be drawn from this same collection.

Related to the consistency rule is the ‘hearer’s maxim’, which states that if two different categories
are produced together and can ‘go together’ “then hear it that way” (Sacks, 1972, p.338). To return
to the child’s story, the speaker leads the listener to hear ‘baby’ and ‘mommy’ as belonging to the
one collection, and the listener is expected to do so. Sacks also outlines a ‘viewer’s maxim’, which
states that if an individual sees a category bound activity being done, and the doer of the action
can be seen as a member of that category, then “see it that way” (Sacks, 1992, p.259). These rules
and maxims hint at the co-constructed nature of category work. Hearers and viewers are involved,
too; not only the speakers.

2.3.1.2. Membership categorisation ‘device’
The child’s use of these two category terms, ‘baby’ and ‘mommy’, indicate that they are
semantically linked in the one collection, however this connection alone does not address the
question as to how the listener processes ‘the mommy’ as the mother of this particular baby who is
crying. Hearers are thought to parse the child’s story as involving a mother and her own child by
the application of the ‘family’ collection, which Sacks describes in terms of a membership
categorisation ‘device’.

Although it remains somewhat opaque in Sacks’ theorising, the concept of a categorisation ‘device’
seeks to illuminate how participants apply their understandings of categories in interactions. Sacks
initially termed this ‘MIR device’, with ‘MIR’ standing for three key tenets grounding his
perspective on categories: ‘M’ for ‘membership’, in that categories are member- rather than
analyst- defined. ‘I’ is ‘inference rich’ as category terms are held to contain members’ own
sociocultural knowledge, and ‘R’ for ‘representative’ in that any and every member is thought to
be an illustrative example of a category (Sacks, 1992, p.41). Later simplified to ‘membership categorisation device’ (MCD), it is described as the ‘apparatus’ or ‘machinery’ behind category work. A device is therefore a collection of categories “with some rules of application” (Sacks, 1992, p.238) that organise the ways in which people use and interpret categories.

2.3.1.3. Sacks’ work on children’s games
Just as he explains the fundamental tenets of membership categorisation with a young child’s story, so does he apply his ideas to children’s activities amongst peers. Sacks suggests that categorisation devices provide “a basic set of resources for building play” (Sacks, 1992, p.503), and managing children’s participation within activities. He introduces the notion of ‘mapping’, in which a child orients to categories in order to initiate an activity or to seek entry into an existing activity. The latter action requires participants to gauge the relevance of categories in an activity, the availability of categories to map oneself onto, and an appropriate time to do so (Speier, 1973). ‘Mapping’ is essentially Sacks’ ‘consistency rule’ in action.

2.3.2. Recent developments in MCA
Sacks’ exploration into membership categorisation remained somewhat of a work in progress at his passing in 1975. While it was not adopted with the same enthusiasm as the other methodology Sacks helped develop, Conversation Analysis (CA), it has since been built upon by others (e.g. Baker, 2004; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Hester & Eglin, 1997; Housley & Fitzgerald, 2009; Stokoe, 2010; Watson, 1978). Today membership categorisation has developed into an approach that tends to be called Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), a practical and “empirically tractable” (Stokoe, 2012, p.278) method for “interrogating culture, reality and society” (p.277).

A key stance of MCA is that the relationship between categories and culture, or categories and social order, is a reflexive one (Danby & Baker, 2000, p.91). Culture informs which particular categories are available to speakers, and culture itself is constituted in speakers’ occasioned use of categories (Hester & Eglin, 1997, p.20). In fact, categories in talk have been referred to as ‘culture-in-action’ (Hester & Eglin, 1997).

Within MCA research, categories are not treated as roles, statuses, or identities that people ‘fill’ or ‘have’ in any permanent way. Instead, category membership is viewed as fluid and unstable in nature, and is conceptualised as emergent in interactions. This understanding of category membership shares similarities with performative (Butler, 1990) and social constructivist models of identity. Speakers orient to or away from categories iteratively in their communications with other cultural members, and their category membership is either ratified or rejected by their interlocutors. An individual’s category membership is negotiated, rejected, and achieved in spoken interactions (Widdicombe, 2008). It is what speakers do with categories in their talk that is of primary interest in MCA research, and the way in which membership (or non-membership) is achieved (or not achieved).
Two distinct camps exist with respect to the application of MCA to data. One limits the analysis to speakers’ “explicit and largely unambiguous uses of categories” (Stokoe, 2012, p.283), while the other looks at both explicit and implicit category work; that is, it also discusses categories that speakers appear to allude to but do not explicitly mention. Schegloff (2007b) does not appear to distinguish between these two varieties of MCA and has warned of the potential for MCA to be a ‘wild and promiscuous’ analytic approach. This danger is neutralised when MCA principles are applied to explicit category work, as there is considerable transparency in the analysis. In studies of explicit categorisation work, only those category terms that a speaker produces, or indisputably alludes to, are analysed.

2.3.2.1. Implicit

Implicit category work, on the other hand, remains considerably less defined than that of explicit (Fitzgerald, 2012). It relies on inferential work by the analyst in determining which membership category is relevant to the interaction (Lepper, 2000). For example, a group of 11 year old Swedish girls are described as invoking the category ‘bad friend’ to exclude a peer, without explicitly mentioning this term. Instead they are described as alluding to the category through their talk of actions that can be associated with membership to it: lying, being disloyal, and exploiting others (Evaldsson, 2007). Another example of implicit membership work is the analysis of an adversative exchange between two English-speaking siblings, aged 7 and 12. Both children are described as orienting to authoritative family categories through engaging in specific linguistic behaviour such as directives and invoking adult rules relating to a dinner time context. Yet in doing so they are both said to ultimately constitute their memberships to their positioned family categories of ‘older brother’ and ‘younger sister’, which remain unmentioned in the interaction, but are deemed to be salient (Hester & Hester, 2010).

These two studies demonstrate that convincing analyses of implicit categorisation work are possible. What’s more, they, like many other researchers who investigate implicit category work, combine MCA with Conversation Analysis, which adds robustness to their analysis. However, the incorporation of CA does not negate the fact that studies such as these rely on considerable analyst intuition. While members are able to draw on their own cultural knowledge (Antaki & Widdicombe, 2008), this is problematic for an emic analysis, even for a cultural insider. Furthermore, if children are viewed as operating within their own social worlds, as they are in the present study, the possibility of an adult analyst being a cultural insider is ruled out.

2.3.2.2. Criticisms of MCA as an analytical approach

Schegloff (2007), in his ‘tutorial’ on MCA, points out various weaknesses that he sees in the analytic approach. One of these is that the category terms which speakers produce may not be the categories most “compellingly in play” (p.476) in an interaction. Providing the example, “‘As a woman, I...’”, he argues that, although the speaker explicitly mentions ‘woman’, this category is not necessarily the most important aspect of this utterance, or the broader interaction. From an MCA standpoint, a speaker’s selection of terms is viewed as revealing of the speaker and of their society.
However, MCA research is less about which particular category terms speakers use and more about how they use them. The action that categories are used to pursue is of more analytical interest than the term itself. Furthermore, given that categories are analysed in context, the degree to which a category is ‘compellingly in play’ is analysed, rather than assumed.

Another point of contention leveled at MCA has to do with the idea of ‘categorisation’. Schegloff (2007a) notes that people are often not doing categorising work when they use category terms. They are just as likely to be doing referring, describing, or identifying. He provides the following example to illustrate his point: “...there’s a woman in my class who’s a nurse” (p.456). Here, he states, ‘woman in my class’ is referring to a particular individual, and the term ‘nurse’ is describing rather than categorising her. Like Schegloff’s previous observation, this is true yet it does not discredit MCA as an analytical approach. The focus of MCA research is not restricted to acts of categorising. The primary interest lies in uncovering the different uses that speakers put categories to. Whether a speaker identifies, describes, refers, or categorises with a category term, it is the social action that they pursue with categories that is the focus, not only instances of categorisation.

2.3.3. Applications of MCA to child data

The majority of work using this approach looks at adult speech, and most studies focus on a single action, or a small number of category collections. For example, Stokoe (2009) examines the use of categories in complaints and when denying culpability, Watson (1978) also looks at categories in the action of complaining, plus also when attributing blame. Hester (2008) describes talk between teachers and educational psychologists about deviant children, in which deviance is related to stage of life categories, amongst others.

In recent times, MCA is increasingly being applied to child data. Given that Sacks explicates many of his foundational ideas of membership categorisation using children’s speech- their narratives and playful activities- this extension of the analytic approach to child data is not surprising. Although growing in number, most existing work on children’s membership categorisation explores children’s implicit use of categories, or a combination of implicit and explicit. One possible reason as to why there are few studies on children’s explicit use of category terms is that children have been found to rarely produce them. Take, for example, Nguyen and Nguyen’s (2017) study of explicit membership categorisation in English-speaking families in Singapore. Despite considerable use of the terms ‘good girl’ and ‘good boy’ by adult caregivers, there is just one production of such a term from a child. In fact, perhaps the biggest drawback in analysing categories is that speakers (children and adults) cannot be relied upon to produce them and to do so in a consistent manner (Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005, p.154).

2.3.3.1. MCA studies on children

Most studies on explicit category mentions in children’s peer talk combine MCA with CA, and they tend to describe implicit use of categories as well. Descriptions of four key existing studies
from this field, involving children of a similar age group to those in the present study, are provided here.

Butler & Weatherall (2006) present data from 6-7 year old English speakers, collected in lunch breaks at two inner city New Zealand schools. The primary focus in this study is how children use categories to manage people’s participation within activities. To investigate the action of seeking entry into an activity, they employ the concept of ‘mapping’ (Sacks 1992). One child, for example, requests access into an ongoing activity by mapping herself onto the category, ‘dog’. She is denied entry, on account of having misgauged the categorisation device at play. As a participant in the activity explains to her, ‘we’re not playing families’ (p.455). The authors use this example to highlight the occasion-based, and speaker-driven nature of categorisation devices. For these children, in this moment of this particular interaction, ‘dog’ is a category within the ‘family’ set. This same child is soon granted entry into the activity, after remapping herself onto the category of ‘little sister’, after a peer claims category membership to ‘big sister’. Butler & Weatherall argue that successfully mapping oneself onto categories is ultimately “[w]hat matters in the playground” (p.466) in terms of gaining participation rights in peer interactions. This study highlights the complex task that children face when trying to gain entry into an activity.

Cromdal (2011) describes interactions between Swedish-English bilingual children aged 8-10 years, at break times at an English school in Sweden. The study details instances in which children use local understandings of gender category membership as an interactional resource, in order to “[construe] the actions of their interlocutors as dissonant with their relevant gender categories” (Cromdal, 2011, p.307). An example of this occurs when a boy responds to the actions of two girls by threatening to tell the teacher. This prompts one girl to label him a ‘tattle-tale’, before the second girl builds on this name-calling, and exclaims, ‘The boys always call the girls tattle tellers’ (Cromdal, 2011, p.301). With this utterance, the speaker links the boy’s threatened action, telling the teacher, to the category of ‘girl’. Positioned as a category bound activity of ‘girl’, the action of telling the teacher is now rendered socially punitive for the boy to pursue. This study shows 8-10 year olds strategically invoking gender categories in talk to achieve specific interactional goals.

Butler (2008) analyses the interactions between a group of 6-7 year old English speaking New Zealand children in their school lunch break, on three consecutive days. She applies MCA, in conjunction with Conversation Analysis, to describe the ways in which participants use the categorisation device ‘fairy club’ to organise activities and interactions within them. Butler describes the fairy club as an ‘institution’ rather than a game, within which children play with ideas of school. The activity is headed by one child, who asserts membership for herself to the categories ‘teacher’ and ‘mother’, and performs these memberships by engaging in authoritative speech behaviour with the other participants, who are the students/little fairies. Two particular communicative practices that participants engage in are focussed on: the activity of ‘sharing news’/’show and tell’, and assessment/complaint sequences between two members of the club. The majority of Butler’s analysis relates to CA concerns, rather than MCA, in that it focuses
primarily on the sequential structure of the children’s talk. However, all of the children’s communications are viewed in relation to the fairy club as a categorisation device, which the author analyses as “not only … a resource for establishing shared understandings and invoking particular membership categories, but as a locus for social action” (Butler, 2008, p.42).

Cobb-Moore (2012) analyses an extended interaction between four English speaking Australian girls aged 4-5 at an urban preschool. The focus of this study is on the children’s use of family categories and how this relates to power asymmetries within the group. Authority is demonstrated to be a joint accomplishment by children. The speaker orienting to ‘mother’ uses directives, terms of endearment, issues warnings, and assumes a dominating physical stance, while the speaker performing ‘child’ calls her peer ‘mummy’, and displays subordinate behaviour such as apologising.

2.3.3.2. Peer talk studies through an MCA lens

MCA studies can also facilitate ready comparisons with other research on children’s spoken interactions. In looking at children’s explicit uses of category terms, existing peer talk studies can be viewed through an MCA perspective, irrespective of the particular discourse analytic approach applied. This is particularly true of studies which describe children’s engagement in activities commonly referred to as ‘role play’. Where authors talk of children ‘assuming a role’, from an MCA standpoint they are orienting to, or performing membership to, a particular category. Some existing studies on children’s peer talk involving category terms are now described with respect to some common themes within peer talk research: the creation and negotiation of power asymmetries via the use of categories (or ‘roles’), and the participation rights resulting from this.

**Power asymmetry through category choice**

A commonly reported strategy amongst preschool aged children to pursue an authoritative position in peer interactions is to orient to a ‘high status’, ‘positioned’ category. English speaking children are described as asserting themselves as ‘king’ or ‘news reporter’ (Kyritzis, 2007), ‘radio broadcaster’ (Butler & Weatherall, 2006), ‘teacher’ (Butler, 2008), or ‘doctor’ (Ervin-Tripp, 1996). The category of ‘mother’ appears to be associated with authority within interactions in a number of different cultures. For example, preschool aged children in Sweden (e.g. Björk-Willén 2012), Korea (Ahn 2016), North America (e.g. Kyritzis, Marx, & Wade, 2001), and urban Australia (Cobb-Moore, 2012; Butler, 2008) have been found to orient to the category of ‘mother’ as one of authority. The figure of ‘mother’ tends to be treated as more authoritative than ‘child’ roles (e.g. older and younger sibling), which in turn have greater authority than pets (Björk-Willén, 2012). An individual who orients to the category (assumes the role) of ‘mother’ and attributes a peer membership to ‘daughter’ or ‘son’ is not simply ‘playing’ with characters; they are forging a real-life power asymmetry between themselves and their peer (Goodwin, 1990a, p.131).

For example, a four year old Korean child is described as orienting to the category of ‘mother’ after a five year old peer interrupts an activity she and another peer were engaged in. Speaking as
‘mother’, the child positions the older interloper as *kangaciya*, ‘doggie’, patting her on the head, and asking her to stop because she is ‘making mommy angry’ (Ahn, 2016, p.21). By speaking as a member of ‘mommy’, and attributing membership to a subordinate category to her older peer, this child redresses the balance of power in the situation, irrespective of ‘real life’ category memberships.

Categories that are considered ‘high status’ tend to be sought after amongst children at this age. An interaction between four year old American children (Johnson (2004), reported in Goodwin (2006, p.157)) see the participants of an activity involving superheroes vie for membership to the category of ‘leader’. Two girls justify their claims to the position by announcing that they are wearing ‘power rings’. One child asserts her right to lead by claiming that she is wearing a gold ‘power ring’, however this claim is soon outdone by another child who declares to the group, “I have the diamond power ring and that is more money than her ring so I am the leader” (Johnson, 2004, p.19). For these English speaking children, being in possession of the most expensive ring - a show of the greatest material wealth- determines who has authority in the group. This is an example of how looking at the way in which children orient to categories in their peer talk can provide insights into their understandings of the world.

The particular language that children use when they perform membership to a particular category can also often be revealing. For example, when asked why he is not speaking Spanish, a Spanish-English bilingual three year old informs his mother that superheroes speak English, not Spanish (Orellana, 1994). Huli children in Papua New Guinea are reported as sometimes using Tok Pisin lexical items when performing post-colonial characters such as administrators and hospital staff in their peer interactions (Goldman, 1998), and Dominican children are described as speaking in English when they orient to ‘teacher’ and Patwa when performing ‘bus driver’ (Paugh, 2005). In fact, MCA is increasingly being applied to contexts of language alternation, with languages themselves being treated as a categorisation device (Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2008; Gafaranga, 2005).

Speakers can also position themselves as a ‘lower’ positioned category as a strategy in their peer talk. An example of this comes from a Swedish four year old, who claims to be ‘just a tiny little baby’ to avoid tidying up toys at preschool (Hellman, Heikkilä, & Sundhall, 2014, p.337). Equally, a nine year old American child is described as refusing to make a hot drink for her brother because she is “not old enough” (Sealey, 1999, p.36). A different strategy again, a 3 year old Korean child orients to the category of *aka*, ‘baby’ with a peer, in what is described as an attempt at encouraging an affiliative relationship with a peer (Ahn, 2016). Children select categories and use them strategically to pursue a wide range of communicative goals with peers.

*‘Real life’ categories*

However, children do not only orient to fantastical categories/roles to manage interpersonal relationships with peers. They also invoke categories that they would be considered members of in ‘real life’. An example of this comes from Howard’s (2007) description of Pong Noi Muang
children, in Northern Thailand. In this study, older children refer to themselves using the kinterm for ‘elder sibling’ when seeking compliance from younger children, for example when making offers, invitations, or issuing directives. By referring to themselves with the kinterm, these children invoke the authority that is associated with this social position (Howard, 2007, p.218). The explicit use of ‘elder sibling’ also makes salient the relational term, ‘younger sibling’, and the expectations relating to this position, of showing deference to one’s elders. A 5 and 7 year old are also described as addressing their respective older siblings with the kinterm ‘elder brother/sister’ when making “whiney” (p.219), emotional appeals. Howard describes the children’s use of the kinterms as invoking the generosity that ‘elder siblings’ are expected to show younger siblings.

Similarly, a study of bilingual Korean-American siblings describes a 7 year old child referring to herself with the Korean kinship (family category) term, enni, ‘older sister’, when producing the following utterance to her 3 year old sister: ne enni mal an tulumyen ike mos hay, ‘You can’t do this if you don’t listen to your older sibling’ (Cho, 2018, p.35). As the Muang children do in Howard (2007), so does this Korean-American child employ the family category term with her sibling when she is trying to influence her behaviour.

As these two examples indicate, children do not necessarily orient to fantastical categories to manage their peer interactions. They can also invoke the associations of categories from everyday life to achieve interactional goals. Just as there is no need to divide children’s talk into discourse ‘types’, their use of categories suggests that there is also little sense in dividing their interactions into those relating to ‘pretend’ versus ‘real’. Focussing on children’s use of categories in talk helps bypass such analyst-driven confines, allowing children’s language to be analysed simply for the resources that they draw on and to what ends.

**Category membership as collaborative achievement**

Despite the confident assertion by the child wearing the diamond ‘power ring’, mentioned earlier, the success of her orientation to the category of ‘leader’ depends on others ratifying her membership to this category, by orienting to her as ‘leader’, and demonstrating their own membership to the category of ‘follower’. After all, category membership is a collaborative affair. A study on 6-9 year old Russian girls illustrates this co-constructed nature of category membership. Like many interactions between preschoolers, the interaction described in (Griswold, 2007) also sees ‘mother’ oriented to as a category associated with authority. However, this study differs from those of younger children in that the child who performs ‘mother’ is not first to assert this category membership. Prior to this, the other children in this interaction actively co-construct her membership by engaging in submissive behavior towards her. Other examples of ‘high status’ categories that children of this age are reported as orienting to come from a study of 8-9 year old American children, who appear to gravitate towards categories such as sports commentators, television personalities and action figures (Sealey, 1999, p.34).
Category based rights

For interactions in which children perform membership to particular categories, this category membership not only informs the nature of their relationship with others but can also inform that child’s participation rights within the activity. This is exemplified in a study of English speaking children at an American preschool (Sheldon, 1996). When a child, Tulla (4;7) seeks entry into an activity that two other girls (Eva (4;9), Kelly (5;5)) are engaged in, she is reluctantly permitted to join in, and assigned to the role of ‘baby brother’. However, this character remains unborn for the majority of the game, which directly impacts on the girl’s participation rights in the activity. As seen in line 5 of the excerpt reproduced here, Eva delays Tulla’s entry into the activity; even her embryonic state.

1. Eva: … you have to be the brother, remember?
2. Tulla: Oh, yeah, I’ll be the baby brother. ((giggles))
3. Eva: ((to Tulla)) Yeah, you have to be a baby brother
4. Tulla: Yeah, I was growing into your tummy.
5. Eva: Yeah, but not yet (Sheldon, 1996, p.63)

While Tulla is included as a participant in the activity, her involvement rests on her membership to the category of ‘baby brother’. This membership also results in her being excluded from the activity until its latter stages.

Asserting membership to particular categories can also work to claim rights over particular objects or spaces. For example, an American preschool aged child is described as gaining possession over a toy syringe by articulating her right to it, as a nurse: “Arlene, remember, I’m the nurse and the nurses getta do shots, remember?” (Sheldon, 1997, p.235). Here the child invokes the category of ‘nurse’ to claim her category-bound rights to a particular object that is associated with this category. A speaker can also assert their rights to an object by attributing non-membership to a peer. In another medically-themed example, a five year old English speaking child exclaims to a peer who is walking off with a toy stethoscope, “No. You’re not the doctor. Now take that off!” (Sachs, 1987, p.185). Through this utterance the speaker highlights their interlocutor’s lack of claim to the entity, and implies their own.

2.3.3.3. Context

As most of the studies described in this chapter indicate, and as is the case in research on children’s language, generally, most research on children’s peer interactions involves children from Western societies, who are speakers of English. Given that children’s peer talk as an area of research is still quite new, the range of existing studies is in fact relatively varied. However, peer talk studies require greater diversity on a number of fronts. These include the cultural and linguistic background of speakers, and a number of aspects relating to context.

As a situated activity, spoken interaction is directly informed by the context in which it takes place. This is true even for preschool aged children (see Hickmann, Schimke, & Colonna, 2015 for a review). The majority of studies on children’s peer talk draws on data collected in institutional
settings, such as childcare centres, kindergartens, and primary schools. With so many children present in the one location, these are convenient contexts in which to record. However, they are also quite specific, in that they are fairly neutral spaces, which do not belong to any one person, and children tend to be grouped with children of the same age as them. Both of these factors are thought to influence the nature of children’s peer talk.

Ownership
Schools and childcare centres comprise spaces and things that are not owned by anyone in particular (Theobald, 2013). In such contexts in the USA, Italy, and (middle class, English-speaking) Australia, preschool aged children have demonstrated a preoccupation with ownership and possession (Corsaro & Maynard, 1996; Theobald, 2013; Whalen, 1995) in their peer interactions in institutional settings. They have used ownership claims, over physical spaces (e.g. Corsaro & Schwartz, 1999) and objects (e.g. Cobb-Moore, Danby, & Farrell, 2008), to manage relationships with other children. Ownership claims tend to relate to assertions of authority. This prompts the question as to how much these neutral contexts, containing perpetually claimable entities, impact on children’s behaviour. Do children use ownership claims in a similar way with peers in contexts and with objects that are not free for the claiming?

In institutional contexts such as schools and childcare centres children also tend to be organised into age-graded groups (Nelson, 2014). From a developmental psychology perspective, interactions between same-aged children are unique sites that facilitate children’s skills in managing relationships with others. This is owing to the “developmental equivalence of the participants and the egalitarian nature of their interaction” (Hartup, 1999, p.109). The interactional linguistic literature shows that children do indeed play with power asymmetries when interacting with same aged peers. What is not known is how this theorised equality translates to interactions between same- or similar-aged children who are also close relatives.

Siblings/kin
Less is known, generally, of children’s linguistic behaviour in exchanges with siblings and cousins. Reynolds and colleagues (Reynolds, Dorner, & Orellana, 2010, p.111) state that siblings “often explore power asymmetries”, while Kyratzis (2004, p.633) questions whether children in kin relationships have the same scope to negotiate the social order as children who are unrelated to one another. Hawaiian children (Boggs, 1985), and Polynesian children on the Marquesas Islands (Martini, 1994), are reported as having no such opportunity with siblings. Different again, Pong Noi Muang children in Northern Thailand, are described as creating “a largely symmetrical and egalitarian vernacular space” (Howard, 2007, p.221) in multi-age sibling groups, while also as invoking hierarchical familial relationships through the use of kinship terms in particular communicative situations. Clearly more studies on children’s talk with kin relations are required.
Western/non-Western societies

In most existing studies on sibling/kin groups (however not all, e.g. Goodwin (2017)), the cultural context is non-Western. In her ‘anthropology of play’, Schwartzman (1978) reports that authority and social hierarchy are central themes in children’s playful activities in Western and non-Western societies. This could be taken to suggest that it is not the nature of the society that informs children’s behaviour in peer interactions, but rather the relationship of interactants. However, in many non-Western societies, older children act as caregivers to younger kin (e.g. de León, 2007; Maynard, 2002; Rabain-Jamin, Maynard, & Greenfield, 2003; Rogoff, 1981). What’s more, this relationship is the type of kin relationship that is most readily explored; studies that do look at sibling/kin groups tend not to involve children who are of a similar age to one another. It follows that a common focus of these studies is how and what older children teach those younger than them. While important, this focus on teaching and developmental outcomes ought not to prevent descriptive work of the moment-to-moment interactions between siblings and kin (Reynolds et al., 2010, p.109). Studies of kin-peer groups in which children are close in age to one another, as well as further apart, are required so as to learn what else children in these relationships do in their peer talk.

Friendship

Another important distinction between the two broad cultural contexts of Western and non-Western societies is the concept of friendship. Numerous studies conducted in Western cultures report children invoking friendship in their peer interactions. In a study conducted in urban Australian preschools, Church (2009) found that children used friendship and emblems of friendship in threats to peers. In fact, threats to withdraw friendship from a peer, for example, “I’m not gonna be your friend if you don’t ever give me that” (p.138), or threats to withhold or retract an invitation to a birthday party, often brought about the end the adversative exchange (Church & Hester 2012). Wielding friendship in such ways appears to work as the ultimate threat. Similar threats are also reported for North American children of the same age, in a similar contexts (Corsaro, 1985; Sheldon, 1997, p.237). Friendship is also reported as being used as a strategy to affiliate with others. Corsaro (2009, p.305) writes of “the oft heard phrase ‘We’re friends, right?’” when seeking entry into an on-going activity or forging an alliance with a peer. Children unrelated to one another appear to use friendship as a key interactional resource with peers.

For children in sibling/kin groups, however, a ‘friend’ relationship does not apply. In fact, in more traditional, kin-based societies, such as Aboriginal communities in Australia, ‘friendship’ is not a relevant concept in the local culture. Gaskins (2006, p.301) in her work with Yucatec Mayan children in Mexico, a kinship based society, argues for a reconceptualisation of ‘friendship’ as a culturally specific form of social closeness. However kin and non-kin relationships are fundamentally different in terms of the degree of choice afforded an individual. Sisters are sisters and cousins are cousins, irrespective of the interactional stakes. All children pursue affiliative and disaffiliative actions with others, however what is yet to be explored is which interactional resources children use in contexts where friendship is not applicable.
2.4. Summary

The field of peer talk research has flourished since the early studies in the seventies; particularly so in recent years. There is much yet to learn about children’s communicative practices with peers (Danby & Davidson, 2007; Griswold, 2007). More research, both with children who are related to one another and children who are not, is “essential” (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2014, p.521), as is including children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and in a range of contexts. In addition to this, what is also needed is cross-study comparability.

Blum-Kulka and colleagues note the many remaining gaps in knowledge as to how children interact with other children. They advise that “making progress in answering the many questions about peer talk will require the ingenuity and the analytical tools of many researchers from many different analytic perspectives” (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004, p.300). One revealing, and increasingly favoured method of exploration in the area of children’s peer talk is MCA. This analytic approach offers a degree of transparency to the ways in which children manage their local social order and understand the various worlds they participate in. As demonstrated in the latter section of this chapter, attention to children’s use of categories in talk can also facilitate comparisons with existing research, regardless of the particular interactional approach applied.

2.5. Research questions

This thesis explores the language use of a group of young Aboriginal children, speaking the traditional Australian language, Murrinhpatha. MCA is used to analyse the interactions they engage in with siblings and cousins, in non-institutional environments. In light of the literature reviewed in this chapter, the description of talk-in-interaction provided in this thesis is guided by the following questions:

1. How do children use categories to affiliate with peers?
2. How do children use categories to disaffiliate with peers?
3. How do children use categories to affiliate and disaffiliate with peers at different ages?

The following chapter shifts the reader’s focus from children’s worlds in general to the worlds of eight specific children. Chapter 3 introduces the remote Aboriginal community of Wadeye, which all eight of this study’s focus children call home. The town is described in terms of its geographical location, its recent history, and its linguistic and socio-cultural landscape.
3. Life at Wadeye

This chapter provides an overview to the community of Wadeye, in terms of its geographical location, its recent history, and certain aspects of contemporary life. This brief tour introduces the reader to the sociocultural context that the eight children in this study are growing up within. Following this, the traditional and current modes of social organisation amongst Murrinhpatha speakers at Wadeye are outlined. This section highlights the social categories that are salient within adult society and are therefore likely to be somewhat salient for children raised in this environment. Murrinhpatha, the language spoken in and around Wadeye, is then briefly described. The chapter ends with a description of common socialisation routines involving category terms that Murrinhpatha speaking caregivers engage in with young children today.

Wadeye, or Port Keats as it is also referred to, is a remote Aboriginal community southwest of Darwin, in the Northern Territory. The town is located within the Thamarrurr region, which extends along the coast from just above the Moyle River down to the Fitzmaurice River. Recent census data puts Wadeye’s population at around 2300 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), making it one of the largest Indigenous communities in Australia. Due to a high birth rate, and a lower life expectancy, children make up almost 40% of the population in Wadeye (ABS, 2016).

The town is located a considerable distance from any highway, and at the end of a 200km long, mostly dirt road. Being located at the end of a road, Wadeye does not see people passing through the town on their way to somewhere else; all travel to and from Wadeye is deliberate. This road, Port Keats Road, floods during the wet season, rendering it impassable for around five months of every year. Daily flights operate between Wadeye and Darwin, taking approximately 40 minutes. Tickets for the plane are expensive, however, and no individual paying for the trip themselves (as opposed to their employer paying) does it regularly. Owing to the cost of airfares, travel to and from Wadeye is not an option for most people for roughly half of every year. A barge arrives from Darwin once a week, ensuring fresh produce in the community throughout the year.
When weather conditions allow it (and occasionally when, by rights, they do not), there is regular movement by people between Wadeye and the communities of Peppimenarti (Peppi) and Daly River, outside of the Thamarrurr region. Kriol is the main language spoken in both these communities, although some older residents of Peppi and its surrounds also speak Ngan‘giwumirri or Ngan‘gikurrungurr, traditional languages often referred to as Ngan‘gitjemerri, or simply Tjemerri.\(^9\)

The relative geographical isolation of Wadeye has resulted in there being considerably less influence from Western culture than in many other Aboriginal communities in Australia. Furthermore, what influence there is has manifested substantially later than elsewhere around the country. The ongoing vitality of Murrinhpatha, the traditional language of the area, is reflective of the town’s geographic isolation. Even today, children in Wadeye tend to have minimal exposure to English before they go to school.

TV and internet are of course impervious to flooded dirt roads. As a result, residents’ access to these media in recent years has dramatically increased their connection to the world outside of Wadeye. Exemplifying this is the recent Disney animated film, ‘Frozen’. Causing a sensation amongst children in Western societies around the world, it inspired equal fervour in children at Wadeye. In fact, Murrinhpatha speaking children orient to non-Aboriginal personae from films, such as Princess Elsa from ‘Frozen’, or Superman, as readily as they do traditional folkloric personae, such as *ku kunugunu*, ‘the old woman spirit’.

\(^9\) *ngan‘gi* is the word for ‘language’ in these languages, just as *murrinh* is the word for ‘language’ in Murrinhpatha, *marri* in Marri Ngarr, and *magati* in Magati Ke.
Today Murrinhpatha is the lingua franca of the Thamarrurr area, although numerous other languages also belong to the region. These include Murrinh Kura, and the Western Daly languages, Marri Amu, Magati Ke, Marri Ngarr, and Marri Tjevin (Green, 2003). The continued health of Murrinhpatha is sadly not mirrored in these other traditional languages, and they have few if any fluent speakers left.

For the Aboriginal people of Australia, there is a direct relationship between languages and land (Merlan, 1981). Each traditional language is linked to a specific part of the country, and it is appropriate for an individual to speak the corresponding language of the land they are presently on. For example, on a fishing trip near Peppi (Ngan’gitjemerri country), a caregiver admonished a child for talking in Murrinhpatha, the language of the Wadeye area. In fact, the (temporary) lack of fishing success was blamed on this child’s use of the incorrect language for their location.

Multilingualism was the norm in traditional Indigenous societies, and it is common amongst people today. As Brandl and Walsh (1982, p.76) state, “to be Aboriginal is to be multilingual”. Even in the context of extensive language loss, the normalcy of multilingualism is entrenched amongst Murrinhpatha speakers.

The map below, of the Thamarrurr region, shows the geographical area that each language is associated with; the land that each language belongs to.

This relationship between language and land is fundamentally interwoven with Aboriginal identity (Rumsey, 1993). Every Indigenous person in Australia is connected to a specific area of land and its corresponding language. When a person speaks the language of their land, their language, they index key aspects of their social identity. This link to a particular ‘country’ and language is organised through membership to social groups, such as clans (Evans, 2003, p.29). For
people within the Thamarrurr region (and many other parts of Australia), clan membership is
determined patrilineally. Children belong to the same clan group as their biological father
(Falkenberg, 1962). Fathers and children therefore share the same country and language.

The community of Wadeye is located on the land of the kardu Diminin, people of the Diminin clan.
As suggested in the map above, and highlighted in the map below, the language of the area in and
around Wadeye is Murrinhpatha. Murrinhpatha is thus the language of the Diminin people.

Seven other clans- Rak Kirnmu, Yek Kulthil, Yek Maninh, Yek Nangu, Rak Wakal Thinang, and Yek
Wunh- have connections to neighbouring areas of land to which Murrinhpatha belongs. As such,
Murrinhpatha is also their language. In sharing a language, members from these eight clans are
considered kardu Murrinhpatha, ‘Murrinhpatha people’.

The same applies to clan groups in other parts of the Thamarrurr region. Members from the
various clans whose country is in Marri Tjevin territory can be grouped together as Marri Tjevin
people, just as individuals linked to areas to which Magati Ke belongs are Magati Ke people. Each
language name on the map in figure 3.2 therefore indexes a specific collection of clans, and a
distinct cultural group.

Since the 1930s, however, Wadeye has been home not only to Murrinhpatha people but also to
many individuals from other language/cultural groups of the Thamarrurr region. This is despite
the fact that some of these groups are traditional enemies (Falkenberg, 1962). Today members of
more than twenty different clan groups reside in the community (Mansfield, 2014; Ward, 1983).

3.1. A brief history of Wadeye

The movement of people to Wadeye throughout the 1930s and 40s was prompted by the
establishment of a Catholic mission, which offered readily available food and supplies. While
areas further north, around Daly River, saw foreign settlements by the 1870s, it was not until 1935
that there was a European presence in the Thamarrurr region. In that year, Father Richard
Docherty, a priest in the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, sailed from Darwin to Werntek
Nganayi, a coastal area near Wadeye, on land of the Murrinhpatha clan, Rak Kirnmu. Accompanying
him on this trip were three other non-Aboriginal men10, and numerous Indigenous
people from the Wadeye area, with whom Father Docherty had discussed his ideas in Darwin.
Upon landing, the Aboriginal men spoke to a group of elders, and detailed the plan for a Catholic
mission. One of these individuals, recalling this moment decades later, reported that “[t]he old
people were happy” (Kolumboort, 2010, p.33), and a temporary mission was soon established
there. This area is now often referred to as Olmithin, ‘Old Mission’. The settlement at Werntek
Nganayi was abandoned in 1939 for Wadeye, then called Yidiyi (Pye, 1972). The reason for the

10 One of whom was the eminent anthropologist, W. E. H. Stanner
move was that Wadeye, as opposed to Werntek Nganayi, provided fresh water, higher ground, and fertile soil for agriculture.

The missionaries appear to have met little resistance when converting the local people to Christianity. This was due in large part to a dream, or vision, that a Murrinhpatha man named Mollingin had had a few years prior to Father Docherty’s arrival. The image he saw in the dream, that of a long haired man and a woman standing on a snake, matched pictures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary that the missionaries showed the Indigenous people they first met (Furlan, 2005). This appears to have enabled the Murrinhpatha people to incorporate Christianity into their existing system of spirituality. Mollingin’s dream can also be presumed to have aided the missionaries in rapidly attaining a position of influence amongst the local cultures (Waters-Lynch, Sloggett, Crocombe, & Melpi, 2015). Another likely factor of the mission’s success was the effort that some of the priests made to learn the local language. Father William Flynn, for example, is said to have used Murrinhpatha in his sermons (Blythe, 2009, p.29). This tradition continues today, with the current priest at Wadeye, Father Leo Weardin, also incorporating Murrinhpatha into his services.

As Murrinhpatha is the language of the land on which Wadeye is situated, it follows that communication between the different Aboriginal cultural groups living at the Port Keats Mission was conducted in Murrinhpatha. An account from Magati Ke elder, Palibu Patrick Nadjulu, indicates that a degree of coercion was also used. He details an occasion on which some Murrinhpatha “warriors” (Ford & Klesch, 2003, p.29) used physical violence against a group of Magati Ke men, insisting that they speak Murrinhpatha rather than their own language, Magati Ke. From their arrival in the mission onwards, Aboriginal people in Wadeye predominantly spoke Murrinhpatha. Today, members of language/cultural groups other than Murrinhpatha tend to have little if any fluency in the language associated with their clan (Blythe, 2009, p.30).

In the 1940s the missionaries instigated formal education in Wadeye, in the form of a dormitory-style school. Children lived there during the week, away from their families, and were forced to speak English (Kelly, Nordlinger, & Wigglesworth, 2010). This approach to schooling continued until the late 1960s (Taylor, 2010). Today the one school in Wadeye is Catholic, of the same order, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. These days it operates with a considerably more progressive approach to education, however, and runs one of the state’s few bilingual programs (Simpson, Caffery, & McConvell, 2009).

The 1970s saw the era of self-determination, in which control of the town was handed back to the Aboriginal population through the locally formed Kardu Numida Council. It was at this time that the Port Keats Mission, was reclassified as the Indigenous community, Wadeye. In stark contrast to

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11 Although certain aspects of traditional Aboriginal spirituality, and local beliefs around sorcery practices, appear to sit in direct opposition to Christianity (Mansfield, 2014, p.82).

12 However, the vitality of Murrinhpatha today suggests that children who went through this dormitory system found ways to regularly speak the language.
other missionary contexts in Australia (e.g. Bowman, 2015), many people who grew up in the mission at Wadeye speak of it in positive terms.

While having considerably less influence in the community from this point onwards, the Catholic Church remains an important institution in Wadeye. An example of the continued influence of the Church is children’s first Holy Communion, which is an important rite of passage and social event. The participating children dress in ceremonial clothing and paint, and older community members perform traditional songs and dances, before the ceremony concludes with mass. Such an occasion not only displays the relevance of the church in contemporary Wadeye society but it also demonstrates the felicitous coexistence of belief systems.

Figure 3.3 A marriage of cultures: A statue of the virgin Mary and Jesus in front of an Aboriginal design. Image from ‘Missionaries and Mission’, http://misacor.org.au

The last 80 years have seen immense sociocultural and linguistic change in the Thamarrurr region. Before the arrival of Catholic missionaries in 1935, people in this part of Australia tended to live on land that was culturally their own, subsisting nomadically within this area (Stanner, 1936, p.187). Many “had not before seen whites, and the characteristic mode of life was still for the most part [A]boriginal” (Stanner, 1936, p.187). The mission, with its readily available shelter and resources, encouraged a considerably more sedentary life. With that said, in the 1980s hunting and gathering was reportedly “still very much part of the way of life” (Ward, 1983, p.56) for residents of Wadeye. Today food is generally bought from one of the shops in town. Most, if not all, Indigenous people deem traditional fare far superior to shop-bought food, in terms of both taste and nutrition. However, obtaining ‘bush tucker’ tends to require a (working) vehicle. Traditional foods found in or very close to town tend to be ignored, as if tainted by their proximity to urbanity.

In terms of language, people from the Thamarrurr area were highly multilingual prior to the mission, speaking their own language and the languages of neighbouring groups (Ford & Klesch, 2003). These days most people living at Wadeye speak only Murrinhpatha fluently, and for the
majority of residents this is a language that they do not consider their own. Given the link between language, land, and identity, this disconnect, between the language that an individual speaks and the language that is culturally theirs, can be assumed to impact at a personal and broader social level.

Unlike many Aboriginal communities in Australia, Kriol is by no means a majority language in Wadeye. However, there are strong ties to a number of Kriol-speaking communities, such as Peppi and Daly River, as mentioned earlier. A number of families in Wadeye also have close relations living in Kununurra, WA, and on the Tiwi Islands. Kriol is the commonly spoken language in these places, too. While there are few Kriol speakers living permanently in Wadeye, the rotation of visiting relatives means that it is not uncommon to hear Kriol being spoken in town.

The mission also resulted in an exposure to English and to literacy. However, the impact of this largely ends with those individuals who grew up in the mission. The current generation of elders are fluent in English, literate, and highly adept at interacting with non-Aboriginal people. People of their children’s generation, on the other hand, tend to have little proficiency in English, and rudimentary literacy and numeracy skills. What that said, the influence of English can still be seen, most notably in the English-based lexicon that young speakers increasingly incorporate into the Murrinhpatha that they speak (Mansfield, 2014).

While effecting considerably less social upheaval than the changes from the 1930s to 1980s, the last few years have seen a steady string of local developments in Wadeye. From 2014 there has been almost constant construction in town, bringing in many (non-Aboriginal) fly-in-fly-out contractors. This work has resulted in a new airport, bitumen roads throughout most of the community, additional housing for non-Aboriginal workers, a forbiddingly large multi-million dollar police complex, and a café and new retail space run by the town’s women’s centre, Palngun wurnangat, ‘Women together’.

2015 also saw the start of a number of new businesses in Wadeye. The women’s centre started their initiative to export *mi marrarl*, ‘bush plums’ around the world, which involved a large portion of the community in the harvesting process. Three new shops also set up in town: one selling takeaway food until late in the evening (dubbed the ‘twentyfour hour’), a butcher, and a small general store in the satellite suburb, Manthathpe, which operates seven days a week and with extended hours.

3.2. Wadeye today

The map in Fig. 3.4, on the following page, displays many of the key places and landmarks in the central area of Wadeye today.
The majority of blank areas in Figure 3.4 are residential areas, as are most areas of Wadeye that extend beyond the map. For example, Nilinh, which is pointed to on the map but not displayed, is a suburb of Wadeye in which many people live. Equally, there are numerous houses along what was the old airstrip, on the way to the new airport.

3.2.1.1. Housing

With a few exceptions, families in Wadeye live in besser block houses, most of which are painted in a bright yellow, blue, pink, green, or red. Some houses have low fences around them, while many others do not. All houses have sheltered front and back porches, which are heavily used by the inhabitants. Almost all houses in Wadeye are crowded, if not overcrowded. Extended families tend to live together, and it is not uncommon for each room, including the kitchen, to be occupied by a different family unit at night. Although the town has seen considerable construction work in the last few years, which has included the building of houses, these developments are yet to extend to housing for Aboriginal residents.
Given the housing situation, children are raised in busy, multigenerational households. This suggests that, from birth, they are exposed to old and new ways of living and speaking. Childcare duties tend to be distributed between a mother and her sisters, and the children’s grandparents. Older children are also expected to help adults look after younger siblings. This distribution of caregiving is similar to what has been described for Aboriginal families in other parts of Australia, in remote communities and also in urban environments (e.g. Atkinson & Swain, 1999; Barwick, 1974; Malin, Campbell, & Aguis, 1996; Ryan, 2011). The majority of children in Wadeye live with their mother’s family, as opposed to their paternal relatives or as separate nuclear family units.

Children tend to be accorded considerable autonomy from a very young age. It is common for children only just beginning to talk to be allowed to dictate where they and their caregiver (if not the entire car load of people) will go. Equally, if a child decides that they do not want to go to school, their decision, if negotiation by caregivers fails to work, is respected. A similar autonomy has been described for Indigenous children in various other parts of Australia (e.g. Hamilton, 1981; Meggitt, 1962; Myers, 1986; Robinson, 2008; Tonkinson, 2011).

3.2.1.2. Names

This tendency for children to grow up with their maternal family is reflected in children’s last names. Children take their mother’s last name unless their parents are officially married, in which case all members of their family unit go by the father’s name. Most surnames in Wadeye are personal names of important men from the past. For example, Perdjert is a Diminin surname, and was the name of an important Diminin man from the pre- and early-mission era.

Families in Wadeye tend to live near one another, and to other family groups of the one clan (Furlan, 2005). As such, speakers can use family names to refer to certain parts of town. There is ‘Parmbuk area’, for example, which refers to a cluster of houses, the majority of whose inhabitants have Parmbuk as their last name. Equally, the satellite suburb Manthathpe is often referred to as ‘Melpi area’, as it is home to many families with the surname Melpi. While this mode of referring to areas in town is common, speakers often use the following neutral labels instead: Pangkin (Top camp), Peppenhi (Bottom camp), Yelmugam, Wadeye (Creek Camp), Nguminhik, Nilinh (kumparra and tiduk, ‘front’ and ‘back’), and Manthathpe.

With respect to personal names, every Aboriginal person in Wadeye has at least two. One of these is their murrinh patha (lit: ‘good name’), murrinh thipmam (lit: ‘black name’), or ‘blackfella’ name. This name corresponds to a place within their, or their mother’s, country. Some people have two murrinh patha. Individuals also have a murrinh inkalith, ‘English name’. English names are used

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13 This correlates with reports of other Indigenous populations from around the world (see Muir & Bohr, 2014 for a review of Indigenous childrearing practices).

14 Official marriages are rare, and so it is rare that children go by their father’s name. However partners in ongoing relationships are referred to in married terms: nangi ‘husband’ and palngun, ‘wife’, lit. ‘woman’ (or, rarely, the more antiquated term, purrima, ‘wife’). This is especially the case if the couple has children together. Younger speakers sometimes use the English terms ‘boyfriend’/‘girlfriend’, but more for dalliances, usually of an illicit nature.
when dealing with institutions in town that are run by non-Aboriginal people, for example the school, the health clinic, and the privately run crèche.

The use of nicknames is also highly prevalent in Wadeye. Nicknames often relate to a distinguishing physical feature or characteristic of an individual. For instance, a person with a prominent forehead might be called Wulumu, ‘forehead’, a man who used to be in the armed forces, ‘Army’, and an individual who is disabled might be referred to as wilthè, ‘wheelchair’. Another common source of nickname is an individual’s ngakumarl, ‘totem’. Detailed shortly, totems are entities found within a person’s country, to which they are intrinsically connected. A person whose principal totem is nginidirr, ‘rainbow lorikeet’, for example, might have this, or an abbreviation thereof (i.e. ‘Ngini’) for a nickname.

3.3. Social organisation

Just like any society, Indigenous or otherwise, Wadeye operates in large part with respect to the various alliances and divisions that exist between its inhabitants. In early anthropological work, the organisation of Aboriginal societies is described in terms of numerous fixed categories, such as ‘hordes’ and ‘sections’, and one of two kinship ‘models’, the Aranda/Arrente and the Kariera/Kariyarra systems (see Kelly & McConvell, 2018 for an overview). However, the reality of Indigenous Australian societies are “more complex and more fluid than [was] often described” (Heath, 1982, p.1). In contemporary thought, social organisation is often treated as a practice, shaped by everyday behaviour of community members (e.g. Blythe, 2009, 2012; Garde, 2008, 2013), as opposed to an immutable system. The behaviour of Murrinhpatha speakers today demonstrates the continued salience of certain previously described modes of social grouping, yet it also highlights the numerous other factors that influence social organisation today.

Early anthropological work with Murrinhpatha people describe a society organised by two ‘patrimoieties’ (tiwunggu ‘eaglehawk’ and karthin ‘brown falcon’), ‘subsections’ and ‘clans’ (Falkenberg, 1962; Stanner, 1936). Today, moieties do not appear to inform social organisation in Wadeye. Subsections, adopted in the Wadeye area in the 1930s from the nearby Djamindjung people (Stanner, 1936), appear to be similarly obsolete in contemporary Murrinhpatha speaking society (Blythe, 2009, p.33). Clan groups were reported as being of great importance in traditional Murrinhpatha society (Stanner, 1936). Unlike the other modes of grouping in early descriptions, their import continues today.

The enduring salience of clans is evidenced most strikingly at funerals, which sadly occur all too frequently. On such occasions it is customary for people to wear specially designed t-shirts which forefront clan membership. Emblazoned on the t-shirts is the clan name of the deceased individual and a totemic entity associated with their clan membership. Figure 3.6 shows two examples of funeral t-shirts, one worn by an adult, the other by a child.
Outside of a funeral context, however, clan membership appears to be rarely mentioned by Murrinhpatha speakers explicitly. What tends to be more salient in everyday interactions are the elements relating to clan membership, such as connections to land, and various other entities that will be detailed shortly.

The remainder of this section outlines the discernible patterns of social organisation exercised by Murrinhpatha speaking adults today. These patterns are described in terms of categories.

### 3.3.1. Race

The contemporary make-up of Wadeye society calls for a superordinate social category; one that groups the different Indigenous cultural/language groups together in terms of their race. *Kardu thipman*, ‘Aboriginal people’, literally ‘black humans’, is the term that Murrinhpatha speakers use to refer to themselves in relation to non-Aboriginal people. It is therefore this term, *kardu thipman*, rather than the English term (‘Aboriginal person’), that is used in this thesis to refer to Indigenous people living in Wadeye and surrounding areas.

*Kardu thipman* contrasts with its binary opposite category, or, to use Sacks’ terminology, its ‘standardised relational pair’, *ku wathpala*. Derived from the English term ‘whitefella’, this term refers to any non-Aboriginal person.\(^{15}\) The nominal classifier *ku* marks non-Aboriginal people as ‘animate non-humans’, as opposed to *kardu*, ‘(Aboriginal) people’. The terms ‘whitefella’ and ‘non-Aboriginal person’ are used here as interchangeable translations of *ku wathpala*.

Non-Aboriginal people tend to be viewed as a somewhat homogeneous group, who live in houses alone or as couples, and who keep cars, boats, and cheeky\(^{16}\) dogs behind padlocked gates. Almost all members of this race category are what has been termed ‘resource people’ (Merlan, 2005), in that they are in the community to render a particular service, or to carry out an institutional role. Recognisable occupations, such as ‘teacher’, ‘nurse’, ‘doctor’ and ‘policeman’ are referred to by the

\(^{15}\) *ku bamam*, lit. ‘white creature’ is the specific term for white non-Aboriginal people.

\(^{16}\) ‘cheeky’ here means dangerous, ie. a dog that will bite.
English term together with the Murrinhpatha nominal classifier, ku. An exception to this is the Murrinhpatha term, ku ngalarr, which is also used for ‘policeman’.

In relation to whitefellas, kardu thipmam are members of the one category, in Wadeye and across the continent. The remaining categories described in this section organise affiliations and disaffiliations within kardu thipmam society.

3.3.2. Kardu thipmam

Membership to the category of kardu thipmam entails connections to a number of elements. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, every kardu thipmam is a member of a (patrilineal) clan, and is linked to a particular area of land (da, ‘land’, or kantri, ‘country’) and that land’s language (murrinh). These elements can be viewed as kardu thipmam categories. So, while kardu thipmam is a category from the race set, it also refers to a collection of categories that constitute and index this membership to the (race) category.

Categories within the kardu thipmam set include that of clan, plus three terms relating to land: da kantri, ‘country’, da kangathi, ‘mother’s country’, and the nominal classifier, da, ‘land’, which- on its own- can refer to either of the specific land categories. Linked to the category of land is murrinh, a category that consists of two parts: an individual’s personal name, and the language of their country.

From these connections to land and language, two broader groupings can be made. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, people can be grouped with others in relation to the particular language that they are connected to. Another broader grouping can be made based on the location of one’s country. Those connected to land that reaches the coast are ‘saltwater’ people, while individuals linked to inland areas are ‘freshwater’ people. This distinction between coastal people and inlanders has also been described for other societies in Northern Australia (e.g. Rigsby & Sutton, 1980, p.19).

Another kardu thipmam category is ku ngakumarl, ‘totem’. Totemic entities are particular animals, plants, and spirits. Individuals are connected to these very elements themselves, and can refer to their totems with kin terminology, such as ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ (Falkenberg & Falkenberg, 1981). It is through totems, or more specifically, ngugumingki, totemic sites, that people are tied to their country. While the translation for ngakumarl used in this thesis is ‘totem’, some people instead use the term, ‘dreaming’, and incorporate totemic sites in with this term. Alternatively, ngakumarl has also been translated as ‘spirituality’ (Ivory, 2009, p.76).

People’s connections to totems also link them to other humans. Two individuals who share the same totems are considered to be in a sibling relationship, irrespective of clan membership and of biology (Ward, 1983, p.2). For example, people of the Wunh clan share the totem ku thithay, ‘wild honey/sugar bag’, with Diminin people. Through sharing the one totem, people of these two different clan groups are considered siblings. This suggests that the category of ngakumarl, ‘totem’,
although determined by an individual’s patriline, organises the social world in Wadeye as readily as genealogical connections.

While an individual’s connections to totems and country are determined by their father, their kangathi, ‘mother’s country’, and their mother’s totems, are also highly important, both personally and socially (Stanner, 1936). Given that most children nowadays grow up with their maternal family, it can be assumed that the importance of these matrilineal ties to kardu thipmam categories is further impressed, as they are the connections of the household at large.

The contemporary salience of people’s connections to kardu thipmam categories, particularly that of country, is exhibited in the fighting that occurs not infrequently in Wadeye amongst young men. One of the most common reasons for this fighting relates to categories of land and rightful claims to it; the men are described as being ‘jealous for country’. The tensions that underlie contemporary Wadeye society with respect to kardu thipmam categories means that the community can at times operate as a socio-political tinderbox.

Discord in relation to kardu thipmam categories is also apparent amongst school aged children in Wadeye. As there is just one school in town, it groups together children from all areas of town, and of all kardu thipmam identities. As in many Aboriginal communities, low school attendance is an issue (Taylor, 2010). While presumably not the sole excuse, a common reason for children not wanting to go to school is the thu kuy, ‘fighting’ or ‘bullying’ that occurs there. While such disaffiliative behaviour is no doubt a feature of all schoolyards, in Wadeye it appears to often be based on children’s membership to kardu thipmam categories.

Other, happier evidence of the contemporary salience of kardu thipmam categories is found in locally composed music. The lyrics of these songs are almost exclusively about connections to specific places and totemic entities. These songs are often audible around town, played from people’s mobile phones, blasted from stereos at homes or in cars, or simply sung.

An individual’s connections to kardu thipmam categories both constitute and index their membership to the race category, kardu thipmam. These connections also directly inform the nature of that person’s relationships with others in the community. It appears that categories of land readily prompt discord, while the category ngakumarl, ‘totem’, effects alliances between people, across clan and biological family boundaries.

3.3.2.1. Football teams
Another mode of grouping that operates in Wadeye society is people’s affiliations to football teams. This type of football, Australian Football League (AFL), ‘Aussie Rules’, or simply ‘footsy’,

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17 In fact, at one point in their fieldwork, Aslaug and Johannes Falkenberg (1981, p.120) were considering the possibility of Murrinhpatha society being matrilineal, so central did this relationship appear to be in the society.
18 Songs are often chosen in relation to the place people are on their way to. For example, when driving to Kumewath, a swimming hole on Diminin country, people who have a connection to this place, be it their own country, their mother’s country, or the country of someone in the car, often play a song which specifically mentions this place.
has a fanatical following with much of the population in Australia, and is highly popular in Indigenous communities. Each team has a mascot, which tends to be an animal. For the majority of Murrinhpatha speakers football team allegiances are derivatives of totemic links (Ivory, 2009, p.86), either their own totem or their mother’s totem. Some of these connections are transparent, for example someone with the totem pulupulu, ‘hawk’, may support the team, the Hawthorn Hawks; an individual whose mother’s totem is karrath, ‘demon’, might be a Melbourne Demons supporter. Others involve a more circuitous link, opaque to a cultural outsider. Team affiliations begin early, with most children being assigned a team soon after birth. Some people have two teams, their own and that of their broader family group. A large proportion of the population in Wadeye regularly sports AFL team clothing. Team flags adorn houses and cars, and general day-to-day items (e.g. towels, hair ties) tend to be preferred in team colours.

While derivatives of the kardu thipmam category, ngakumarl, ‘totem’, supporting the same football team does not appear to engender as profound a link between people as sharing the same totem. Nevertheless, football teams connect Wadeye residents across clan and family group lines to a certain degree.19

### 3.3.2.2. Dance groups

Another, more formalised system of social grouping that exists in Wadeye is linked to traditional cultural ceremonies. Every kardu thipmam in town belongs to one of four dance groups: thanpa, lirrga, wangka, and wulthirri20, each with their own particular songs and dances. Today thanpa and wulthirri operate as a single group in ceremonies, making it in effect a three-way system. This mode of grouping dates from the 1960s (Marett, 2005), and has been described as one of ‘macro language groups’ (Furlan, 2005), in that people of certain cultural groups belong to a particular dance mob. For example, Marri Ngarr people were members of the lirrga dance mob. However this neat one-to-one mapping does not seem to hold today. Some people, at least some women, have affiliations to two groups, and choose which group to dance with depending on the ceremony and who is involved.

The dance group system is one of reciprocal ceremonial exchange, in that members from one group perform at ceremonies of the others. For example, at a funeral of a wulthirri individual, wangka and/or lirrga members perform. Further involvement is seen at circumcision ceremonies, where a boy is painted up, mentored, and danced for by members of the dance groups of one of his brothers-in-law (Ward, 1983, p.46). This particular group then becomes the boy’s own. Once the ceremony has taken place, the boy-now-man is referred to by his particular dance group by those he is now in a taboo relationship with. The reciprocal obligations that this tripartite system

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19 Football teams also connect out into the non-Aboriginal world, and a common question that children in Wadeye ask whitefellas is thangku tim nhinhiyu? ‘What’s your team?’

20 It has been reported (Barwick, Blythe, Marett, & Walsh, 2007; Furlan, 2005) that wulthirri is no longer performed. At the boys’ (circumcision) ceremony held in Sep 2016, serendipitously during my final field trip, the combined wulthirri/thanpa group performed alongside lirrga and wangka. People in fact tended to refer to the group simply as wulthirri, with only rare mentions of thanpa, if any. All of the women I spoke to said that wulthirri is the most complex of dances, as it has many different moves.
involves, and the social mixing that it achieves, help control the tensions that exist between certain
groups in town; fighting rarely occurs during ceremony times.

3.3.3. Family
Aboriginal societies are described as being “governed” by kinship (Sutton, 1982, p.182). The use of
kinship- or as referred to in this thesis, ‘family’- terms by Murrinhpatha speakers in Wadeye today
reflects the continued influence of kin relationships on social interactions. Family terms differ from
some other category terms in that they are all relational. For example, an individual is only a
member of the category ‘grandparent’ with respect to a person who is considered their grandchild.
Associated with each family term are certain expectations of behaviour for members of that
particular category. These norms relating to member behaviour inform the nature of everyday
interactions between individuals, whether participants follow or flout these ‘rules’ (Sutton, 1982,
p.182). While it is necessary to look at how speakers enact family relationships to gain a fuller
picture of social order (Agha, 2007; Schneider, 1984), examining kinship structures and
terminology can also reveal meaningful aspects of social categories and organisation.

The figure below shows core aspects of the kinship system for Murrinhpatha speakers, from a
female ego perspective. Where the male version differs is that instead of nangkun, ‘husband’, their
partner is palngun, ‘wife’ (literally ‘woman’). For some family categories in the chart, two terms
are provided. This reflects the variation evident today amongst speakers today, in terms of lexical
choices and pronunciation. Aspects of this variation have been previously discussed in relation to
the kardu kigay, ‘young men’ of Wadeye (Mansfield, 2014).

A version of Figure 3.7 from a male ego perspective can be found in Appendix A as can a more
detailed version of the system, in which traditional patterns of marriage are also reflected. These
marriage patterns are rarely adhered to today. In fact, the older people in the community criticise
the ‘any way’ coupling of younger generations (Mansfield, 2014, p.34). The kinship diagram in
the appendix is therefore not only more detailed than figure 3.7 but also more idealised.

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21 The term purrima, ‘wife’, is rarely used by speakers today. In fact, the term appears to be viewed as comically
antiquated.
22 Rather than anything biologically improper, the term simply refers to the way in which younger Murrinhpatha
speakers tend not to abide by traditional, highly predetermined patterns of choosing a partner.
Figure 3.7 Murrinhpatha kinship chart, female ego
Looking at fig. 3.7, certain observations can be made. The terms for grandparents and grandchildren in Murrinhpatha are reciprocal. For example, a woman calls her daughter’s child *kawu*, and that child calls her mother’s mother the same. A child can refer to his father’s father as *kangkurl*, as this man can refer to his son’s son. This sharing of terms suggests that a close relationship between members of these family categories is encouraged (Stanner, 2009, p.59). This echoes descriptions of various other Aboriginal societies, in which grandchildren and grandparents share kin terms and intimacy is fostered between them (e.g. Garde, 2008; Radcliffe-Brown, 1931).

The other main points that can be made from the kinship chart relate to siblings and biological sex. Siblings of the same sex, one generation above ego, are referred to by the one family term. Children can call the woman who gave birth to them, as well as that woman’s sisters, ‘mother’ (*kale*, or, as is more common these days, *mama*), and use the term for ‘father’ for their biological father and also his brothers. The categorisation of same sex siblings as identical to one another in terms of kin relations, relates to one of the foundational ‘principles’ that Radcliffe-Brown (1930, 1931) proposed for all Aboriginal Australian social systems: ‘the social equivalence of brothers’. This has also been referred to as ‘same-sex sibling merger’ (Scheffler, 1978, p.115). As with grandparent/grandchild, this shared family term suggests that a closeness is expected between sisters and between brothers.

The social equivalence of same-sex siblings is also reflected in the family terms used to classify their children. The respective children of two brothers, or of two sisters, are considered full siblings. As fig. 3.7 shows, ego calls the children of their mother’s sister *paba* ‘brother’ and *mumak*, ‘sister’, just as they do the children of their father’s brother. The respective children of a brother and of a sister, however, are considered to be in a *pugarli*, ‘cousin’ relationship with one another. This suggests that the relationship between siblings of the opposite sex is expected to differ from that of siblings of the same sex. Rather than being terminologically the same, brothers and sisters are a degree removed from one another, as are their respective children.

As intimated by the differential kinship terminology, a social divide is encouraged between Murrinhpatha speaking siblings of the opposite sex. Post-pubescent brothers and sisters interact minimally with one another and avoid using each other’s personal names. This is even the case when siblings live under the same roof. Two generation above ego, however, there is no such differentiation between the sex of siblings. For example, an individual uses the same term to refer to their father’s father, *kangkurl*, as they do their grandfather’s siblings, be they male or female. In the grandparent generation, therefore, the sex of siblings is less relevant than their siblinghood.

Fig. 3.7 also shows a lack of terminological differentiation between ego’s children and ego’s siblings’ children. All of these relations shown in the diagram are *wakal*, ‘child’ (translating literally to ‘little’). However, this appears to be changing. Certain young adult speakers use the terms *pipi* and *kaka* (‘aunt’ and ‘uncle’) in a reciprocal manner, such as the terms for grandparent/grandchild.
That is, an aunt, *pipi*, can refer to their niece as *pipi*, rather than *wakal*. Requiring more evidence, this use of terms is not marked on the kinship chart provided.

Contemporary kinship behaviour in Wadeye seems to support such a shift in the application of these family categories. Today in Wadeye, girls and their *pipi* (*fa.zi*) tend to share a warm and playful relationship with one another. Similarly, a special relationship between boys and their *kaka* (*mo.br*) is indicated by the uncle’s role of teacher and dancer for the boy when he participates in traditional boys’/men’s ceremonies. These relationships are highly visible during *themalak*, a period of ordered mayhem between the boys’ and men’s ceremonies, in which aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews engage in play fights with one another. Although not overtly reported in the existing literature, a close relationship appears to be encouraged between aunts and their nieces, and uncles and their nephews. This, and the recent possible extension of the family categories, *pipi* and *kaka*, suggests that the intimacy expected between members of these family categories is a contemporary phenomenon amongst Murrinhpatha speakers.

Certain other family term variants that are not included in fig. 3.7 relate to categories of grandparent. In certain contexts, the Murrinhpatha term, *thamunh* (*mo.fa*), for example, is replaced by the terms *thabuth*, *thabuthi*, or *abuthu*. The selection depends on the referent and their particular connection to the *kardu thipmam* category, ‘language’. *Thabuth* is the Marri Ngarr term for maternal grandfather and can be used to refer to or to address a maternal grandfather whose language is Marri Ngarr. Equally, *abuthu* can be used for Ngan’gitjemerri men who are members of the category. This use of family terms, which indexes a person’s cultural language (and therefore key aspects of their *kardu thipmam* identity) appears to be the main way in which traditional languages other than Murrinhpatha feature in people’s lives today (Davidson, 2017).

### 3.3.4. Siblinghood

Another aspect of social organisation in Wadeye relates to whether or not people are in a sibling relationship with one another. This was mentioned with respect to the *kardu thipmam* category, *ngakumarl*, ‘totem’. An individual is considered to be in a sibling relationship with their particular totems, and with people who share this connection to the same entities. Siblingship was also alluded to in the previous section, on family terms, which outlined the way in which siblings of the same sex were viewed as social equivalents.

The sibling/non-sibling nature of social relationships is also discernible in the Murrinhpatha language itself. Most free pronouns have sibling and non-sibling variants, for example, *nanku* is the form for ‘you two siblings’, whereas *nankuninha* expresses ‘you two male non-siblings’. Structural details of a language can reveal aspects of a culture’s values (e.g. Howard 2007, Enfield 2007). As these two examples display, gender is not encoded on the sibling variant, only on the non-sibling.

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23 This tends to involve throwing eggs, water, mud etc. at each other.
This detail suggests that it is more important in Murrinhpatha speaking culture to linguistically mark whether or not two people are siblings than it is to encode their respective genders.

Whether or not people are siblings is also conveyed by the verbal morphology of the language. However, there is no ‘sibling’ morpheme in Murrinhpatha. Siblinghood is instead expressed through the absence of non-sibling markers (Blythe, 2009). This suggests that, morphologically, the unmarked category of people is siblings. This contrasts with the socially unmarked relationship between people, of non-siblings. (A group of people comprising only siblings is considerably less common than a group containing at least one non-sibling relationship.) These aspects of the language are described more fully in section 3.4. They are mentioned here so as to highlight the salience of siblinghood in Murrinhpatha speaking culture.

### 3.3.5. Stage of Life

Previous studies describe many Murrinhpatha terms for distinct stages of life categories. Most of these recorded are for male members of society. Stanner (1957, item 23), for example, reported fifteen different age divisions for male children referring to stages of development from newborn to when they can walk unaided. Such terms do not appear to be in regular use today. Children are referred to as *kardu wakal*, ‘child’ (literally ‘little person’), or in the plural, *kardu mamay*, ‘children’. *Beiibi*, from the English term ‘baby’, is also used by some speakers to refer to a newborn. The standardised relational pair of *kardu wakal*, ‘child’, is *kardu ngalla*, literally ‘big person’. This term can be used to refer, not only to adults, but also older children, depending on the context. To avoid age technicalities, then, the translation ‘grown up’ is used in this thesis for *kardu ngalla* as well as ‘adult’.

The category, *mardinhpuy*, often translated as ‘young woman’ (e.g. Street, 1987), can apply to all females who are not old women, the common term for which is *kunugunu*. Females are therefore considered *mardinhpuy* from birth until old age. In light of this, the term is perhaps used to convey notions of gender more often than stage of life. The modifier *wakal*, ‘little’, can be used in conjunction with the term, *mardinhpuy*, specifying ‘little girl’. This can also be done with the term for ‘boy’, *kulbuy*. Males are considered to be *kulbuy* (derived from the English ‘schoolboy’) as young children, *kigay* from puberty to middle age, and then *ngalantharr* or *pule* as senior men. The term *keke*, which refers to men in middle age, between *kigay* and *ngalantharr*, seems only to be used by older speakers in the community.

In languages such as Swedish and English, children tend to strive to be deemed ‘big girls’ or ‘big boys’ rather than ‘babies’, and adults often encourage them in this endeavour (e.g. Cahill, 1986; Hellman, Heikkilä, & Sundhall, 2014). Non-membership to the (reviled) category ‘baby’ in these cultures therefore incorporates gender. This is not the case for Murrinhpatha speakers. When striving to distance themselves from *kardu wakal*, ‘child’ category membership, children orient to

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24 This, and the corresponding “dearth of information” (Elkin, 2004, p.xxix) regarding women, can be explained at least in part by the fact most field researchers in the past were men.
that of the equally genderless *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’. They do not orient to a gender-specific stage of life term.

While there is no specific stage of life category term for it, a shift in behaviour can be seen in children at around 5-6 years of age. During this period, most children switch from spending the majority of their time in close proximity to caregivers to spending much of their time in the company of other children (close kin relations). While never very far away from adults, children at around this age begin to demonstrate considerable independence from their caregivers. This practice, of children socialising in ‘kid mobs’ from around this age, has been reported for a number of different communities around Australia, for example in Arnhem Land (Hamilton, 1981) and in Warlpiri communities (Bavin, 1993; Meggitt, 1962).

During this period children in Wadeye also begin to be increasingly called upon by adults to help them with caregiving duties. This help might entail fetching things for the adult when they are busy with an infant, or monitoring toddlers to ensure they remain safe near water, for example. Surveys of a multitude of different cultures around the world have described the age bracket of 5-7 as a time of shift for children in terms of responsibilities and expectations (e.g. Rogoff, Sellers, Pirrotta, Fox, & White, 1975; Sameroff & Haith, 1996). Despite the fact that there is no category term in contemporary Murrinhpatha that specifically relates to this particular stage in children’s lives, it appears that from around five years Murrinhpatha speaking children do shift to a slightly different social role. While they are still members of the category ‘children’ in broad social terms, they are also *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown ups’ in comparison to those that they are caring for, or those who do not yet spend time in peer only groups.

Murrinhpatha speakers do not readily use stage of life categories (or category-like terms) that relate to numerical age. Unlike many children in Western cultures, who might proudly declare that they are ‘five and three quarters’, numerical age does not appear to hold much worth for Murrinhpatha speaking children nor adults. Numerical age is an outsider concept, and Murrinhpatha speakers only seem to refer to it when interacting with non-Aboriginal people and institutions. The way in which children’s age is more readily expressed is with respect to physical size, often relative to that of other children. For example, a child can be described as *saiz ngarra x*, ‘the same size as x’, where *x* is the other child.

In terms of school-related age signifiers, Murrinhpatha speakers again use people to anchor their references. For instance, rather than a child saying they are a ‘first grader’ or that they are in ‘transition’, they are much more likely to refer to their teacher, as in *titha ngay Lisa*, ‘My teacher is Lisa’. Such a statement does not appear to be used to express stage of life, however.

Murrinhpatha speakers today employ considerably fewer stage of life categories than in the past, and most of the terms used cover a broad age span. People do not use category terms relating to

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25 ‘Transition’ is the term used in the Northern Territory for the year of schooling before grade one.
numerical age or school to convey an individual’s stage of life. The closest they come to this is the category-like use of *saiz*, ‘size’, which relates more or less to a child’s height.

### 3.3.6. Gender

As evident in the previous section, stage of life categories and categories of gender are quite interconnected in Murrinhpatha. With the exception of *kardu wakal*, ‘child’, and *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, most other stage of life categories also encode gender. While older speakers are described as using *palngun* and *nugarn* to express ‘female’ and ‘male’, respectively, no matter the referent’s age (J. Blythe, personal communication), children and individuals of their parent’s generation do not appear to use any single category terms for ‘male’ and ‘female’. Most gender terms available also encode stage of life membership, albeit to varying degrees. The salience of gender in the social organisation of Murrinhpatha speakers has also been touched on with respect to the categories of siblinghood and family.

Looking at the makeup of groups in Wadeye, it is clear that gender category membership plays an important role in interpersonal interactions. As is common in Aboriginal societies in Australia, generally, men and women in Wadeye tend not to spend much time in each other’s company. With the exception of couples, and pre-pubescent children, individuals predominantly interact with members of their own gender category. This gender-based divide is heightened in a sibling context. As noted in the section on family categories, sisters are encouraged to have close relationships with one another, as are brothers, while (post-pubescent) sisters and brothers are expected to avoid one another, physically and linguistically. The intimacy fostered between aunts and nieces, and uncles and nephews, further impresses the notion that shared membership to a gender category warrants closeness between speakers. This in turn can be thought of as implicitly discouraging such a relationship between members of opposite gender categories.

Today there also exists a category, ‘sister girl’. Elsewhere in Australia this term refers to transgender individuals (Brown, 2004). In Wadeye it is applied to individuals who are biologically men, seen as behaving in an effeminate manner. Sexual orientation does not appear to be a key component of membership to this category. It is said that these men ‘walk like a girl’, which is in stark contrast to the macho posturing engaged in by most of Wadeye’s *kardu kigay*, ‘young men’. People labelled ‘sister girls’ predominantly interact with women, and the term seems to be used without any discernible judgement or animosity.26 The use of this category term suggests that a gender divide operates in Wadeye, rather than one of biological sex.

In terms of the grammatical encoding of gender in Murrinhpatha, groups of people are classified as either all male, or as comprising at least one female. There is no dedicated form for a female-only group. As mentioned in the section on siblinghood, gender is encoded in Murrinhpatha only for referents who are not siblings. This could be interpreted as gender not being relevant in the

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26 While the many women I know definitely appear to use the term ‘sister girl’ in a neutral manner, I cannot comment on male attitudes towards members of this category, as I spent little time in the company of Murrinhpatha speaking men.
case of siblings. Looking at speakers’ everyday behaviour, however, this is patently untrue. A possible explanation is that the avoidance behaviour exhibited between siblings of the opposite gender is so entrenched/enforced that the linguistic encoding of gender in a sibling context is simply unnecessary.

### 3.3.7. Mob

Another mode of grouping people in Wadeye is by way of the category, *mup*, ‘mob’. This term *mup* is used to group people together in relation to someone or something, and it is produced with a descriptor of some sort, such as an individual’s name, an entity, or a particular quality. For example, *Nansi mup*, ‘Nancy mob’ identifies a collective in relation to a key group member, Nancy; *Doka mup*, ‘Dockers mob’, refers to a group of people who support the football team, the Freemantle Dockers, while *nusin mup*, ‘nuisance mob’ can be used to refer to a group of people understood to be demanding or irritating.

#### 3.3.7.1. Metal mobs

A particular, ordered form of *mup* is the ‘metal mob’ (Mansfield, 2014). With most groups taking their names from metal bands, such as Judas Priest, this organisational system is relatively recent, and it predominantly involves the *kardu kigay*, the young men. Metal mob affiliations appear to be organised around kin relationships27, but not necessarily by clan (Mansfield 2014). Rivalry between metal mobs is serious (Ivory, 2009), and has resulted in Wadeye gaining some notoriety around Australia, after numerous media reports covered instances of violence.

Women’s metal mobs also exist in Wadeye, an example of which is the ‘Bon Jovi Girls’. However they are fewer in number and seem to form in relation to male mobs. Children are involved in this system inasmuch as they live in Wadeye, and in households with particular mob affiliations. One of the focus children in this study, Mavis (6;11), was recorded speaking to an imaginary companion *Licamen*, ‘Lica man’28, where ‘Lica’ is the common local way of referencing the Metallica mob. This suggests that metal mobs are part of the backdrop against which Murrinhpatha speaking children grow up.

As in any community, the organisation of Wadeye society is directly informed by the different connections and divides that exist between members. People can classify one another in terms of their stage of life, gender, race, occupation, place within the kinship network, and whether or not they are siblings. Individuals are also grouped and divided by virtue of links to *kardu thipmam* categories, such as totems and country, and their membership to particular ‘mobs’, metal or otherwise. A community whose culture is a combination of traditional ways and new, Wadeye’s patterns of social organisation are both historically-derived and innovative. With membership to all of these categories come associated rights and obligations, and with many of the categories come expectations around how a member ought to behave.

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27 However it is impossible to tease apart social closeness and family ties in Wadeye.
28 LAMP_20151021_LD_01_00:11:29.040
3.4. The language, Murrinhpatha

Murrinhpatha is a polysynthetic, non-Pama-Nyungan language spoken in Wadeye and nearby areas. From the Southern Daly group (Green, 2003), it is one of only 13 traditional Australian languages still being acquired by children (Marmion et al., 2014).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Murrinhpatha is the lingua franca for kardu thipmam within the Thamarrurr region. In contemporary Wadeye society, almost all kardu thipmam residents under the age of 50 speak Murrinhpatha as their first language. For many people, it is the only language they speak fluently.

3.4.1. Linguistic work on Murrinhpatha

The first language documentation work on Murrinhpatha was conducted by Catholic missionaries (e.g. Flynn, n.d.). This was followed by comprehensive linguistic descriptions by Walsh (1976) and Street and colleagues (1987; 1981; 1989). Since this foundational work, there has been further, focussed description of Murrinhpatha’s verbal morphology (Blythe, Nordlinger, & Reid, 2007; Nordlinger, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Nordlinger & Caudal, 2012; Walsh, 1987, 1995), phonology (Butcher, 2004; Mansfield, 2015a), and nominals (Walsh, 1993, 1996, 1997). Children’s acquisition of the grammatical system has also been investigated (e.g. Forshaw, 2014, 2016), and considerable interactional work has been carried out, focussing on adult conversation (Blythe, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2015). Murrinhpatha has also been looked at in terms of language change, from a diachronic perspective (e.g. Blythe, 2013, 2018; Green, 2003), and through variationist research on the speech of kardu kigay, the young men (e.g. Mansfield, 2014, 2015b).

In his description of young men’s speech, Mansfield (2014) outlines numerous differences in language use compared to that of the older generations. These include intervocalic deletion of obstruents, the use of simplified verb forms, considerable verb borrowing, and the placement of the adverbials outside of the verbal complex. Most of the features that Mansfield describes can be seen in children’s use of language, as well as that of the young women, i.e. the children’s mothers and other women of that generation. As linguistic variation is not a focus of the present study, these aspects are not described further. Mention is made here only to indicate that language change is evident in Wadeye, not only in the speech of young men, but in the speech of younger Murrinhpatha speakers more generally, irrespective of their gender.

3.4.2. Phonology

The phoneme inventory of Murrinhpatha can be seen in table 3.1 on the following page, reproduced from Nordlinger (2015, p.497).
Table 3.1 Murrinhpatha phoneme entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>consonants</th>
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<th>alveolar</th>
<th>retroflex</th>
<th>laminal</th>
<th>velar</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>rt</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voiced stop</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>rd</td>
<td>dh</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>mh</td>
<td>nh</td>
<td>ng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lateral</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>rl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flap/trill</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>rr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glides</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The laminal stops, (th), (dh), and (nh) represent palatal- and also dental- realisations. Laminal-dental stops occur before back vowels, /u/ and /a/, with palatals in all other environments. Conflicting analyses exist as to whether this is allophonic variation or not (see Mansfield, 2014, p.136-138). This thesis does not engage in the debate around allophony, and adopts the same orthography seen in this table, as it is the system used in Wadeye.

3.4.3. Orthography

In the existing documentation work on Murrinhpatha, numerous orthographical differences can be seen. The variation is reflected to a certain degree in the spelling of the language name itself. Previous versions include Murinbada, Murinbata, Murriny Patha, Murinypata and Murrinh-Patha. The script that is used in this thesis is the current ‘community’ orthography, which is based on the system established by Street in the 1980s, and is used at the school, and other institutions in town. The main difference between this and other recent orthographies lies in the treatment of lamino-dental and lamino-palatal stops, mentioned in the phonology section above. In some studies (e.g. Barwick, Blythe, Marett, & Walsh, 2007; Blythe, 2009; Mansfield, 2014), this difference in pronunciation is rendered transparent in the spelling. In the community orthography, however, these sounds are represented by a single form.

3.4.4. Verbal structure

Verbs in Murrinhpatha are polysynthetic, in that they are composed of numerous different morphemes, which cannot be produced in isolation. Morphological complexity is characteristic of many languages in the northern part of Australia (McGregor, 2002), as is a bipartite verbal structure. However, in Murrinhpatha, and other languages from the Daly River region, such as Marrithiyel (Green, 1989) and Ngan’gityemerri (Reid, 1990), these different morphological elements appear in a single verbal complex.

Verbal predicates in Murrinhpatha are comprised of two parts, referred to here as the ‘classifier stem’ and ‘lexical stem’. The classifier stem, also called a ‘finite verb’ (Blythe et al., 2007), is a portmanteau morpheme, of which there are 38 classes. The second part of the verb form is the
lexical stem, or ‘verb root’ (Mansfield, 2014). Unlike the classifier stem, the lexical stem does not appear in all verbs (Nordlinger, 2010b, p.323). When the lexical stem does appear in the verb, it interacts with the classifier stem to create the meaning of the entire verbal predicate. This combination often works in a semantically transparent way, as the examples below demonstrate (all examples from Nordlinger, 2010b, p. 325), however this is not always the case.

The first pair of examples show two different classifier stems combining with the same lexical stem, rtal, meaning ‘break by single chopping action’.

Ex.(3-1) pantal pan-rtal 3sgs.SLASH(23).NFUT-chop ‘He sliced it (with a knife)’
Ex.(3-2) mungarn tal mungam-rtal 3sgs.BREAK(11).NFUT-chop ‘He broke it with his hands’

In the next two examples the one classifier stem, bangam, meaning ‘break’, combines with two different lexical stems.

Ex.(3-3) bangamparnta bangam-warta 3sgs.BASH(14).NFUT-split.open ‘He smashed it open (with a hammer)’
Ex.(3-4) bangamel mel bangam-melmel 3sgs.BASH(14).NFUT-flatten ‘He flattened it (with a hammer)’

Murrinhpatha verbs can also encode person, number, gender, and (non)siblinghood of verbal arguments, as well as TAM. The order in which these elements occur in the verb appear to follow a templatic structure (Blythe, 2009; Nordlinger, 2010b).

3.4.5. Free pronouns

Free pronouns operate as definite referential expressions, and also mark possession. They inflect for the same features as can be encoded in the verb: person, number, gender and siblinghood. As such, a free pronoun produced together with a complex verb is pragmatically rich but redundant in terms of morphosyntax (Blythe, 2009, p.113).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>DUAL NON-SIBLING</th>
<th>DUAL SIBLING</th>
<th>PAUCAL</th>
<th>PAUCAL SIBLING &amp; PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXCLUSIVE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ngay</td>
<td>ngankunginthathyangankunintha</td>
<td>nganku</td>
<td>ngankungime ngankuneme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLUSIVE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>neki</td>
<td>neki</td>
<td>nekingime nekineme</td>
<td>neki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>nhinhi</td>
<td>nankunginthathannankunintha</td>
<td>nanku</td>
<td>nankungime nankuneme</td>
<td>nanki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>nigunu nukunu</td>
<td>peninginthastapeningintha</td>
<td>piguna</td>
<td>peningime peneme</td>
<td>pigunu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*italics = at least one female in the group*

29 A sibling relationship between referents is actually expressed by the absence of the non-sibling morpheme.
As can be seen in the table 3.2, gender is marked on non-sibling forms, with the female variant applying to groups with at least one female. Free pronouns inflect according to a four-way number split- singular, dual, paucal, and plural, where paucal is used for a group of three to ten (Blythe, 2009, p.98). First person forms that are dual or paucal in number can also encode inclusivity. While variants that encode siblinghood/non- are exclusive, those that do not encode siblinghood convey inclusivity. Owing to this, speakers can be very precise in their references to ‘we’ or ‘us’, particularly when using pronouns that are dual in number. This precision lessens when referring to larger groups, however. Plural pronouns do not encode siblinghood, and paucal sibling is expressed by the same forms as plural.

3.4.6. Nominal clauses

In terms of nominals, all Murrinhpatha nouns belong to one of nine noun classes (NC), which are signaled by a nominal classifier/noun class marker. A tenth class, thamul, for types of spears, appears to be no longer in use (Mansfield, 2014, p.118). Spear is now combined with thu, the classifier for offensive weapons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NC marker</th>
<th>Associated entities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kardu</td>
<td>Aboriginal people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku</td>
<td>animate non-humans, non-Aboriginal people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kura</td>
<td>liquids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mi</td>
<td>food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nanthi</td>
<td>things of the residue category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thu</td>
<td>offensive weapons, lightning, plus also playing cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thungku</td>
<td>fire, things associated with fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da</td>
<td>time and place, including place names, and seasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murrinh</td>
<td>language, and associated concepts e.g. songs, school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Murrinhpatha noun class markers and associated entities, based on Walsh (1993)

The NC marker for laita, ‘lighter’, for example, is thungku, ‘fire-related things’. While the NC marker is not obligatory, the full, explanatory form of the nominal phrase (NP) is thungku laita. The NC marker can also appear on its own, with a verb form. When NPs appear in conjunction with a verbal construction they tend to be minimal in form (i.e. not the full form, thungku laita), whereas in verbless utterances NPs are generally larger and more informative (Blythe, 2009, p.102). A ‘larger’ NP could be made up of, for instance, a nominal classifier, a noun, and one or more of the following: adjective, demonstrative or numeral. NC markers can also be used informatively as descriptors. For example, thungku thay describes ‘firewood’, whereas thu thay describes a stick being used as a weapon.

An important distinction in Murrinhpatha that these NC markers highlight is the differentiation between kardu and ku. While kardu is the category term for living Aboriginal people (kardu thipmam), ku is for animate non-human entities. Aboriginal spirits- deceased human ancestors, and folkloric personae- are included in this category, as are animals, and ku wathpala, (living) non-Aboriginal people.
3.4.7. Socialisation routines

Numerous category-based socialisation routines are evident in Murrinhpatha speaking society, and many, if not most, caregivers in Wadeye engage young children in such practices.

Certain socialisation routines centre on teaching or testing knowledge of *kardu thipmam* categories. One form of this routine sees caregivers produce a statement from the child’s perspective (e.g. ‘My totem is *y*’) before prompting the child to repeat the utterance. Caregivers elicit this reproduction from children with the form *thama*, ‘you say it’, as in *x thama*, ‘say *x*’. Two examples of caregivers engaging children in this routine can be found in Appendix II, ex. 1 and 2. This use of the form *thama* by Murrinhpatha speaking caregivers to prompt is comparable to prompting routines in various other languages and cultures around the world. Examples include Sesotho adults’ use of *ere*, ‘say’ (Demuth, 1986), Kaluli caregivers’ use of *elema*, ‘say it like this’ (Schieffelin, 1990), and Yukatek Mayans’ employment of the forms *a’l-ti’, ‘say’, and *kech=ti’ ‘say it like this to him’ (Pfeiler, 2007).

Some caregivers in Wadeye also use the form *thama* as a discourse marker in socialisation routines. Rather than eliciting a reproduction of an utterance that they design from the child’s perspective, caregivers produce *thama*, ‘isn’t that right’, after a declarative statement about the child’s membership to *kardu thipmam* categories. In doing so the caregiver prompts the child to agree with their statement. For example, *kantri nhinhika Nangu, thama*, ‘Your country is Nangu, isn’t that right’. Caregivers often engage in this form of socialisation routine with preverbal infants. An example of this can be found in ex. 3 of Appendix II.

Another socialisation routine that features *kardu thipmam* categories takes the form of display questions, which are questions to which the asker knows the answer. Display questions are also referred to as ‘tutorial’ (Snow et al., 1976) or ‘test’ (Holzman, 1972) questions. This routine can be viewed as testing a child on their knowledge of *kardu thipmam* categories, and/or eliciting a demonstration of this knowledge from them. Caregivers tend to elicit information about children’s own connections to *kardu thipmam* categories. An example of this is provided in ex. 4 of Appendix II. From the age of around three and a half, caregivers often begin to test children on the *kardu thipmam* connections of other people. An example of a caregiver using display questions in relation to a third party’s *kardu thipmam* categories can be found in ex. 5 of Appendix II.

Elicitation routines such as these provide a degree of transparency onto a society’s values. Their content indicates what caregivers deem important for children to know and to do (Demuth, 1986, p.77). The socialisation routines outlined here impress the importance of *kardu thipmam* categories within Murrinhpatha speaking society, and the importance of children learning their own memberships to these categories and, when they are slightly older, that of others.

Another type of socialisation routine that is common in Murrinhpatha speaking caregivers’ interactions with young children relates to behaviour management. Caregivers often manage
children’s behaviour by scaring them with mentions of the nonhuman personae, *ku ngalantharr*, ‘old man spirit’, *ku kunugunu*, ‘old woman spirit’, or *ku karrath*, ‘devil’. Similar methods of managing young children’s behaviour through allusions to spirit beings have also been described for Indigenous caregivers in other parts of Australia, such as the Nyaanyatjarra Lands (Kral & Ellis, 2008) and in Adelaide (Malin et al., 1996). The allusions to these categories by Murrinhpatha speaking caregivers take one of three forms: an invocation of the spirit itself, an announcement of the spirit’s presence or their imminent appearance, or a warning statement to the child as to what the spirit will do to them (e.g. take the child away). An example of each of these three forms can be found in Appendix II, ex. 6-8.

Caregivers are the speakers who predominantly engage in the socialisation routines noted here. As such, these particular uses of categories can be associated with *kardu ngalla*, ‘adult/grown up’ membership; engaging children in these socialisation routines are category bound activities of *kardu ngalla*.

This chapter described the main physical, linguistic, sociocultural and historical facets of the community in which the participants of this study are growing up. Wadeye was depicted in terms of its geographical location, the changes that have occurred over the last 80 years, and certain aspects of everyday life for inhabitants today. The fundamental connection between place, language, and *kardu thipmam* identity was also noted, as was the continued relevance of these connections in the complex society that is contemporary Wadeye. Also highlighted were various other key categories that organise adult Murrinhpatha speaking society and inform interactions between its speakers. As children are raised in this environment, the categories that demarcate adult society can be presumed to impact on children and their understandings of the world. Following this, Murrinhpatha, the language that the eight children in this study speak, was briefly outlined, before a description was provided of the various category-based socialisation routines that Murrinhpatha speaking *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown ups’, commonly engage young children in. The content of a number of these routines impress the importance within Wadeye society for children to learn their own connections to *kardu thipmam* categories and that of others.

Having described the context in which this research takes place, the following chapter, Chapter 4, will detail the study itself, including logistical matters of the data collection process, the mechanics of analysis, and the children involved.
4. Method

In this chapter I first discuss the ways in which logistical and sociocultural factors of the field site, Wadeye, shaped my research design. I then outline my approach to processing and analysing the data. The chapter concludes by introducing the study’s eight focus children.

4.1. Research design

In every study that involves fieldwork, the methods and process of data collection are shaped by logistics of the particular field site: its physical location and its society’s cultural values. The setting for this study, the remote community of Wadeye, influenced numerous aspects of the research design. This section will detail the ways in which it did. While numerous aspects of the community were described in the previous chapter, here Wadeye is discussed in relation to the process of data collection.

My approach to data collection followed that of the overarching LAMP (Language Acquisition in Murrinhpatha) project, based at The University of Melbourne. As detailed in Kelly, Forshaw, Nordlinger & Wigglesworth (2015), this was a modified ‘best practice’ FLA methodology, which involved collecting longitudinal, spontaneous speech data from a small group of children of a variety of ages, recorded with their caregivers. The interest of the present study, and of the broader project, lies in how Murrinhpatha speakers use language in everyday interactions. Naturalistic data allows for this, providing the scope needed to identify linguistic phenomena in discourse (Rowland, Fletcher, & Freundenthal, 2008), while ensuring the validity of such phenomena (Stromswold, 1996). The particular modifications made relate to the number of children recorded, and the frequency with which the recordings were made. These decisions were informed by the practical reality of the field site, Wadeye.

Over the course of my fieldwork I embedded myself as much as (logistically and culturally) possible in the lives of the focus children and their families. This resulted in the development of close relationships with numerous families, which continue today. Investing in personal relationships has been directly linked successful studies in remote Aboriginal communities in Australia (Kelly et al., 2015). Furthermore, given that I was working with young children, a closeness with participants and their families was crucial.

As well as collecting data via recordings, I asked caregivers and other informants questions relating to cultural matters, made contextual notes of recordings, and kept detailed, daily records of general happenings in town and of my observations. While this study is by no means an ethnography it draws on ethnographic elements.
4.1.1. Time spent in the field

Best practice for studies on children’s linguistic development involves the focus children being recorded frequently; monthly or even weekly (e.g., Demuth, 1996; Ingram, 1989). Wadeye’s remote location directly influenced the number and regularity of fieldtrips that were possible. It was time-consuming and expensive to travel to and from the field site. Accommodation challenges also made long stays difficult. There are very few places to stay in Wadeye. All accommodation available on a temporary or short-term basis is in high demand and is exorbitantly priced, and all long-term accommodation is occupied for most of the year. This impacted on the length of fieldtrips since staying in Wadeye for periods longer than 2-3 months at a time was not feasible. As a result, data could not be collected more than twice a year.

Living with a local family was also not possible in Wadeye. Aboriginal houses are intensely private domains, even with respect to other Indigenous people who are not close relatives (Memmott, 2002). What’s more, houses tend to be fully inhabited if not overcrowded. Attempting to stay in an Aboriginal household, therefore, was not an option.

The table below displays the time I spent in Wadeye, and the primary purpose for each trip.

Table 4.1 Time spent in Wadeye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DATES IN WADEYE</th>
<th>TOTAL TIME</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary trip</td>
<td>Oct 2013</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>Meet fellow Melbourne University researchers’ local contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldtrip 1</td>
<td>Feb-Apr 2014</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Recruitment, Data collection, Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldtrip 2</td>
<td>Sep-Nov 2014</td>
<td>2.5 months</td>
<td>Data collection, Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldtrip 3</td>
<td>Mar-May 2015</td>
<td>2.5 months</td>
<td>Data collection, Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldtrip 4</td>
<td>Sep-Nov 2015</td>
<td>2.5 months</td>
<td>Data collection, Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldtrip 5</td>
<td>Aug-Sep 2016</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Transcription</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the second fieldtrip on, I was with families all day, every day. This time involved making recordings, working on transcriptions with caregivers, or simply spending time with people, either in town or at nearby swimming/fishing/picnic locations. In the evenings I processed the data and worked on files so that they would be ready to transcribe.

4.1.2. Common issues in the Australian context

A common obstacle in conducting research in remote communities is the issue of participant availability. Aboriginal populations can be quite transient (Bell & Taylor, 2003) and people’s approach to time can make the scheduling of work problematic. Owing to this, many fieldworkers describe having to simply wait and hope that people are in town and keen to work. Happily, this was not at all reflective of my experience of fieldwork.
All of the focus children were in Wadeye for the entire duration of my data collection period. When I returned in 2016 for the transcription trip, however, one focus child was living in the community of Peppimenarti. Another focus child was temporarily living with maternal relatives on Bathurst Island, 80 km north of Darwin. These changes underscored how serendipitously constant the children’s lives were over the 21 months I was collecting data.

In terms of organising to work with people, this proved remarkably effortless. Women were eager to engage in language work, and I was never without someone to work with. In fact, from my second fieldtrip on, daily schedules formed of their own accord. Caregivers of the children ‘booked’ themselves in with me to work on particular days, often in either a morning or afternoon slot. While this was not rigid, and often changed on the day, it worked well to ensure that I spent equal time with key families and individuals. Given the lack of employment opportunities in town, particularly for women, I felt it important to spread the work between families as much as possible.

4.1.3. Recording setup

As I aimed to collect naturalistic speech data, the recording situation required “high ecological validity” (Eisenbeiss, 2010, p.12). That is, it needed to resemble real-life situations. The speech context itself influences spoken interactions, and possibly more so for children (Cazden, 1970, p.41). Due to this, it was important to consider factors such as the recording setting, the combination of participants, and the group’s activities (Ervin-Tripp, 1999). I managed this issue by involving participants in the decision making process. This ensured that the location of the recording, the particular people present, and the activities they engaged in were ones in which participants were likely to feel comfortable.

Natural groupings of people are considered especially important, “the best possible solution” in fact, to managing the ‘observer’s paradox’ (Labov, 1972, p.256). Video is crucial for studies on interaction, especially those involving children, given their use of gesture (Kelly, 2003). However it is a fraught method of observing natural speech, which is, in essence, the ways in which people interact when they are not being monitored (Labov, 1972, p.113). Speakers may behave with the camera in mind, either censoring themselves, or performing especially for it. Sparrman (2005), for example, discusses the ways in which 6-8 year old children display a consciousness of being recorded, while Svahn (2012) and Kyratzis (2007) describe children engaging directly with the camera or recording device. However, this behaviour is not necessarily a problem. As Duranti (1997, p.118) reasons, “people usually do not invent social behaviour, language included, out of the blue. Rather, their actions are part of a repertoire that is available to them independently of the presence of the camcorder.” No matter how an individual talks while being filmed, it can be assumed that this is still part of that person’s communicative repertoire.

A step I took to reduce the unfamiliarity of the recording situation was to involve older children and adults in the process. They were encouraged to turn the camera to follow the children if they
walked out of shot. A pair of headphones remained plugged into the camera which was recording the audio. This meant that someone could stand at the camera and listen to the children talk. As a video camera remains highly visible, these steps positioned the recording sessions as a family activity. Especially in the initial recordings, the presence of a close relative behind the camera seemed to make for a considerably more relaxed, less alienating recording environment for children.

Most adults remained mindful of being filmed. This was discernible from their calls for the children to remain in areas within shot, and to say certain things to the camera, e.g. ngarra video thama ‘Say it to the camera’, and kemera-nu dangkardu ‘Look at the camera’30. Adults also tended to produce talk to other adults at a considerably quieter volume than the speech they directed to children. This suggests a continued awareness of the camera but also an appreciation of the fact that it was the children’s language I was interested in, more so than theirs.

In terms of the children, apart from an initial fascination with the camera in the early recordings, and some occasional, demonstrably performative behaviour (which caregivers tended to actively encourage), children did not appear to be particularly bothered by the recording situation. The ways in which they interacted with others when a camera was present were not discernibly different from contexts in which it was not. For example, fights in recording sessions over who was hogging the biscuits mirrored those that occurred outside the shop. Equally, children’s recounting of events in recording sessions echoed those that children told one another in the car. The fact that I spent considerable time with the children outside of recordings gave me a basis from which to gauge the ‘normalness’ of their speech in recordings.

Caregivers were advised, and reminded, that the children were not required to do or say anything in particular during recordings. Despite this, in most recordings caregivers instruct the children to talk, for example, murrinh thaningerren! ‘Speak!’ or murrinh sturi thurdigithi! ‘Tell a story!’ While such utterances occasionally prompted speech from the children, they were more readily met with silence, direct refusals, or with display of sound plays. For instance, when ordered by her grandmother to speak, the focus child Tabitha flatly replies wurda, ‘no’,31 before walking off. When the mother of Acacia, another focus child, instructs her to talk, Acacia responds with murrinh murrinh murrinh ‘language language language’32. Similarly, in multiple recordings, the focus children Benjamin and Raymond produce a string of nonsense words and random sounds when they are told to ‘say something’. Examples such as these suggest that in spite of the camera’s presence, and adults’ active encouragement to talk, the children did not feel coerced to behave in a particular way.

30 In fact, for certain people the recording equipment was synonymous with me. In one recording Annunciata told her daughter Casimira to tell a story ngarra Lucy, to me. As I was a distance away Casimira asked how she was to do this. Ngarra nanthi kanhi matha nange, ‘Tell her in this thing just here’, Annunciata replied, pointing to the microphone. LAMP_20150416_LD_01_00:01:37:541
31 LAMP_20140917_LD_01_00:05:37.631
32 LAMP_20140318_LD_02_00:03:05.585
4.1.3.1. Equipment

All sessions were recorded for both audio and video data. Sony digital video recorders, HXR-NX30P, were used in each session, mounted on tripods. For most recordings two cameras were used, which captured the participants from two different angles, one close-up and one recording a broader scene to allow for people wandering about. For other recordings only one camera was used. The number of cameras used was determined by two factors, how many little hands were intent on fiddling with the equipment, and the size of the recording area. For smaller, more enclosed areas two cameras was deemed both unnecessary and too imposing.

Two children were recorded in every session bar one. Each wore a small, custom-made backpack\textsuperscript{33}, fitted with a hidden lapel microphone and a Senheisser wireless transmitter. The placement of these within the backpacks can be seen in Fig. 4.1.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{backpack_diagram.png}
\caption{Location of transmitter and lapel microphone in children's backpacks}
\end{figure}

The matching receivers (to the transmitters) were connected to one of the two cameras. This can be seen in Figure 4.2, over the page. One of the lapel microphones recorded in the left channel of the stereo audio track, while the other microphone recorded in the right. This split audio helped determine which child was speaking when transcribing the data.

\textsuperscript{33} Made of cotton, they were lightweight, with adjustable straps, and a buckle across the child’s chest, which proved conveniently difficult for children to undo themselves.
Using these backpacks allowed children to run around freely in recordings. Their speech was recorded clearly up to a distance of around 50 metres from the receiver/camera.

The speech of those accompanying the children, generally two caregivers and often one or two other children, was picked up by the backpack microphones. The second camera, when used, was set up with a shotgun microphone. This audio recording worked as a backup in case there was a problem with the recording from the backpacks. In the end, these back up recordings were not needed.
Most children had a complex relationship with the *beg wakal*, the backpacks (lit. ‘little bags’). They clearly enjoyed the social prestige that came along with wearing them, of being one of the ‘chosen’ children. Those without a backpack were often visibly upset, at least momentarily, on missing out. However, most children also found the backpacks irritating after a while, and in certain weather, hot. The demand for adults to *thungupirt*, ‘take it off!’, was commonly made by children in the latter stages of many recordings. Multiple calls to take the backpacks off tended to dictate the end of the recording session.

4.1.3.2. Location

Recordings were made in a variety of locations, depending on the preferences of the participants, and on the weather. The first data collection trip took place in the wet season, therefore due to the flooded road and the daily storms, most recordings were made in town, in the local park area, or outside people’s houses. On other trips recording locations also included a local lookout, beach areas, nearby fishing spots, and swimming holes.

4.1.3.3. Activities

The activities people engaged in during recordings depended on the location. Irrespective of this, at every recording session participants were provided with food and drink, and facilities to make tea on a fire. This was recommended by other linguistic fieldworkers who had previously worked in the area, as an activity that was both culturally appropriate and good for gently encouraging people to sit about and talk.

Recordings in town did not involve making a billy of tea on a fire, for practicality reasons. In-town activities that children engaged in included climbing on the play equipment in the park, looking for creatures such as lizards and canetoads, and playing with natural objects in their surrounds, for example making tiny houses out of leaves and sticks, or using sticks as play weapons. A few recordings were made in, or on the front porch of, houses that I was staying in. Activities in these sessions also included looking through magazines, playing with toys, and listening to (quiet) music.

Most recordings that took place outside of Wadeye involved a more elaborate picnic than those in town, often with tea and damper made on a fire. These recordings also involved all manners of activities, for example, fishing, collecting and cooking shellfish (*ku thali*, ‘longbums’, and *ku balli*, ‘crabs’), looking for *mi marrai*, bush potatoes, playing on the car, climbing trees, drawing on cement with charcoal, and making structures out of sand, using cups and spoons. The activities that participants engaged in while being filmed were not controlled, other than ensuring children did not go swimming until their backpacks were removed.
4.1.3.4. My role in the recordings

I was present at all recordings, although when possible I absented myself for a period of time by walking off somewhere nearby. This was especially important in the first recordings, as it was a foreign context for most children, which I felt would not have been helped by the presence of an outsider. I applied Corsaro’s (1997) ‘reactive methods of field entry’, in that I let children react to my presence in initial recordings, rather than actively pursuing interactions with them.

In subsequent recording sessions I followed Demuth (1996) and Bowerman (1973) and attempted to keep interactions with the children to a minimum during recordings. However, maintaining a passive presence in recordings grew increasingly difficult as the children became more familiar
with me. In fact, for some children the only way to ensure they remained within shot of the cameras and not follow me was if I sat there myself. What’s more, caregivers often encouraged me to sit with them and have a cup of tea. This resulted in me being a more active participant in these recordings than intended.

Yet as Schieffelin (1990) and Cobb-Moore (2008) comment in relation to their own respective experiences, the researcher is a participant whether they choose to be or not. The increasing time I spent within the frame of recordings reflects the natural development in the personal relationships between myself and the participants. It also better mirrored the time spent outside of recordings, which ensured a more natural context. The detrimental impact of this is that it reduced the amount of usable data for this study, as interactions between myself and the children are not included in the analysis.

A note on names
All names of Aboriginal people in this thesis are pseudonyms. The decision to assign English names to participants, and not nicknames, or Murrinhpatha names, was a conscious one. In Wadeye, people tend to supply their English names to non-Aboriginal people, at least initially. For this reason, together with a desire for naming continuity across the broader project that this study is part of, English pseudonyms only are used.

4.1.4. The data
Table 4.2 lists the eight focus children in this study, with their ages in the recordings made at each time point. Each child will be introduced individually in section 4.1.5 of this chapter.

Table 4.2 Age of focus children at each time point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Age at T1</th>
<th>Age at T2</th>
<th>Age at T3</th>
<th>Age at T4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casimira</td>
<td>2;10</td>
<td>3;4-3;5</td>
<td>3;11-4;0</td>
<td>4;5-4;7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damien</td>
<td>2;11</td>
<td>3;5-3;6</td>
<td>3;11-4;0</td>
<td>4;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabitha</td>
<td>3;0</td>
<td>3;6-3;7</td>
<td>4;1-4;2</td>
<td>4;7-4;9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>3;2</td>
<td>3;8</td>
<td>4;2-4;3</td>
<td>4;8-4;9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acacia</td>
<td>3;5</td>
<td>3;11-4;0</td>
<td>4;6-4;7</td>
<td>5;0-5;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>3;11-4;0</td>
<td>4;6-4;7</td>
<td>5;0-5;1</td>
<td>5;6-5;7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mavis</td>
<td>5;4</td>
<td>5;10-5;11</td>
<td>6;4-6;5</td>
<td>6;10-6;11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>5;6-5;7</td>
<td>6;0-6;1</td>
<td>6;7-6;8</td>
<td>7;1-7;2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T1 = timepoint 1 (i.e. field trip 1)

Two other children, brothers Eugene (2;6-4;0) and Clarence (4;7-6;1), were recorded just as these eight children were, at all time points. Their data was not included in this study, however, as they both remained visibly uncomfortable with the recording situation on all four field trips. In an attempt to address this, I spent considerable time with them and their family outside of recordings, and also made slight modifications to the recording setup, such as using one camera only, and positioning it at a distance from them. Despite this, every recording saw these two children either not speaking at all, or half-heartedly reproducing phrases that their mother insisted they repeat
after her. The discomfort Eugene and Clarence displayed on camera was in stark contrast to how they behaved with each other, with other family members, and with me, before and after the recording equipment was used. The speech data collected from these children was therefore deemed non-naturalistic, non-spontaneous, and therefore not useable for this study. The very first recording made with Charlie and his family was not included in the study for the same reason. While unfortunate, Eugene and Clarence’s discomfort highlighted the ease with which other children dealt with the recording situation, and the ‘naturalness’ of their speech.

Table 4.3 shows the total minutes that each child was recorded. Two or more recordings were made per focus child each trip, with the exception of Casimira at T1, for whom there is one recording only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3 Minutes of data recorded per child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHILDREN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casimira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabitha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acacia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mavis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*italics: child was present in the recording but was not wearing a backpack mic (therefore often less speech recorded for them, as microphone not always near them)*

Recordings were ideally made near the beginning, and in the middle of each field trip, to allow for time to work with caregivers on transcriptions. All recordings were at least partly transcribed.

Participants were paid for their involvement in recordings. The adult caregivers received money, while children received stickers. Adults were also paid for transcription work they undertook.
4.1.4.1. Transcription

All data reported in table 4.3 was transcribed to some degree, and was done so in the multimedia annotation software, ELAN (Sloetjes & Wittenberg, 2008). This software, developed by the Max Plank Institute in Nijmegen, allows for complex annotations of media, and is also capable of managing multiple video and audio files simultaneously.

As is common in language documentation work, a ‘team transcription’ system was used in this study. This entails a linguist and a native speaker working together to transcribe files. Although time-consuming, this method proved to be highly effective. It was also necessary. Unlike some studies on children’s language (e.g. Rose & Brittain, 2011; Stoll et al., 2012), transcription work for the present study was not able to be done independently by native speakers. Representative of the Wadeye community at large, most women I worked with had fairly low levels of literacy.

To maximise the productivity of transcription sessions, I prepared each file as well as possible prior to working on it with a speaker. This involved segmenting utterances in ELAN and organising them in terms of speaker. This allowed me to play isolated utterances in turn to the language worker and repeat as necessary. Prior to working with speakers I also transcribed any speech that I was confident of, myself. While preparing the file in this way, I also took note of sections that seemed to contain rich language data, and focused first on these in the sessions.

The transcription work was undertaken with native Murrinhpatha speakers, all of whom were female caregivers of the children. The work involved deciphering the children’s utterances in Murrinhpatha, and then, depending on the individual’s English proficiency, providing me with a translation of what was said. People worked on recordings that featured their own children or children with whom they have a close relationship. This ensured that the language worker was familiar with the particular child’s manner of speech, and details of their daily life. This was especially important for transcribing some of the younger children’s language. When checking transcriptions that I was unsure of I worked with different caregivers within the relevant family.

Most of the women who engaged in this work had never had a job before. I therefore considered it a priority to make the transcription work, a laborious process by any account, as positive an experience as possible. This meant stopping the session when the language worker seemed tired or bored. Family responsibilities also meant that young children were also often present in transcription sessions. An effective (and pleasant) way to address these issues was to combine this work with trips to nearby picnic spots outside of town, when possible (as in Fig. 4.6), rather than work inside a room. This minor adaptation made the work more enjoyable and manageable for everyone involved, adults and children alike, and resulted in women regularly requesting more transcription work. Transcription sessions, most of which were audio-recorded, ended up being rich sources of cultural data themselves. A focused yet relaxed activity, the context of transcription sessions often inspired tangential explanations and stories from the women. This proved to be invaluable to this study.
4.1.4.2. Processing the data

From the relatively large corpus of data detailed in table 4.3, children’s peer talk was processed for analysis. Just as the term ‘peer’ is taken to mean any other child, so is a generous interpretation of ‘peer talk’ applied in this study. Peer talk includes all speech produced by children that is not directed to adults, and that is not self-talk. As such, some of what I refer to in this dissertation as children’s peer talk does not occur away from the presence of adults; it simply does not directly involve them.

**Coding procedure: Applying Stokoe’s (2012) guiding principles for MCA**

The present study applies Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) (Sacks 1992) to the children’s speech data. As described in Chapter 2, MCA is ethomethodological in its orientation, in that its chief focus is to investigate how things are done between social members. MCA research analyses people’s use of categories in naturally occurring talk. Categories are treated as linguistic resources, and are examined for the particular purposes that speakers put them to in interactions.

I follow Stokoe (2012) in examining only the “explicit and largely unambiguous uses of categories” (p.283) produced by speakers. While insightful research has been produced investigating speakers’ implicit categorisation work, this looser application of Membership Categorisation Analysis was felt to pose too many risks. Investigations into implicit categorisation work often rely heavily on ‘cultural insider’ judgements and knowledge. Such an approach was not appropriate to adopt in this study as I am a cultural outsider, two times over; I am neither *kardu thipnam*, ‘Aboriginal’, nor
am I a child. Restricting the data to speakers’ explicit orientations to categories helped to ensure that the analysis remained robust, transparent, and participant- rather than researcher- driven.

In terms of the application of MCA to the speech data, I drew on Stokoe (2012, p.280)’s ‘guiding principles’. These guidelines span the collection of data to its analysis. They are listed here, in italics, followed by a description of their implementation in the present study.

1) **Data should be collected across a variety of contexts.**

The variety of contexts in the present study are the different time points, which provide four different ‘age contexts’ for each focus child. Also varied are the recording locations, and, as much as possible, the children’s co-participants. As this study is primarily concerned with children’s peer talk, these ‘different contexts’ do not extend to child-adult dialogues, or utterances which children direct to their ancestors, or to myself. Children’s self-talk is also not included. Utterances that appear to be produced for the group at large, rather than a specific individual, are included in the dataset, provided that at least one other child is in the immediate vicinity of the speaker.

2) **Search the data for explicit mentions of categories and compile a collection of them.**

Include in this also ‘category-resonant descriptions’ and category-like terms, which “convey the sense… of being deployed as categories” (Schegloff, 2007, p.480). Examples of these are “don’t be so testosterony” (Stokoe, 2012, p.280) and “I’m not spiderman” (Stokoe, 2009, p.77).

For each child, a collection of category terms produced was made. These collections were organised in relation to the timepoint (T1 – T4) at which they occurred.

Categories describe ‘types’ of people or personae. They may relate to age, occupation, race, character traits, religious beliefs etc. The majority of forms that were considered to be category terms in the present study are nouns, for example, mardinhpuy, ‘girl’, wathpala, ‘non-Aboriginal person’, and nes, ‘nurse’. These terms can appear with nominal classifiers but can also be used without. All forms of kardu, ‘(Aboriginal) person’ plus an adjective were included as category terms. Examples include kardu wakal, ‘child’, kardu pathama ‘capable person’, kardu wiye ‘bad person’. These were only treated as categories, however, if both elements, kardu and the adjective, were produced. So, while the utterance ngayka kardu ngalla, ‘I’m a grown up’, was treated as containing a category term, the same utterance produced without the noun, ngayka ngalla, ‘I’m big’, was not. Kinship terms were also classified as categories, as there are local understandings of specific family relationships. For example, a grandfather is expected to behave in a particular manner with his grandchild and vice versa.

Just as Stokoe (2009) deems ‘spiderman’ a category, as in the utterance “I’m not spiderman”, so too were superhero and other non-human characters included as category terms in the present study. This is due to the fact that speakers can trade on the “known-in-common properties” (Stokoe 2009, p.78) of each character. Spiderman, for example, is known to have a spider-like ability to climb, just as The Hulk is understood to have superhuman strength. The local folkloric characters of ku
kunugunu and ku ngalantharr, the old woman and old man spirit, respectively, were also treated as categories in the present study, as well as ku karrath, ‘devil’, and the English term, ‘ghost’. There are ideas about how these characters behave, and speakers can (and do) orient to these personae just as they do types of superheroes.

In the present study, collective pro-terms were also included as categories, which, although a less common practice, is seen in numerous MCA studies (Demosthenous, 2012; Housley & Fitzgerald, 2009; Leudar, Marsland, & Nekvapil, 2004). This is particularly true of MCA work that looks at matters of social inclusion/exclusion. Collective pro-terms were considered important to include in this study, due to the information that can be conveyed through them in Murrinhpatha.

Murrinhpatha non-singular free pronouns, or collective pro-terms, can encode dual, paucal and plural number, inclusivity and exclusivity, plus siblinghood and non-siblinghood. Speakers must therefore choose which particular ‘we/us’ term they will produce. Much of the information that free pronouns can convey is also expressed through verbal morphology in Murrinhpatha. In spite of this, children’s verbal forms are not included in the dataset for this study. This decision was made due to the fact that, while person number, gender and sibling encoded in verbal morphology are emic categories for adult speakers, they do not appear to be so for children (yet) (Blythe et al., in prep).

Another particularity of this study is that in Murrinhpatha speaking culture there are categories that relate specifically to an individual’s identity as a kardu thipmam, an Indigenous person. As detailed in the previous chapter, these include categories of land and totems. The reason for their inclusion in this study is that they constitute intelligible and ratifiable membership of the race category, kardu thipmam. Mentions of these terms were organised together as examples of the kardu thipmam set of categories.

In terms of analysis, kardu thipmam categories were treated like any other category, such as ‘girl’ or ‘child’. Where they differ is in what qualifies as a mention of these categories. While a person can be labelled a kulbuy, ‘boy’, or a titha, ‘teacher’, membership to kardu thipmam categories is a further step removed. An individual themselves is not a ngakumarl, ‘totem’. Rather, their ngakumarl is a particular entity, for example, ku walet, ‘fruit bat’, to which they are connected. This connection, and those to other kardu thipmam categories, constitutes a person’s membership to the category, kardu thipmam. Therefore, when a speaker claims, ngakumarl ngayka ku wa, ‘my totem is the crow’, they are using the kardu thipmam category, ngakumarl, ‘totem’, and, through this, they are indexing their status as a kardu thipmam member.

Not included for analysis

Mentions of kardu thipmam categories were included in the analysis only if ‘complete’; when a speaker produced the kardu thipmam category along with a relevant entity. An example of an utterance that was not included in the study is provided below. The child, Mavis, produces the
category, *tim*, ‘football team’, which is treated as a *kardu thipmam* category, as it is a derivative of the traditional category, *ngakumarl*, ‘totem’.

Ex. (4.1)

Mavis (5;4):  
*tim ngay-ka nan*  
*My team is whatchimacallit*

While the speaker clearly uses the category of ‘football team’ in relation to herself, she does not articulate the particular entity that constitutes her category membership. As such, Mavis’ production of *tim* is not included in the collection of category mentions compiled for analysis.

There are two more circumstances in which mentions of category terms were excluded from analysis. Both of these relate to ensuring the spontaneous nature of the use of categories. The first exclusion covers category terms that were used as vocatives, for single addressees. The reason for this restriction was to avoid including children’s use of nicknames in the data set. The other restriction of categories applies to songs. Local songs produced in Wadeye tend to centre around *kardu thipmam* identity categories, and the lyrics are filled with mentions of such category membership. Not only are song lyrics not spontaneous speech, they were written by adults, not children, and not these children. As a precaution, all category terms that children appear to produce in song were excluded from the study.

**Implicit categories**

The overwhelming majority of children’s orientations to categories analysed in this study involve the child’s explicit production of category terms. However, there are a handful of instances included in the dataset in which a speaker orients to a category but does so without using the term. These constitute the “largely unambiguous uses of categories” referred to by Stokoe as opposed to the “explicit” mentions (Stokoe, 2012, p.283). Such examples are included in the dataset only if another participant in the interaction explicitly produces the category term. Excerpt 4.2 below illustrates such an instance. In this example, Tabitha is considered to be orienting to the category, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’ in her utterance, despite the fact that she does not explicitly mention the term. This is due to the fact that her brother, Maurice, produces the category term in his turn immediately prior.

Ex. (4.2)

1 Maurice:  
dawudawu-nu nganki aa Casimira *kardu ngalla*::  
*Let’s play tag  Oh, Casimira’s a gro::wn up*

2 Tabitha:  
*ngay de*  
*Me too*

3 (1.7)

4 Casimira:  
en (0.3) Tabitha-*ka*  
*and  Tabitha*
As the category term *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, has been explicitly produced in this interaction, Tabitha’s assertion in line 2 is considered to be an ‘unambiguous’ orientation to it. This contrasts with the following example, which shows a child’s implicit category work that is not included for analysis. In ex. 4.3, children Tabitha and Acacia, and their grandmother Carla, produce names of particular football teams. While it can be safely assumed that Tabitha is alluding to a football team in line 3, her utterance is not included in the study, as neither she, nor others in the interaction, here or either side of this excerpt, produce the category term, *tim*, ‘team’.

Ex. (4.3)

1 Tabitha: nebirl boma
*Look, Bombers!* ((holds up a playing card to the group))

2 Carla: nigunu-ka dimen na nigunu-yu
*She’s Demons, isn’t she* ((to Tabitha))

3 Acacia: ngay-ka dimen warda
*I’m Demons now* ((to Tabitha))

As this example, and its lack of inclusion in the study, demonstrates, I approached the data conservatively. While this meant that some instances of children’s orientations to categories were excluded from the dataset, I considered this a price worth paying to ensure a robust analysis.

3) **Determine which membership categorisation devices are at work** in the interactions involving category terms, e.g. ‘occupation’, ‘stage of life’, or ‘family’.

Determining the particular categorisation device in operation involved looking for which categories speakers treat as going together; which categories are positioned as belonging to the one set. In order to do this, I examined each category mention within its interactional context. The particular device at play was most readily determined when multiple category terms were used by speakers in the one stretch of talk. The production of more than one term positioned the categories as connected, from a speaker perspective.

In some instances, the use of multiple category terms helped refine the precise meaning of the category used. This can be seen in excerpt 4.4, which sees two brothers, Raymond and Benjamin, speak to a female cousin, who is around the same age as Raymond. The excerpt begins with Raymond producing two category terms, one after the other, in line 1: *mardinhpuy*, ‘girl’ and *kulbuy*, ‘boy’. Each of these terms can be viewed as belonging to the stage of life collection as well as that of gender. The interactional context itself- two children of a similar age, and of opposite genders- implies that gender categories are more likely to be salient than stage of life. However, rather than relying on intuitions about what seems ‘more likely’, Raymond’s use of both of these terms together indicates that they belong to the one set. Seeing as ‘girl’ and ‘boy’ in Murrinhpatha go together with respect to gender, not stage of life, it is the categorisation device of gender that he mobilises here.
Ex. (4.4)

1 Raymond: nhinhi-ka mardinhpuy-wa kulbuy wakal
You’re a girl Or are you a little boy?
2
3 Raymond: nhinhi-ka kul[buy]
You’re a boy?
4 Benjamin: [nga]rra kul-[ngarra kulbuy]-ya le thanam
With the bo-
You like being with boys
5 Judith: awul ((growly voice))
no!
6 Judith: nigunu-ka mardinhpuy de ngay Mary Lucy
She’s a girl just like me, Martha and Lucy

In line 4 of this excerpt, Raymond’s brother Benjamin also produces a category term, kulbuy, ‘boy’. Given the previous category mentions from Raymond in this same stretch of talk, we can say that in his use of kulbuy Benjamin orient(s) to the device already in play: gender.

In one instance, speakers’ choice of terms indicated a less typical category set. Cousins Mavis and Molly engage in an extended activity, a small portion of which is provided in excerpt 4.5 below. In between speaking inkalith, ‘English’, or a representation thereof, Mavis produces the category term, bas, ‘boss’.

Ex. (4.5)

1 Mavis: ngay-wa ku bas ne (0.7) inkalith
I’m the boss, aren’t I English
2
3 Mavis: don ran kam iya
don’t run, come here
4 Molly: am ka:ming
I’m coming!

Shortly after this, another child, Acacia, joins the activity, producing the term alk, ‘the Hulk’ (not shown in this ex. 4.5). Other superhero characters are then incorporated by the participants, as is the category, ku wathpala, ‘whitefella’. When orienting to these categories, the girls produce English words, phrases and sounds. Looking at the interaction as a whole, the common factor across these categories as used by these three children is inkalith, ‘English’. Rather than classifying ‘boss’ as belonging to the occupation collection, or ‘whitefella’ to that of race, the terms are classified in relation to their context of use: as belonging to the category introduced in line 1, ‘English speaking’.

However, for most instances in the data, only single category terms were produced, either a sole mention by one child or multiple children orienting to the same category. What’s more, most peer interactions in the data were quite short in duration, allowing little chance to glean the particular categorisation devices in operation. Despite looking at category mentions in context, it was therefore not always possible to confidently ascertain which device was at work. In these
situations I classified each category term into a collection with what I felt were similar categories. For example, when kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’ was the sole category used in an interaction, and the context did not suggest otherwise, I classed this category term as belonging to the ‘stage of life’ set. In a speaker-driven analysis it is of course not ideal to group category terms from an analyst’s perspective. In fact, the argument has been made that labelling categorisation devices is merely “an analytical exercise for scholars” (Reynolds, 2013, p.147), given that speakers themselves do not name the devices they mobilise, or the collections to which particular categories belong. However, in order to describe the use of category terms across children in the cohort it was necessary to organise each category mention into collections/sets. Ten sets of categories were apparent in the data, shown in the table and described below.

Table 4.4 Category sets and their corresponding categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY SET</th>
<th>CATEGORIES COMPRISING THE SET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kardu thipmam</td>
<td>Categories of land, language, name, clan, dance group, totem, football team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivity</td>
<td>Collective pro-terms, mob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Terms for definable jobs, such as ‘doctor’, ‘teacher’, plus also ‘driver’ and ‘boss’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Binary categories of male and female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage of life</td>
<td>Terms relating to a person’s age/stage of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonhuman characters</td>
<td>Aboriginal folkloric personae and characters from Western popular culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal qualities</td>
<td>Terms reflecting an attribute of a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Kinship terms, including husband and wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Binary categories of kardu thipmam and non-Aboriginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English speaking</td>
<td>‘Boss’, ‘whitefella’, superheroes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All terms relating to kardu thipmam identity (land, language, name, clan, dance group, totem, and its derivative, football team) were classified as belonging to the kardu thipmam set. Collective pro-terms and mup, ‘mob’, were classified as belonging to the ‘collectivity’ collection. Terms such as nurse, teacher, boss, policeman, and driver were deemed ‘occupation’ categories. The collection of gender terms comprise two categories, male and female. In terms of non-human personae, traditional folkloric spirits and Western characters, such as superheroes, were classified as belonging to the one collection, of nonhuman characters. Categories such as kardu wiye, ‘bad person’, kardu pathama, ‘capable person’, and ekspet, ‘expert’ were grouped together as personal qualities. Categories in the family set included kinship terms plus the categories nangkun and palngun, ‘husband and wife’. The race set was made up of the two binary categories, kardu thipmam and ku wathpala, Aboriginal person and non-Aboriginal person. The ‘English speaking’ set, which relates to one interaction only, includes the categories boss, whitefella, and superheroes.

5) Examine each utterance containing a category term, or category-like term, in relation to the on-going talk in which it occurs. Specifically, note its design and ‘action orientation’. That is, deduce the social action/s that the speaker is attempting to achieve through their utterance.
Looking at the children’s category mentions in their contexts of use, I determined the action pursued by the speaker in each relevant utterance. As Pomerantz and Fehr (1997) explain, in their guidelines for a conversation analytic approach to data, this involves asking the question, “What is this participant doing in this turn?” (p.72). The answer to this question lies in the participants’ conduct, not from speculation on the part of the analyst.

Various action orientations emerged from the data. I sorted these into two groups: actions that are ‘affiliative’ in nature and actions that are ‘disaffiliative’. Affiliative actions can be viewed, broadly, as promoting solidarity with an interlocutor. Disaffiliative actions instead promote difference or opposition between speakers.

Six affiliative actions were observed in the data. Four of these relate to children’s use of categories in relation to ‘activities’, where an activity is defined as a joint engagement, in which children demonstrate a shared visual and cognitive focus. This could be by speaking on the same topic, and/or occupying themselves in physical behaviour for a common goal. The affiliative actions that children pursue with the help of categories are detailed below, in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Affiliative actions in the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFILIATIVE ACTION</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group together with other/s:</td>
<td>Collect oneself and one or more other people together into a group or pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positively assess:</td>
<td>Evaluate another person and/or their actions positively (Goodwin &amp; Goodwin, 1992, p. 154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an activity:</td>
<td>Instigate a new activity, or extend an activity that is already in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in an activity:</td>
<td>Demonstrate one’s engagement in an activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek entry into an activity:</td>
<td>Attempt to join an ongoing activity that other children are already engaged in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate the participation of others in an activity:</td>
<td>Encourage peers to join an activity, or aid their participation within an activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine disaffiliative actions were observable in the data, and are detailed here, in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Disaffiliative actions in the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISAFFILIATIVE ACTION</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuate self:</td>
<td>Differentiate oneself from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuate other/s:</td>
<td>Mark others as different from oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose another’s statement or action:</td>
<td>Demonstrate a lack of agreement with another child’s statement or action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assert authority over a physical entity or space:</td>
<td>Claim object or physical area as one’s own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclude:</td>
<td>Reject another’s attempt to join an activity, or order a child to leave the immediate area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tease:</td>
<td>Issue a provocative remark, which contains information that the speaker knows to be untrue; a “nonserious attack” (Tholander, 2002, p. 317)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negatively assess:</td>
<td>Evaluate another person and/or their actions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threaten:</td>
<td>Express a future punishment in order to influence the behaviour of a peer. Threats may specify this future consequence or may remain unspecified (Benoit, 1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak as a caregiver:</td>
<td>Engage in one of the caregiver routines detailed in chapter 3: prompting or teaching knowledge about kardu thipham category membership, or invoking scary personae to control others’ behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final action in this table, to speak as a caregiver, is included as a disaffiliative action in that it promotes a power asymmetry with one’s interlocutor. Caregiver-like talk positions a speaker’s interlocutor in a subordinate, child position.

Some of these disaffiliative actions occur within interactions that are deemed activities. In such cases, the actions are taken to disrupt the activity and thus not be an action within the activity.

**Examples of coding**

Some examples are provided here to illustrate the coding process and the rationale behind decisions in some of the less straight-forward instances. In the first example, two speakers use the category ‘nurse’. Both children’s utterances are coded as pursuing the disaffiliative action ‘asserting authority over an entity’. Non-verbal elements of this exchange informed the coding.

**Action: Assert authority over entity/space (disaffiliative)**

In this brief interaction, Tabitha (3;0) holds a toy stethoscope in her hand. Casimira (2;10) walks towards her, and, reaching her hand towards the object, she produces the category term, ku nes, ‘nurse’. Tabitha reacts by moving the object out of Casimira’s reach, and asserting membership to the category, ‘nurse’ for herself, and, through this, a claim to the object associated with this category.

Ex.(4.6)

1. Casimira: ku nes nurse ((walks up to Tabitha, and reaches for the stethoscope))
2. Tabitha: ngay ku neth I’m the nurse ((lifts the stethoscope above her head))
3. Tabitha: ((walks away from Casimira, holding the stethoscope))

By looking at the non-verbal behaviour in this interaction, it is evident that the action that Casimira tries to accomplish with her category term in line 1 is to take possession of the toy; to assert authority over it. This action is also indicated by the way in which Tabitha responds to her
peer. Tabitha moves the object away from Casimira and issues an utterance of her own. Out of context, Tabitha’s utterance could be viewed as her individuating herself as a nurse. In context, however, Tabitha is responding to Casimira’s attempt to take the object, verbally and physically. She is therefore asserting authority over the object, too. This example demonstrates the importance of viewing utterances in their interactive context when determining which action/s the speaker is pursuing.

The next example shows Acacia also asserting authority over an entity. However here two other actions appear to also be at play. In asserting joint authority over the object, Acacia is grouping herself and Mavis together. Furthermore, in doing so, Acacia is excluding the third child in the situation, Marie-Therese. While these additional actions are described in the analysis, only the initial, primary action is coded for.

Ex.(4.7)

1 Mavis: ((pours water from a drink bottle on her arm))
2 Marie-Therese: ((walks towards the Mavis and Acacia))
3 Acacia: Mavis neki damatha nawa thali-yu
   1.DJ.INC
   Mavis, this mollusc belongs to just us two, doesn’t it
4 Mavis: ((pours water on her arm))
5 Marie-Therese: ((stops approaching and waits, standing behind the girls))

LAMP_20150418_LD_01_00:30:00.731

Action: Individuate self (disaffiliative)

In the following example, all of Acacia’s utterances are coded as ‘individuating self’. While it is also possible that she is orienting to the category of ‘ghost’ in order to develop an activity with her peers, in order for her utterances to be coded as such, a sign of uptake by others present is required. In this stretch of talk, there is no such sign of uptake from peers.

Ex.(4.8)

1 Acacia: ngay-ka gos
   I’m * a ghost
2 Mavis: aa ku were [kanhika *** ]
   and this dog...
3 Molly: [ ngawu ] dangkardu-ya-dha [nhinhi]yu
   hey did you see it?
4 Acacia: [ gos ] ngay-yu
   I’m a ghost
5 Beatrice: awu manganka thungupirt
   no, don’t take it (the backpack) off!
   ((to Tabitha))
6 Acacia: ngay-ka GOS
   I’m a GHOST!

LAMP_20140307_LD_01_00:22:00.141

Action: Developing an activity (affiliative)

In the following example (4.9), Benjamin’s use of the category, kangathi, ‘mother’s country’, in line 3, is coded as the affiliative action of ‘developing an activity’, rather than the disaffiliative action
‘individuating self’. This decision was based on the dialogue that follows. In line 11, Benjamin prompts his interlocutor, Crystal, to similarly individuate herself in relation to *kardu thipmam* categories, through the line, *nhinhi warda*, ‘your turn’. In line 15, Crystal individuates herself in relation to her own country, in a form that echoes Benjamin’s in line 3. Benjamin suggests to Crystal in line 11 that it is her turn to individuate herself, and she demonstrates her uptake of this suggestion in line 15. These subsequent actions in the dialogue indicate that the primary goal of Benjamin’s production of *kangathi* in line 3 is not to mark himself as different from his cousin, but to instigate an activity that is based on their different *kardu thipmam* category memberships.

Ex. (4.9)

1 Terry: ma ma ma  ((extends arm towards the biscuit Deborah is holding))
   *Gimme gimme gimme*

2 Deborah: biskit thulath medeyi-nu[kun ]  ((to Terry))  ((hands Terry the biscuit))
   *Eat the biscuit or else you’ll get hungry*

3 Benjamin:  *[kangjathi]* ngay-ka
   *My mother’s country is*

4 (1.9)  ((stifled chuckling from Benjamin))

5 Benjamin: Nangu
   Nangu

6

7 Deborah: A::wu kantri thama
   *No::: say country*

8 (0.5)

9 Benjamin: kan- tri
   *count- try*

10 (1.8)

11 Benjamin: *nhinhi warda*  ((faces Crystal))
   *your turn*

12 (1.1)

13 Terry: kantri
   *kantri*

14 (0.7)

15 Crystal:  *kantri* ngay-ka (0.5) Kurrangu
   *My country is Kurrangu*

16 (0.7)

17 Terry: Kurrangu
   *Kurrangu*

Action: Facilitating another’s participation in an activity (affiliative)

Excerpt 4.10 begins with Maurice naming his totem (*ku tek*, line 1) and his name (*Yenmeni*, line 2). Before this, other children have also declared their membership to *kardu thipmam* categories, suggesting that the children are engaged in a speech activity organised by the device, *kardu thipmam*. In line 4, Tabitha prompts Declan to declare his connection to the category of *ngakumarl*, ‘totem’. While the form of her prompt aligns with what is treated in this study as ‘caregiver talk’, Tabitha is not considered to be engaging in this action, of speaking as a caregiver. Instead, her production of the category term *ngakumarl*, ‘totem’ in line 4 is coded as ‘facilitating another’s participation in an activity’. This is due to the fact that she produces this prompt within an activity...
that involves declaring one’s membership to *kardu thipmam* categories, as Maurice demonstrates in lines 1, 2, and 6. Tabitha prompts her brother Declan to assert his membership to ‘totem’ in order to join the ongoing speech activity.

Ex.(4.10)

1 Maurice: *ngakumarl* ngay-ka ku tek  
*My totem is the red tailed black cockatoo*

2 Maurice: *murrinh* ngayka Yenmeni  
*my name is Yenmeni*

3 Bernadette: nhinhi-warda thinangerren  
*(to Declan)* your turn now. Speak!

4 Tabitha: *ngakumarl* ngay-ka tek thama  
*(to Declan)*  
*Say *my totem is the red tailed black cockatoo!**

5 ((Declan holds Tabitha by the shoulders and moves her a few paces back))

6 Maurice: *ngakumarl* ngay-ka [ku tek]  
*My totem is the red tailed black cockatoo!*

7 Tabitha: [ku tek]  
*black cockatoo!

Action: Opposing another’s statement/action (disaffiliative)

The following example, 4.11, begins with Marvin prompting Casimira to individuate her *kawu*, ‘maternal grandmother’, in relation to the *kardu thipmam* category of *kangathi*, ‘mother’s country’. In line 5, Casimira queries which *kawu* (mo.mo) Marvin is referring to. This production of *kawu* by Casimira is not included in the analysis. As an other-initiated repair, her use of the term does not fit into a clear affiliation or disaffiliation action type. It is the only one of its kind in interactions between children, however, and as such it was considered not to warrant a reassessment/recategorization of action types. Following Casimira’s repair, Marvin clarifies who the referent in his prompt (in line 1) is in line 6. Casimira then produces a counter assertion in line 8, in which she individuates her grandmother with respect to her an alternate location, Yederr. This counter assertion by Casimira, comprising the category, *da*, ‘land’, is coded as ‘opposing another’s statement’.

Ex.(4.11)

1 ((Martin walks up to Casimira, and leans down close to her ear))

2 Marvin: *°kanhi-ka kangathi kawu* ngay° nukun?  
*This is my grandma’s mother’s country here*

3 (0.8)

4 Marvin: kanhi-ka da Dabul Krasing ngawu (0.4) thama  
*here, at Double Crossing’ You say it*

5 Casimira: *kawu* nangkal  
*Which grandma?*

6 Marvin: Pearl thama-ya  
*Pearl, y’know?*

7 (0.6)

8 Casimira: awu *da* nigunu-ka Yederr-wa nigunu  
*No, her land is Yederr, that’s hers*

9 (1.4)

10 Casimira: Yederr
6) **Examine the interactional consequences of each category term’s use.** The ensuing dialogue is examined to see whether the interlocutor orients to, or resists, the category mentioned, and/or the categorisation device which the speaker has mobilised.

Lastly, I noted the responses from other speech participants to the uses of categories. I looked for whether or not a speaker’s category membership was ratified or rejected by others. I also examined the interaction to see whether or not a person oriented to the same device as the initial speaker. Of interest with respect to both of these points was the ways in which participants carried out these actions of endorsing or resisting a categorisation.

In terms of the actions being pursued by speakers, by looking at the reactions that their utterance engenders, the actions could be deemed ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’. That is, a child could seek entry into an activity and either achieve this goal or fail to achieve it. The relative success of a speaker’s action did not impact on the coding of the utterances.

What should also be noted is that frequency of use is not addressed in this study. MCA research does not focus on how often speakers use particular categories in interactions. Instead, the primary focus lies in what speakers do with category terms, and which category term they select to pursue the action. The regularity of their productions is considered to be less important than the fact that they are produced.

The process undertaken in applying MCA to the data followed the principles laid out by Stokoe (2012). Category terms were first located in the data for each child, at all four time points. The particular membership categorisation device at work in the interaction was also noted. Utterances containing categories were then analysed for their particular action orientation, and for the reaction they prompted from other interactants. I also noted any actions or qualities which speakers showed to be associated with a particular category term. The actions of each category-containing utterance were then organised according to their sociality; whether the speaker used categories to pursue an action that was ‘affiliative’ or ‘disaffiliative’ in nature.

### 4.1.5. The children

In this section, each of the eight focus children is introduced. The age provided in brackets for each child is their age at their initial recording. Siblings who frequently appear in recordings together are first introduced together before individually. Prior to meeting the children, however, I make two brief notes: one on the terminology used, and the other on hearing conditions. The children’s introductions follow immediately after this.

**A note on terms**

Prior to these introductions, however, a brief note on names and terms used is required. Just as I refer to Aboriginal people from Wadeye in this dissertation using the term that they use to
describe themselves: *kardu thipmam*, so do I apply the local definition of siblings and cousins. As mentioned in section 3.3.3 of the previous chapter, siblings of the same sex are viewed as social equivalents in Wadeye society, and the children of sisters are considered full brothers and sisters (*ngathan/paba* and *munak/mumak*, respectively). The same holds for the children of multiple brothers. In the literature, children in these relationships are often termed either ‘classificatory siblings’ or ‘parallel cousins’. Children of a man and children of that man’s sister are, on the other hand, considered to be cousins, *pugarli*. These children are referred to in the literature as ‘cross cousins’.

Rather than using these analyst-created terms, I employ the local interpretation of social relationships wherever possible. Given my aims in this study to present a speaker-centric description of children’s language use, it is appropriate to refer to children’s social relationships with the terms that speakers use themselves. For the purpose of clarity, however, the children’s relationships are described in their introductions in both insider and outsider terms.

**Hearing conditions**

Around the end of the data collection process, two of the eight focus children in this study were diagnosed with hearing impairments. Otitis media (middle ear disease) is rife amongst Aboriginal populations, with infections more common and of a greater average duration than in non-Aboriginal children (Couzos, Metcalf, & Murray, 2001). In fact, a large scale study, conducted in four areas of Northern and Central Australia, found that 91% of the 6-30 month old Indigenous children that were tested had some form of otitis media (Morris et al., 2005). The two children in the present study who have diagnosed hearing conditions were therefore not removed from the analysis, as, tragically, hearing impairments are part of what ‘normal’ hearing is for children in Wadeye today.

4.1.5.1. Casimira and Tabitha

Casimira (2;10) and Tabitha (3;0) are sisters, in that their respective mothers, Annunciata and Bernadette, are sisters. Annunciata and Bernadette are both *kardu thay*, of the tree people clan. Their country is Kungarlbarl, and their chief totem is *kanarnturturt*, the crocodile. Both girls’ *kangathi*, ‘mother’s country’ is therefore Kungarlbarl, and the crocodile, while not either of their totems, is an important animal for them, as it is the totem of their household and of their extended family.

Casimira and Tabitha live with their maternal family, and are cared for by their mothers, their mothers’ sisters, and Pearl, their maternal grandmother. Annunciata also has a son, 4 years older than Casimira; Bernadette has four sons older than Tabitha. These boys are all considered brothers to each of the girls. Numerous cousins and their parents also live in this house. During my first two fieldtrips, Casimira, Tabitha, and their maternal family lived in a house at *Pangkin* (Top Camp). Their house was often referred to, not by its colour, but in relation to their ‘cheeky’ dog, named *kanarnturturt*, ‘Crocodile’. During my third trip, the girls’ entire extended
family moved into a larger house in Nguminhik, an area on the other side of the main street of town. Annunciata told me this was to escape the fighting that was happening regularly between young men in the Top Camp area.

Both girls went to crèche most days of the week in 2014 and regularly attended preschool in 2015. Although neither child appeared to speak much English, they would have been exposed to considerably more English, and to more non-Aboriginal people, than the other children in the study due to this attendance.

In each recording that Casimira participated in, Tabitha was also present, and also wore a backpack mic. Given that Casimira and Tabitha were almost never apart in everyday life, this pairing of them in recordings reflected their natural grouping off camera.

**Casimira**, the youngest member of the cohort, is of the clan yek Maninh. Her country extends from Manthathpe to the nearby coastal areas Yinthin and Ngantimeli. While Wadeye is not within the bounds of her country, Murrinhpatha is her language. Casimira’s main totem is *ku werrk*, the sulphur-crested cockatoo, and her football team is the St Kilda Saints. Casimira tends to be addressed and referred to by a nickname, which is one of her totems. The one exception to this is Pearl, the girls’ maternal grandmother, who almost exclusively addresses Casimira with the kinterm, *kawu*, grandchild. Casimira is Pearl’s favourite grandchild. This fact is discernible in interactions, and Pearl has explicitly informed me of the fact numerous times.

Casimira rarely if ever stays with her paternal relatives in Manthathpe. This is despite one of her mother’s sisters, often a caregiver of Casimira’s, living there with her partner as of my fourth fieldtrip. Casimira’s father does not appear to have much involvement in her day-to-day life.

**Tabitha** is of the Diminin clan. Murrinhpatha is therefore her language, and Wadeye is located on her country. Her chief totem is *ku tek*, the red tailed black cockatoo, and her football team, with its colours of red and black, is the Essendon Bombers. Tabitha appears to be exclusively called by her nickname, which, just like Casimira’s, is one of her totems.

Very occasionally Tabitha stays in Nilinh, with relatives on her father’s side. However, her father appears to play no active role in Tabitha’s life.

### 4.1.5.2. Damien

Damien (2;11) is the youngest of four children.\(^{34}\) He is of the Diminin clan. As such, Wadeye is on his country and Murrinhpatha is his language. His chief totem is *ku tek*, the red-tailed black cockatoo.

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\(^{34}\) By my fifth fieldtrip Damien had a 3 month old baby brother. Throughout the data collection period however Damien was the youngest.
Damien spends the majority of his time living at Nilinh, in a house with his mother and father. Many of his paternal relatives live in houses either side of this. Damien’s father is known for his bad temper. His mother, Rhonda, is of the Thangkurral clan, and is a demonstrably warm, nurturing person.

Damien also spends considerable time at his maternal grandparents’ house in Peppenhi, Bottom Camp. He sleeps there not infrequently, but much less often than his three siblings do. Rhonda and her parents are literate, speak English fluently, and actively value education. Rhonda’s mother has worked at the school for years, and Rhonda regularly sits in the classroom with her youngest children in order to encourage them to stay at school. Both Rhonda, and Damien’s teenage sister, Luella, dote on Damien as the baby of the family. They often spoke to him using ‘baby talk’, squeezing his cheeks, and kissing him. Rhonda still occasionally breastfed Damien on my fourth fieldtrip, at age four and a half.

Damien is addressed and referred to by his English name, and, while actively denying his Murrinhpatha name in 2015, on my fieldtrip in 2016 he proudly informed me of his Aboriginal name, entirely unprompted. His grandmother recently informed me that Damien has latterly taken to refusing to wear clothes, declaring that he is a ‘bushman’, and regularly asserting his membership to kardu thipmam categories.

Damien’s football team is the Melbourne Demons, however over the course of this study he seemed to show little interest in this. Unlike most other children in town, Damien did not once mention his team, nor did he appear to care for football paraphernalia.

Damien’s older brother had been a focus child in William Forshaw’s PhD research, in the same overarching child language project, LAMP35. However Damien and his mother had little direct involvement in this process.

4.1.5.3. Charlie

Charlie (3;11) stands out from the other focus children in a number of ways. While all other children in the study are either siblings or cousins to one another, Charlie has connections to a different section of Wadeye society. He also has family in Peppimenarti, a small town 100 kms from Wadeye; Nan’gitjemmerri country and today predominantly Kriol-speaking.

While Charlie has many siblings and cousins, he is the only biological child of his mother, Sarah, and father, Leon. Both of his parents are quite different from other caregivers in the study. Charlie’s mother Sarah came to live in Wadeye in her late teens. While Sarah’s mother is Murrinhpatha, of the kardu Diminin people, her father’s country, and thus her own, is Wududuk, an area near Peppimenarti. Sarah defines herself as a ‘freshwater’ person, as opposed to a ‘saltwater’ person such as most people living in Wadeye. She attended boarding school in Darwin

35 Language Acquisition in Murrinhpatha, based at The University of Melbourne
for one year when she was younger, and is highly proficient in English. While she and I developed a warm friendship, Sarah referred to me as her ‘boss’, and to recording and transcription sessions, which she claimed and seemed to enjoy, as ‘work’.

Most people in town appear to be wary of Charlie’s father, Leon. In fact, many women in the community explicitly told me not trust him, or to interact with him at all. Leon was never acknowledged by his father as a son. He uses his mother’s surname, and associates with his mother’s side of the family. Yet in certain situations he identified himself to me in terms of his (father’s) country. An example of this is when he gave me his blessing to work with the mother of Benjamin and Raymond, two other focus children in this study, as he shares “one totem, one country” with her. Leon’s cultural identity in terms of kardu thipmam categories appears to be somewhat uncertain. As Charlie’s father, this can be assumed to directly impact Charlie’s own kardu thipmam membership, as these connections are transmitted patrilineally.

Apart from my fourth fieldtrip, during which Sarah and Charlie lived at Leon’s mother’s house (Charlie’s mangka, his paternal grandmother), Charlie lived with his mother’s family. Due to this, Charlie has grown up hearing a mixture of Murrinhpatha and Kriol spoken at home. While Sarah, her siblings and parents speak predominantly Murrinhpatha when in Wadeye, there were often Kriol-speaking relatives from elsewhere staying with them. Most of the maternal side of Charlie’s family is fluent in English, and his maternal grandfather often works with non-Aboriginal tradesmen around town. Sarah tells me that Charlie understands Kriol, but that he always responds in Murrinhpatha.

With regards to the area of town in which Charlie and his maternal family lived, on my first two fieldtrips they were in a house in New Nilinh, or Nilinh tiduk, a new area of Wadeye a considerable walk from the centre of town, before moving into a busy house at Pangkin, Top Camp. On my transcription fieldtrip in 2016 Charlie and Sarah were living in Peppimenarti.

Charlie’s football team is the Richmond Tigers, as is his mother’s and his father’s. The three of them share a team because, as Sarah explained to me, they are a family. For Sarah, football teams are not always connected to totems. Sarah and Charlie also support the Western Bulldogs, as it is the team of Charlie’s extended maternal family.

Charlie attended school very rarely during the course of this study. The reason he gave for this was thu kuy, ‘fighting’ or ‘bullying’. His mother, Sarah, is wary of institutional education, and instead dedicates herself to educating Charlie about his ancestors, the spirit world, and traditional practices. However, when Charlie was living in Peppi, as he was at the time of my transcription field trip, in 2016, he attended school willingly and regularly.

In terms of names, only Charlie’s Murrinhpatha name is used when addressing or talking about him; never his English name, nor any observable nickname.
4.1.5.4. Acacia and Mavis

Acacia (3;5) and Mavis (5;4) are sisters, with the same biological mother and father. They also have two younger sisters. They are Murrinhpatha people, of the Diminin clan. The girls’ father and Damien’s father are brothers, meaning that Damien, Acacia, and Mavis are siblings.

Mavis and Acacia’s mother, Valerie, is Magati Ke, of the clan yek Naninh. Much of the girls’ initial rearing was by Valerie’s mother. After Valerie’s mother’s death, the children were often cared for by their paternal grandparents, Carla and Ethan. From 2015, Mavis and Acacia were mostly in the care of their mother, Valerie, with all four girls and both parents living as a nuclear unit in Nilinh. Here the girls lived as neighbours to their paternal family. Relatives on both paternal and maternal sides continued to play an active part in looking after the children, however, as Valerie was known (and bemoaned) as being a ‘lazy mother one’.

Valerie tended to interact with her children considerably less than other caregivers. Doubtless exhausted from caring for four children under the age of six, she also appeared to be a fairly quiet, solitary person. She considered the transference of cultural and practical life knowledge to her children to be the realm of her parent’s generation. When asked how children learn language, for example, she said that they listened to the old people and learnt from them. On most occasions, Acacia and Mavis were recorded together, with their younger sisters. Often their mother, Valerie, was the sole caregiver present.

Both Mavis and Acacia had been recorded in the LAMP project previously. As such, there was no adjustment period for them with the backpacks and the camera. However, the degree of comfort these two girls felt in a recording situation was at times problematic, as they tended to view the cameras as their play things.

Acacia’s football team is the Melbourne Demons. She is addressed and referred to by most people by her nickname, which derives from an exclamation that Mavis produced when Acacia was a newborn. Although not a regular attender at preschool, Acacia was often going to school by the time of my transcription trip in 2016, and appeared to enjoy her time there.

Mavis’ football team is the Essendon Bombers. In terms of names, people tend to use Mavis’ English name to address her. After very patchy school attendance in grade 1, Mavis started to attend school more regularly in 2015. Once she did so, she was diagnosed with medium level hearing loss. This was a surprise for all who knew Mavis, as she had shown no discernible signs of hearing difficulties.

4.1.5.5. Raymond and Benjamin

Brothers Raymond (3;2) and Benjamin (5;6) are of the clan yek Nangu. Their language is Murrinhpatha, and their country is the coastal region of Nangu.
Benjamin and Raymond live in Peppenhi, Bottom Camp, with their extended maternal family. The boys’ primary caregivers are their mother Deborah, Deborah’s sister Martha, and their maternal grandmother, Judith. The men in this household- Judith’s husband, and Deborah and Martha’s brothers- also seem to play an active role in the boys’ day-to-day lives.

Benjamin and Raymond’s father was in jail for almost the entirety of the data collection period owing to a domestic violence offence against Deborah for which she reported him to the police. For the brief period in 2015 between his release from prison and his reoffending and subsequent reincarceration, Benjamin and Raymond remained with their mother’s family. Deborah has a close relationship with her sisters-in-law, and when their father is not in Wadeye the children often spend time at their paternal family’s house.

Benjamin and Raymond were co-present at almost all recording sessions of one another.

Raymond’s main totem is *tina ngalla*, the sun, and his football team is the Melbourne Demons. Raymond was born a twin however his twin brother died in infancy and is buried near the family home. Raymond himself informed me about this brother of his numerous times. Raymond is addressed and referred to by his English name by most people. Children and adults on his father’s side instead call him by a nickname which is the name of one of his totems. Raymond’s attendance at preschool was sporadic, but considerably more consistent than that of Benjamin.

Benjamin’s principle totem is *ku wak*, the crow, and his football team is the Adelaide Crows. He is called by his Murrinhpatha name by everyone except his mothers (his mother Deborah and her sister Martha) who used his English name or a nickname, due to cultural naming restrictions. Benjamin rarely attends school, and often runs away before classes start when he is forced to go. When the school holds ‘culture day’, however, he attends the full day. ‘Culture Day’, in which children are taught traditional dances, for example, or are taken out to country, is also prioritised by his mother, Deborah. In 2015, after a relatively extended period of school attendance, Benjamin was diagnosed with severe hearing loss.

### 4.1.6. Chapter summary

In this chapter I described the ways in which various sociocultural and logistical factors of Wadeye informed my research design. The bulk of the chapter focused on how I collected, processed and analysed the data. I outlined Stokoe (2012)’s ‘guiding principles’ for applying MCA to data, and described my adaptation of these principles for the present study. Following this I demonstrated their application to examples from the data. The dataset I use for this study is a subset of the longitudinal, naturally occurring speech I recorded in Wadeye, comprising spontaneous speech productions by children to other children, or to a group in which there are children. The chapter concluded with a brief introduction to each of the eight focus children in the study.

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36 Benjamin’s Murrinhpatha name is similar to that of one of their brothers, whose name they cannot say due to naming taboos for opposite sex siblings.
The next portion of this thesis details the study’s results, which I present in four chapters. In the following chapter an overview of each child’s use of categories is provided. The subsequent three chapters then address the research questions that guide this study:

1. How do children use categories to affiliate with peers?
2. How do children use categories to disaffiliate with peers?
3. How do children use categories to affiliate and disaffiliate with peers at different ages?

These three questions are addressed in turn. Chapter 6 looks at research question 1, Chapter 7 covers research question 2, and Chapter 8 explores research question 3. Prefacing this, however, is an overview of each child and their use of categories in their peer interactions.
5. Each Child’s Use of Categories

This section provides an overview of each child’s linguistic behaviour in recordings, as well as the raw data of their productions of category terms. Given that a key tenet of this study is that children ought to be treated as individuals, as opposed to representatives of a generaliseable ‘child’, it is crucial to begin the presentation of data in relation to the individual speakers who produced it.

All category terms that children produced in recordings are presented in terms of the affiliative or disaffiliative nature of action orientation, and the time point (T1-T4) at which they were produced. Beside every category term is a coloured dot which denotes the particular category collection or device that it is classified as belonging to. The key to the category sets is provided here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kardu thipam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stage of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>collectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nonhuman characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>personal qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English speaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The specific actions that each child pursues with their category productions are also detailed. As with the category terms themselves, the actions are also organised with respect to the four time points.

As is the case throughout this thesis, the frequency with which children use categories for different actions is not presented, as the focus lies on that and how speakers use terms to pursue actions, rather than how often they do so.

5.1. Casimira (2;10 - 4;7)

At every recording that Casimira participated in, her similar-aged sister Tabitha was also present. At T1, only a single recording of Casimira was made, and she engaged in very little peer talk within it, due in part to caregivers engaging her in extended prompting routines. At all other time points, however, Casimira produced considerable peer talk. The vast majority of this was with Tabitha, yet she also interacted with other, older siblings. Given that most of her peer talk involved Tabitha, it is no surprise that most of Casimira’s category mentions, listed in Table 5.1 over the page, were directed to her.
As table 5.1 shows, Casimira uses the widest array of categories at T3, including the categories of ‘husband’ and of ‘whitefella’, and also a broader range of collectivity terms. Casimira produces most category terms at this time point in a single recording, in which she engages in an extended narrative activity with Tabitha. The main arc of the girls’ co-constructed story involves a young child who progresses from a baby, crying for his mother, to a toddler, before becoming a grown up who wears lipstick and earrings and gets into fights. The actions that Casimira pursues with her productions of categories are shown in the table below.

Table 5.2 Casimira: actions pursues with categories

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Casimira is the one child in the cohort whose use of categories over the 21 month data collection period most readily facilitates a developmental analysis. This is in large part due to her pursuing a

37 The girls themselves refer to their talk as *murrinh sturi*, ‘a story’
number of actions, such as teasing, engaging in caregiver talk, and asserting authority over entities/spaces in remarkably similar speech situations (including interlocutor, physical location, and topic of talk) at different time points.

5.2. Damien (2;11 - 4;5)

Damien did not produce a great number of category terms in peer interactions at any of the four time points. One explanation for this is that he was often engaged in interactions with adults or in self talk, neither of which were included for analysis. Another factor at play is that much of Damien’s language in recordings made at T1 was indecipherable, and dismissed as ‘babytalk’ by his adult caregivers. The few category terms that Damien did produce in these first recordings were prompted by adults and are therefore not part of the dataset. The majority of the category terms listed in the table below correspond with single productions.

Table 5.3 Damien: categories produced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>AFFILIATIVE ACTIONS</th>
<th>DISAFFILIATIVE ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1 2;11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2 3;5-3;6</td>
<td>grinalk/alk, ainner thanri, modalkombat, the Hulk, Ironman 3, Mortal Combat</td>
<td>spadamen, Spiderman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3 3;11-4;0</td>
<td>alk, mardinhpuy, the Hulk, girl</td>
<td>murrinh, name, ngakumari, totem, mama, mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4 4;5</td>
<td>ngakumari, kardu pathama, nekingime, mup, the Hulk, capable person, 1.PC.INCL, mob, totem, capable person, 1.PC.INCL, mob, kardu ngalla, grown up</td>
<td>pugarli, cousin, kardu ngalla, grown up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the affiliative actions Damien pursued with categories were in interactions with cousins, and all of those relating to activities involved orienting to superhero or action movie characters. The disaffiliative actions Damien engaged in were directed to both cousins and siblings. No particular pattern is evident as to which categories he uses to disaffiliate with whom.

As Table 5.4 indicates, the categories Damien produces and the actions he applies them to are quite different from one time point to another. While he is a different age at each time point, this is of course not the only variable at play. Owing to this, Damien’s modest selection of category terms and uses he puts them to cannot easily be compared across time points.
Table 5.4 Damien: actions pursued with categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group Together</th>
<th>Positively Assess</th>
<th>Develop An Activity</th>
<th>Participate in an Activity</th>
<th>Seek Entry into an Activity</th>
<th>Facilitate Participation</th>
<th>Individuate Self</th>
<th>Individuate Others</th>
<th>Oppose Other’s Statement/Action</th>
<th>Assert Authority over Entity/Space</th>
<th>Exclude</th>
<th>Tease</th>
<th>Negatively Assess</th>
<th>Threaten</th>
<th>Caregiver Talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T4</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.5 Tabitha: categories produced**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Affiliative Actions</th>
<th>Disaffiliative Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>ngakumari, totem</td>
<td>ngakumari, totem, grown up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kardu ngalla, grown up</td>
<td>kardu ngalla, mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ku karrath, devil</td>
<td>ku neth, nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>ngakumari, totem</td>
<td>ngakumari, totem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kardu ngalla, grown up</td>
<td>da, land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>grinalk, the Hulk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nekingime, 1.PC.INC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nganki, 1.PLU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>ngakumari, totem</td>
<td>da, land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kardu lirrga, lirrga person (dance group)</td>
<td>kantri, country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kardu wakal, uncle</td>
<td>ngakumari, totem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kaka, uncle</td>
<td>kardu ngalla, grown up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wathpala, non-Aboriginal person</td>
<td>kardu ngalantharr, old man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ku kunugunu, old woman spirit</td>
<td>dedi, dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ngankungime, 1.PC.EXC</td>
<td>kardu thipmam, Aboriginal person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. Tabitha (3;0 - 4;9)

Tabitha is the youngest child in the cohort to produce categories for affiliative and disaffiliative actions with peers at all four time points. Apart from T1, when Tabitha engaged in considerable peer talk with her cousins Acacia and Adam, the vast majority of Tabitha’s peer interactions involved her sister, Casimira. This is especially the case at T3, where, as mentioned earlier, with respect to Casimira, Tabitha and Casimira engaged in an extended activity in which they collaborated with one another to tell stories, and used many different category terms to do so. Like Casimira, Tabitha was also engaged in considerable prompting routines (in and out of recordings) relating to kardu thipmam categories by caregivers. This was especially the case at the first two timepoints. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Tabitha produces many kardu thipmam categories of her own accord at all of the four time points.
Tabitha first produces collectivity terms at T2, and from T3 categories of gender. Similar to Casimira, Tabitha employs categories of race at T3, for both affiliative and disaffiliative actions. While she directs most of these mentions of race to Casimira, she also directs one to an older brother, in a different recording.

At all time points, Tabitha uses *kardu thipam* categories for affiliative as well as disaffiliative actions. Looking at table 5.6 below, the specific actions she applies them to are fairly constant over the 21 months. It should be noted that Tabitha does not use categories to engage in caregiver talk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T3 cont.</th>
<th>mup</th>
<th>mob</th>
<th>wathpala</th>
<th>non-Aboriginal person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>da</td>
<td>land</td>
<td>ku dhayan</td>
<td>giant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paba</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>ku pulithmen</td>
<td>policeman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kulbuy</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>kardu palngun</td>
<td>women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mardinhpuy</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>neki</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngankungime</td>
<td>1.PC,EXC</td>
<td>1.DU,INC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T4</th>
<th>4-7-4-9</th>
<th>da</th>
<th>land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neki</td>
<td>1.PC,EXC</td>
<td>neki</td>
<td>1.PC,EXC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>penengime</td>
<td>3.PC</td>
<td>penengime</td>
<td>3.PC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mup</td>
<td>mob</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the latter two time points, Tabitha uses categories for a broader range of disaffiliative actions than she does at T1 and T2. She also uses a broader range of categories to do this.

At T2, Tabitha uses *kardu thipam* categories in a way that no other child in the cohort does. Developing an activity that she is engaged in with her older brothers, Tabitha tries (unsuccessfully) to prompt her co-participants to assert connections to joke totemic entities, such as *ku tingningningning* and *ku dingbingbingbing*. While many children in the cohort engage in activities that are organised by the *kardu thipam* device, and demonstrate their participation by

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38 LAMP_20140917_LD_01_00:15:45.970

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using categories from this collection, Tabitha is the only speaker to try to subvert a *kardu thipmam* category itself.

5.4. Raymond (3;2 - 4;9)

Raymond’s early recordings saw him produce very little speech. In most of his interactions- with children and adults alike- he communicated either non-verbally or in language that his caregivers dismissed as ‘babytalk’. Just as with Damien, no category terms were discernible in Raymond’s speech at this time point.

Table 5.7 Raymond: categories produced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>AFFILIATIVE ACTIONS</th>
<th>DISAFFILIATIVE ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>3;2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>3;8</td>
<td>grinalk, the Hulk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ngakumarl, totem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>4;2-4;3</td>
<td>kunugunu, old woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kardu wakal, child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kunuugunu, mob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>4;8-4;9</td>
<td>da, paba, paingun,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nena, nanku, mup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raymond used categories in his peer talk on very few occasions until T3. Present at numerous recordings at these latter two time points were female cousins of a similar age to Raymond. Most of his mentions of categories at T3 and T4 were for diaffiliative actions, almost all of which he directed to these cousins. As for affiliative actions, most actions that Raymond pursues relate to activities that his older brother and (male) cousins are involved in.

Table 5.8 Raymond: actions pursued with categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GROUP TOGETHER</th>
<th>POSITIVELY ASSESS</th>
<th>DEVELOP AN ACTIVITY</th>
<th>PARTICIPATE IN AN ACTIVITY</th>
<th>SEEK ENTRY INTO AN ACTIVITY</th>
<th>FACILITATE PARTICIPATION</th>
<th>INDIVIDUATE SELF</th>
<th>INDIVIDUATE OTHER/S</th>
<th>OPPOSE OTHER’S STATEMENT/ACTION</th>
<th>ASSERT AUTHORITY OVER ENTITY/SPACE</th>
<th>EXCLUDE</th>
<th>TEASE</th>
<th>NEGATIVELY ASSESS</th>
<th>THREATEN</th>
<th>CAREGIVER TALK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T3</td>
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<td>T4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>AFFILIATIVE ACTIONS</th>
<th>DISAFFILIATIVE ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>T3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unlike the rest of the cohort, Raymond individuates himself with categories on one occasion only. Also at odds with the other children, he individuates others with respect to *kardu thipmam* categories but does not do so for himself.

T3 marks a noticeable shift in Raymond’s use of categories in his peer interactions, in that he produces more terms and in a greater range of actions. Unfortunately, the female cousins who he disaffiliates with on numerous occasions in later recordings were not present in recordings made at the first two time points. As such it is not possible to tease apart factors of interlocutor and age in Raymond’s use of categories with peers.

### 5.5. Acacia (3;5 – 5;1)

With the exception of the first time point, most recordings of Acacia involve her sisters and mother. When other children are present, such as her cousins, Acacia appears to make greater use of categories. T4 sees her employ a wide range of categories, in an extended activity with her sister Mavis and cousin Molly.

At the first two time points many of Acacia’s productions of categories mirror those of other people present; children and adults alike. T3 and T4 see less echoing and more creativity in her category work. From T2 on Acacia produces a number of different collectivity terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.9 Acacia: categories produced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1 3;5</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>T2 3;11-4;0</td>
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<td>T3 4;6-7</td>
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<td>T4 5;0-5;1</td>
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</table>
As displayed in table 5.10, the sole actions that Acacia pursues at numerous different time points are actions through which she situates herself with respect to other people: grouping herself together with others and individuates herself from peers. (Numerous examples of the latter at T1 could in fact be failed attempts at developing an activity, one of which is seen in ex. 4.8). Acacia also pursues the action of opposing a peer’s statement at T1 and T3.

Table 5.10 Acacia: actions pursued with categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positively Assess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in an Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek Entry into an Activity</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuate Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuate Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oppose Other’s Statement/Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assert Authority Over Entity/Space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exclude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tease</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negatively Assess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threaten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver Talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sole occasion on which Acacia uses categories in an activity is the aforementioned activity with Mavis and Molly at T4. T3 saw an increase in the variety of disaffiliative actions pursued. All of these are directed to children who are cousins of a similar age to her.

5.6. Charlie (3;11 – 5;7)

Not only does Charlie use category terms with peers considerably less than the other children in the cohort, he also tends to use them differently. In much of his talk with other children, Charlie recounts past events that relate to his present location, or a place that is visible from where he is speaking. In almost all such stretches of talk Charlie positions himself as a member of a larger group, using collectivity terms. When Charlie recounts past events to peers, he often refers to individuals with whom he is in a kin relationship. However, not once does he produce a family category when referring to these people. In fact, Charlie produces a family category term on a single occasion only, at T4, when helping his younger brother answer a question.

In terms of co-participants, Charlie was often one of just two or three children in recordings. At T1-3 these children were age equivalent to him or slightly older, while at T4 Charlie appeared with younger siblings.
Another key difference between Charlie and the other children in the cohort relates to categories from the *kardu thipmam* collection. Charlie does not produce a single *kardu thipmam* term in interactions with peers, at any of the four time points. With respect to this, it should be noted that no caregiver prompts him to individuate himself in relation to *kardu thipmam* categories. Furthermore, as the table below shows, Charlie does not use categories to engage in caregiver talk with peers; not those relating to *kardu thipmam* categories, nor the routine involving nonhuman characters, the likes of which he does produce on a few occasions.

As can be seen in Table 5.12, Charlie also differs from the rest of the cohort in terms of the ways in which he uses categories. He produces category terms to develop and participate in an activity in one recording only, with his same aged uncle, at T2. While Charlie does engage in social activities with peers at all four time points, these tend not to involve the use of categories, or much language at all. The activities are often largely physical, such as throwing rocks into the water.
5.7. Mavis (5;4 – 6;11)

Most recordings of Mavis were conducted with her mother and three younger sisters. While Mavis produced a wide variety of category terms for at each time point, the majority of these occur in interactions with children she is in a cousin relationship with. This was particularly so with Mavis’ cousin Molly, 8 months her senior. When in recordings with just her immediate family, Mavis produced fewer categories.

Table 5.13 Mavis: categories produced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>AFFILIATIVE ACTIONS</th>
<th>DISAFFILIATIVE ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>kardu pathambunh (Murrinhpatha people (clan))</td>
<td>kardu pathambunh (Murrinhpatha people (clan))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kardu mathawurr (Tree people (clan))</td>
<td>kardu murrinh ke (Magati Ke people (clan))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kangathi (mother’s country)</td>
<td>kardu mathawurr (Tree people (clan))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ngakumarl (grown up)</td>
<td>kangathi (mother’s country)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kardu ngalla</td>
<td>tim (football team)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nganki 1.PC.1.PL</td>
<td>ngakumarl (totem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ngankungime 1.PC.EXC</td>
<td>mangka mo.fa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kardu bas (boss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>ku karrath (devil)</td>
<td>murrinh name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ku ngalantharr (old man spirit)</td>
<td>kardu wakal (child)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ngankungime 1.PC.EXC</td>
<td>ku ngalantharr (old man spirit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nganki 1.PC.SIB</td>
<td>kardu karrath (devil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neki 1.DU.INC</td>
<td>kardu wiye (bad people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>da (land)</td>
<td>da (land)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mup (mob)</td>
<td>kangathi (mother’s country)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nekingime 1.PC.INC</td>
<td>murrinh name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ngankungime 1.PC.EXC</td>
<td>kardu mamaypurrk (children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>da (land)</td>
<td>kardu ngall (grown up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>matha (mother)</td>
<td>nangkun (husband)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nangkun (husband)</td>
<td>ngankungintha 1.DU.NSIB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ku bas (boss)</td>
<td>ngankungintha 1.DU.NSIB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>keptin merika (Captain America)</td>
<td>neki 1.DU.INC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ematho Thor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ainmen Ironman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ekspet expert</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ngankungime 1.PC.EXC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nganki 1.PC.SIB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nganku 1.DU.SIB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ngankungintha 1.DU.NSIB .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neki 1.DU.INC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mavis uses a range of collectivity terms at all four time points. She also invokes the category of nangkun, ‘husband’, at T3 and also T4. Like Acacia, Mavis produces many personae that are connected via their use of English, in an activity organised by the corresponding device. In terms of kardu thipman categories, Mavis is the only child in the cohort to invoke clan membership, and
does so using her own, that of her mother, and that of her grandmother. Mavis uses terms from the *kardu thipmam* set at all four time points, however she uses them in relation to herself at T1 only. This is also the only time point at which she produces these terms for explicit social organisation work, grouping and differentiating. Furthermore, as the table above implies, Mavis used a number of the same *kardu thipmam* categories for these two different actions. Her uses of *kardu thipmam* terms in later recordings relate to other people’s connections, not her own.

**Table 5.14 Mavis: actions pursued with categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROUP TOGETHER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POSITIVELY ASSESS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEVELOP AN ACTIVITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTICIPATE IN AN ACTIVITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEEK ENTRY INTO AN ACTIVITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FACILITATE PARTICIPATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIVIDUATE SELF</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIVIDUATE OTHERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OPPOSE OTHERS STATEMENT/ACTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSERT AUTHORITY OVER ENTITY/SPACE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXCLUDE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEASE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEGATIVELY ASSESS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THREATEN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CATEGORY/TALK</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AFFILIATIVE ACTIONS**

**DISAFFILIATIVE ACTIONS**

What this table does not convey are the numerous instances in which Mavis actions a second social goal while pursuing a number of the listed actions. In numerous instances, the initial and secondary actions were of opposite natures. For example, a negative assessment of a third party that Mavis produces at T2 works to forge an allegiance with the individual she addresses it to. Similarly, while it would appear that Mavis engages in next to no disaffiliative actions at the fourth time point, she subtly disaffiliates with her sister numerous times when working to develop an activity she, her sister, and cousin are engaged in.

5.8. **Benjamin (5;6 – 7;2)**

At the first two time points, Benjamin produces most category terms in activities with children he is in a cousin relationship. Most of the (few) activities that he engaged in were also with his cousins. At T3 and T4 much of Benjamin’s category work relates to his little sister, Alice; either to her or about her. Alice’s presence as a newborn at T2 however prompted no such attention from Benjamin, with respect to categories or otherwise. Benjamin also felt unwell in multiple recordings at the latter two time points. In these situations he (understandably) produced minimal speech, and engaged in even less peer talk.
Like Mavis, Benjamin produces *kardu thipnam* categories in relation to himself at the first time point only. Many of these productions occur within activities that are based on declaring one’s own *kardu thipnam* membership. In recordings at T2 - T4 however, Benjamin produces *kardu thipnam* categories in relation to other people’s membership.

Unlike the other children, Benjamin produces a stage of life term once only, to negatively assess his brother. The term he uses considerably more than this is *ekspet*, ‘expert’, especially with regards to himself. Benjamin’s single production of a gender term at T4 works to establish in-group solidarity. This is the only such example in the corpus.

Table 5.16 Benjamin: actions pursued with categories
Looking at Benjamin’s use of categories in disaffiliative actions, it reveals that he applies these terms most regularly to differentiating people; himself most at T1 and T2, before shifting to individuate others more than himself. At the first three time points Benjamin pursues very few other disaffiliative actions with categories. At T4, however, Benjamin applies category terms for numerous disaffiliative actions that do not involve differentiating people. In terms of caregiver talk, Benjamin engages in this pursuit at three different time points, with a range of addressees.

This chapter provided a brief overview of each individual child’s use of category terms in affiliative and disaffiliative actions across the 21 months of this study. The specific category terms each child produced were reported, as were the particular actions they pursued at each time point. As the individual summaries imply, the range of categories that children produce, and the actions they pursue with them, is informed not only by factors such as a child’s age, linguistic abilities, personality, mood, and the topic of talk, it also appears to be directly impacted on by the particular interlocutors that are present, and the nature of relationship the child has with them. Having glanced at the results with respect to the eight individual children in this study, the following three chapters look closely at categories in action with respect to the cohort as a whole. The next chapter, chapter 6, presents a description of children’s category use in affiliative actions. Chapter 7 follows with disaffiliative actions, before the cohort’s use of categories is examined in relation to speaker age, in chapter 8.
6. Affiliative Actions

This chapter describes the children’s use of categories when pursuing the six affiliative actions defined in this study. All eight members of the cohort use categories when grouping themselves together with others, developing an activity, and participating in an activity. A subset of the cohort also employs categories when seeking entry into an activity, and facilitating the participation of a peer into an activity. The remaining affiliative action, to positively assess peers, is pursued by a single child, on one occasion only. Each affiliative action is now described in turn. Excerpts of dialogue are provided to illustrate the various ways in which different children use categories when pursuing these affiliative actions.

6.1. Group self together with others

All eight children in the cohort use categories to group themselves together with others. As the table below shows, each child uses collectivity categories (comprising collective pro-terms and the term, *mup*, ‘mob’) to do this. The table also indicates that in certain instances of grouping oneself with others, children use collectivity terms in conjunction with other categories. The most commonly used categories for this purpose are those from the *kardu thipmam* set, which four children employ. Only one child, Benjamin, uses a gender category for this action. With the exception of Damien, all children in the cohort group themselves with others in multiple recordings and at most time points.

Table 6.1 Categories used by children to group self together with others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
<th>RAYMOND</th>
<th>ACACIA</th>
<th>CHARLIE</th>
<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUP TOGETHER</td>
<td></td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td></td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td>⚫</td>
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<td>⚫</td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td>⚫</td>
<td>⚫</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ⚫ *kardu thipmam* ⚫ family ⚫ collectivity ⚫ stage of life ⚫ gender

Given the nature of categories within the collectivity set, it is not surprising that all children in the cohort use them when creating groups. After all, many of these terms translate to ‘we’ or ‘us’. As outlined in chapter 3, Murrinhpatha collective pro-terms distinguish dual, paucal, and plural number. They also encode inclusivity/exclusivity, and, for dual forms, siblinghood. Paucal and dual forms can also express whether a group is all-male or mixed sex.

When grouping themselves with others, children use inclusive and exclusive forms to incorporate certain people present into a collective. However, the children also appear to use the feature of clusivity on these terms differentially, according to the degree of novelty of the particular group that they assert. That is, when creating a new group, or shifting/re-establishing the boundaries of a group, children employ inclusive forms, either the dual, *neki*, or paucal, *nekingime*. When
referring to a pre-existing collective, children tend produce the exclusive paucal term, *ngankungime*, or, less commonly, an exclusive dual form, which necessitates the encoding of siblinghood. Two examples of children using both an inclusive and exclusive form to group themselves with others are provided below. Following this are two examples of children using either a paucal or a dual form to pursue the action.

In excerpt 6.2, Charlie (5;7) uses both the inclusive and exclusive collectivity terms when he recounts a past event of a car getting bogged, to his cousin, Cyprian (5;5). What’s more, he uses these terms in reference to the same group. Shortly before his talk with Cyprian, however, Charlie recounts this same event to two adults, his mother and myself. While not included in the dataset for this study, as it involves adult speakers, it is provided here in ex. 6.1, to set the scene for Charlie’s interaction with his cousin. As can be seen in line 4, Charlie uses the exclusive paucal form, *ngankungime*, ‘us’, to refer to the group when he talks with the adults. He also uses the category term, *mup*, ‘mob’, in this stretch of talk (lines 2, 4 and 6). Children’s use of the collectivity term *mup* will be discussed shortly.

Ex.(6.1)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Charlie: yu (.) Lucy? Yeah Lucy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Charlie: Magan <strong>mup</strong> Magan <strong>mob</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Charlie: Elaine <strong>mup ngankungime</strong> 1.PC.EXC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elaine <strong>mob, us</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lucy: ne really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Charlie: Robbie <strong>mup</strong> dintharrkarrk pangu Robbie <strong>mob</strong> got bogged over there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(0.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Charlie: en ngarra (0.3) ngarra thelput ngunedhangime.. And to... we went to a <strong>house</strong>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than two minutes after this interaction with adults, Charlie talks about the same event with his cousin, Cyprian, in excerpt 6.2. While numerous others are nearby during this interaction, it appears that Charlie and Cyprian are the sole participants in this conversation. Rather than simply recounting the event, however, Charlie first establishes Cyprian’s member status in the group, ‘us’. After asking Cyprian directly in line 1 whether he was also present at this event, Charlie poses the question again, in line 6, using the inclusive paucal form, *nekingime*.

Ex.(6.2)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Charlie: Cyp nhinhi-ka nhinhi-ka nhinhi-ka nhini wangu ((faces Cyprian)) Cyp, what about you? What about you? Were you there too?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(0.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cyprian: aa? What?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By using the inclusive form, *nekingime*, in line 6, Charlie categorises Cyprian as a member of the group in his very question about Cyprian’s involvement. This appears to act as an invitation, or offering, of group membership to Cyprian. Once Cyprian confirms his group membership, in line 8, Charlie switches to the exclusive paucal term, *ngankungime*, at line 9. This change, from inclusive to exclusive, suggests that Charlie employs these terms differentially, depending on how actively he is doing the action of grouping. Charlie looks down at the ground when he produces the exclusive form in line 9, yet he does not appear to be addressing another person with this utterance; that is, his recipient is either Cyprian or himself. It appears, then, that Charlie uses *nekingime*, the inclusive pro-term, when the boundaries of the group he asserts are malleable, and the exclusive form, *ngankungime*, when referring to an established collective.

Children’s differential use of inclusive and exclusive paucal terms can also be seen in excerpt 6.3, which shows Benjamin (5;7) producing two different dual category terms when organising an activity with his cousins, Crystal (6;0) and Terry (3). In ex. 6.3, Benjamin stands at the edge of a small stream, while his cousins walk through the ankle-deep water towards him. The three children are physically near each other throughout this stretch of talk, and appear to engage with each other as a trio, rather than splintering off into exclusive pairs. However Benjamin groups himself with each of them individually, using two different collectivity terms. With Terry, he uses the inclusive dual pro-term, *neki*, in line 3, and with Crystal, the exclusive dual non-sibling form, *ngankungintha*, in line 7.

Ex. (6.3)

1 Benjamin:  
   TERRY  
   TERRY!!  
   (0.3)
Benjamin summons Terry at line 1, and uses the inclusive form, *neki*, in line 3 to encourage Terry to join him. Here he actively creates a pairing with Terry, and his selection of the inclusive collectivity term appears to reflect this. In line 4, Crystal suggests that they run over to a different puddle. Her command, *tharra*, ‘run!’, is impersonal in its form, however she appears to direct it to Benjamin, as she is facing him, and is closer to him than she is to Terry. Benjamin’s responses in lines 5 and 7 indicate that he interprets Crystal’s utterance as a suggestion for the two of them; he agrees with Crystal’s proposal in line 5 (*yu*, ‘yes’), before producing the exclusive dual pro-term, *ngankungintha*, ‘us two non-siblings’. In his selection of this exclusive collectivity term, Benjamin can be heard articulating and acknowledging the grouping that Crystal implicitly creates at line 4. He then calls out to Terry, in line 9, summoning him to where he and Crystal are going. This overt inclusion of Terry, immediately after having produced the dual pro-term with Crystal, suggests that Benjamin’s use of the exclusive pro-term in line 9 is less about clusivity and more about the relative ‘newness’ of the dual grouping.

In excerpt 6.4, Tabitha (4;8) recounts a trip that a group, of which she is a member, made to Darwin. Sitting on the grass in town with numerous relatives, Tabitha asserts herself as a member of this collective in line 1 through the pronoun, *ngankungime*, 1.PC.EXC. In line 4, Majella (9;6), Tabitha’s sister, uses the inclusive form, *nekingime*, to assert herself as a fellow member of this group. Tabitha rejects Majella’s attempts to join the Darwin collective, in lines 5 and 8. In line 12, Casimira (4;6), another sister, uses the same strategy as Majella to seek entry into the paucal group, by using the inclusive form. The success or failure of Casimira’s attempt is unknown, however, owing to their brother Peter lighting a fire nearby, which halts the interaction.

Ex. (6.4)

1 Tabitha: *ngarra ngankungime* Darwin ngathedhangime ngarra Darwin 1.PC.EXC
Us lot, we went to Darwin

(0.9)

Tabitha: thamul wakal pangu wangu ((points with chin))

In Little Spear (name of car) over there

Majella: thama nekingime nawa ((walks towards Tabitha and Casimira))

Hey, that was us, wasn’t it

Tabitha: yawu nhinhi-ka makardu-wa

Hey you weren’t there

Majella: ya ngay wangu

I was too

(2.4)

Tabitha: awu nhinhi-ka makardu-wa ngarra Put Kith kahnimatha tharidhda

No, you weren’t there. You were right here in Port Keats

(2.9)

Tabitha: Darw- Darwin *** kardidha (.) dhu-wa

Darw- *** was in Darwin, that’s right

(2.0)

Casimira: nekingime

1.PC,INC

Us?

(1.4) ((Peter lights a couple of leaves on fire))

Peter: thungku wakal ngayyu:::

I:::’ve got a little fire!

LAMP_20151023_LD_01_00:27:01.525

Tabitha recounts the past event using the exclusive paucal form, ngankungime, ‘us’. This pro-term could simply be working to exclude certain individuals present (such as Majella) from the referents of this group, rather than reflecting how established the group is. It is Casimira and Majella’s use of the inclusive form, nekingime, that is most revealing in this interaction. Both of these speakers employ the pro-term to try to join this group that Tabitha is referring to. Nekingime, being inclusive, can be assumed to include all individuals who are present. In terms of referential scope, Casimira (and Majella) are not required to collect all present into a group to include themselves. As Tabitha demonstrates in line 1, the exclusive paucal form, ngankungime, can also be used to incorporate the speaker as a group member. The selection of the inclusive term, then, suggests that Casimira uses it to adjust the group’s boundaries, as does Majella before her.

Excerpt 6.5 features Casimira (4;6) again. In this interaction, she uses the exclusive dual sibling term, nganku, ‘we two siblings’, when speaking with her sister, Majella (9;6). The two girls are seated near each other on the grass, raking leaves into piles with their hands, with no one else in their immediate vicinity. The excerpt begins with Casimira claiming certain leaves as belonging to her (lines 1 and 3). Majella then differentiates herself at line 5 in relation to the sideways action she is using to rake the leaves. Following this, in line 7, Casimira groups the two of them together, before Majella endorses this grouping in line 9.

Ex. (6.4)

1 Casimira: yawu kardi:: nanthi ngay

Hey come o::n that’s mine
((Casimira turns her body slightly away from Majella, and continues to rake leaves))

**Casimira:**

*bere nanthi ngay kanhi*

*Well, this is mine here*

**Majella:** saidwei nganaka ngayyu

*I’m doing it sideways!*

**Casimira:** nganku thama

*Us two, isn’t that right*

**Majella:** yu nganku saidwei ***

*yeah, us two are doing it sideways ***

**Majella:** ((sits down))

---

Casimira’s selection of the exclusive pro-term in line 7, to group herself and Majella together, seems to reflect the fact that both children are already engaged in the same activity. She is not suggesting a new activity to Majella, or establishing a new partnership. Equally, Casimira is not asserting a pairing that excludes a specific other individual, as no one else is nearby. Similar to Benjamin in ex. 6.3, Casimira appears to be articulating her existing collaboration with her sister.

Another collectivity term that is used by children to group themselves with others is *mup*, ‘mob’, which Charlie uses in ex. 6.1. This term is often combined with the personal name of a key individual of the group, e.g. *Elaine mup*, ‘Elaine mob’. Acacia (4;0), Casimira (4;0), Tabitha (4;2 & 4;8) and Charlie (4;7) combine the category term with a single name, while Charlie (5;0) also produces a string of six different names when referring to the one particular group.

Certain children also establish a ‘mob’ in relation to shared connections to a *kardu thipmam* category. In her very first recording, Mavis (5;4) groups herself together with all children and adults who are present, with the exception of myself: her cousins Molly (5;11) and Elsie (1;2), sister Luella (14), her paternal grandmother and two aunts. Excerpt 6.6 shows Mavis collect all of these individuals together in relation to the clan membership of her grandmother: *mathawurr mup*, ‘tree people mob’. She does so in lines 3, 5, and 7. Mavis does not appear to direct her assertions in ex.6.6 to a particular individual. Instead, she appears to announce the groupings to the collective itself.

Ex.(6.5)

1 **Mavis:** ngay-ka *kardu mathawurr-ka*

*I’m of the tree people*

2 (0.9)

3 **Mavis:** *kardu mathawurr mup* kanhimatha

*The tree people mob is right here*

4 (1.4)

5 **Mavis:** *kardu mathawurr mup-yu*

*The tree people mob*

6 (0.7)
Just as a reference to ‘Elaine mup’ suggests that Elaine is a key member of the group, Mavis’ use of her grandmother’s clan membership indicates its centrality for this collective. Everyone present in this interaction has a close relationship to the individual whose clan membership Mavis anchors the collective to. She is either their mangka (fa.mo), as she is for Mavis, their kawu (mo.mo), or their mother. Mavis’ approach to grouping here indicates that she treats kardu thipmam membership as a connector between people.

However, Mavis asserts this group, ‘tree people mob’, after having first individuated herself in relation to the clan term, in line 1. This demonstrates that she also views kardu thipmam membership as relating to individuals, and that the kardu thipmam membership of one person can be assumed by another family member. Mavis demonstrates this oscillation between differentiating herself and grouping people together on numerous occasions in this recording, and seems to follow a particular pattern when doing so: she individuates herself in relation to a particular kardu thipmam category, before creating a group with a collectivity term, and then links this group to that same kardu thipmam category. Prior to ex. 6.6, Mavis applies this pattern in relation to her own clan membership, kardu murrinhpatha, ‘Murrinhpatha person/people’, and her own totem, ku tek, the red tailed black cockatoo, as well as the principle totem of her grandmother, ku kanarnturturt, the crocodile. All people present for this stretch of talk have close connections to these kardu thipmam elements, which Mavis draws on to collect everyone together.

Mavis appears to produce most utterances to the group at large. However, she also delivers certain utterances while looking towards the camera, which her teenage sister Luella stands behind. In grouping herself with others in relation to kardu thipmam categories, Mavis therefore appears to pursue an additional goal of demonstrating her knowledge of kardu thipmam categories, and connections to them, for the group at large.

Like Mavis, Acacia (5;0) and Damien (4;6) also use a combination of collectivity terms and allusions to kardu thipmam categories when grouping themselves with peers, in excerpts 6.7 and 6.8 respectively. Furthermore, they too appear to pursue this action for an additional goal. Both Acacia and Damien collect themselves, their brother Nathan (6;9), and cousin Molly (7;6) together, and they each do so immediately prior to proposing a new activity. This suggests that they group themselves with peers as an attention-getting strategy. Both of these interactions occur in the one recording, one shortly after the other. The four children stand on a rocky bank of a river, on the other side of a thicket of dried mangroves from their caregivers, who are tending a fire to make tea.

Acacia (5;0) uses categories to group herself together with the three other children after Nathan divides them into pairs. Excerpt 6.7 begins with Nathan proposing an activity of throwing rocks
into the water. He uses dual category terms to group himself with his cousin Molly, and Acacia with her brother Damien, in lines 1 and 3. Acacia follows this utterance from Nathan by collecting all four of them together, at line 4. She achieves this by using the inclusive paucal form, nekingime, and by connecting the group to their current location via the category, da, ‘land’.

Ex.(6.6)

1 Nathan: mup warda ngankungintha-yu
   Hold up. Us two (non-siblings)
2 (0.6)
3 Nathan: nankuyu ((picks up rock to throw in water))
   and you two (siblings)
4 Acacia: da:: nekingime da-ya (.) kangkurl ngay ne
   It’s our place. (.) My grandpa, isn’t that right
5 Nathan: kangkurl ngay thama dinthurk ngarra kura lalingkin kanhi
   My grandpa, right? He dived into the ocean here
6 ((Nathan throws rock into water))
7 Molly: yu thama
   yeah, isn’t that right
8 (1.2)
9 Acacia: kangkurl ngayka pepe ((points to water)) kandamatha nawa
   My grandpa, he went under right here, didn’t he

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Acacia’s use of da, ‘land’, in line 4, appears to be an allusion to the kardu thipmam category. It is Molly’s kangathi, ‘mother’s country’, and kantri, ‘country’ for the other three children present. Acacia uses the nominal classifier, da, ‘land’, rather than a specific category of land category (‘country’ or ‘mother’s country’). Given that the children do not share precisely the same category membership in relation to their present location, Acacia’s use of this overarching term mirrors the inclusiveness of the pro-term, nekingime. Her selection of these two category terms affords all four children membership to the one group.

Upon collecting everyone into this ‘we’ group in line 4, Acacia produces the family term, kangkurl (fa.fa). As seen in the remainder of the excerpt, Acacia’s mention of this family member prompts a collaborative recounting of a past event that took place at their current location. It appears that Acacia groups everyone together before instigating this speech activity.

Shortly after this interaction, in excerpt 6.8, Damien (4;6) also collects everyone together, after attempting to gain his cousin Molly’s attention, in lines 1 and 5. He does so in line 7, with the inclusive paucal term, nekingime, and by providing a name for this inclusive ‘we’: kanarnturturt mup, ‘the crocodile mob’.
Damien’s mention of ‘crocodile’ appears to be an allusion to the *kardu thipmam* category, *ngakumarl*, ‘totem’. All four children that Damien collects together in line 7 share the same connection to the totemic entity of crocodile; it is the principle totem of their grandmother (*mangka* (fa.mo) for three of them, and *kawu* (mo.mo) for one). After producing the term, ‘crocodile mob’ a second time, in line 9, Damien suggests a new activity for the group, which involves going over to the car. In fact, Damien appears to address the group here as ‘crocodile mob’. Like Acacia, Damien precedes his suggestion of an activity by explicitly grouping himself and his peers together, and in relation to a *kardu thipmam* category.

6.2. Positively assess

While numerous children in the cohort assess themselves and others as *kardu patha*, a ‘good person’, when speaking to adults, no examples of this exist in the data in children’s peer talk. In fact, only two child in the cohort produce a category term to make a positive assessment of someone to a peer, and they do so with each other, in the one exchange.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.2 Categories used by children to positively assess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casimira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVELY ASSESS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* personal qualities

In excerpt 6.9, Damien (4;6) and Acacia (5;0) huddle near their brother, Nathan (6;9), who is seated on the ground, attempting to crack open a small clam with a rock. Damien produces a positive
assessment of Nathan to Acacia as they watch him, stating that he is *kardu pathama*, a ‘capable person’.

Ex. (6.8)

1. Acacia: Nathan-ya ha ha  
   *Oh, Nathan!* ((laughs))

2. (2.2)

3. Damien: *kardu pathama* nukunu daya  
   *He’s a capable person, he is*

4. (1.2)

5. Acacia: *kardu pathama*-ya nawa  
   *He’s a capable person, isn’t that right*

6. (0.8)

7. Damien: *kardu pathama*-ya  
   *He’s a capable person*

8. (1.1)

9. Damien: *inhini*  
   ((motions to another shell with hand))  
   *and this one*

Acacia responds to Damien’s positive assessment at line 3 by using the identical category term to pursue this same action, in line 5. In doing so, Acacia pursues the affiliative action of positively assessing a peer, but also affiliates (and also aligns) with Damien. She endorses Damien’s assessment of Nathan by making the same assessment herself back to him, and follows this assessment with the agreement seeking form, *nawa*, ‘isn’t that right’. Acacia’s use of this agreement seeking marker suggests that she is trying to prompt further affiliation between herself and Damien through a reciprocal show of agreement. Damien responds to this in line 7 by repeating his assessment of his brother, producing the category *kardu pathama* once again. Both children affiliate and align with one another (Acacia in line 5, and Damien in line 7) by echoing each other’s positive assessments, and through their repetitions of the category term.

### 6.3. Develop an activity

As indicated in table 6.3, most children use a broad range of categories when developing an activity with peers. This action combines the instigation of a new activity, and the development, or extension, of an existing activity.

#### Table 6.3 Categories used by children to develop activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Casimira</th>
<th>Damien</th>
<th>Tabitha</th>
<th>Raymond</th>
<th>Acacia</th>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>Mavis</th>
<th>Benjamin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: • *kardu thipmam* = family • collectivity • race • nonhuman characters • stage of life • gender • English speaking • personal qualities

Children use categories in a variety of different ways when developing an activity. One way is what has been referred to in the literature as the ‘approach-avoidance’ routine (Corsaro, 1988), in which a speaker announces the presence of a threatening agent and orients to it in fear. Tabitha
(3;0) prompts such an activity with peers by identifying the presence of a ‘devil’, *ku karrath*. Mavis (5;10) does similarly, with her sister, Acacia (4;0) and the term, ‘devil’*. Charlie (4;7) prompts an activity of this ilk with his peer, Nicholas (4;7), by orienting to the category, *ku wathpala*, ‘whitefella’*, and Raymond (4;4) instigates an activity with his cousin, Renata (3;0) with *kunugunu*, ‘old woman spirit’.*

Numerous children develop activities by stating what they and their peer/s are about to do. Mavis (6;10) uses a dual collectivity term when trying to develop an activity that she is engaged in with her sister, Acacia (5;0) and cousin, Molly (7;6). She produces the inclusive form, *nekī*, in line 3 of ex.6.10, in an utterance that she directs to Acacia only.

Ex. (6.9)

1 Mavis: ngayka ***
   I’m ***
2  (0.4)
3 Mavis: puythuknu ne Acacia nekiyu
   1.DU.INC
   Let’s fight, yeah? **Us two, Acacia**

Through her suggestion in line 3, Mavis attempts to engender oppositional behaviour between herself and Acacia. She proposes the action with the verb

*puythuknu*

puy-thuk-nu

1.DU.INC slash RR(24)-fight-RR

before producing the collectivity term, *nekī*, 1.DU.INCL. This category term, *nekī*, emphasises the dual (as opposes to paucal) scope of the verb. As Mavis produces the collectivity term immediately after Acacia’s name, it also works to exclude Molly from this (adversarial) duo.

The opposite use of categories and verbs from this is seen in ex. 6.11, in which Benjamin (6;2) instigates an activity with his cousin, Jeremiah (6;7). The excerpt begins with Benjamin walking up to the trunk of a large tree, and individuating himself as *ekspet*, ‘expert’. In line 5, Benjamin includes Jeremiah in the verb he produces, and indicates what the two of them will do, by way of the same category term he uses in relation to himself. He proposes that they ‘go like experts’, using the category term to describe their future action.

Ex. (6.10)

1 Benjamin: ngay-ka **ekspet** nhinta ngay-yu Jeremiah  ((looking up at the tree))
   I’m an expert, that’s what I am, Jeremiah!
2  (0.5)  ((Jeremiah jumps off a low platform nearby))
3 Benjamin: **ekspet** da ngay

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39 LAMP_20140313_LD_01_00:21:50.231 and LAMP_20140313_LD_01_00:27:56.145
40 LAMP_20140910_LD_01_00:33:02.398
41 LAMP_20140923_LD_02_00:42:00.200
42 LAMP_20150323_LD_03_00:17:07.023
I'm an expert

4 Jeremiah: Benja[min]

Benjamin

5 Benjamin: [nga]wu ekspet piy ingimenu

Hey let's go like experts

6 (5;4) ((Benjamin starts trying to climb the tree))

7 Jeremiah: Benji thurdiwal

Benji jump down

Unlike his utterances in lines 1 and 3, in which he asserts his own membership to the category, ekspet, ‘expert’, Benjamin does not categorise the two of them as ‘experts’ here. Instead he uses the category to illustrate the behaviour that he suggests they engage in. Later in this same recording, when the two boys are up in the tree, Benjamin uses the category term, king kong, to do the same. He does not assert his and Jeremiah’s co-membership to King Kong, but rather suggests that they behave ngarra king kong sta lif, ‘in King Kong style’.43

Another example of developing an activity with categories without personally orienting to them is provided in excerpt 6.12. In this instance, Tabitha (4;9) uses categories in relation to physical objects, and does so to justify the adversarial relationship that she proposes for them. The excerpt begins with Tabitha seated on the ground in the park with her sister, Casimira (4;7). Both children have been creating houses out of sticks and leaves. When, in line 1, Casimira states that one of these structures is about to fall, Tabitha uses categories to suggest a new activity for them to engage in. Rather than assigning the categories to herself and Casimira personally, Tabitha proposes, in lines 3 and 5, that the sticks are mardinhpuy and kulbuy, ‘girls’ and ‘boys’, who are fighting each other. The activity Tabitha develops is based on an oppositional relationship between members of different gender categories.

Ex.(6.11)

1 Casimira: manhilarlarr-nukun

It’s gonna fall down

2

3 (0.3)

Tabitha: mardinhpuy ngarra kulbuy

girls on boys

4

5 (0.9)

6 Casimira: ((gasps)) ***

7 ((Casimira whacks one stick against the another))

8 Casimira: kardu [murlak-wa] ngay-yu ((in a gruff voice))

I’m an angry person

9 Tabitha: [ wurdah ] ((grabs the stick from Casimira’s hand))

no

Given that Tabitha provides no other context for this antagonistic relationship, it appears that she

43 LAMP_20141007_LD_01_00:45:57.340
treats members of mardinhpuy and kulbuy as being in an inherently oppositional arrangement. Casimira responds to Tabitha’s suggestion, in lines 6 and 7, by animating a violent altercation between two sticks. Casimira’s uptake indicates that she hears ‘fighting’ as an appropriate activity for members of opposite gender categories to engage in.

A third way in which children use categories to develop an activity involves announcing membership to a particular category, as seen in ex. 6.13. In this excerpt, at the beginning of Benjamin’s very first recording, Benjamin (5;7), his cousin Crystal (6;9) and Crystal’s brother, Terry (3), stand near the camera, peering at it with interest, each chomping on an apple. Benjamin’s mother, Deborah, is also present, sitting on the ground, nearby. Benjamin instigates an activity with Crystal, by using the kardu thipmam category, kangathi, ‘mother’s country’, in line 3.

Ex. (6.12)

1  Terry: ma ma ma  ((extends arm towards the biscuit Deborah is holding))
    Gimme gimme gimme
2  Deborah: biskit thulath medeyi-nu[kun ]  ((to Terry))  ((hands Terry the biscuit))
    Eat the biscuit or else you’ll get hungry
3  Benjamin:  [kanga]thi ngay-ka
    My mother’s country is
4  (1.9)  ((stifled chuckling from Benjamin))
5  Benjamin: Nangu
    Nangu
6  (0.3)
7  Deborah: A::wu kantri thama
    No:: say country
8  (0.5)
9  Benjamin: kan- tri
    coun- try
10  (1.8)
11 Benjamin: nhinhí warda  ((faces Crystal))
    your turn
12  (1.1)
13 Terry: kantri
    kantri
14  (0.7)
15 Crystal: kantri ngay-ka (0.5) Kurrangu
    My country is   Kurrangu
16  (0.7)
17 Terry: Kurrangu
    Kurrangu

In lines 3 and 5, Benjamin asserts his membership to the category, kangathi, ‘mother’s country’. Through this he demonstrates the activity that he is instigating with Crystal. After Benjamin prompts her in line 11 (‘your turn’), Crystal produces an assertion similar to Benjamin’s in lines 3 and 5, and declares her membership to the kardu thipmam category of kantri, ‘country’, in line 15. Crystal’s response suggests that she interprets Benjamin’s category work as instigating an activity, and is demonstrating her uptake of his suggestion.
This mode of developing an activity, by asserting membership to a category, is not restricted to categories from the *kardu thipman* collection. Children orient to stage of life categories, and also perform membership to superheroes or other nonhuman personae. In excerpt 6.14, Casimira (4;0) develops an activity by mobilising the categorisation device of race. Interrupting a storytelling activity that she is engaged in with Tabitha (4;2), Casimira categorises the two of them as a pair of *wathpala*, ‘whitefellas’. She does this in line 6, by using the term *ku wathpala*, and the inclusive dual pro-term, *neki*.

Ex. (6.13)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | Tabitha: *kardu kunugunu*
|   | *the old woman*
| 2 | (0.5)
| 3 | Tabitha: *kardu kunugunu kardikaykaydha*
|   | *the old woman called out*
| 4 | Casimira: [* *** sibesibesibesibede be]debe
|   | *** sibesibesibesibede bedebe
| 5 | Tabitha: aa aaaaaaa ((howling)) mere kardidha
|   | a::::::::hhr  she wasn’t there
| 6 | Casimira: *neki-ka ku wathpala* shabishabbiya
|   | 1.DU INC
|   | *The two of us are whitefellas* shabishabbiya
| 7 | (0.3)
| 8 | Casimira: evribadi gon
|   | *everybody’s gone*
| 9 | (0.4)
| 10 | Casimira: eska: nebeginavri::s
|   | eska: nebeginavri::s
| 11 | (0.3)
| 12 | Tabitha: ngarra Lending no
|   | *At the barge landing, no*

Immediately after attributing joint *ku wathpala* status to herself and Tabitha, in line 6, Casimira performs this category membership, linguistically, in lines 8 and 10. That is, she displays the linguistic associations she has with this category. Casimira produces distinctly non-Murrinhpatha speech sounds, including fricatives, lengthened vowels, and the phrase *everybody gone*. She also delivers her *wathpala* utterances with a flat intonation contour, in contrast to her Murrinhpatha speech. In her display of whitefella membership, in lines 8 and 10, Casimira demonstrates the activity she instigates, of ‘being’ whitefellas. Tabitha joins her sister in line 12, when she too orients to the category of *wathpala* in her speech, albeit in a different manner. Through this turn at line 12 Tabitha demonstrates her uptake of the activity that Casimira develops.

Looking at line 4, it appears that Casimira produces an utterance which contains a representation of English, or ‘*wathpala* speak’, similar to that which she produces in lines 6-10. This could suggest that Casimira initially proposes this activity implicitly, by orienting to ‘whitefella’ category membership through her linguistic behaviour alone. Given that Tabitha continues to tell her story, in line 5, it appears that this implicit development of the activity by Casimira is not successful. Her
explicit use of categories in line 6 therefore appears to be a second (and more auspicious) attempt to develop the activity with her peer.

Mavis (6;10) also uses a representation of English when developing an activity with her cousin, Molly (7;6). However, unlike Casimira, Mavis manages to instigate the activity with this linguistic behaviour alone. This brings us to another way in which children use categories to develop an activity: by mobilising a new categorisation device. Excerpt 6.15 begins with Mavis calling for Molly’s attention with ngauw, ‘hey!’, as she and Molly climb up onto the roof of the car. Mavis follows this interjection with a string of non-Murrinhpatha speech sounds. These include repetitive, staccato sounding word forms, the English phrase ‘come here’, and the form ‘asan’, which contains a sibilant, a sound not found in traditional Murrinhpatha.

Ex. (6.14)

1 Mavis: ngauw kedekedema kam iya de asan
    hey! kedekedema come here de asan

2 Molly: (0.6)

3 Molly: asan

Unclear from Mavis’ utterance alone, it is Molly’s response that indicates that Mavis is pursuing the action of developing an activity. Molly follows Mavis’ turn by repeating the final form she produces: asan. This repetition indicates an alignment with Mavis, an orientation to the language that Mavis produces, and an orientation to the categorisation device that Mavis mobilises, that of ‘speaking English’. It also indicates Molly’s uptake of Mavis’ activity, and an affiliation with her interlocutor.

As this activity between Mavis and Molly proceeds, it grows to incorporate a third participant, Acacia (5;0), and develops into one in which the children orient to specific categories, rather than the device of ‘English speakers’ alone. From her entry into the activity until the beginning of excerpt 6.16 below, Acacia performs membership to the category, alk, the Hulk. Mavis and Molly perform ku bas, ‘the boss’, and ainmen, ‘Ironman’, respectively. This activity predominantly consists of the two older girls (the boss and Ironman) running in terror, and hiding, from Acacia’s Hulk. Mavis and Molly operate as a team against their joint enemy, Acacia/Hulk. After numerous minutes of this, Acacia attempts to develop the activity. She does so by reassigning the category memberships of participants. This provides another example of a speaker developing an activity, with the help of a new categorisation device.

Acacia attempts to develop the activity by mobilising the categorisation device of gender. Notably, Acacia does not use the Murrinhpatha term, mardinhpuy, ‘female’. Instead she uses a gendered term derived from English and which is associated with people and personae from the ku class (encompassing animate non-humans/non-Aboriginal people). She labels Mavis and Molly ku leidi alk, ‘lady Hulk’, in lines 7 to 11. Acacia’s use of the leidi demonstrates her orientation to the
categorisation device of English speakers that is already in operation in the activity, in that English is the language associated with non-Aboriginal people and characters. She therefore tries to develop the activity not by changing the device in operation, but by incorporating additional categories into the activity in relation to the existing device.

Ex.(6.15)

1 Acacia: ngayka nan-wa
   I’m whatchamickallit
2 Mavis: ngarra kem
   Where is he/she?
3
4 Mavis: milaisthinkudayi
5 Molly: kanamngintha *** kanhingawu kanamngintha
   Here we are *** Over here, here we are
6
7 Acacia: alk (0.2) nhinhi ku leidi
   Hulk! You’re a lady
8
9 Acacia: nhinhi ku leidi ALK?
   You’re lady HULK
10
11 Acacia: nhinhi ku leidi alk? nhinhi ku leidi alk ne
   You’re lady Hulk And you’re lady Hulk, aren’t you
12 Molly: kanhirenu kanhiwinhdathnu
   Over here! He’s going to look for you.
13
14 Molly: ya ainmen (0.7) kanhingu kanamngintha nganaka
   Hey Ironman We’re over here, ok?

Acacia does not use a dual pro-term when she attempts to develop the activity in lines 7-11, which would group Mavis and Molly together as a pair of lady Hulks. Instead she remaps each of her co-participants individually, and multiple times.

By incorporating gender into this activity, Acacia repositions herself and her two co-participants as members of adjacent, connected categories; all three of them are types of ‘hulk’. It appears that Acacia tries to develop the activity in such a way so as to promote an affiliative, rather than adversative, relationship between herself, Mavis, and Molly. Her use of categories also indicates that Acacia chooses to retain a separation between the two older girls and herself. They are each ‘lady hulk’ while she is the unmarked, non-lady hulk. This implies that Acacia respects the alliance that exists between the older two girls, while also pursuing a closer relationship between them and herself. Acacia pursues this action, of developing the activity, with what appears to be an additional goal of negotiating the social dynamic between herself and her co-participants.

Mavis and Molly do not react overtly to Acacia’s assertions in lines 7-11, which suggests that they do not ratify Acacia’s category work. Further suggesting a lack of ratification is the fact that Acacia tries to develop the activity again soon afterwards. In her second attempt to develop the activity,
Acacia recategorises herself as well as her peers. The relationship between her own category and that which she attributes to the two older girls is the same: she is the standard, unmarked superhero, and Mavis and Molly are each the female variant. Again, Acacia’s use of categories suggests that, in trying to develop the activity, she is negotiating the dynamic between all three players, while still respecting the allegiance that Mavis and Molly display with one another. Acacia’s second attempt to develop the activity (and its social dynamic) is shown in excerpt 6.17. Here Acacia assigns category membership to each party once only, in line 3. She is Batman, Mavis is Lady Batman, and Molly is Lady Batman.

Ex.(6.16)

1 Molly: ngay damatha
   just me
2 Mavis: *** (yelling at Acacia, who is walking back over to the car)
3 Acacia: ngay betmen >nhinhi betmen ku leidi? nhinhi betmen ku leidi<
   I’m Batman. You’re Lady Batman. And you’re Lady Batman
4 (0.2)
5 Mavis: NO
   NO!
6 Molly: NO [ **]*
   NO! ***
7 Mavis: [ngay-ka] ***
   I’m ***
8 (0.4)
9 Mavis: puythuknu ne Acacia neki-yu
   Let’s fight, yeah? Us two, Acacia

Mavis and Molly unequivocally reject Acacia’s proposed reassignment of categories, one after the other. Each of them responds negatively, in lines 5 and 6, in the language associated with their respective category memberships and the activity as a whole: inkalith, ‘English’. Mavis further impresses her rejection of this more affiliative relationship in line 9 when she proposes that she and Acacia engage in openly adversarial behaviour. The fact that Acacia uses gender categories on two occasions to develop this activity indicates that mobilising this device is a specific strategy that she applies, albeit one that leads to little success.

6.4.  Participate in an activity

More so than any other action relating to activities, children’s selection of categories when participating in an activity tends to be directly informed by the categorisation device in operation. The category sets that appear in the table below, then, reflect to some degree the topic of children’s activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITY</th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
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Key: ● kardu thipmam  ● family  ● collectivity  ● stage of life  ● nonhuman characters  ● race  ● English speaking  ● personal qualities
Children demonstrate their participation in an activity by orienting to the categorisation device/s that organise the interaction. Depending on the activity, they can do this by asserting membership to relevant categories for themselves or others, or by orienting to the same, or related, categories in their talk.

As described in section 6.3, Casimira (4;0) develops an activity with Tabitha (4;2) that revolves around performing ‘whitefella’ membership. After announcing the activity in line 1, Casimira engages in a display of this category membership in this same turn, thus demonstrating the activity itself. Tabitha soon follows, in line 12, with her own embodied performance of wathpala. Through this, Tabitha signals her uptake of, and participation in, the activity.

Ex.(6.17)

6 Casimira: neki-ka ku wathpala shabishabbiya
1.DU.INC

The two of us are whitefellas shabishabbiya

7 (0.3)

8 Casimira: evribadi gon
everybody's gone

9 (0.4)

10 Casimira: eska: nebeginavr::s
eska: nebeginavr::s

11 (0.3)

12 Tabitha: ngarra [Len]ding no
At the barge landing, no

13 Casimira: [*** ]

14 Tabitha: no kanarnturturt ngarra Lending (shakes head, waggles finger at Casimira))
no crocodile at the barge landing

15 Casimira: a videfidu () fine:tifubiga
a videfidu fine:tifubiga

16 (0.4)

17 Peter: ha ha [*** thama-ya]
((laughing)) Do this ***

18 Tabitha: [Lending *** ]
The barge landing ***

19 Tabitha: <lending [kanan->] >
((Tabitha tosses some pebbles & dirt at Casimira))
At the barge landing a croc-

20 Casimira: [sipidsidu]pitupit () seves
sipidsidupitupit seves

21 Tabitha: lending (0.2) <kanarnturturt wan> (0.4) aa::
At the barge landing there's one crocodile. Ohhhh

While Casimira performs membership to this race category by producing discernibly non-Murrinhpatha speech sounds (in lines 6-10, 15 and 20) Tabitha uses speech that is considerably slower than her usual Murrinhpatha talk, together with the English word, no, in lines 12 and 14. Tabitha also appears to position wathpala membership in opposition to kanarnturturt, the crocodile, at lines 14 and 21. The crocodile is the main totem of the girls’ maternal family group and is therefore an important animal for both of them. From her double use of ‘no’, this opposition to the crocodile could be seen as taking the form of rule creation/enforcement, actions commonly
associated with non-Aboriginal people. While Tabitha’s performance of ‘whitefella’ membership differs from that of Casimira, her orientation to the category (in lines 14, 18, 19, and 21) demonstrates her uptake of, and participation in, this activity that Casimira introduces. Tabitha does not orient to Casimira’s own performance of *wathpala*, yet she orients to the category itself, and displays her own associations with it.

Benjamin (6;2) demonstrates participation in an activity with his cousin, Jeremiah (6;7), in excerpt 6.19, by orienting to the category, *senaipa*, ‘sniper’. When Jeremiah produces the term in line 7, Benjamin immediately orients to the term himself, in line 8. Benjamin does so in the same way as Jeremiah: without explicitly linking himself to the category, but rather by announcing the category and orienting to it physically.

Ex. (6.18)

1 Jeremiah:  i [jamp]  
   (jumps off a small platform onto the sand))
   *and jump!*

2 Benjamin:  [ da ] kanhi ngarranu paningkalangimenu  
   (points to tree))
   *let’s climb up here!*

3 John:  ey
   *hey!*

4

5 Deborah:  awu mup pandamatha  
   (points to ground, near the boys’ feet))
   *no, stay right there*

5 Benjamin:  ((jumps off the platform onto the sand, making a swooshing sound))

6 Jeremiah:  ((jumps onto the sand, making a similar vocalisation to Benjamin’s))

7 Jeremiah:  *senaipa*
   *sniper!*

8 Benjamin:  *senaipa de*
   *a *sniper* too!*

9 Raymond:  mup
   *wait!*

10 Jeremiah:  hey Raymond *** purrungime (0.3) *senaipa*
   *hey Raymond let’s go *** *sniper* *

11 ((Jeremiah waves for Raymond to come over to them))

12 Benjamin:  thungku thay-ya ***
   *firewood***

13

14 Benjamin:  thungku gan thungku gan
   *guns, guns!*

15 Benjamin:  ((runs off towards a large tree branch lying on the ground))

16 Benjamin:  kanhingu purru
   *let’s go over here*

17

18 Jeremiah:  Benji thungku gan tu ***
   *Benji, *** two guns!*

19 Benjamin:  tharra
   *Quick!*
Benjamin further displays his engagement in this activity by incorporating an object associated with members of the category of ‘snaiper’, thungku gan, a gun, in line 14. Jeremiah endorses Benjamin’s incorporation of this category-related object in line 18, by referring to the guns himself.

The other main way that children use categories to participate in activities involves orienting to the same, or similar, categories as peers in talk. In one recording, Casimira (4;0) and Tabitha (4;2) participate in an extended murrinh sturi, ‘storytelling’ activity. Sitting on the ground, facing each other, the girls co-construct stories, or alternate in telling each other individual yet similarly themed tales. Excerpt 6.20 shows the two children orienting to the category, kardu wakal, ‘child’, and co-constructing a narrative about the child.

Ex.(6.19)

1 Casimira: *** pangure ngarra midul pangu-yu ((points to her left))
*** is over there, in the middle over there

2 (1.0)

3 Casimira: ngarra mangka nukunu
fa.mo
at his grandma’s house

4 (2.9)

5 Tabitha: mu kardu wakal-ka
well, what about the kid?

6 (0.3)

7 Casimira: ngarra mangka nukunu “kanam du kanamkarrk” ((tiny, creaky voice))
fa.mo
he’s at his grandma’s house, crying and crying

8 (0.8)

9 Tabitha: mama nukunu-yu
with his mum?

10 (0.9)

11 Casimira: awu (0.4) ‘ma::ma:::::: mam
no, he went ‘mu::mmy::::::!’

12 (0.3)

13 Tabitha: i badul
for a bottle?

14 (2.0)

15 Casimira: pirda warda nukunu *** kanhi ((motions bottle to mouth))
that’s it, he went like this ***

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The children demonstrate their participation in the activity seen in ex. 6.20 by building on each other’s utterances. Casimira engages with Tabitha’s mention of the child’s mother in line 9, by voicing the child calling out ‘mu::mmy::’ in her following turn. In line 13 Tabitha mentions a bottle, an object which she appears to associate with members of the category ‘child’. Casimira again picks up Tabitha’s utterance by incorporating the bottle that into her story through gesture, in line 15. Tabitha demonstrates her participation in the activity by incorporating categories and

---

44 This description of the activity is made by both children
entities related to the story’s protagonist, kardu wakal. Casimira demonstrates her participation by engaging with Tabitha’s mentions in her own additions to the narrative.

Tabitha (4;2) and Casimira (4;0) also demonstrate their participation in this same storytelling activity by using the paucal exclusive term, ngankungime. Both girls appear to use the term to alert their co-participant that they have a story to tell. Ex. 6.21 sees Tabitha producing the collectivity term, and ex. 6.22, Casimira.

Ex.(6.20)

1 Tabitha: bere
   well
2 (0.4)
3 Casimira: *** ((drawing in the ground with stick))
4 (1.2)
5 Tabitha: bere ngankungime ne
   1.PC.EXC
   well, it was us mob, wasn’t it
6 Casimira: thay nayet ((passes the ‘story stick’ over to Tabitha))
   you hold the stick
7 (0.2)
8 Tabitha: ngay[ka: ]
   as for me:::
9 Casimira: [thama] da ((shows Tabitha what to do with the stick))
   go like this
10 Tabitha: nganinarruinganidha
   I was falling asleep...

As excerpts 6.21 and 6.22 show, both girls use ngankungime, 1.PC.EXCL, in what looks like a request for the floor. The interlocutor responds by finishing her turn, and/or her story. In ex. 6.21, Tabitha produces the collectivity term in line 5, and Casimira conveys her relinquishment of the floor to
Tabitha by passing her the ‘story stick’\textsuperscript{45} in line 6. In ex. 6.22, Casimira produces the paucal pro-term at line 24, before Tabitha announces the end of her story with \textit{bere}, at line 26.

The first of these two excerpts indicates that the narratives speakers produce after the paucal pro-terms are not necessarily about a group. As can be seen in line 8 of ex. 6.21, Tabitha follows her use of \textit{ngankungime}, \textit{1.PC.EXCL}, by beginning a story about herself, using the pronoun \textit{ngayka}, \textit{1.SG-TOP}. A mismatch in subject such as this further suggests that the collectivity term is being used by the speakers more to organise their participation in the speech activity and to manage their interaction, and less to refer to a particular group of people.

These examples have shown children orienting to the same category in their talk, however there are certain instances in which children participate in an activity by orienting to a similar category; a different category to their peer, but one from the same collection. In an activity with his cousin, Adam (4;4), Damien (3;6) demonstrates his continued participation in an activity by taking turns to assert his membership to a particular category of superhero. Damien and Adam do this before or while providing a physical display of the particular category membership they declare for themselves. An example of this can be seen excerpt 6.23. Damien performs membership to the category, \textit{grinalk}, the Hulk, while Adam does the same with Ironman.

Ex.(6.22)

1 Damien: \textit{grinalk} \textit{the Hulk!}

2 (1.8)  ((Adam runs off, past the camera. Damien follows))

3 Adam: \textit{ya ainmen} (0.3) \textit{ainmen ainmen}

4 (5.7)  ((both verbalising ‘action’ sounds, out of shot of the camera))

5 Adam: \textit{AINME::N IRONMA::N!}

6 (1.0)

7 Adam: \textit{ainmen Ironman!}

8 Damien: \textit{grino::lk}

9 (0.7)

10 Adam: \textit{ainmen Ironman} ((runs back to the platform))

11 Adam: \textit{ainmen ainmen Ironman, Ironman} ((clambers onto the platform))

12 Damien: ((runs back to the platform, and climbs up))

In this excerpt, each child asserts membership to a different category of the one collection, and orient to that categories in a similarly embodied fashion. In this way, Damien and Adam

\textsuperscript{45} While there does not appear to be the tradition of using ‘story wires’ while telling narratives in Murrinhpatha, such as there is in amongst people of the Central desert, for example (e.g. Eickelkamp, 2008; Green, 2014), Casimira does seem to be using this stick in a similar fashion, as a kind of ‘story stick’. Her mother, Annunciata, used a stick in a similar manner, earlier in this same recording
demonstrate their joint orientation to this categorisation device at work, to the activity itself, and, through this, to one another.

The following excerpt, ex. 6.24, sees Benjamin (7;2) joining an activity that his brother, Raymond (4;9) develops. Sitting together on the bonnet of the car, out of earshot of the other children and their caregivers, Raymond describes what his maternal grandmother, his nena, will purchase when she next has money, in lines 1-7. After considerable effort on Raymond’s part, Benjamin responds in line 9, and he does so by orienting to the same categorisation device that Raymond mobilises in line 1, that of family. He also orients to the theme of Raymond’s talk, of buying desirable objects. Where Raymond speaks of his nena buying (many) bicycles (line 7), Benjamin begins his story by claiming that his thabuth, the Marri Ngarr term for ‘maternal grandfather’, will purchase a car line (line 9).

Ex. (6.23)

1 Raymond: nena ngay-ka (0.3) ku mani martnu
mo.mo
my grandma, she’ll get money, won’t she
2 (0.4)
3 Raymond: nawa
won’t she
4 (2.4)
5 Raymond: nawa
won’t she
6 (0.9)
7 Raymond: ku mani martnu pathingul terert (0.3) i ku mani ***
she’ll get money and she’ll buy heaps of bikes and…
8 (1.8)
9 Benjamin: thabuth ngay *** an trak martnu ***
mo.fa
my grandpa, *** and he’ll get a car ***

Benjamin often uses a nickname to refer to the particular individual who is a member of the category, thabuth, ‘maternal grandfather’, and the referent of his use of this term. In fact, he does so later in this same interaction. Benjamin’s use of the family category term in line 9 therefore seems to be a deliberate mirroring of Raymond’s use of nena, in line 1, and an overt show of engagement in the activity that his brother develops. Benjamin’s orientation to buyable objects – a ‘grown up’ version of Raymond’s, one could argue – also demonstrates his engagement.

6.5. Seek entry into an activity

Four of the eight children use category terms when seeking entry into an activity. More than anything, this number is indicative of the paucity of contexts in recordings that were conducive to this action being pursued. The majority of activities that children engage in involve just two participants. As the definition of ‘activity’ used in this study does not include solitary endeavours, the action of seeking entry into an activity is not applicable to such a context. Furthermore, in some
recordings there is no third child of an appropriate age present to try to join ongoing activities. These factors limit the opportunities for children to pursue this action considerably.

As table 6.5 indicates, only the younger members of the cohort use categories to seek entry into activities. What’s more, in every example of this action it is a younger child attempting to join an activity between two older peers. This suggests an age-related aspect to the pursuit of this action, which further narrows the scope of contexts in which this action could be pursued.

Table 6.5 Categories used by children to seek entry into an activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEEK ENTRY INTO ACTIVITY</th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
<th>RAYMOND</th>
<th>ACACIA</th>
<th>CHARLIE</th>
<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
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Key: † nonhuman characters  ● stage of life  ● family  ● collectivity  ● English speaking

The ways in which speakers use categories to seek entry into activities appears to directly reflect the category use of peers who are current participants within the activity.

In a recording with his brother Benjamin (6;2) and cousin Jeremiah (6;7), Raymond (3;8) attempts to enter into an activity that the older boys are engaged in. Excerpt 6.25 begins with Benjamin and Jeremiah up in a tree, and Raymond on the ground, nearby. The activity involves the film characters, Caesar (the monkey from Planet of the Apes), the superhero, Ironman, and considerable shooting actions. In seeking entry into this activity, Raymond maps himself onto the character, grinalk, ‘the Hulk’, at lines 11 and 13.

Ex.(6.24)

1 Benjamin:  

\[\textbf{sisa ainmen} \]  

\[\textit{Caesar, Ironman!}\]

2

3 Benjamin:  

\[\textbf{ku ainmen-ka ded ded thama} \]  

\[\textit{Ironman is really dead, isn’t he}\]

4 (0.3)

5 Benjamin:  

\[\textbf{ku ainmen} \textit{ded ded} \]  

\[\textit{Ironman’s dead}\]

6 Jeremiah:  

\[\text{(machine gun sounds)}\]

7 Benjamin:  

\[\text{(shooting/explosion sounds)}\]

8 Jeremiah:  

\[\text{thungku gan tharri} \]  

\[\textit{three guns!}\]

9 Jeremiah:  

\[\text{(shooting noises)}\]

10 Benjamin:  

\[***\]

11 Raymond:  

\[\textbf{ngay-ka grinalk} \]  

\[\textit{I’m the Hulk!}\]

12 Benjamin:  

\[***\]

13 Raymond:  

\[\textbf{ngay-ka [ grinalk ]} \]  

\[\textit{I’m the Hulk!}\]

14 Benjamin:  

\[\textbf{[ami ami]} \]  

\[\textit{soldier, soldier!}\]

Raymond’s selection of the category ‘Hulk’ suggests an orientation to what he perceives as the categorisation device organising the older boys’ activity. Given that neither Benjamin and John
respond to Raymond’s bid, it is unclear whether he correctly gauges the device in play or not. Most children who pursue this action, of seeking entry into an activity, follow the strategy employed by Raymond in excerpt 6.25. That is, they orient to a category from the device that they perceive to be in operation in the activity.

Acacia (5;0) maps herself onto this very same category, *alk*, ‘Hulk’, when trying to join an activity that her sister Mavis (6;10) and cousin Molly (7;6) are engaged in. Unlike Raymond, however, she is successful, as can be seen in excerpt 6.26. The two older girls ratify the category membership that Acacia asserts for herself, and include her in their activity.

Ex.(6.25)

1 Mavis: Molly Molly Molly
*Molly Molly Molly!*

2 (0.5)

3 Mavis: ngayka kanhire reun kanhire
*I’m going this way, around this way*

4 Molly: o shit
*oh shit*

5 Acacia: ngay-ka (0.2) ngay-ka *alk* [ngay yu] *alk* (((climbs onto the car))
*I’m I’m Hulk! I’m Hulk, Hulk*

6 Mavis: [kam iya] langpidi
*Come here langpidi*

7 (0.3)

8 Molly: go go go
*Go, go, go!*

9 Acacia: kardu *** *alk* ngay-yu
*** *I’m Hulk*

10 Mavis: be kedekede inkuskan
*be kedekede inkuskan*

11 Molly: go go go *alk-wa!*
*Go, go, go! It’s HULK!*

12 Acacia: ’duf:’
*((pretends to steps heavily, as she nears them on the car))*

13 Mavis: *alk-wa!*
*It’s Hulk!*

14 Acacia: ((hisses))

Mavis and Molly each demonstrate their acceptance of Acacia as Hulk in this interaction by referring to her with this very category term. Molly is the first to explicitly orient to Acacia’s category membership, in line 11: *go go go ALK-WA! ‘Go, go, go it’s HULK!’* 46. Mavis follows in line 13 with an equally feverish *ALK WA! ‘HULK!’*. The girls’ corroboration of Acacia’s category membership indicates that she correctly gauges the categorisation device at work in their activity, and that she maps herself onto a relevant and available category. Acacia appears to adapt her particular Hulk membership so that it aligns with her co-participants’ reactions. Molly and Mavis

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46 While Molly exclaims *go go go* in line 8, it is not clear whether this utterance is produced in relation to Hulk until line 11, after Acacia has proclaimed her category membership again.
respond to her in (mock) terror (in lines 8, 11, and 13) and Acacia accordingly displays fearsome behaviour in her big, heavy steps (line 12), and her animal-like vocalisations (line 14).

Looking at this interaction, prior to Acacia’s involvement, the device in operation does not appear easy to gauge. Only one category, *ku bas*, ‘boss’, had been mentioned explicitly in Mavis and Molly’s discourse before Acacia’s attempt to join, in line 5 of excerpt 6.26. In fact, the most defining feature of the activity is the girls’ use of language. As described with respect to developing an activity, in ex. 6.15, Mavis and Molly had been speaking in a combination of Murrinhpatha and a representation of English. Acacia’s decision to map herself onto the superhero, ‘Hulk’, therefore shows considerable nous (or considerable luck) in gauging an appropriate category.

Another example of this action sees Raymond (4;9) trying to gain entry into an activity that his older cousin Jasper (12) develops. In excerpts 6.27-6.30, Raymond sits on the bonnet of a parked car, with his cousin Jasper and brother Benjamin (7;2). The activity is one that Jasper tries to instigate with Benjamin, and it involves making declarations about wives, in order to shock and entertain a child who is listening through headphones at the camera, around 20 metres away. Raymond attempts to join this activity by using four different strategies. All of his attempts involve orienting to the category, *palngun*, ‘wife’, and doing so in a manner that aligns with Jasper’s own uses of the term. The instances in which Raymond seeks entry into this particular activity are now detailed.

In excerpt 6.27, Raymond first engages in this activity when Benjamin fails to react to Jasper’s prompts for him to join in, in lines 1-3. Raymond takes over from Jasper in encouraging his brother to participate, in line 5. He does this by asking Benjamin to identify who his wife is, through which he implicitly attributes Benjamin membership to ‘husband’.

Ex.(6.26)

1 Jasper: kanhingawu Benji dinthebup ngarra ngay pangathu-ya  
*Hey Benji listen to me from over there*

2 Jasper: palngun ngay-ka Vanessa *** ha ha  
*My wife is Vanessa ((laughs))*

3 Jasper: dinthebup ngarra ngay pangathu-yu  
*Listen to me from over there*

4  

5 Raymond: palngun nhinhi-ka nangkal ((faces Benjamin))  
*Who’s your wife?*

6  

7 Benjamin: ((clicks tongue)) (0.3) wurda-wa  
((remains seated separately from ))

Raymond’s question in line 5, *palngun nhinhi-ka nangkal*, ‘who is your wife?’ displays an orientation to the categorisation device, family, that Jasper introduces in line 2. In orienting to the device, Raymond appears to endorse Jasper’s play idea. He also involves himself in the activity through posing this question to his brother. In asking Benjamin who his wife is, Raymond speaks from
within the activity, as if he himself is already a participant. Yet Jasper does not engage with Raymond. Instead he interacts with Mark (10;8), who is listening through the headphones, connected to the camera.

Raymond uses the category term, *palngun*, ‘wife’, three more times in this interaction. Each instance sees Raymond attempting to affiliate with Jasper, and gain entry into the activity, in a slightly different way. In in line 2 of the previous excerpt, 6.27, Jasper attributes wife membership to ‘Vanessa’ (and thus husband membership for himself, seeing as they are standardised relational pairs). In line 10 of excerpt 6.28, Raymond speaks as if a participant of the activity, and asserts that Nora is his wife for himself. Such a declaration echos Jasper’s from the previous excerpt.

Ex. (6.27)

8 Raymond: pal[ngu-]  
My wi-

9 Jason: [ *** ] pangathu ne  
*** from over there, yeah?

10 Raymond: pal[ngun ngay-ka Nora]  
My wife is Nora

11 Jasper: [palngun ngay-ka]  
My wife is-

12 (0.4)

13 Jasper: palngun ngay-ka Mark  
My wife is Mark

14 (1.2)

In line 13 of excerpt 6.28, Jasper announces that his wife is Mark, the boy listening through headphones (and also Jasper’s brother). Such a claim adds a degree of absurdity to the activity. Raymond follows this shift in tone with his next mention of *palngun*, in line 15 of excerpt 6.29, below. Here he proposes a different wife, *Anna mutum*, ‘Anna the dummy’. However Raymond identifies this wife for himself, not for Jasper. Raymond accompanies his assertion in line 15 with a laugh, which suggests that, for him, this proposed member of the category ‘wife’ matches the absurdity of Jason’s in line 13.

Ex. (6.28)

15 Raymond: palngun nhinhi-ka Anna mutum ha ha  
Your wife is Anna the idiot ((laughs))

16 Jasper: ((laughs at Mark))

2 lines removed

19 Raymond: An[na mutum]  
*Anna the dummy*

20 Jasper: [*** ha ] ha  
((looks at boys by the camera))

As Raymond produces his assertion, in line 15, he also appears to affiliate with his cousin non-verbally, clasping his arms around Jasper’s shoulders and neck. Jasper provides no discernible
response to Raymond’s declaration or hug. Instead, he looks straight ahead, at Mark, over by the camera.

Raymond’s final mention of the category ‘wife’ in this interaction relates to Mark, the focus of Jasper’s attention. He produces his comment in line 23 of ex. 6.30 to Jasper. Numerous aspects of this utterance of Raymond’s suggest that he is building on a previous turn from Jasper.

Ex. (6.29)

21 Raymond: nebirl *** ngarra shop wakal-yu:: ngarra shop wakal-yu::
   Look *** at the little sho::p, at the little sho::p
22 (1.2)
23 Raymond: palngun nukunu-ka nhinta   ((turns to face Jasper))
   That really is his wife!
24 Raymond: MILES KANHITHU
   MILES, COME OVER HERE!

In his remark at line 23, Raymond provides no personal names. He does not articulate the identity of the wife, nor that of the husband, to whom Raymond refers simply with the possessive, nukunu, ‘his’. Raymond’s use of nhinta, ‘that’s it’, also implies a reference to, and agreement with, a prior utterance from Jasper. In all of his attempts to join this activity with Jasper, Raymond demonstrates a flexible engagement with his cousin’s use of terms.

However, the success of Raymond’s attempts to join the activity and be treated as a participant by Jasper is doubtful. Despite the interactional dexterity he displays, Raymond’s attempts also demonstrate that orienting to a particular category and doing so in a manner that aligns with his interlocutor does not guarantee entry into an activity.

6.6. Facilitate others’ participation in activities

Five children use categories to facilitate a peer’s participation in an activity. Most do so on a single occasion only. Just as with the previous action, facilitating a peer’s participation in an activity requires a fairly specific context, of at least three children present, and for an activity to be taking place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
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<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FACILITATE PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>☀️</td>
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<td>Key: ☀️ kardu thipnam</td>
<td>☐️ stage of life</td>
<td>☀️ gender</td>
<td>☀️ family</td>
<td>☀️ collectivity</td>
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Children use categories to facilitate a peer’s engagement in an activity in three discernible ways. One is to provide their interlocutor with a (full or partial) utterance to produce. Another is to use categories to encourage or persuade another child to participate. A third mode is seen in a single instance only, and involves Casimira (3;4) endorsing her sister’s membership to the category, kardu
ngalla, ‘grown up’, which appears to be required to participate in a particular activity with their older brothers.47

Casimira (3;4) and Tabitha (3;6) each facilitate the participation of a peer in a speech activity by prompting them to produce a particular utterance. They do so in the one recording session, in which two main activities take place with them and two of their older brothers, Declan (8;4) and Maurice (6;3). Both of these activities involve asserting one’s membership to kardu thipmam categories. One activity takes place near the camera, while the other occurs around 30 metres from the camera, on the monkey bars. Tabitha and Casimira facilitate the participation of others by supplying them with information relating to kardu thipmam categories. They do so with each other, and also with their brothers.

Prior to the start of excerpt 6.31, Tabitha and Casimira have been taking it in turns to announce their memberships to kardu thipmam categories. In line 1, Maurice asserts his membership to the kardu thipmam category, ngakumarl, ‘totem’. Bernadette, the children’s caregiver, attempts to involve Declan in this activity in line 3, by telling him that it is his turn to speak. At line 4, Tabitha prompts Declan with an appropriate line to produce, thereby facilitating his participation in the activity.

Ex.(6.30)

1 Maurice: ngakumarl ngay-ka ku tek
   My totem is the red tailed black cockatoo
2 Maurice: murrinh ngay-ka Yenmeni
   my name is Yenmeni
3 Bernadette: nhinhi-warda thinangerren (to Declan)
   your turn now. Speak!
4 Tabitha: ngakumarl ngay-ka tek thama (to Declan)
   Say ‘my totem is the red tailed black cockatoo’!
5 ((Declan holds Tabitha by the shoulders and moves her a few paces back))
6 Maurice: ngakumarl ngay-ka [ku tek]
   My totem is the red tailed black cockatoo!
7 Tabitha: [ku tek]
   black cockatoo!

Tabitha produces the category term, ngakumarl, ‘totem’, to assist her older brother Declan in joining the activity. Judging from the fact that Declan’s sole reaction to this is to physically move Tabitha away (line 5), it appears that her ‘help’ is not appreciated.

Casimira (3;4) facilitates her brother Maurice’s participation in a similarly themed activity, in excerpt 6.32. The activity sees the four children swinging on the monkey bars, taking turns to assert their membership to the kardu thipmam category of ngakumarl, ‘totem’, as Tabitha demonstrates in line 3. Unlike Tabitha in ex. 6.30, Casimira pursues the action of facilitating

47 LAMP_20140917_LD_01_00:13:54.201
participation in ex. 6.32 when her interlocutor, Maurice is already willingly engaged in the activity. What’s more, she supplies him with an utterance to produce when he is audibly searching for an appropriate totemic entity to connect himself to.

Ex.(6.31)

1 Maurice: thama ngawu Tabi
   *go like this, Tabi*
2 Casimira: ***
3 Tabitha: ngakumarl ngay-ka TEK
   *My totem is BLACK COCKATOO*
4 (0.9)
5 Maurice: ngakumarl ngay-ka ku::[::: ]
   *my totem is the::::::*
6 Casimira: [*"thithay"]
   honeybag   ((whispered))
7 (0.3)
8 Casimira: thithay
   honeybag!
9 (0.6)
10 Maurice: ku thithay
   the honeybag

Maurice signals trouble in line 5 when he lengthens the vowel in *ku*, the noun class marker for animate non-humans, and fails to assert a totemic entity. Casimira facilitates Maurice’s participation in this activity in lines 6 and 8 by suggesting a possible entity for him to produce in order to complete his turn, *ku thithay*, ‘honeybag’. While Casimira does not explicitly mention the category term, ngakumarl, ‘totem’, her orientation to this category, and to the *kardu thipmam* device organising the activity, is displayed through her suggestion of a ratifiable totemic entity of Maurice’s (and not her own). Maurice produces this totemic entity in line 10. Through this he displays his participation in the activity and indicates the success of Casimira’s facilitation.

Charlie (5;6) also facilitates the participation of a peer by providing him with information. In excerpt 6.33, Charlie, his mother Sarah, and brother Lenny (3;4) are sitting on a picnic blanket, near a creek. Sarah is peeling oranges for the boys. As she does this, she engages Lenny in a question and answer activity. When she asks Lenny a question about his mother’s name in line 1, Charlie provides Lenny with an answer at line 3, facilitating his participation in the speech activity.

Ex.(6.32)

1 Sarah: i Lenny nangkal mama nhinhi-yu nangkal mama nhinhi-yu
   *and Lenny, who’s your mum? Who’s your mum?*
2 (0.8)
3 Charlie: mama nhinhi-ka nan thama Thalanthay
   *Your mum is whatshername, isn’t it. Thalanthay*
4 (0.3)
5 Sarah: awu thitha nukunu-wa Thalanthay-yu

48 Lenny can call Sarah his *mama*, but here she appears to be referring to her sister, Lenny’s birth mother
No, Thalanthay is his sister

((Charlie turns around to look behind him before turning back to his Lenny))

Charlie: ba thitha nhinhi thama
I mean, your sister, isn’t that right

Lenny: awu thitha nhinhi
No, your sister

((nods at Lenny))

Charlie: ay ngampayirrat ku kanarnturturt maku-wa
Hey I lied, there’s no crocodile here

((taps Sarah on the leg))

Lenny: Thalanthay ngay
Thalanthay is mine

When Charlie provides Lenny with the information at line 3, he uses the form thama as a discourse marker, rather than the prompting verb form. (This is evident from the non-final placement of thama in his utterance, but more so from the fact that he does not take his interlocutor’s perspective in the utterance he supplies. Charlie refers to ‘your’ mother (mama nhinhi), not ‘my mother’ (mama ngay).) When Sarah informs Charlie that the information he has offered Lenny is incorrect, Charlie provides him with information again in line 7, with the adjusted content49. That Charlie directs the feedback he is given from Sarah to Lenny, when Lenny is well within earshot of Sarah, further indicates that Charlie uses categories in this stretch of talk to aid Lenny.

The remaining two examples of children facilitating the participation of peers in an activity have to do with recipient design. Damien (4;0) and Raymond (4;9) each tailor their use of categories to accommodate, and thus encourage, their interlocutors.

Different again, Damien (4;0) encourages his cousin, Elsie (2;4) to join an interaction with him and his mother, Rhonda, by tailoring his questions so as to incorporate her gender. In excerpt 6.34, the three are seated on the ground, drinking tea and eating biscuits. The excerpt begins with Damien asking Elsie whether or not she likes ‘Hulk’ (line 1). When his mother Rhonda prompts him to ask Elsie instead if she likes the Disney movie, ‘Frozen’50, in line 2, Damien follows Rhonda’s prompts and does so in line 3. In line 9, Damien reverts to his original question, and asks Elsie if Hulk is ‘hers’. However, after a generous pause, Damien produces the category term, mardinhpuy, ‘girl’, in line 11. Damien follows this with a repeat question, in line 13, in which he produces the term as a single category, hulk mardinhpuy, ‘girl hulk’.

Ex.(6.33)

1 Damien: alk ngawu le thanam nawa
Hey, you like Hulk, don’t you

((facing Elsie))

2 Rhonda: aa *** alk kem pana-yu Elsa pana-yu Elsa yu nange Let him go nange

49 The use of the family term thitha, ‘sister’ in this interaction should be noted. A Kriol term, Sarah’s use of it reflects her multilingualism (she is fluent in Murrinhpatha, Kriol, and English), and Charlie’s familiarity with Kriol lexicon.

50 Elsa is one of the main characters from the film, and ‘Let it go’ is a well-known song from it.
Rhonda does not explicitly mention gender category terms in her utterance to Damien in line 2, she simply mentions a character and song from a particular film. Yet the adjustment that Damien makes to his original question to Elsie about Hulk in lines 11 and 13 indicates that he interprets his mother’s ‘Frozen’ prompt as alluding to categories of gender. Damien explicitly incorporates gender into his questions, tailoring his utterance to accommodate Elsie’s gender category membership, and thus facilitating her participation in the talk.

Raymond (4;9) also uses categories to facilitate a younger relative’s participation in an activity. In excerpt 6.35, he encourages his sister Alice (1;2) to join him and his brother Benjamin (7;2), where the two of them are sitting. The way in which Raymond attempts to coax Alice into joining them is to foreground the familial connection that they share.

Ex. (6.34)

Raymond produces the category term *paba*, ‘brother’, together with the collective pro-term, *nanku*, in lines 2 and 4. Through this, Raymond foregrounds the kin relationship that Alice shares with him and Benjamin, and does so from Alice’s perspective. Raymond seems to positions himself and Benjamin in relation to these categories as a persuasive strategy, to encourage Alice to join them.
6.7. Summary

This chapter described the ways in which children use category terms when grouping themselves together with others, making positive assessments, and pursuing actions that relate to activities with peers. Some of these actions are pursued by all eight children, while other are pursued by considerably fewer. In terms of grouping themselves with others, children appear to select categories on the basis of how established or novel a collective is. The actions of participating and seeking entry into an activity see children orienting to the categorisation device in play. In some contexts children do this by performing membership to a category, while in others children orient to relevant categories in their talk. Children’s use of categories in these actions could be viewed not only as pursuing an affiliative action but also as aligning with their interlocutor. In terms of developing an activity, children assert category membership for themselves and/or others. Two children, Acacia and Mavis, also develop activities so as to realign interpersonal relationships between participants when they engage in an extended activity. Facilitating the participation of others in activities sees children either provide their interlocutors with information they consider necessary for the activity, or select and produce category terms from their interlocutor’s perspective.
7. Disaffiliative Actions

This chapter describes the children’s use of categories when pursuing the nine disaffiliative actions defined for this study. Most children in the study produce category terms for a broad range of disaffiliative actions across the four time points. All eight children use categories to individuate themselves, and to oppose the statements or actions of others, and all except one speaker use categories to individuate others. At least half of the cohort produces categories to pursue all other disaffiliative actions, with the exception of negative assessments, which only the two eldest children use categories to pursue. As in the previous chapter, each action is examined in turn. The various ways in which children employ categories when pursuing an action are described, with excerpts of dialogue provided as illustration.

7.1. Individuate oneself

As can be seen in table 7.1, every child in the cohort uses categories to mark themselves as different from others. The categories most commonly produced across the cohort when pursuing this action are those from the kardu thipman and stage of life collections.

Table 7.1 Categories used to individuate oneself

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUATE SELF</th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
<th>RAYMOND</th>
<th>ACACIA</th>
<th>CHARLIE</th>
<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ ✳ ✳</td>
<td>✳</td>
<td>✳ ✳</td>
<td>✳</td>
<td>✳ ✳ ✳</td>
<td>✳ ✳ ✳</td>
<td>✳ ✳ ✳</td>
<td>✳ ✳</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ✳ kardu thipman  ● stage of life  ● occupation  ● family  ● gender  ● nonhuman characters  ● personal qualities

In many cases, children categorise themselves as a member of a particular category on the basis of physical behaviour that they display. For example, in excerpt 7.1, Casimira (3;4) announces to her two older brothers that she is a member of the category, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, as she facilitates the sharing of food. Casimira hands out boxes of fruit juice (line 3), before attempting to open a packet of biscuits for them all to eat. It is while she is engaged in this latter action, in line 7, that she labels herself kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’.

Ex. (7.1)

1 Casimira: kanhingawu
   Hey
2 (1.0)
3 Casimira: puy-ya ((hands a juice carton to her brother, Declan))
   Go on
4 (0.8)
5 Casimira: mamparlnu ((picks up a packet of biscuits))
   I’ll open it
6 (0.5)
7 Casimira: ngay kardu ngalla-yu ((attempts to open packet of biscuits))

143
I'm a grown up

((Declan takes the unopened biscuit packet from Casimira, and drops it back into the shopping bag))

Casimira: ngay kardu ngalla
I'm a grown up

((to Declan))

You do it

Casimira: awu ((looking at Maurice, who has opened and is starting to drink some juice))
No!

((Casimira motions to take a juice from her brother))

kura ngay-ka
no- what about my drink?!

kura ngay paba:wu: (outstretches both arms towards Maurice)
It's my drink, brother!

The timing of Casimira’s orientation to ‘grown up’ in lines 7 and 9 indicates that she associates actions relating to the facilitation of others’ eating and drinking with membership to this category. She declares herself a member of this category in connection to the member-like behaviour she exhibits, or intends to presently exhibit. This individuation of herself could also be taken as a justification for her assertion in line 5, that she will succeed in opening the packet of biscuits. That is, through orienting to the category, ‘grown up’, Casimira implies that she will display this category bound behaviour.

Given that she uses the category term in connection with particular behaviours, Casimira’s lack of success in opening the biscuits (the acknowledgement of which is exhibited by her brother and herself in lines 10-12) appears to discredit her membership claims, and connect her with category non-membership. Non-membership to kardu ngalla equates to membership to its standardised relational pair, kardu wakal, ‘child’. It could also be argued that through her behaviour in lines 12-15, in which she asks an elder for help in a task, before decrying her brother for having taken her drink, Casimira orients further from ‘grown up’ category membership and closer to that of ‘child’.

Tabitha (4;1) similarly individuates herself as a kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, upon demonstrating certain behaviour. Excerpt 7.2 is taken from a recording at the beach, with Tabitha, Casimira (3;11), the girls’ older brothers, and three adult caregivers. Tabitha has been picking up hermit crabs, and letting them crawl on her bare hands. The excerpt begins with Tabitha trying to catch a creature as it scuttles across the sand. When Casimira expresses annoyance at Tabitha encroaching on her space, in lines 2-3, Tabitha turns away to dig for creatures elsewhere. As Tabitha does so, she announces, in line 5, that she is a kardu ngalla warda, ‘a grown up now’.

Ex.(7.2)

((Tabitha tries to grab a hermit crab, crawling in the sand near Casimira))

Casimira: Tab- ((Casimira nudges Tabitha away with her shoulder))

Tab- ((whiney voice))
((Tabitha turns away, to dig around in different patch of sand))

Tabitha: ngay kardu ngalla warda
I’m a grown up now

((Tabitha leans forward, close to the sand))

Tabitha: wa: ku thi::th
Ooh! A grub!

Jonah: <ku thananga>
A hermit crab

((Bernadette wipes Tabitha’s nose))

Maurice: kura patha kanhi bagurduknu kanhire
I’m going to drink this water over here

While Casimira’s category use in ex. 7.1 suggests a relationship between her assertion of ‘grown up’ membership and the physical behaviour she engages in, Tabitha makes this connection explicit. Tabitha’s use of the adverbial, warda, ‘now’, in line 5, indicates that her membership to the category kardu ngalla is recently attained, and presumably in relation to a recent action (i.e. her handling of creepy crawlies). This in turn implies that, prior to playing with hermit crabs, Tabitha did not consider herself a member of kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’. Given this connection between creatures and this category, Tabitha’s delighted exclamation upon finding a grub in the sand in line 7 could be viewed as a further display of her newly asserted ‘grown up’ membership.

The timing of Tabitha’s self-differentiation in line 5 suggests that she pursues this action in response to Casimira’s behaviour in lines 2 and 3, in which Casimira protests Tabitha’s presence by speaking in a whiney voice, and physically pushes her away. In orienting to the category, ‘grown up’, Tabitha mobilises the stage of life device, making all categories from this collection salient. Just as Casimira inadvertently does with herself in ex. 7.1, so Tabitha’s membership claims to kardu ngalla can be heard as contrasting with Casimira’s behaviour. By characterising her own actions as a category bound activity of ‘grown up’, Tabitha also seems to imply that Casimira, by virtue of her own behaviour, is not a fellow category member.

Just as Casimira’s orientation to ‘grown up’ is challenged when she fails to open the packet of biscuits in ex. 7.1, Tabitha’s ‘grown up’ membership in ex. 7.2 could be viewed as discredited by a caregiver wiping her nose in line 9. Having one’s nose wiped is an activity associated with membership to the category of ‘child’. However, as stage of life terms are relational, Bernadette’s treatment of Tabitha as a child does not necessarily threaten her ‘grown up’ membership in relation to Casimira. Furthermore, having her nose wiped does not undo her handling of hermit crabs, which is the behaviour that Tabitha appears to base her orientation to kardu ngalla on.

Three other children in the cohort also individuate themselves in relation to their physical behaviour, current or imminent. Charlie (5;6) announces to his twin sisters that he is a ‘ninja’ as he climbs along a tree branch51, and Raymond (4;4) informs a group of peers and adults that, as

51 LAMP_20150919_LD_01_00:13:29.423
‘Superman’, he will fly up and away\textsuperscript{52}. Benjamin individuates himself as a range of different categories based on his behaviour. Upon placing a wide brimmed hat on his head, and strutting about with his hands on his hips, Benjamin (5;8) announces that he is ‘Woody’, a cowboy character from the animated film, Toy Story\textsuperscript{53}. Six months later, at 6;2, Benjamin swings from a tree branch and individuates himself as ‘Caesar’, a character from the film, Planet of the Apes\textsuperscript{54}, and while trying to shimmy up a tree trunk, Benjamin (7;1) asserts his membership to ‘Spiderman’\textsuperscript{55}. These examples demonstrate the types of physical movement and the objects that children associate with particular non-human characters.

As evident in table 7.1, five of the eight children individuate themselves using \textit{kardu thipmam} categories. When this action is pursued with categories form this collection, children’s claims do not appear to relate to any particular physical behaviour. In many examples of this action pursued with \textit{kardu thipmam} categories, children announce their category membership to the group at large, which includes adult caregivers. In others, children appear to direct their utterances to the camera. Such behaviour is seen with \textit{kardu thipmam} categories only. This suggests that when children individuate themselves in relation to \textit{kardu thipmam} categories, they appear to pursue secondary action, too, which is to display knowledge.

Mavis (5;4) demonstrates this behaviour in multiple recordings at the first time point, as flagged in the previous chapter. She individuates herself in terms of the \textit{kardu thipmam} categories of totem, land, and clan, and does so seemingly to the group at large, also at times while looking directly at the camera. Excerpt 7.3 sees Mavis assert her membership to the category of \textit{ngakumarl}, ‘totem’. She individuates herself in lines 2 and 4, while facing the camera, behind which stands her father.

Ex.(7.3)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Acacia: ((screams, and jumps away from Carla, with the car key in hand))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mavis: \textit{ngakumarl ngay-ka ku tek-wa} ((facing the camera))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>\textit{my totem is the red tailed black cockatoo}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Carla: yukuy ki-gathu thirra ((to Acacia))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>\textit{that's it, come on, give me the key}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mavis: ku nguluguy ku pi[rdama]tha ((lifts tub of yoghurt up to her mouth))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>\textit{and the echidna and the- that's all}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Acacia: [ *** ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mavis: \textit{ngakumarl nganki}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.PL/PC.SIB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>\textit{it's our totem}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mavis: ((licks yoghurt out of the tub))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In line 6, Mavis uses the same category with which she individuates herself to create a group with everyone present. This oscillation, between individuating herself and creating a group, in relation

\textsuperscript{52} LAMP_20150323_LD_03_00:29:07.270  
\textsuperscript{53} LAMP_20140402_LD_01_00:14:50.866  
\textsuperscript{54} LAMP_20141007_LD_01_00:12:17.355  
\textsuperscript{55} LAMP_20150920_LD_01_00:09:34.772
to kardu thipmam categories, was mentioned in 6.1 of the previous chapter. It suggests an awareness in Mavis that such category membership can both differentiate and group together.

7.2. Individuate other/s

Table 7.2 shows the types of categories that each child uses to mark other people as different. All children use categories to pursue this action with peers with the exception of Damien.

Table 7.2 Categories used by children to individuate other/s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUATE OTHER/S</th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
<th>RAYMOND</th>
<th>ACACIA</th>
<th>CHARLIE</th>
<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key: stage of life</td>
<td>collectivity</td>
<td>gender</td>
<td>kardu thipmam</td>
<td>personal qualities</td>
<td>occupation</td>
<td>nonhuman characters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as they do in relation to themselves, children also individuate other people on the basis of behaviour. For example, Casimira (3;4) labels Tabitha (3;6) a kardu ngal, ‘grown up’, when she does a flip on the monkey bars56, and Benjamin (6;8) individuates his brother, Raymond (4;5), who is wielding a (butter) knife in each hand, with the term, ‘Ninja Turtle’57. Children’s use of categories in this action can be seen as an application of Sacks’ ‘viewer’s maxim’.

Certain children pursue this action on the basis of the physical location. For example, in a recording made on his grandmother’s kantri, where he had never been before, Benjamin (6;8) individuates his maternal grandmother in relation to the kardu thipmam category of land, da. In excerpt 7.4, Benjamin and his cousin, Dexter (7;4), are standing near the river’s edge, watching their aunt Laura fish. Benjamin’s mother (mo.zi), Martha, is seated next to Laura on the riverbank, nursing her daughter, Alice (0.8). The boys stand a few steps behind the adults. After suggesting to Dexter that they walk off somewhere together, Benjamin stops, faces the camera, and asserts his grandmother’s membership to the kardu thipmam category of land.

Ex.(7.4)

1 Benjamin: kaya willi mamba ((to Dexter))
2 ((Benjamin and Dexter start to walk off))
3 Benjamin: ((stops, turns around, and looks towards the camera))
4 Benjamin: ((slaps his hands on his thighs))
5 Benjamin: kanhi-ka:: ((slaps hands on legs)) da nena ngay nukun mo.mo

This here… is my nanna’s country

6 (1.1)
7 Benjamin: kanhi-yu here
8 (0.7)
9 Benjamin: Kura Ngaliwe-ka ‘Narrow River’ ((glances over at caregivers))

56 LAMP_20140917_LD_01_00:16:37.881
57 LAMP_20150328_LD_01_00:15:17.915
Benjamin directs his utterances in lines 5-11 to the camera. His quick glances to the adults sitting nearby in lines 9 and 11, however, indicate that he is conscious of their presence, and that he assumes they will hear them. In line 14, Martha prompts Benjamin to continue pursuing this action of individuating his grandmother with respect to the current location. Through her prompt, Martha conveys her approval of Benjamin’s earlier spontaneous actions. This approval further suggests that Benjamin designed his individuation of his grandmother at least in part for the ears of his caregivers.

In other instances of this action, children individuate others in a fairly neutral manner. Speakers mark others as different from themselves simply to refer to them. Mavis (5;11) and Charlie (5;6), for example, each refer to their respective younger siblings using the collectivity term, piguna, 3.DU.SIB. Equally, Casimira (3;4) and Tabitha (3;6) each produce the term kunugunu, ‘old woman’ when identifying the driver of a car that goes past. A category term used by numerous children to individuate others in the plural is mup, ‘mob’. Excerpt 7.5 sees Charlie (4;7) alluding to a past event, by pointing out where a particular group of people, who he identifies via a key member, Nancy, had previously gone. Charlie stands atop a rock, looks off into the distance, and delivers his utterances to Jackson (4;7), his cousin. Jackson’s sister, Yolanda (3;0) is also nearby.

Ex.(7.5)

1 Charlie: karrim kardu- (points into the distance in front of him) there’s a person-
2
3 Charlie: Nensi mup kanhingu Nancy mob was round this way
4 Jackson: ((steps up onto same rock that Charlie is on and gazes in the direction of Charlie’s point))
5 Charlie: Nensi mup-ka Nancy mob
6

58 Mavis: LAMP_20141008_LD_01_00:08:25.975, Charlie: LAMP_20150919_LD_01_01:14:08.536
59 LAMP_20151023_LD_01_00:41:36.683
7 Charlie: pangu Nensi **mup** pangu Nensi **mup** ((points ahead))  
**Nancy mob was over there, Nancy mob was over there**

8 Charlie: pangu-dangu Nensi **mup-yu**  
**Nancy mob was way over there**

9 Charlie: ((lowers his arm, and knocks Jackson off the rock in the process))

11 Jackson: Charlie  
*Charlie!*

12 Charlie: ((turns around to look at Jackson))

13 Charlie: wurda mere ngay Yolanda  
*No it wasn’t me, it was Yolanda!*

Although the category term, **mup**, ‘mob’, is most often used by children when pursuing the affiliative action of creating groups, it can also be used by a speaker to label multiple people together as different, as Charlie demonstrates here.

### 7.3. Oppose another’s statement/action

All eight children produce category terms to oppose a peer’s statement or action. The type of categories most commonly used across the cohort are those of the *kardu thipmam* set, which six children produce.

#### Table 7.3 Categories used by children to oppose another's statement/action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oppose Other’s Statement/Action</th>
<th>Casimira</th>
<th>Damien</th>
<th>Tabitha</th>
<th>Raymond</th>
<th>Acacia</th>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>Mavis</th>
<th>Benjamin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Circle" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Circle" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Circle" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Circle" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Circle" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Circle" /></td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Circle" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ![Circle](image9) *kardu thipmam*  
- ![Circle](image10) stage of life  
- ![Circle](image11) family  
- ![Circle](image12) nonhuman characters  
- ![Circle](image13) personal qualities  
- ![Circle](image14) collectivity  
- ![Circle](image15) occupation

Children use categories to oppose statements by peers in a number of different ways. One of these is to reproduce the same category term used by their interlocutor, or a very similar term, with corrected informational content. Another mode of opposing involves reproducing the category one’s interlocutor uses but prefacing it with a negator. A different method again is to counter another child’s statement by producing an alternate category term. In terms of opposing a peer’s behaviour (as opposed to statements), numerous children do this by attributing category membership to themselves or others. Another way is to assert category non-membership for their interlocutor. When opposing another’s behaviour, children use category terms as a justification of their opposition.

In the first example of this action, in ex. 7.6, Casimira (4;6) opposes a statement made by her brother Marvin (13). The excerpt begins with Marvin employing the *kardu thipmam* category, *kangathi*, ‘mother’s country’, in a caregiver-like utterance. He prompts Casimira in line 2 to individuate her grandmother in relation to their current location. Once Casimira has clarified the precise individual that he is referring to with the family category term, *kawu* (mo.mo), (line 5), Casimira rejects Marvin’s initial statement, in line 8. She does so with a negator and by providing an alternate place name.
Ex.(7.6)

1 ((Martin walks up to Casimira, and leans down close to her ear))

2 Marvin: *kanhi-ka kangathi kawu ngay* nukun?  
   'This is my grandma's mother's country here'

3 (0.8)

4 Marvin: kanhi-ka da Dabul Krasing ngawu *** thama  
   'here, at Double Crossing' *** You say it

5 Casimira: kawu nangkal  
   Which grandma?

6 Marvin: Pearl thama-ya  
   Pearl, y'know?

7 (0.6)

8 Casimira: awu da nigunu-ka Yederr-wa nigunu  
   No, her land is Yederr, that's hers

9 (1.4)

10 Casimira: Yederr  
   Yederr

At line 8, Casimira opposes the content of her brother’s utterance (in line 2) with the negative interjection, awu, (‘no!’). She then justifies this opposition by asserting her grandmother’s ratifiable connection to the *kardu thipmam* category of land. In her assertion, Casimira stresses the alternate place name she provides in line 8 with the emphatic particle, -*wa*, highlighting the contrast between this and the place had Marvin named. The fact that Casimira employs the general category term for land, *da*, rather than the specific term that Marvin uses in his turn, could also be viewed as her allowing the focus to rest on the corrected place name, rather than on the type of category. After all, Casimira is not opposing her brother’s use of the category term, but rather the particular location that he links to it.

The next example of opposing, ex. 7.7, occurs in an interaction in which Acacia (3;5), Tabitha (3;0), and two older children, Mavis (5;4) and Molly (6;0), are discussing what they will do with the sheets of stickers they have each just been handed. Their caregiver Eleanor sits with them. The excerpt begins with Mavis (5;4) declaring that she will give her stickers to her father. In line 6, Acacia announces that she will give her stickers to her mother.60 This could be viewed as an orientation to the family device that her sister mobilises in line 1. Acacia mentions her mother again in line 10, when she restates her plans for the stickers. Tabitha then issues a (partially audible) utterance about her own mother. In line 13, Acacia opposes Tabitha’s statement.

Ex.(7.7)

1 Mavis: *dedi* ngay-ka? maletet ngarra kanhi  
   *my dad, he'll stick it on here*

2 (0.6)

3 Mavis: *dedi* [ngay]

---

60 This verb form was described to me as a ‘babytalk’ version of *ngamngenmutnu*  
   ngam-nge-mut-nu  
   1sS.poke(19)-3sIO-give-FUT  
   ‘I'll give it to her’
my dad

4 Eleanor: [natha]-warra ngarra mobail naleletnu (holds out mobile phone)

You do it, stick it onto this phone

5 Tabitha: ngay kanhi

mine are here

6 Akiya: ngarra mama ngay ngapuutnu (to Eleanor)

I’ll give them to my mum

7 Molly: mobail da kanthin does she have a phone?

8 Ernestina: ngarra nan thangemut
give them to whatshername

9 Acacia: mama ngay ngapunut

I’m giving them to my mum

10 Tabitha: mama ngay ***

my mum ***

11 Tabitha: *** mobail ***

and what about *** phone?

12 Eleanor: ngarra [

*** mobail ***

and what about *** phone?

13 Acacia: [wurda mama ngay] ***

no, my mum ***!

Acacia opposes her cousin’s statement in line 13 by reproducing the category term, ‘mum’, and prefacing it with the negative interjection wurda (‘no!’). While the audio quality in this section of the recording prevents any certain claims being made, it appears that Acacia repeats the same verb form in line 13 as Tabitha produces in line 11. It is likely, then, that Acacia opposes Tabitha’s statement by repeating it back to her, prefaced with a negator. If so, this would be an instance of ‘format tying’ (Goodwin, 1990a). What is indisputable, however, is Acacia’s use of the category term mama to oppose Tabitha’s utterance.

Certain instances in the data see a child oppose a peer’s selection of category, but without supplying an alternative term for them to use. Instead, the speaker simply alerts the interlocutor to their incorrect category selection. In excerpt 7.8, Benjamin (7;1) opposes an utterance produced by his brother Raymond (4;10), in which the latter individuates their sister Alice (1;2) in relation to her mother’s country. The boys are sitting on a picnic blanket with Alice and her mother, Martha, eating watermelon. Their grandmother, Judith, is collecting firewood nearby to boil a billy of water for tea.

Ex.(7.8)

1 Raymond: KUNUGUNU NUKUN kem [pangu ]
The OLD WOMAN SPIRIT might be over there!

2 Raymond: ((points in direction that Judith is walking))

3 Martha: [awu nigu]nu-ka kangathi nigunu kanhi-yu

No, this place here is her mother’s country

4 (0.4)

5 Benjamin: yu yeah

6 (1.8)

7 Raymond: kangathi nukunu Alice kanhi-ka ((points off to same direction as in line 1))

It’s Alice’s mother’s country here
At line 7, Raymond states that their current location is Alice’s kangathi, ‘mother’s country’. Benjamin then reproduces this category term to oppose Raymond’s use of it in line 8. While Benjamin makes clear his opposition to Raymond’s selection of category in this utterance, he does not offer his younger brother a more appropriate term to use. This suggests that Benjamin expects Raymond to know what the appropriate choice of term in fact is, or that he is able to figure it out. Martha’s explicit clarification of how Alice and Judith are each connected to their current location, in lines 9 and 11, indicates that she, on the other hand, does not expect Raymond to know the correct category. These utterances of Martha’s also highlight the possibility that it is not Benjamin’s role to correct his brother, with their caregiver (who is also Alice’s mother) sitting with them. While the reasons for Benjamin not supplying Raymond with an alternate category to produce can only be guessed at, what is clearly shown in the data here is Benjamin’s unelaborated mode of opposing Raymond’s utterance.

This next excerpt sees Mavis (5;11) reject a proposal that her cousin, Molly (6;7) makes, by attributing a particular category membership to her. This interaction takes place under the shade of a tree at the beach, as Mavis and Molly negotiate the premise of an activity they have yet to start. Excerpt 7.9 begins with Molly asking who will perform the category of teacher, before proposing that the two of them are joint members of this category. Mavis opposes Molly’s suggestion in line 3, and informs Molly that she is not the teacher. Mavis then attributes Molly membership to an alternate category term, kardu wakal, ‘child’, in line 5.

Ex.(7.9)

1 Molly: nangkal titha neki-yu
   Who’s the teacher? Us two?
2 (0.5)
3 Mavis: A::WU manangka titha nhinhi
   NO:: you’re not the teacher.
4 (0.6)
5 Mavis: kardu wakal-wa nhinhi
   You’re a little kid
6 Molly: mm titha ngay
   hmm, I’m a teacher
7 (0.9)
8 Mavis: a::wu
   No:
9 Acacia: ngawu [Daisy] ***
   Hey Daisy is ***
10 Mavis: [yakay]
  argh!
11   (0.9)
12 Mavis: MAMA KARDU WAKAL NABERT MANI:::
  MUM, CAN YOU TAKE THE LITTLE KIDS AWAY?

In line 1, Molly suggests that she and Mavis are co-members of ‘teacher’. Mavis denies Molly membership to the category, ‘teacher’, first by announcing her non-membership to the category (line 3), and then by casting her as a member of its standardised relational pair in this context, ‘child’ (line 5). This attribution of category membership acts as a justification for Mavis’ opposition. Molly cannot be a teacher because she is a member of its binary opposite category. By assigning Molly membership to a different category, Mavis leaves implicit her own orientation to the category of teacher. Mavis’ use of authoritative language in lines 3, 5 and 8 could be taken as a performance of this category membership. And, while Molly resists her assigned membership in line 6, her utterance contrasts with the definiteness, greater volume, and emphasis of Mavis’ assertions.

While Mavis implies her orientation to ‘teacher’ through remapping Molly onto its opposite category, the following examples show children using explicit assertions of category membership for themselves to oppose the actions of peers. In a recording in which his brother, two sisters, and mother are present, Damien (4;6) opposes the actions of his brother, Nathan (6;9), by claiming membership to the category, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’. Immediately prior to this stretch of talk, in ex.7.10, Nathan walks up to the camera and looks through the viewfinder, in Damien’s direction. The excerpt begins with Damien standing up and marching towards the camera and his brother. Damien opposes this action of Nathan’s in line 2 by telling him, in a loud voice, to move away. He follows this command by declaring his membership to the category, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’.

Ex.(7.10)

1 Damien: ((gets up and starts walking towards the camera/Nathan))
2 Damien: ngathparre () kardu ngalla ngay-yu
  Move away! I’m a grown up
3   (1.4)
4 Damien: ngathparre ((pushes Nathan))
  Move!

Damien uses membership to the category of kardu ngalla in line 2 in order to justify his opposition to Nathan’s actions. He wields his ‘grown up’ membership as a support for his demand that Nathan stop and move away. Nathan is discernibly older than Damien. As such, we can assume that Damien is not contrasting himself with Nathan and implying non-membership to ‘grown up’ for him. Equally, Damien does not appear to use this category to group himself with his brother, as a fellow grown up. He does not follow his assertion with de, ‘too’, as in ‘I’m a grown up too’, nor does he suggest that they both look through camera. What Damien appears to express here is that
he, as a *kardu ngalla*, has the right to look through the camera, and that Nathan should move to allow him his category based right.

Tabitha (4;1) also uses category membership to oppose an older sibling’s actions. In excerpt 7.11, she mobilises the categorisation device of race to oppose her brother Jonah’s behaviour. In this interaction, two of Tabitha’s older brothers, Jack (11;2) and (primarily) Jonah (12;9), have been repeatedly issuing commands for her to speak. They have also been employing caregiver-likeprompting routines with Tabitha, trying to elicit displays of knowledge from her about *kardu thipmam* categories, as Jack does in line 1 of the excerpt. After acquiescing numerous times, Tabitha stops responding to her brothers’ prompts. This is displayed in line 2 of the excerpt, where she walks away in silence after Jack’s display question to her. In line 3, Tabitha’s eldest brother, Jonah, combines a verbal order for Tabitha to speak with a smack to her head. Tabitha responds to this behaviour from Jonah by invoking the category, *wathpala*, ‘non-Aboriginal person’, in line 5. She bases her opposition to Jonah’s actions on his lack of membership to this race category.

Ex.(7.11)

1  Jack: Tabitha thangku *ngakumari* nhinhi-yu
   Tabitha what’s your *totem*?
2  Tabitha: ((walks past her brothers, behind the camera))
3  Jonah: deyida pangathu thaningerren thim
   *Come on, again, speak from over there*
4  Jonah: ((hits Tabitha over the head))
5  Tabitha: yawu kardu bere-YA manangka *wathpala* nhinhi-yu
   *Hey that’s enough! You’re not a whitefella y’know*
6  Jack: pangure (.) pangu *ngakumari* ngay-yu thama
   *over there there. Say ‘my totem is...’*

By invoking the category, *wathpala*, Tabitha does not reject Jonah’s demands on the basis of personally not wanting to comply. Instead, she opposes Jonah’s behaviour on the basis of race categories, and the expected behaviour with respect to these. By reminding her brother in line 5 that he is not a *wathpala*, Tabitha makes salient his membership to its binary opposite category, *kardu thipmam*, ‘Aboriginal person’. She connects Jonah’s current behaviour with the category that Jonah does not have membership to, ‘whitefella’. In doing so, Tabitha positions Jonah’s behaviour as inappropriate for his category membership, and uses this to justify her opposition. While Jonah does not retaliate, Jack’s utterance in line 6 suggests that Tabitha’s invocation of race to the other boy does little to deter him in his prompting.

In a recording one month later, Tabitha (4;2) uses a race category to oppose a peer’s actions again. However, in this instance, in ex. 7.12, the categorisation device of race is already mobilised in the interaction. Tabitha asserts joint membership to the category, *kardu thipmam*, for herself and her sister, Casimira (4;0). She does so to oppose an activity that Casimira instigated with her, and in which they have both been participating. This activity, described in the previous chapter (in sections 6.3 and 6.4), involves the two children speaking as members of the category, *wathpala,*
‘non-Aboriginal person’. Tabitha opposes Casimira’s ongoing participation in this activity by providing a counter assertion of race category membership for the two of them; the standardised relational pair of ‘whitefella’, kardu thipmam. The excerpt begins with the utterance that Casimira produces when she first develops the activity with Tabitha. The excerpt then jumps to three turns prior to Tabitha’s opposition, which occurs in line 25.

Ex.(7.12)

1 Casimira:  
neki-ka ku wathpala shabishabbiya  
the two of us are whitefella's shabishabbiya

20 lines removed

22 Casimira: mami-ya wisiri (.) gan  
no food, wisiri gone

23 Tabitha: en (0.3) [ya-]  
and-

24 Casimira: [ngay]ka wurda  
not me

25 Tabitha: AWU [neki-ka kardu thipmam-yu]  
NO! the two of us are kardu thipmam

26 Casimira: [asibi::g (.) a swimming pi:] aa nathap da (0.3) agabiya:::tay  
asibi::g a swimming pool- oh shut up! agabiya:::tay

27 Tabitha: ((throws a pebble at Casimira))

28 Tabitha: “kanarnurturt ku neki”  
the crocodile is ours

30 Tabitha: “kardu kem *** kanhi-wa”  
people *** in this place

31 Casimira: ((throws a handful of dirt near Tabitha))

32 Casimira: nhinhi warda murrinh sturi  
It’s your turn for a story

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In opposing Casimira, in line 25, Tabitha produces the category, kardu thipmam, together with the dual collectivity term, neki, I.D.U.INCL. Tabitha and her sister are of course not the sole members of kardu thipmam. Rather, Tabitha’s use of neki mirrors the utterance that Casimira produces when she first develops this activity, in line 1 of the excerpt. By applying kardu thipmam membership to the two of them, as a pair, Tabitha recalls Casimira’s earlier utterance. Through this Tabitha appears to pointedly oppose the activity, and the category membership the activity is centred around. She therefore opposes the wathpala membership of neki, ‘us two’, by asserting kardu thipmam membership for neki, ‘us two’. By using the same collectivity term as her sister, Tabitha appears to undo their membership to wathpala, supplanting it with membership to its standardised relational pair.

Unlike the previous example with her brother, Tabitha’s assertion of kardu thipmam membership in this interaction does not prove adequate opposition. Casimira dismisses Tabitha’s opposition by telling her to ‘shut up’ in line 26 and continuing to speak as a member of ‘whitefella’. Tabitha responds to this in line 28 by supporting her previous claim with what appear to be allusions to the kardu thipmam category of ngakumarl, ‘totem’. Tabitha links the pair of them to the crocodile,
the main totem of the girls’ maternal family. She states that the crocodile is ‘ours’, again using the dual form, neki, which Casimira began the activity with. Given that an individual’s totemic connections help constitute their membership to the race category, kardu thipmam, Tabitha’s mention of the crocodile here can be taken as an illustration of their kardu thipmam membership. Tabitha bolsters her opposition to the activity and to Casimira’s behaviour by providing additional support for her assertion of their kardu thipmam category membership.

Similar to Mavis in ex. 7.9, Tabitha opposes the orientation to one category by asserting membership to its standardised relational pair. This particular example of opposing also sees Tabitha twice reuse the collectivity term that Casimira produces at the start of the activity. This alignment, or ‘format tying’, implies a focussed redressing of Casimira’s actions.

7.4. Assert authority over an entity/space

All children in the cohort, with the exception of brothers, Raymond and Benjamin, employ category terms to assert authority over an entity, an activity, or a physical space.

Table 7.4 Categories used to assert authority over an entity/space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSERT AUTHORITY OVER ENTITY/SPACE</th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
<th>RAYMOND</th>
<th>ACACIA</th>
<th>CHARLIE</th>
<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key: kardu thipmam</td>
<td>occupation</td>
<td>stage of life</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>collectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to asserting authority over entities, numerous examples indicate that children produce category terms to invoke the rights that are associated with that particular category membership. In the previous section, on opposing, Damien (4;6) is described as asserting his membership to the category of kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’. He does this to oppose his brother Nathan’s monopolising of the camera. After his initial use of this term, however, Damien appears to switch from opposing his brother’s behaviour to asserting authority over the camera. He expresses his claim over the camera by orienting to the same category as before, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, in lines 6 and 8. The interaction is reproduced in ex. 7.13 in its extended form.

Ex.(7.13)

1  Damien: ((gets up and starts walking towards the camera/ Nathan))
2  Damien: ngathparre (.) kardu ngalla ngay-yu
   Move away! I'm a grown up
3   (1.4)
4  Damien: ngathparre ((pushes Nathan))
   Move!
5   (0.8)
6  Damien: kardu ngalla ngay-yu ((holds onto a leg of the camera tripod))
   I'm a grown up!
7   (0.3)
8  Damien: KARDU NGALLA!
   A GROWN UP!
Damien labels himself a member of the category, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, in order to assert his claim to the camera. He appears to use this membership to justify his rights over the object.

In excerpt 7.14, Tabitha (3;0) and Casimira (2;10) both produce the category term, *ku nes/neth*, ‘nurse’ to assert authority over a physical object. Casimira (2;10) produces the term as she attempts to take a toy stethoscope that Tabitha is holding. Tabitha responds by using this same category term, but explicitly asserts membership to the category for herself.

Ex. (7.14)

1 Casimira: *ku nes* nurse ((walks up to Tabitha, and reaches for the stethoscope))

2 Tabitha: *ngay ku neth* I’m the nurse ((lifts the stethoscope above her head))

3 Tabitha: ((walks away from Casimira, holding the stethoscope))

Using the same term as Casimira (line 1), Tabitha implies her greater claim to the object in line 2 by asserting membership to the category with which this object is associated. While Casimira produces the category term, Tabitha invokes rights associated with membership to the category.

While it is possible that Casimira may be using *ku nes* here as a name for the stethoscope itself, rather than invoking the occupation category ‘nurse’, Tabitha evidently does not refer to the object as ‘nurse’. The placement of *ngay*, ‘I’, in Tabitha’s utterance in line 2 indicates that she is not simply claiming the object as hers. Were *ngay* functioning as a possessive marker here, it would follow the possessed object. As this is not the case, we can be sure that Tabitha is orienting to the category of nurse, which she appears to be doing in order to keep control over the object in her possession.

Two children, Acacia and Mavis, use dual collectivity terms to assert joint authority over entities. A subsequent goal of their assertions of joint possession appears to be to exclude a third child. Two of these instances occur in the one recording. In both cases the entity in question is a crab claw, and each girl’s assertions of authority also work to marginalise the same individual, their cousin, Marie-Therese (5;1). Examples of this use of collectivity terms are provided in ex. 7.15 and 7.16.

Immediately prior to ex. 7.15, Mavis’ mother hands me a freshly cooked crab claw. The excerpt begins with Mavis (6;5) noting its large size, at which I suggest that the two of us share it, in line 2. Mavis and I sit then next to each other on the tarpaulin, ready to start cracking the shell open, when Marie-Therese (5;1) approaches. Mavis asserts joint authority over the crab, for herself and for me, in line 13, by using the dual non-sibling collectivity term, *ngankungintha*. While this form could also reference Mavis and Marie-Therese, as they are in a non-sibling relationship, Mavis

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61 The different pronunciation of this term by Tabitha and by Casimira is indicative of changes occurring more broadly in Murrinhpatha speaking society. Older generations tend to pronounce the term ‘nurse’ as *neth*, just as they pronounce my name as *Luthi*. Many younger speakers in the community, however, pronounce English-based lexicon with sibilants, as Casimira does here.
follows this mention of the term by explicitly informing Marie-Therese of her lack of claim to the crab in line 15: mere nhinhī, ‘not yours’.

Ex.(7.15)

1  Mavis: ku ngalla pana-yu (((looking at the crab claw in Lucy’s hand))

*That’s a big one*

2  (0.8)

3  Lucy: yu (0.7) neki

*yeah It’s ours*

4  (0.2)

5  Mavis: mm

6  (2.0)

7  Mavis: kanhingu ngarra kanhingu

*over here, over here*

3 lines omitted

11 Lucy: ok

12 Mavis: ((walks over to tarpaulin and sits down))

13 Lucy: ((follows Mavis))

14 Marie-Therese: ((walks over and sits opposite Mavis and Lucy))

13 Mavis: ku ngankungintha-WA ((to Marie-Therese))

*It’s OURS*

14  (0.9)

15 Mavis: mere nhinhī

*Not yours*

16  (2.5)  ((Acacia walks over to the group, carrying a water bottle))

17 Valerie: Marie-Therese ku [ wa]kal nhinta dangkardu ((calling from by the fire))

*Marie-Therese, look, here’s a little one*

18 Acacia: [nga]

*Here you go*

19 Acacia: ((hands Lucy the water bottle, and sits down with the group))

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Mavis appears to use her assertion of ownership over a crab claw to manage the participation of others in this interaction. She excludes Marie-Therese by informing her in no uncertain terms, in lines 13 and 15, of her lack of claim to the crab claw.

In excerpt 7.16, from later in this same recording, Acacia (4;7) groups herself with her sister Mavis (6;5) to assert authority over a crab claw, which she refers to as *ku thali*, ‘longbum/mollusc’. Unlike Mavis, Acacia does not address Marie-Therese. Instead, she directs her utterance in line 3 to the person she is establishing co-possession with, Mavis.

Ex.(7.16)

1  Mavis: ((pours water from a drink bottle on her arm))

2  Marie-Therese: ((walks towards the Mavis and Acacia))

3  Acacia: Mavis neki damatha nawa thali-yu

*Mavis, this mollusc belongs to just us two, doesn’t it*

4  Mavis: ((pours water on her arm))


Marie-Therese: ((stops approaching and waits, standing behind the girls))

Acacia’s use of the inclusive dual form, neki, in line 3, positions Mavis as a co-possessor of the crab claw, and Marie-Therese as a non-possessor. Her use of damatha, ‘only’ with the pro-term highlights the collectivity term’s exclusivity of number. The fact that Acacia addresses her sister, and does not interact with Marie-Therese, appears to further highlight Acacia’s exclusion of her.

Two children, Charlie and Mavis, orient to categories in order to assert authority over a physical space. In excerpt 7.17, Charlie (5;6) asserts membership to the category, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, in order to claim for himself the area around a tree that he is climbing. He instructs his sister Rebecca (2;11) to move out of his way in line 6 before producing the category term in line 8. Given the sequencing of his two utterances, Charlie appears to use the category term as a reason for his prior command. He uses his kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’ membership to justify his demand that Rebecca move.

Ex.(7.17)

1 Charlie: Lucy look Lucy
2 Charlie: ((climbs onto a tree branch))
3 (5.6) (Charlie adjusts himself on the branch))
4 Rebecca: ((Runs over to the branch))
5 Rebecca: ((Hangs off the branch with her hands))
6 Charlie: hey ngathparr mani
   Hey move out of my way
7 (2.3)
8 Charlie: kardu ngalla-wa ngay-yu
   I’m a grown up
9 Rebecca: ((lets go of the branch and walks off))

Charlie appears to use this membership claim to the category of ‘grown up’ in line 8 to assert his rights to his climbing area. He includes the emphatic particle -wa on the category term. In doing so, Charlie encourages a contrast between the category that he invokes, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, and the category’s standardised relational pair, kardu wakal, ‘child’. By emphasising his own ‘grown up’ status, Charlie implies Rebecca’s membership to ‘child’, and her associated lack of rights to occupy the space.

As table 7.4 shows, three children, Casimira, Tabitha, and Acacia, employ kardu thipman categories to assert authority in peer interactions. All mentions of categories relate to those of land, and in all of these instances, the children’s assertions of authority appear to work to redress an interactional balance between them and others, and to, defensively, assert an authoritative position in the interaction.

In excerpt 7.18, Acacia (4;7) invokes the kardu thipman category of land to assert authority over a physical area, after her cousin, Serena, claims a patch of sand as her own. Serena directs her
utterances to Acacia’s younger sister, Daisy, who is digging in the hole that Serena has made in the sand. Acacia reacts to Serena’s utterance by claiming to have a *kantri*, ‘country’, connection to the broader location that they are in.

Ex. (7.18)

1 Serena: awu da putek ngay wardsya
*No, this is my bit of sand now*  
((to Daisy))

2 Serena: thamanu *ka*
*Go like this, come on*  
(digs in the sand with a spoon)

3 Acacia: mi *kantri* ngay-wa kanhi-yu
*This is my country here*

4

5 Acacia: da *kantri* ngay-wa kanhi
*This is my country here*

While the term that Serena produces, *da*, ‘place’, in line 1, can denote the *kardu thipmam* category of land, her inclusion of the adverbial *warda*, ‘now’, indicates that she is not invoking category membership with her use of the word. Instead, she is referring to the immediate patch of sand that she is digging in. Judging by Acacia’s subsequent utterances, in lines 3 and 5, it appears that Acacia interprets her cousin’s utterance otherwise. While she does not explicitly oppose Serena’s statements, Acacia uses the category, *kantri*, ‘country’, in what appears to be an assertion of authority over the space, and / or over the sand activity they are engaged in.\(^6^2\).

In ex. 7.19, Casimira (4;0) asserts her membership to the *kardu thipmam* category of *kantri*, ‘country’. She does so at numerous points throughout the recording, in response to other people’s shows of authority, however moderate. The excerpt begins with caregiver Bernadette prompting Tabitha\(^6^3\) to issue a directive to Casimira, which she does in line 2: *pirtpirt-gathu* ‘quickly, over here!’. Casimira responds to Tabitha’s instruction by asserting her category-based claim to the location in line 3.

Ex. (7.19)

1 Bernadette: *pirtpirt-gathu nange*
*Tell her ‘quickly, over here!’*

2 Tabitha: *pirtpirt-gathu*
*Quickly, over here!*

3 Casimira: da *ngay-wa kanhingu*  
((walks towards Tabitha))
*It’s my land over here*

4 Tabitha: ngankungime ngathedhangime kanhi[ngu-yu ***]
1.pc,excl
*Us, we were at this place before*

5 Casimira: [da *NGAY*]

\(^6^2\) Curiously, Acacia first uses the category term with the nominal classifier for food, *mi*. In her following assertion of category membership, however, she produces the classifier for land, *da*.

\(^6^3\) In this prompt Bernadette does not use the generic *tama*, ‘say it’. Instead she specifies *nange*, ‘tell her’. Although there are numerous other possible ‘hers’ present, it can be assumed that Bernadette is referring to Casimira. Most caregivers try to keep both focus children close to each other in recordings. It can be presumed, then, that Tabitha’s order is directed to her sister.
It’s MY land

Emphasising my through the emphatic particle, -wu, in her utterance in line 3, Casimira simultaneously highlights her own claim and implies ‘not yours’ to Tabitha. Casimira’s use of the form kanhingu in this assertion also appears to directly relate to Tabitha’s previous utterance. Kanhingu ‘this way’, or ‘over here’, refers specifically to the location that Casimira is approaching, the area to which Tabitha called her in line 2. Casimira uses this instead of kanhi, ‘here’, which could refer to the broader location as a whole. In line 4, Tabitha recalls a past event at the present location, and groups herself with others in relation to this. While Casimira does not dispute Tabitha’s statement, she immediately mentions her kardu thipmam connection to the land again, in line 5, emphasising that it is hers. In doing so, Casimira appears to assert authority by declaring her category membership, and implying Tabitha’s (and perhaps also the rest of the group’s) lack thereof. For Casimira and Acacia, asserting a kardu thipmam connection to the present location appears to be a tactic to rebalance interactional authority in their favour.

7.5. Exclude

Five children use categories to exclude a peer, on at least one occasion. As evidenced in table 7.5, no particular category set is employed to exclude peers by a majority of the cohort.

Table 7.5 Categories used to exclude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXCLUDE</th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
<th>RAYMOND</th>
<th>ACACIA</th>
<th>CHARLIE</th>
<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ● family ♀ gender ♂ stage of life ● collectivity ● kardu thipmam

Some children exclude peers on the basis of their interlocutor’s category membership. In excerpt 7.20, Raymond (4;9) does this by mobilising the categorisation device of gender. When his cousin Concepta (4;4) walks over to Raymond, and a number of other male relatives, Raymond rejects her attempt to join them by foregrounding her membership to the category, mardinhpuy, ‘girl’.

Ex.(7.20)

1 Raymond: nhinhi-ka mardinhpuy-wa () kulbuy wakal
   You’re a girl Or are you a little boy?

2

3 Raymond: nhinhi-ka kulbuy
   You’re a boy?

Raymond attributes Concepta with membership to the category, ‘girl’, in line 1, and stresses the category with the emphatic particle -wu. He identifies Concepta’s membership to this gender category as the reason for her exclusion. By excluding Concepta on the basis that she is a member of ‘girl’, Raymond implicitly connects himself and the group of children he is standing amongst with the category that Concepta does not have membership to, its standardised relational pair,
‘boy’. Raymond follows this category-based exclusion with category-based teasing, which sees him challenge Concepta’s gender category membership in lines 1 and 3.

Mavis (6;4) also attributes category membership to others in order to exclude them. Excerpt 7.21, taken from a recording with her three younger siblings, her parents, and an aunt, begins with Mavis inviting me to follow her to the beach, away from the others, who are sitting on a blanket, drinking tea. Before leaving, however, she excludes her siblings from her beach plans, in line 3, with the help of the category, *kardu mamaypurrk*, ‘children’. In addressing them as ‘children’, Mavis suggests that she excludes her siblings on the basis of their stage of life category membership.

Ex.(7.21)

1  Mavis:  Lucy kanhingawu piku  
   Lucy, let’s go over here
2       (1.6)
3  Mavis:  mup warda *kardu mamaypurrk*-ya  
   you *children* stay there!

In labelling her siblings ‘children’, Mavis speaks as a non-member of that category. That is, she implies her own membership to the binary opposite category to ‘child’, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’. This appears to further justify Mavis’ exclusion of her peers from the beach plans.

Some children also exclude peers by asserting, or alluding to, their non-membership to categories. Ex. 7.22 sees Tabitha (4;2) mobilise the device, gender, when her brother, Peter (6;3) attempts to join her and her sister, Casimira (4;0) in their speech activity. Neither girl had mentioned gender categories prior to Peter’s arrival, and gender seemed in no way salient in their interaction, as they sat on the grass, facing each other and talking. However, when Peter attempts to enter into their talk, in line 3, Tabitha characterises the activity, and possibly also the area they are sitting in, as relating to girls only.

Ex.(7.22)

1  Casimira:  *** bere wakay  
   *** right, that’s over
2  Peter:  ((walk over to Casimira and Tabitha))
3  Peter:  nhema ngawu ***  
   *Hey go like this***
4  Tabitha:  be-wel-  
5  Peter:  ***
6  Tabitha:  YA:WU: kanhi-ka *mardinhpuy mardinhpuy*  
   *HEY! This is for girls here*
7  Peter:  *** th[a]ma  
   ((facing Casimira))  
   *Go like this***
8  Pearl:  [Pe]ter thurdwurl  
   *Peter come back here!*
9  Pearl:  Peter diyebup thirra  
   *Peter are you listening?*
10 Peter:  ((walks off from the girls))

LAMP_20150325_LD_01_00:25:29.081

LAMP_20150428_LD_01_00:27:33.261
Through her use of the category term, mardinhpuy, ‘girl’, Tabitha links participation in the activity that she and Casimira are engaged in with membership to this category. Tabitha does not reject Peter’s attempt to join them on the basis of him as an individual. Instead, she employs gender categories as a tool to exclude him. By positioning the activity as category bound to ‘girl’, in line 6, Tabitha indicates the impossibility of Peter participating, as he is a non-member of mardinhpuy. He is excluded because of his incompatible gender category membership. While Peter does not respond to Tabitha’s use of the category term, he does not leave immediately, and walks away from the girls only once his grandmother, Pearl, who is seated around 10 metres away, tells him to, in line 8. Pearl’s response of instructing Peter to leave, and Peter’s reaction to her instructions, in line 10, suggest that Tabitha’s justification for excluding Peter on the basis of gender category membership is broadly considered to be a valid one.

Two children in the cohort exclude a peer by explicitly asserting their interlocutor’s non-membership to a certain category. For example, in ex. 7.23, Benjamin (7;2) orders his cousin, Concepta (4;4) to move away from him and the area near the camera. After this command, in line 6, Benjamin declares her lack of membership to kardu thipmam categories of land, with respect to their current location.

Ex.(7.23)

1 Miles: Raymond
   Raymond!
2 Judith: ngathparre kanhithu *** (to Concepta)
   move, come over here ***
3 Benjamin: ((pushes Concepta in Judith’s direction))
4 Miles: rekeding (,) pangu thiku nhinta ka
   It’s a recording. Go over there, that’s it
5 Concepta: ((stands by Judith, staring defiantly at Benjamin))
6 Benjamin: PUY (0.4) da manangka nhinhi kanh-i-yu
   MOVE! It isn’t your country here
7 Concepta: ((takes a step closer to Judith, while still looking at Benjamin))
8 Concepta: ((looks away from Benjamin, off to her left))

By informing Concepta that she has no kardu thipmam claim to the area, in line 6, Benjamin appears to position her as lacking rights in their present location. She is characterised as having no right to stand where she wants, as she has no category-based connection to the area. In justifying his exclusion of her with this use of the category, da, ‘land’, Benjamin simultaneously implies his own rights, if not membership. Concepta’s reaction, to move slightly closer to her grandmother, before looking away from Benjamin (lines 7-8), suggests that she does not resist this attribution of non-membership. By not retaliating to Benjamin’s exclusion of her, Concepta can be seen to ratify the category-based powerlessness that Benjamin attributes her. Through this she co-constructs the power asymmetry that Benjamin pursues with her.

The final way in which categories are used to exclude is exhibited only by Damien (4;0), towards his cousin, Elsie (2;4). In this interaction, shown in ex. 7.24, Rhonda, Damien’s mother, is sitting on
the ground, in the shade of the car, with Damien standing next to her, leaning against the car tyre. Elsie is standing close by, while Elsie’s mother, Josephine, is seated by herself, around 3 metres away. The excerpt begins with Elsie walking towards Damien and his mother, biscuit in hand. Damien’s utterance in line 2 suggests he is not pleased by her presence. After Elsie dips her biscuit into his mother’s cup of tea in line 3, Damien uses the family term, *mama*, ‘mum’, in his subsequent turn to exclude his cousin from the immediate area. Through this he appears to invoke the expectations of a relationship between a member of this family category and its pair, ‘child’.

Ex.(7.24)

1 Elsie: ((walks towards Damien and his mother, Rhonda))
2 Damien: MM MM
   UH-UH!
3 Elsie: ((bends down and dips biscuit in the cup of tea near Rhonda))
4 Damien: nhinhi-ka [pangunu] ngarra mama nhinhi
   *You! Over there, to your own mum!*
5 Elsie: [Rhonda] Rhonda
6 Rhonda: na pipi thama ((shakes head))
   *Really? Say ‘auntie’*
7 Elsie: pipi
   *auntie*
8 Rhonda: mm ((turns around, smiling, to Damien, and touches his face affectionately))

LAMP_20150427_LD_01_00:21:37.816

By using the family category term, ‘mother’, in line 4, Damien makes salient the associative rights of family relations. *Mama nhinhi* (‘your mum’) appears to position Josephine as the rightful person for Elsie to be with. His choice of words also implies that Elsie should not be with someone else’s mother, i.e. his own mother, Rhonda. Another point to be made here relates to recipient design. Josephine, Elsie’s mother, is Damien’s aunt, who Damien tends to address and refer to by her personal name. When instructing Elsie to go, however, Damien refers to Josephine from Elsie’s perspective. Rather than producing an utterance such as ‘go to Josephine’, ‘go to my aunt’, or ‘go away from my mum’, Damien constructs his utterance in line 4 from his interlocutor’s perspective. This design further suggests that Damien selects the family category to evoke a sense of duty in Elsie. Damien excludes Elsie by using a category term to inspire feelings of obligation and duty.

7.6. Tease

As table 7.6, over the page, shows, the action of teasing peers with the help of categories appears to be a practice of younger children in the cohort, only. The choice of *kardu thipmam* categories is common to all four children who pursue this action.
Table 7.6 Categories used to tease

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
<th>RAYMOND</th>
<th>ACACIA</th>
<th>CHARLIE</th>
<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEASE</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ✗ kardu thipmam  ✔️ family  ✗ gender

Children who engage in teasing appear to do so with specific individuals. Casimira engages in this behaviour only with Tabitha, and Raymond only with his female cousins of a similar age to him. Tabitha (4;8) and Damien (4;0) each attempt to tease peers in a single recording only, yet they do so with Casimira and a same-aged male cousin, respectively. Teasing appears to be pursued with categories mostly in an offensive or unprompted manner, rather than discernibly in response to another person’s action. There is just one instance in the data in which a child (Raymond (4;9)) teases a peer for something that they have done, which was mentioned in ex. 7.20.

Most instances of teasing in the data involve a child claiming for themselves a peer’s connection to kardu thipmam categories. For example, on multiple occasions in the one recording, such as in ex. 7.25, Casimira (3;4) rejects her sister Tabitha’s membership claims to kardu thipmam categories and/or asserts them as her own. Each such occurrence elicits an impassioned response from Tabitha (3;6). These instances of teasing occur within activities, which are organised by the categorisation device of kardu thipmam, and are encouraged by their caregiver, Bernadette. The activity, mentioned in the previous chapter, involves the girls taking turns to assert their own membership to the kardu thipmam categories of ngakumarl, ‘totem’ (as in lines 2 and 3), and to a lesser extent, kantri, ‘country’. In line 8, Casimira teases Tabitha by asserting her connection, not to the white cockatoo, which is her ratifiable category membership, but to Tabitha’s totem, ku tek, the red tailed black cockatoo.

Ex.(7.25)

1 Bernadette: naningerren
Speak, you two (siblings)!

2 Casimira: ku ngakumarl ngay-ka [ku werrk ]
My totem is the white cockatoo

3 Tabitha: [ngay-ka ] tek ngakumarl ngay-ka tek
Mine’s the black cockatoo! My totem is the black cockatoo!

4 Bernadette: pangathu thirra pangathu mamba go
From over there, look, from over there. Right, go!

5 Bernadette: ((moves Tabitha from behind the camera))

6 Tabitha: ngakumarl ngay-ka tek
My totem is the black cockatoo

7

8 Casimira: ngakumarl ngay-ka tek
My totem is the black cockatoo

9 Tabitha: ((turns to Casimira and hits her))

10 Tabitha: wurda manangka NHINI::: ngakumarl [ngay ]
No it’s not YOURS! It’s my totem

11 Casimira: ((Casimira hits Tabitha, Tabitha goes to her mother, upset))

12 Casimira: [NGA] ku [WERRK]
I’m the white cockatoo!

13 Bernadette: [ ngawu ]
Hey!

14 Casimira: ((pouts defiantly))
15 Bernadette: manangka thu kuy thu kuy
   No fighting, no fighting
16 Bernadette: ngakumarl ngay-ka ku tek da ngay-ka:: thama
   *My totem is the black cockatoo, my country is..... Say it*
17 ((Tabitha pushes Casimira, who falls to the ground and starts to cry))

Casimira’s utterances in lines 2 and 12 indicate that she knows her ratifiable membership to the category of ngakumarl, ‘totem’, is through ku werrk, the white cockatoo. Yet in line 8 she claims totemic membership to the black cockatoo, Tabitha’s totem. The fact that Casimira categorises herself in relation to her ratifiable totem either side of this utterance suggests that her claim to ku tek, the black cockatoo, is disingenuous, and produced deliberately to provoke Tabitha. Tabitha’s immediate and aggressive response (hitting Casimira, yelling at her, before pushing her over) implies Casimira’s success in this endeavour.

Another way in which children use categories to tease is to attribute a particular category membership to peers. In ex. 7.26, Casimira (4;0) uses the category term, nangkun, ‘husband’, while she engages in a speech activity with Tabitha (4;2). She extends the narrative to attribute a husband to her sister, in line 11. In doing so, Casimira implicitly casts Tabitha as a member of the category, palngun, ‘wife’.

Ex.(7.26)

1 Casimira: nhinta kurran ((points to a passing car))
   *there it goes*
2
3 Casimira: trak ngankungime-ka pangu damatha ((points to the car again))
   1.PC.EXC *Our car is just over there.*
4 Casimira: ((turns back to face Tabitha))
5 Casimira: draiva-ya ngay
   *I’m the driver*
6
7 Tabitha: nangkal
   *Who is it?*
8
9 Casimira: dedi nhinhi-ka ngamimarda kana:wi::t
   *Your dad is staying over at Manthathpe*
10 (1.3) ((Casimira reaches her hands out in the dirt in front of her))
11 Casimira: i: nangkun nhi:nhi:
   *aand your hu:sba::nd*
12 (2.6)
13 Tabitha: *manangka nangkun ka*nawit ((throws pebble at Casimira))
   *It’s not a husband who’s staying there*
14 (1.4)
15 Casimira: dedi nhinhi-ka manangka ***
   *Your dad isn’t ***
16 Tabitha: awu paba ngay-wa pangu-yu
   *No, my brother is over there*
Rather than goading Tabitha by claiming her totem as her own, in this excerpt Casimira taunts her by attributing her a husband. The effectiveness of this particular family term to tease is indicated in Tabitha’s visible discomfort, her verbal objection to Casimira’s use of the term, and her physical action of throwing a pebble at her (line 13). Tabitha rejects Casimira’s use of the term, *nangkun*, ‘husband’ in line 13 before supplying the term, *paba*, ‘brother’, for Casimira to use in her story in its place.

7.7. Negatively assess

Just two of the eight children use categories to issue negative assessments of peers. For this action, each marking in table 7.7 represents a single use. As such, the table not only displays the types of categories used and by whom, it also shows the number of instances that this action is pursued with categories. Three of these negative assessments involve the speaker juxtaposing a peer’s activity with a particular category membership, and implying a mismatch between the two.

Table 7.7 Categories used to negatively assess

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Casimira</th>
<th>Damien</th>
<th>Tabitha</th>
<th>Raymond</th>
<th>Acacia</th>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>Mavis</th>
<th>Benjamin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negatively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: • personal qualities  ● stage of life  ● gender

Mavis and Benjamin both issue their negative assessments in response to the behaviour of younger relatives. As the table above indicates, they each use a stage of life category when making negative assessments. In fact, they each use the category, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, and do so to admonish their respective younger siblings.

In excerpt 7.27, Acacia (4;6) repeatedly requests to be carried by an adult. In line 6, Mavis (6;4) reminds her, in a disapproving tone, that she is a *kardu ngalla-wa*, a ‘grown up’.

Ex.(7.27)

1 Acacia:    *ngapa*

   *carry me!*

2

3 Acacia:    *ngapa* Lucy  ((touches Lucy’s arm))

   *carry me, Lucy*

4

5 Lucy:    [Aca]

   *Aca-

6 Mavis:    Ac[acia] *kardu ngalla-wa* nhinhi-yu  ((takes rock from Acacia’s hand))

   *Acacia, you’re a grown up.*

7 Lucy:    yu:/

   *yea:y*

8 Mavis:    [thiku du]pak kanhi  ((drops rock onto the sand))

   *Move it! Dump them here*
By using the term, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, in this context, Mavis indicates that Acacia, in asking to be carried, is not behaving appropriately for a member of this category. A further implication of this is that she is in fact behaving like a member of its opposite category, *kardu wakal*, ‘child’. After attributing her sister with *kardu ngalla* category membership in line 6, Mavis instructs Acacia to ‘move it’ and help her in a task of collecting rocks. In assigning Acacia this task of helping her, Mavis appears to treat her sister as a ‘grown up’; ratifying her membership to the category, despite the non-member like behaviour she displays in lines 1 and 3.

In ex. 7.28, Benjamin (7;1) produces the category term, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, when his brother, Raymond (4;8), runs over to the camera to look through the viewfinder. Remaining seated on the tarpaulin with their sister Alice (1;1), Benjamin growls a negative assessment of and to Raymond, in line 2, using the category *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’.

Ex.(7.28)

1  Raymond:  ((runs over to the camera))
2  Benjamin:  ngay damatha *kardu ngalla* Raymond  
   *I’m the only one who’s a grown up, Raymond*
3  Benjamin:  ((dunks a biscuit into the cup of tea and takes a bite))
4  (8.7)  ((Benjamin looks at Raymond, while chewing))
5  Raymond:  ((runs back over to join his siblings))

Audibly displeased, Benjamin relates his brother’s behaviour to the category, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, and suggests a disjunct. Unlike Mavis, in ex. 7.27, Benjamin orients to the category himself, rather than applying it to his brother. His use of *damatha*, ‘only’, indicates that this category membership is exclusive and applies to him alone, not to Raymond. This exclusivity in turn indicates Raymond’s non-membership to this category. Benjamin appears to treat the act of engaging with the camera as a category bound activity of *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’. By declaring that he alone is a member of this category, Benjamin casts Raymond’s behaviour as inappropriate for his stage of life category membership. Benjamin also implies his own rights to behave in a similar way, despite not engaging in such behaviour.

The final example of negatively assessing a peer provided here is in ex. 7.29, in which Mavis (5;10) categorises her younger siblings as a group of *kardu wiye*, ‘bad people’. Prior to this action, Mavis and her cousin, Molly (6;6) had organised an area for an activity, brushing sand off a platform to use as a table, and positioning cups and other objects on top of it. Mavis produces her negative appraisal of the girls upon seeing them interfere with the area that she and Molly had arranged so carefully.

Ex.(7.29)

1  Mavis:  mm *kardu wiye-wa pigunu* pangu-yu:: nawa  
   *Hm, those siblings over there are bad people, aren’t they*
2  Molly:  yu  
   yeah
Mavis attributes her sisters with membership to the category *kardu wiye*, ‘bad person’ on the basis of their behaviour. In directing her negative assessment to Molly, and actively seeking agreement from her via *nawa* (‘aren’t they’), Mavis simultaneously pursues an allegiance between herself and her cousin. Molly’s affirmative response in line 2 indicates that she also considers the girls’ behaviour to be category bound to *kardu wiye*. Mavis and Molly are therefore aligned with one another on their view of the younger girls. Also implied in the interaction is that Mavis and Molly are affiliated with one another in their category membership. As Mavis states, and Molly agrees, the siblings over there are bad people. This implies that she and Molly are not. In fact, it suggests that the two of them are members of its standardised relational pair, *kardu patha*, ‘good people’. In denouncing her sisters as ‘bad’, Mavis encourages solidarity with her cousin, as fellow *kardu patha*.

### 7.8. Threaten

As table 7.8 displays, half of the cohort use categories when threatening peers, and three of this four use family categories to do so on at least one occasion. None of the three eldest children use categories to pursue this action.

**Table 7.8 Categories used to threaten**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Casimira</th>
<th>Damien</th>
<th>Tabitha</th>
<th>Raymond</th>
<th>Acacia</th>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>Mavis</th>
<th>Benjamin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threaten</td>
<td>👑</td>
<td>🌺</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ♠ family ● occupation ● *kardu thipman* ● nonhuman characters

One application of category terms in threats is for speakers to allude to future consequences for their interlocutor, should they engage, or not engage, in certain behaviour. Some of these future consequences are specific, while others, the majority, are left unarticulated.

Excerpt 7.30 displays a specified threat. The participants in this interaction are Raymond (4;2), his cousin Renata (2;10), and his grandmother, Judith. Raymond’s brother, sister, and mothers are also nearby, seated on a picnic blanket. The excerpt begins with Raymond attempting to open the backpack that Renata is wearing. Renata screams in protest, prompting caregivers to shush her (lines 3 and 4), and Raymond to push her (line 5). In line 7, Raymond begins to call out to the old woman spirit, *kunugunu*, presumably to involve her in threat to Renata. Judith, Raymond’s grandmother, cuts him off in line 8 and directs the threat to him instead. In line 11, Raymond produces an utterance without being silenced. In it, he mobilises the categorisation device of family to issue a threat to Renata. He threatens her by using the category term, *thamunh* (mo.fa), invoking him as an ally.

**Ex.(7.30)**

1 Raymond:  
   *mathap* ((tries to open the backpack that Renata has on))  
   *I’ll open it*

2 Renata:  
   ((screams))

3 Martha:  
   shh!
In his threat, in line 11, Raymond refers to his grandfather by the category term, *thamunh*, rather than by his name or nickname, which Raymond often does. In selecting the family category term, Raymond makes salient the behaviour commonly associated with a grandparent towards a grandchild, i.e. one of care and protection, and, according to Raymond, the willingness to apply this in acting as a thug. Raymond invokes the category of grandfather to issue an explicit threat to his cousin.

This articulated threat contrasts with other, less specific threats, in which children allude to a being who will come, and do something bad to their interlocutor, however they do not elaborate as to what this ‘something’ is. For example, when Benjamin (7;1) accuses Concepta of wasting food, Raymond (4;10) produces the utterance, *kunugunu muthay nukun*, ‘the old woman spirit will come’⁶⁴. Another example is seen in ex. 7.31, in which Tabitha (4;2) chastises Casimira (4;0) for throwing a stick near a (non-Aboriginal) man’s foot as he walked past the two of them. Clicking her tongue and shaking her head (line 3), Tabitha tells Casimira to stop it, before threatening the appearance of a policeman, in lines 4 and 7.

Ex.(7.31)

| 1 Casimira: | ((throws a stick towards the feet of a man walking past)) |
| 2 Casimira: | *** |
| 3 Tabitha: | ((clicks tongue, shakes head)) |
| 4 Tabitha: | pirda:: ku pulithmen-nukun stop! A policeman might come |
| 5 Tabitha: | ((knocks over her drink, then uprights it)) |
| 6 Casimira: | ((spits on her hand and rubs off some dirt with her finger)) |
| 7 Tabitha: | pulithmen-nukun yakay ((rakes fingers in the dirt in front of her)) A policeman might come, watch out |
| 8 | (1.4) |
| 9 Tabitha: | mange nukunu ku pulithmen pangu yawu |

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⁶⁴ LAMP_20150927_LD_01_00:02:13.590
he'll do it himself, hey, the policeman is over there

10 (0.7)
11 Tabitha: dedi nukunu-ka ku dhayen ngalla
His dad is a huge giant,

12 (0.5)
13 Tabitha: ku pulithmen
that policeman is

14 Casimira: ((stops rubbing her hand, sits up straight, and looks at Tabitha))
15 Casimira: Tabi kura-gathu
Tabi gimme the drink
16 Casimira: ((makes a drinking gesture with her hand to her mouth))

Tabitha builds on this threat of a policeman coming for Casimira, and mobilises the categorisation device of family in line 11 as well as that of nonhuman characters. Tabitha embellishes her (unelaborated) threat so not only will Casimira have to deal with a policeman coming for her, but she will also have to contend with the policeman’s father, who is a member of the category, ‘giant’. The fact that Tabitha builds on her threat in this way, incorporating the policeman’s giant-like father, suggests a concern that her initial threat may not be powerful enough. It also indicates that for Tabitha, a person’s older family members, and people of large physical size, are categories that can inspire fear.

Other examples of undisclosed threats involve children asserting a connection to a category for themselves and/or highlighting a peer’s lack thereof. In both of these situations, category membership seems to afford a powerful position in the interaction, and non-membership a position of subordination or lack of support. The following two examples demonstrate this use of membership and non-membership in threats.

In ex. 7.32, Acacia (4;7) threatens her cousin, Thomas (4;0), by claiming that she has a ‘country’ connection to their current location. Through this she appears to position herself as powerful, and Thomas as powerless. She invokes this (spurious) category membership when she and her cousin are in an oppositional stalemate. Acacia’s utterances in this excerpt display a steady increase in intensity. She moves from making two assertions, in lines 3 and 6, to what appears to be warning Thomas, in line 10, to threatening physical violence in line 13, before invoking the kardu thipmam category of ‘country’, in line 16. Thomas responds to each of Acacia’s earlier utterances in the dialogue by repeating her words back to her, however he is silent when Acacia asserts a kardu thipmam connection to the land.

Ex.(7.32)

1 Thomas: mi keik ngalla mawathanu peningime-yu
Hey you guys I’m gonna make a huge cake

2 (4.1)
3 Acacia: ngay de mawathanu
I’m gonna make one too

4 Thomas: ngay de mawathanu
I’m gonna make one too
Acacia claims a ‘country’ connection to the area four times in this stretch of talk (lines 16, 19, 21, 23). She also positions herself as the sole person with a kardu thipmam connection to the area, by producing the modifier, damatha, ‘only’, in her assertion in line 21. In line 23 she appears to react against Mavis’ attribution of ‘mother’s country’ membership to Thomas, in line 18. While Acacia does not articulate what this kantri membership of hers means for Thomas, the fact that she orients to this category after having threatened him with physical violence (line 13) suggests that, for her, this assertion of kardu thipmam membership wields even greater disaffiliative force. Thomas’ sudden silence at Acacia’s invocation of the term suggests that her invocation of the kardu thipmam category of land is effective as an interactional strategy.

In ex. 7.33, Raymond (4;9) threatens his cousin, Concepta (4;4), by asserting a lack of membership to land. He and Benjamin (7;2) sit on the bonnet of the car, while Concepta is around 20 metres away, with the adults and the boys’ sister, Alice (1;2). Given her distance from the two boys and
their backpack mics, any responses she produces, if any, are inaudible. Similar to Acacia in ex. 7.33, Raymond issues his threat after having tried numerous other strategies. Prior to the beginning of the excerpt below, Raymond has been yelling the following utterance to Concepta: *kamarlka thangku*, ‘Stop staring!’. After numerous demands for her to ‘stop staring!’, and a string of obscenities, Raymond invokes categories to marginalise her further. Excerpt 7.33 begins with Raymond asserting Concepta’s non-membership to the category *kangathi*, ‘mother’s country’. He then supplies two examples of ratifiable members of this category, both of whom are present in the recording: his maternal grandmother, Judith (line 5), and his sister, Alice (line 7).

Ex. (7.33)

1 Raymond: mere KANGATHI NHINHI da kanhi-yu  
*This place here isn't YOUR MOTHER'S COUNTRY!*

2 (2.8) ((Raymond moves from the roof of the car to the windscreen))

3 Raymond: kangathi NAn nukun  
*It’s whatshername’s mother’s country*

4 (1.6) ((Raymond sits down next to Benjamin, at the front of the bonnet))

5 Raymond: nena ngay nukun kanhi-yu 
mo.mo  
*It's my grandma’s place here*

6 (1.8) ((Benjamin readies himself to jump off the bonnet of the car))

7 Raymond: Alice-ka kantri-wa  
*It’s Alice’s country*

8 Benjamin: ((jumps to the ground and runs off towards his cousins))

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After reminding Concepta that she has no ‘mother’s country’ connection to their present location, in line 1, Raymond links their location to his grandmother, in line 5, and does so using the category term, *nena*. Through this, Raymond mobilises the device of family, and links himself to Judith. In line 7, Raymond identifies another individual with a connection to the area, his sister, Alice, via the category, *kantri*. He does not mention Alice in relation to family categories, however, and uses her personal name rather than the category term, *mumak*, ‘sister’. By mentioning these two people’s ratifiable membership, Raymond further highlights Concepta’s non-membership through the contrast it creates. He also appears to speak as if he himself has closer *kardu thipamam* connections to the location than Concepta does. Given that Judith is Concepta’s *mangka*, ‘maternal grandmother’, and Alice is her cousin, rather than sister, this only barely the case. By labelling Concepta as a non-member with respect to a *kardu thipamam* category of land, Raymond, just like Benjamin in ex. 7.23, appears to infer an illegitimacy to her presence at their current location. He uses her lack of connection to the area to ostracise her, conveying that she is not welcome.

Despite using *kardu thipamam* categories to disaffiliate in this way, neither Acacia nor Raymond has a ratifiable claim to the land on which they produce their threats. That is, no adult in Wadeye society would consider them as having a categorial connection to the location. This suggests that the children use these terms strategically, as an interactional resource. Furthermore, the apparent submission of their respective addressees implies that the veracity of claims yields less interactional force than the assertions of category membership themselves.
Casimira (4;0) does the opposite when she issues a threat to her sister, Tabitha (4;2), in excerpt 7.34, in which she uses the family category term, *mama*, ‘mum’. Casimira invokes this category in order to draw attention to its absence, and bases her threat on this very absence. The excerpt begins with Tabitha encouraging Casimira to leave her alone. Casimira calls on her mother to intervene in line 5, before alerting Tabitha to the fact that her (Tabitha’s) mother is not present, in line 12. The girls interact with each other in hushed voices throughout this stretch of talk, presumably to avoid being overheard by their caregivers, including Pearl, who are sitting around 10 metres.

Ex. (7.34)

1  Tabitha: yawu ka thiku warda
   *Go away already*
2  (1.0)
3  Casimira: ngawu thurrulili-nukun
   *Well maybe you should go walk somewhere*
4  (4.2)
5  Casimira: MA:MA::: Tabitha wa:ka::!
   *Mummy::! Tabitha’s being annoying!*
6  (0.4)  ((Tabitha looks behind her then turns back to face Casimira))
7  Tabitha: "ngiku pangu thiku manda kanhingu" ((muttered under breath))
   *I’m going way over there, and you go just here*
8  (0.7)
9  Pearl: ngawu naningerren-nu nanku yawu *** dangkardu  ((from a distance))
   *Come on, you two (siblings) are going to talk  *** You see?*
10 (0.6)
11 Pearl: thing[erren]
   *Talk!*
12 Casimira:  [ ma ]ma maKArdulwa nhinh{ }
   *Your mum isn’t here*
13 Pearl: [thu kuy-ka] wurda-wa
   *No fighting!*
14 Tabitha: ***
15 Casimira: mama-ya mere thingekaydha nawa
   *You didn’t call out to your mum, did you*
16 (5.9)
17 Tabitha: bere kanhingu ngurranu  ((stands up and starts to walk away))
   *Right, I’m going over here*
18 ((Casimira gets up and follows Tabitha))

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In this interaction, Casimira appears to treat category members of *mama*, mother, as allies. By reminding Tabitha that her (biological) mother is not present, Casimira positions her as lacking support. Casimira stresses the absence of Tabitha’s mother in line 12, with the emphatic particle, *-wa*, on the negator. This highlights the availability of Casimira’s own mother, to whom she calls out for support immediately prior to issuing her threat. It is worth noting that Casimira’s use of the category *mama* in this threat indicates that she does not consider her own mother, Annunciata, also a member of *mama* for Tabitha. As the girls’ biological mothers are full sisters, this application of the category term differs from traditional interpretations amongst Murrinhpatha speakers.
7.9. Caregiver talk

As table 7.9 shows, four children, Casimira, Acacia, Mavis, and Benjamin employ categories in utterances that are classified as caregiver-like. These utterance types are those described in chapter 3, and comprise particular forms of elicitation, teaching, and controlling behaviour. They involve categories from the *kardu thipmam* and nonhuman character sets. Casimira, Mavis, and Benjamin produce this talk at numerous timepoints, while Acacia engages in caregiver speech in a single recording only.

Table 7.9 Categories used to engage in caregiver talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEAK AS CAREGIVER</th>
<th>CASIMIRA</th>
<th>DAMIEN</th>
<th>TABITHA</th>
<th>RAYMOND</th>
<th>ACACIA</th>
<th>CHARLIE</th>
<th>MAVIS</th>
<th>BENJAMIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
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<td>● ●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ● *kardu thipmam* ● nonhuman characters

In the majority of instances, the particular type of caregiver talk that each child engages in with peers directly mirrors the linguistic behaviour of their own respective caregivers. Casimira’s caregivers, Bernadette, Annunciata, and Beatrice, often engage her and her sister Tabitha in prompting routines. They elicit statements about the children’s *kardu thipmam* connections with the prompt, *thama*, 2.SG.SAY/DO, yet they also make extensive use display questions. On many occasions these display questions are produced in the form of a guessing game. When Casimira (3;5 & 4;7) uses categories to speak as a caregiver, she does so in this way.

Excerpts 7.36 and 7.37 show Casimira (3;5) modeling her caregiver talk on that of her caregiver, Bernadette, which is displayed in ex. 7.35, below. In this interaction, Casimira and her sister Tabitha (3;7) are sitting in the park, close to Bernadette and their grandmother, Pearl. Upon noticing a hawk in the sky, Bernadette quizzes Casimira and Tabitha on the *kardu thipmam* category of *ngakumarl*, ‘totem’, and poses a display question as to whose totem the hawk is (line 1). When both children claim the *kardu thipmam* connection for themselves (lines 2 & 3), Bernadette informs them, playfully, that this is incorrect, *wu-rda?*, ‘no-o’ (line 5). Rather than supplying the answer, Bernadette encourages the children to keep guessing.

Ex.(7.35)

1 Bernadette: pulupulu::: nangkal *ngakumarl* nukunu pulupulu-yu *ha-a:::wk. Who has the hawk for a *totem*?
2 Casimira: [ngay!] *me!*
3 Tabitha: [ngay!] *me!*
4 (0.6)
5 Bernadette: *wu-rda?* no-o
6 (0.8)
7 Casimira: ngay! *me!*
8 (1.7)
In line 13 of ex. 7.36, Casimira takes over the caregiver discourse role from Bernadette, and produces an utterance that resembles Bernadette’s from line 9 of the previous excerpt, in its linguistic content, the melody with which it is produced, and its function of facilitating further guessing from her interlocutor. Casimira directs her caregiver-like utterance to Tabitha.

Ex. (7.36)

12  (2.4)
13 Casimira: manangka nangkal nukun pulupulu-yu
That's not whose the hawk is
14 Tabitha: ngay!  
It’s mine!

Tabitha responds to Casimira’s utterance in line 14 precisely as she does to Bernadette’s in ex. 7.35. In this way, Tabitha corroborates Casimira’s orientation to the discourse role of caregiver. The interaction between Casimira and Tabitha continues in ex. 7.37 with Casimira producing utterances that resemble Bernadette’s, in lines 18, 22, and 24, and Tabitha responding as a member of ‘child’, in lines 20 and 25.

Ex. (7.37)

15  (0.4)
16 Casimira: ya:: *** wu-rda?
Come o:::n *** no-o
17  (0.5)
18 Casimira: na- (0.7) nangkal nukunu-yu ngakumari ngay-yu
wh- whose totem is mine?
19  (0.8)
20 Tabitha: ngay
mine!
21  (2.0)
22 Casimira: wu-rda?
no-o
23  (1.6)
24 Casimira: ngakumari nangkal nukun pulu pulu-yu::=
who has the hawk for a totem?
25 Tabitha: =nga:y
me:::!
26  (2.4)
27 Casimira: wu-rda?
no-o

These excerpts indicate that Casimira uses Bernadette’s utterances as a template for her own caregiver speech. Tabitha ratifies Casimira’s implicit orientation to ‘caregiver’ by responding to her
as she does to Bernadette in ex. 7.35. In doing so, Tabitha speaks from a subordinate position; as a promptee, and as a member of the category ‘child’.

Benjamin’s caregivers Deborah and Martha often discuss people’s kardu thipmam membership categories with children, and prompt young children to repeat, or acknowledge, information pertaining to their own kardu thipmam connections. With preverbal children, Benjamin’s caregivers interpret noises or physical movements as a response to these utterances. All instances in which Benjamin produces caregiver speech with his little sister, Alice, directly echo the interactional style of his own caregivers. This can be seen in excerpt 7.38. This recording takes place at Palyirr Thuykem, ‘Thuykem Hill’, to which Alice has a country connection. Benjamin is there with numerous other children and his caregivers Martha and Judith. Breaking away from an activity with his brother Raymond and various cousins, Benjamin walks over to his sister Alice, who is positioned on the ground, in the shade, near the adults. Benjamin calls out her name in a playful, chant-like manner, in line 2, before engaging in caregiver speech with her in line 4.

Ex. (7.38)

1 Benjamin: ((walks over towards April with arms outstretched))
2 Benjamin: Alice A-A-Alice Alice A-Alice
   Alice A-A-Alice Alice A-Alice
3 (2.0)
4 Benjamin: Alice da nhinhi thama
   Alice it’s your land, isn’t it
5 (3.2)
6 Benjamin: Alice da nhinhi thama
   Alice it’s your land, isn’t it
7 Alice: ((vocalises))
8 Benjamin: aa
   huh?
9 Benjamin: ((leans his head in towards Alice))
10 Benjamin: ngarra
   what?

In his caregiver talk in lines 4 and 6, Benjamin is not prompting Alice to repeat the phrase he produces. This is clear from the fact that he does not produce the utterance from her perspective, but uses nhinhi, 2.sg. However, he does appear to try to elicit an acknowledgement from her. When Alice produces a vocalisation in line 7, Benjamin encourages her, twice, to repeat herself. In this way, Benjamin’s caregiver speech with Alice echoes that of his caregivers in terms of its linguistic form as well as his expectations of the addressee.

As for Mavis, while her paternal grandparents often engage children in interactions about kardu thipmam membership categories, her mother, Valerie, does not. What Valerie does uses regularly is the behaviour management routine involving nonhuman characters. The first instance in which Mavis produces caregiver speech of any variety occurs when her mother calls on her to do so, as seen in ex. 7.39. Mavis appears in this recording with her immediate family: her three younger sisters, her mother, and, at times, her father. It takes place in the bush, near a dry creek bed, which
is down a steep and rocky slope. Mavis’ mother Valerie sits near the fire she has made, waiting for the water to boil to make tea. The excerpt begins with Valerie calling out to Daisy (2;6), who is wandering away from the group, towards the creek bed. Valerie warns Daisy of danger in line 3, before enlisting Mavis to help manage Daisy’s behaviour in line 7. Mavis obliges in line 8, by invoking *ku karrath*, a ‘devil’, before physically leading her sister back to their mother in line 9.

Ex.(7.39)

1  Valerie:  DaiSY::
   *DaiSY::*

2  (2.0)  ((Daisy continues to walk towards the creek bed))

3  Valerie:  ku dhawu
   *Watch out!*

4  (4.9)

5  Acacia:  *** pikunu
   *Shall we go ***?

6  (1.1)

7  Valerie:  ngawu Mavis wa:ka:ynu:::
   *Hey Mavis, come o:::*n

8  Mavis:  **ku KARRATH ha ha
   *Devil!!!* ((laughs))

9  Mavis:  ((leads Daisy back to where their mother Valerie is sitting))

In the one recording in which Acacia (5;1) produces caregiver speech, she too produces this routine. Excerpt 7.40 sees Acacia leading her younger sister Daisy (3;7) on a walk, away from the camera, the picnic, and their mother. The excerpt begins with Acacia commenting to Daisy that their youngest sibling, Penelope, (2;4), had followed. Acacia tries to deter Penelope from entering a mangrove area. She does this by warning her, multiple times, that *ku kunugunu*, ‘the old woman spirit’ might be in there. One instance of this can be seen in line 7.

Ex.(7.40)

1  Acacia:  Penelope kanhiriwak
   *Penelope followed you*

2  (2.7)

3  Daisy:  ngay kanhirenu Penelope-ka mup warda ne
   *I’ll go this way and Penelope will wait there, yeah?*

4  (0.8)

5  Daisy:  thama
   *isn’t that right*

6  (3.4)

7  Acacia:  *ku kunugunu*-nukun, Penny
   *the old woman spirit might be there, Penny*

While a single occasion only, Acacia’s use of the category *ku kunugunu*, ‘old woman spirit’ in ex. 7.40 appears to reflect the linguistic behaviour of their mother, Valerie, just as Mavis’ does.
7.10. Summary

This chapter has described the ways in which children use category terms when pursuing nine different disaffiliative actions. In terms of individuating oneself and others, children tend to assert this in relation to demonstrations of physical behaviour. When opposing a peer’s behaviour, children use categories to justify their disaffiliative action, asserting category membership for themselves, or non-membership for others. Assertions of authority over entities tend to be made by speakers to imply their rights as a category member. One way in which children exclude peers is on the basis that their peer’s category membership is at odds with their own, while another mode is to assert a peer’s non-membership to a particular category. Most instances of teasing sees the speaker claim connections to the kardu thipam categories of their interlocutor, while most negative assessments feature categories in order to indicate the category-based inappropriateness of a peer’s behaviour. In the majority of threats made with categories, children imply rather than specify the negative consequences. Lastly, the use of categories in caregiver speech routines suggests a connection between the ways in which the children pursue this action and the speech behaviour of their respective caregivers.
As indicated in chapter 5, the degree to which the children in this study use categories in their speech, and the actions they apply them to, differs dramatically from individual to individual. This is particularly evident amongst the younger members of the cohort. Of the four children who are recorded at age 3;3 and younger, Tabitha is the sole speaker to pursue both affiliative and disaffiliative actions with category terms. Casimira and Raymond use categories in disaffiliative actions only at this young age, while Damien, who engages in little peer talk at the first time point, does not produce category terms for actions of either nature. Tabitha, plus the two eldest children in the group, Mavis and Benjamin, are the only children who produce categories for affiliative and disaffiliative actions in recordings at all four time points. Despite the uniqueness of each individual child, however, certain age-related patterns emerge from the data.

In this chapter, the data from all eight children is collected together, and each production of category terms is analysed with respect to speaker age. Numerous observations are made with respect to particular actions that are pursued at different ages within the range of 2;10 to 7;2. Children’s uses of categories to affiliate and disaffiliate remain the topic of this chapter, however the focus is on how the use of categories looks at different ages.

Certain affiliative and disaffiliative actions are pursued predominantly by children under the age of five. Only children aged 5;0 and under use categories to seek entry into an on-going activity. Equally, teasing is an action pursued only by children 4;11 and younger. There also appears to be a concentration of categories used to assert authority over entities and physical spaces at age 4;6 and younger. One action, to threaten, is pursued with categories solely by children aged between 4;0 and 4;11. There are also actions that are pursued predominantly by children older than 5;0. Speakers aged 5;11 and up (Mavis and Benjamin) are the only ones who use categories to negatively assess peers. Similarly, there is a concentration of caregiver talk from children aged 5;1 and older.

However, the remaining actions do not display this under-five and over-five distinction, in terms of whether or not they are pursued. The three actions that relate to explicit social organisation work (grouping together, individuating oneself and individuating others) are pursued by children across all ages, as are the actions of developing and participating in an activity. Another action pursued at most ages is to oppose another’s statement or action. Equally, categories are used for the action of excluding peers by four-year-olds and six- and seven-year-olds alike. While these actions are pursued by children of different ages, the ways in which speakers employ categories within them appears to differ.
This chapter sketches age related patterns of category use in a number of affiliative and disaffiliative actions. Excerpts of dialogue are provided, from speakers of a range of ages, so as to illustrate age-related uses that emerge from the data.

8.1. Affiliative actions

In terms of affiliative actions, grouping oneself together with others is described first, before actions relating to the engagement in activities: demonstrating one’s participation in an activity as well as developing an existing activity. These activity related actions are described together.

8.1.1. Group self together with others

There are few instances in the data in which 3 year olds use categories to group themselves with others. Furthermore, with the exception of Casimira (3;5 & 3;11), all instances involve Tabitha. The earliest example of this action in the data is an implicit act of grouping. In this interaction, shown in excerpt 8.1, Tabitha (3;0) and her cousin, Acacia (3;6), have just caught sight of a small lizard and are trying to catch it. The excerpt begins with Beatrice, one of the three caregivers present, encouraging the children to continue with their attempts. She points to the lizard amongst the leaves and suggests that it is dangerous. After watching Acacia try to trap the lizard inside a plastic container, in line 3, Tabitha categorises her as a *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, in line 6. She then orients to this category herself in line 8, as she moves closer to Acacia and the area in which the lizard is hiding.

Ex.(8.1)

1 Beatrice: ngawu puy banhilelenu nhinta kurran nabet
   *Keep going. It’ll bite you. There it is. Grab it!*
2 ((Beatrice points at the lizard and walks off))
3 ((Acacia tries to grab the lizard. Tabitha stands nearby, watching))
4 Acacia: banhilelenu
   *It’ll bite you!*
5 ((Tabitha walks towards Acacia, who is looking down, for the lizard))
6 Tabitha: nhinhi-ka *kardu ngalla*
   *You’re a grown up!*
7 (0.9)
8 Tabitha: ngay *kardu ngalla* (0.2) de
   *I’m a grown up too*
9 ((Both girls stand next to each other looking down at ground))

Tabitha does not use a dual pro-term in this excerpt, and so does not explicitly group herself and Acacia together as a pair of ‘grown ups’. Instead, she attributes *kardu ngalla* category membership to each of them, separately. The group that Tabitha creates is therefore implicit, as she casts them as fellow members of the same category.
Notably, Tabitha categorises Acacia first, before herself. Through this sequencing, plus the use of *de*, ‘too/as well’, in line 8, Tabitha positions herself as an additional, rather than a central, member of *kardu ngalla*. This order of categorisation appears to directly reflect the girls’ non-verbal behaviour. At the time of Tabitha’s assertion at line 6, Acacia is in the process of trying to catch the lizard, whereas Tabitha engages in this endeavour shortly after claiming ‘grown up’ membership for herself in line 8. Tabitha’s assertion of ‘grown up’ membership in line 8 could therefore also work as a proclamation of intended action.

As outlined in chapter 6, children appear to make differential use of the inclusive and exclusive feature of collectivity terms when grouping themselves with others. All examples that were provided in section 6.1, however, were produced by children who are four and five years of age. This is no coincidence, as most instances in which children pursue this action with categories involve children of these ages. What is also apparent in children of this age bracket is that four year olds do not appear to use the feature of siblinghood consistently when grouping with collectivity terms. The youngest speaker to encode siblinghood is Acacia, at 4;6. Her use of dual exclusive terms also suggests a lack of differentiation between sibling and non-sibling forms at this age. Little can be said with respect to the encoding of siblinghood at five years of age due to the limited number of dual exclusive forms produced.

Two productions of exclusive dual forms by Acacia (4;6) are provided here, in excerpts 8.2 and 8.3. Both occur in the one recording, and in relation to the same individual, her cousin Thomas (4;0). What the excerpts indicate is a lack of differentiation in her use of sibling and non-sibling forms. Ex. 8.2 is taken from early on in the recording, when Acacia and Thomas have just had their backpacks fastened onto them. In line 4, Acacia announces to Thomas that they are a pair, using the dual sibling form, *nganku*. Her pairing with Thomas appears to relate to the fact that they are the sole two children who have been chosen to wear the backpacks.

Ex. (8.2)

1 Acacia: *dangkardu-thim*

    *you see?*

2

3 Thomas: *ngarra *** kanhimatha*

    *on the *** right here?*

4 Acacia: **nganku Thomas**

    *1.DU.SIB us two (siblings), Thomas*

5

6 Acacia: *nganku Thomas damatha*

    *1.DU.SIB just us two (siblings), Thomas*

7 Thomas: **THARNTU KANAM**

    *(looking out to sea)*

    **THERE’S A BOAT!**
In line 6 Acacia reasserts this grouping of herself and Thomas, again with the dual sibling form. In this reassertion of the grouping she highlights the restricted nature of the collectivity term, in that it refers to herself and Thomas only (*damatha*).

Later, in this same recording, Acacia groups herself with Thomas again, but this time she uses the non-sibling dual form. Excerpt 8.3 begins with Acacia and Thomas arguing over who ‘owns’ a particular hole in the sand. In line 6, Thomas’ sister Serena declares that the hole belongs to both of them, via the term *nankungintha*, 2.DU.NONSIB. In line 14, Acacia appears to warm to the idea of co-owning the hole with Thomas, and declares that it is *neki*, 1.DU.INC. In line 16 she then groups herself with Thomas using the non-sibling dual form, *ngankungintha*.

Ex(8.3)
1  Acacia:  ((walks over to where Thomas has just started digging in the sand))
2  Acacia:  da weyi NGAY-WA
            that hole’s MINET!
3  (0.3)
4  Thomas:  wurda (.) da weyi ngay-ka *** warda  ((stabs a stick into the sand))
            nah this is my hole *** now!
5  (1.2)
6  Serena:  da weyi nankungintha
            2.DU.NONSIB
            The hole belongs to both of you (non-siblings)
7  (1.9)
8  Thomas:  wakay putek NGALLA matha ngay-yu::
            done- I’ve got loads of sand!
9  (0.5)
10 Thomas:  tharn-thu: (0.6) nebirl
            A bo-oat,  look!
11 (2.9)
12 Acacia:  ma-thu MA-thu  ((grabs the stick Thomas was using))
            gimme that GIMME that
13 (2.6)  ((Acacia starts digging in the sand, as Thomas stands up))
14 Acacia:  yu:: weyi neki
            1.DU.INC
            yea::h our hole!
15 (1.3)
16 Acacia:  da weyi ngankungintha
            1.DU.NONSIB
            It’s our (non-sibling) hole?

Acacia’s use of the non-sibling collectivity term in line 16 can be viewed as mirroring Serena’s production at line 6. However this does not discount the fact that, as this and the previous excerpt display, Acacia (4;6) uses different forms to group herself and her cousin Thomas together. This apparent lack of differentiation, between sibling and non-sibling forms, is seen again in Acacia’s speech six months later, seen in excerpt 8.15, later in this chapter. Acacia’s undifferentiated use of dual forms contrasts with the speech of her brother Nathan (6;9), in ex. 6.7, in which he uses sibling and non-sibling dual pro-terms to organise himself and three other children into pairs. While not a focus child, Nathan’s strategic use of the feature of siblinghood further indicates that
Acacia is still learning how to use these terms, suggesting that children harness the sibling/non-sibling distinction after the inclusive/exclusive contrast.

Another aspect of grouping by children aged 4-5 years is that certain children from the age of 4;6 pursue this action on the basis of shared connections to particular categories. In chapter 6, Damien (4;6) and Acacia (5;0) were described as doing this in relation to *kardu thipmam* categories (ex. 6.7 and ex. 6.6 respectively). Mavis (5;4) was described as oscillating between individuating herself and collecting everyone together in relation to her own and her grandmother’s *kardu thipmam* connections (ex. 6.5). Casimira (4;7) can be seen to do similarly, in the excerpt below.

In excerpt 8.4, Casimira (4;7) stands at the barge landing with nine members of her maternal family; six siblings and three adult caregivers. Everyone stares at the water for a sign of a crocodile. The adults encourage the children to call out to a particular ancestor, *newuy*, whose totem is the crocodile (and so therefore who is the crocodile), and asks to ‘show yourself to us’. In a lull of calling out, in line 4, Casimira addresses her sister, Majella (9;7), and confirms with her the connection of this individual to the peer group. Casimira uses the family term that they have been calling out, *newuy*, and the paucal sibling term, *nganki*, to check that this relative is ‘ours’. In doing so, Casimira groups herself together with the other children, all of whom are in a sibling relationship with her, in relation to this ancestor.

Ex.(8.4)

1 Pearl: karrim pangathu-yu
   *there it is, coming from over there*

2 Casimira: [ si: ]
   *See?*

3 Marvin: [kanam] pangu
   *Is that it there?*

4 Casimira: *newuy nganki* -ka nhinta thama (turns to face Majella)
   *(1.PC.SIB)*
   *That’s our (paucal sibling) great grandma, isn’t it*

5 (0.4)

6 Casimira: thama
   *isn’t it*

7 (0.5)

8 Majella: (nods))

9 Casimira: *newuy ngay*
   *Is it my great grandma?*

10 Patricia: ku kem pangu ngawu branwan (.) pangathu ngarra bush-[gathu *****]
   *There it is! The brown thing over there. It’s going towards the bushes*

11 Berenice: [NEWU:::Y] nhema
   *Say ‘great grandma!’*

12 Tabitha: [NEWU::Y]
   *great grandma::!

13 Casimira: [NEWU:::Y]
   *great grandma::!

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Casimira follows her grouping action in line 4 with two iterations of the agreement-seeking marker, *thama* (in lines 4 and 6), indicating that Casimira is actively pursuing confirmation from Majella. After eliciting an affirmative response from Majella about their shared kin relationship to this ancestor, in line 8, Casimira checks her own connection as an individual, in line 9. In posing this question, Casimira demonstrates an awareness of a possible disjunct between her personal connections to categories and her connections as a member of the family ‘mob’. Her clarification question in line 9 suggests that, for Casimira, what is *nganki*, ‘ours (paucal sibling)’, is not necessarily *ngay*, ‘mine’.

Casimira’s tentativeness and desire for confirmation from an older sibling contrasts with Mavis’ repeated oscillations between the actions of individuating herself and asserting a group in relation to categories, as seen in ex. 6.5 and ex. 7.3. This could be taken to suggest that at four years children begin to group themselves and others in relation to categories, and by five they do so confidently.

The final example of grouping provided here comes from the oldest child in the cohort, at the final time point. In excerpts 8.5 and 8.6, Benjamin (7;2) creates a ‘boy’ group with his brother, Raymond (4;9), and numerous other male relatives who are not present. Benjamin accomplishes this grouping in a number of different ways. He produces the collectivity term, *nekineme*, 1.PC.M.INC, the category term, *kulbuy*, ‘boy’, and Benjamin also appears to perform ‘male’ category membership, by using particular phonetic features, and by mentioning activities and places that he associates with male groups.

Sitting on the bonnet of the car, Benjamin and Raymond have been talking about what certain relatives will buy when they have *ku mani terert*, ‘lots of money’. This prior talk was seen in ex. 6.23. Benjamin imagines that his grandfather will buy a car, and details what he, his grandfather, and others will do with said car. Excerpt 8.5 begins with Benjamin describing them driving, fast, to the nearby town of Peppimenarti (Peppi), with lots of people and money. He then, in line 14, explicitly creates a group, using the inclusive collectivity term, *nekineme*, 1.PC.M.INC. This pro-term indicates that the group consists of male members only, and is paucal in number. By using this inclusive term with Raymond, Benjamin overtly incorporates his brother as a member of this group; as a passenger in the car.

**Ex. (8.5)**

10 Benjamin: Peppi Peppi ku mani kardu terertnu ***
*He’ll take it to Peppi, Peppi, with lots of money and loads of people***

11 (0.7)

12 Benjamin: mere nangkal nukun (0.4) *** kras ngalla *** ((makes sound of speeding car))
*Not whoever’s it is *** St Kilda ***

13 ((Benjamin makes a ‘zooming’ gesture with his arm))

---

65 Benjamin also appears to allude to a football team in line 12, *kras ngalla*, St Kilda Saints, however too much of the surrounding talk is inaudible to be sure of how he uses this term.
When describing this scene, in lines 10-14, Benjamin demonstrably alters the style of his speech. He produces phonologically reduced forms and backs the velar /k/ to a uvular position. These features are characteristic of the way in which kardu kigay, ‘young men’, talk to one another in Wadeye (Mansfield, 2014). The location that Benjamin describes the car being taken to, Peppimenarti, is a place where people, mostly men, go to drink. Benjamin thus exhibits and refers to various behaviours that are category bound to ‘male’.

Excerpt 8.6 sees the continuation of Benjamin’s talk, after a short interlude. After listing names of the various people in this group/car, Benjamin continues his description, within which he produces the category term, kulbuy, ‘boy’, in line 27.

Ex. (8.6)

24 Raymond: ***概念a [Concepta]-
And Concepta? Concepta is a-
25 Benjamin: [mang raf]ka wurda
No playing rough
26 (0.7)
27 Benjamin: kulbuy kulbuy
Just the boys
28 (0.9)
29 Benjamin: Army draiva ba Ernest draiva
Army will be the driver. I mean, Ernest’ll be the driver
30 ((Benjamin moves to sit on top of the car, in front of Raymond))
31 Benjamin: ***tharra ***tharra bulut manda kanhitharra bulut
***go fast, fast as lightning, right past here, fast as lightning

While kulbuy, ‘boy’, can also belong to the stage of life collection, its use in this context suggests that Benjamin employs it as a gender category. Benjamin’s production of kulbuy links to the male paucal term nekineme that he uses earlier, in line 14. Furthermore, the two individuals that Benjamin nominates as drivers, Army and Ernest, in line 29, are in fact middle age men. Benjamin, Raymond, and the other individuals mentioned in this stretch of talk, are members of the one category in terms of gender, not with respect to age. This is the sole example of a child directly grouping themselves with others through co-membership to a gender category. It is also the most elaborate example of category use when pursuing this action, of grouping oneself with others.

The data suggests that children rarely use categories to group themselves with others until around the age of four. At ages four and five most children create and refer to groups regularly in their talk, and use the inclusive/exclusive, but not siblinghood, features of collectivity terms differentially. It is also possible that four to five years is a period in which children experiment with and consolidate understandings of how they fit in society as individuals and as members of a
group, and how or whether these map onto one another. The children aged six and seven in this study, Mavis and Benjamin, rarely use categories to pursue this action, however Benjamin’s creation of his ‘boy group’ indicates an ability to use multiple aspects of categories when one does engage in this action.

8.1.2. Activity-related actions

As a broad concept of ‘activity’ is applied in this study, activities differ greatly with respect to their topic and also to the nature of category use within them. Some activities involve an embodied orientation to categories (performing category membership) while others see children orienting to categories in their talk only. Despite this broad range, the ways in which children engage in activities suggest a discernible age-related trend.

Three year olds display considerable repetition in their orientations to categories when engaging in activities. They tend to orient to single category and repeatedly assert their membership to it. Excerpt 6.23 saw Damien (3;6) and his cousin Adam (4;4) participate in an activity together by orienting to superhero categories. This activity involved the boys taking turns to repeatedly assert and reassert their membership to a particular nonhuman character. For most of the activity, Damien orients to alk, ‘The Hulk’, and Adam to ainmen, ‘Ironman’. Damien performs aspects of his ‘Hulk’ category membership physically rather than verbally, indexing strength by flexing his arm muscles, and producing guttural ‘monster’ type sounds. The children engage in the activity by each orienting to a category from the one device, however their performance of category membership

In ex. 6.31 and ex. 6.32, an activity was described that Casimira (3;4) and Tabitha (3;6) engage in with their older brothers Maurice (6;3) and Declan (8;4). This activity involved the children swinging on the monkey bars and taking turns to declare their membership to the kardu thipmanm category, ngakumarl, ‘totem’. When participating in this activity, Casimira and Tabitha orient to the category of ngakumarl, ‘totem’ in a similar manner to Maurice and Declan, however they do so with more repetition than the boys. Another excerpt from this activity is provided below. Excerpt 8.7 begins with Maurice announcing his connection to the totemic entity ku thithay, ‘sugarbag’. Casimira joins in at line 3, asserting her connection to ku nitingkin, ‘the squid’. In line 8, however, Casimira asserts this same connection again, to the squid. Equally, Tabitha, in line 9, asserts her connection to ku thithay, the same totemic entity that Maurice links himself to in line 1.

Ex. (8.7)

1 Maurice: ngakumarl ngay-ka ku tiriwun ngakumarl ngay-ka ku thithay

My totem is the yellow bee, my totem is the sugarbag (wild honey)

2

(0.9)

3 Casimira: ngakumarl ngay-ka: (.) ku nitingkin

My totem is the squid

4

(0.6)

5 Declan: Tabitha

Tabitha
6  (1.3)  
7 Tabitha:  ku nga[ku-   ]
My to-
8 Casimira:  [ngaku]marl ngay-ka ni[tingkin]  
My totem is the squid
9 Tabitha:  [ku nga]kumarl ngay-ka ku thithay  
My totem is the squid
10  (1.5)  
11 Maurice:  ngakumarl ngay-ka ku muyu  
My totem is the green ant

While this activity requires knowledge of the kardu thipmam category, ‘totem’, Tabitha and Casimira’s repetition of categories, hinted at in excerpt 8.7, appears to be reflective of the way in which three year olds use categories in activities, irrespective of their nature or topic.

The next example of participating in an activity also involves Tabitha (4;2) and Casimira (4;0), but as four year olds. The activity, which involves the girls telling stories together or to each other, sees a considerable degree of collaboration between the children. This is apparent in the previously described excerpt 6.20, in which the children make use of category bound activities and objects related to the main character of their narratives, the nameless kardu wakal, ‘child’. In the excerpt provided here, ex. 8.8, the children are engaged in this same speech activity. In lines 6-10 the girls both engage with the category bound activity of sleeping with respect to the child, and in line 16, Casimira builds on Tabitha’s mention of the word, kanamurturturt, ‘crocodile’, by invoking the kardu thipmam category, ngakumarl, ‘totem’, and linking it back to the protagonist.

Ex.(8.8)

1 Tabitha:  bere  
well
2  
3 Casimira:  mamna ngawu da [kagawu] (.) kardu wakal pana  
He said to him 'hey, come here,’ that little kid
4 Tabitha:  [ *** ]  
5  
6 Casimira:  <kagawu kardu wakal> mamna damatha kardiwirbirldha  
‘come on, child’, he said to him, but the kid just stayed up all night
7  (1.1)  
8 Tabitha:  kardu panawit de-ya  
the kid should go to sleep
9  
10 Casimira:  awu mere nganiw-nukun  
((produced in little gremlin-like voice))
11  (1.2)  
12 Tabitha:  kardu-ka ba:l:e:nu::  
It’s going to bi::te him
13  (0.4)  
14 Tabitha  argh (0.3) argh  
((mimes chomping action))
15  (1.0)  
16 Tabitha:  berematha penenime-yu (0.3) ku kanamtu:rturt-wa  
That’s it for those guys  a cro.co:di:le
In line 6, Casimira states that the child, *kardu wakal*, has stayed up all night (*kardiwirlbirldha*). Tabitha builds on this theme in line 8 by suggesting the child go to sleep. Following this, in line 10, Casimira engages with Tabitha’s suggestion by voicing the child, who refuses to go to bed. In these three lines of dialogue the two girls demonstrate an awareness of activities associated with members of the category, ‘child’ (sleep), and orient to this activity in their talk to affiliate and align with their interlocutor.

With respect to Tabitha’s incorporation of the crocodile, in line 16, from an outsider perspective, this appears fairly incongruous. However, Casimira’s utterance in line 19 indicates that she does not. By mentioning *ngakumarl*, ‘totem’, and mobilising the *kardu thipmam* categorisation device in the process, Casimira explicitly links this new element in their story, the crocodile, back to their protagonist. This could be viewed as Casimira applying the ‘consistency rule’, and hearing the two as connected. What Casimira’s statement in line 19 undoubtedly displays is an engagement with her co-participant’s use of terms, just as was seen in lines 6-10. Such behaviour contrasts with activities amongst three year olds, who appear to operate more in parallel with one another.

From the age of five, children appear to do more again while engaging in activities, namely managing interpersonal relationships. One activity, between Acacia (5;0), Mavis (6;10), and Molly (7;6) sees the speakers orient to English speaking characters such as superheroes. As outlined in chapter 6, Mavis and Molly operate as part of a team in this activity, allied against Acacia, who is performing membership to Hulk. In ex. 6.15, Acacia (5;0) mobilises the categorisation device of gender in order to try and to develop the activity. As previously described, Acacia appears to use the gender category *leidi*, ‘lady’, not only to develop the on-going activity but also to negotiate a more affiliative relationship with her co-participants by reassigning category memberships.

Shortly after the stretch of talk in ex. 6.15, Mavis (6;10) also attempts to manage interpersonal relationships by developing the activity, shown in excerpt 8.9 below. Just like Acacia, Mavis mobilises a new categorisation device, family, which she does by producing the category term, *nangkun*, ‘husband’, in line 3. Mavis introduces the category of ‘husband’ into the activity by prompting Molly to identify her own. Molly demonstrates her uptake of this new theme in line 5 when she names Captain America as her husband.

Ex. (8.9)

1 Mavis: elp mi elp mi
   *Help me! Help me!*
2 (3.2)
Mavis’ incorporation of the category ‘husband’ makes salient its standardised relational pair, ‘wife’\(^66\). In asking Molly what her husband is, therefore, Mavis attributes her with membership to the category of palngun, ‘wife’. Mavis also orients to the category of wife later in the interaction\(^67\). This category co-membership that Mavis proposes can be seen as strengthening the allegiance between Mavis and Molly in this activity. Notably, the third participant in this activity, Acacia, does not attempt to claim a husband for herself. Her lack of membership to the category of wife appears to reinforce the divide between herself and her co-participants.

The adversarial relationship between the two older girls and Acacia is strengthened by Mavis’ category work, in that the incorporation of husbands works to bolster Mavis and Molly’s ‘team’ with extra members (for example, Molly’s husband, Captain America). Recruiting superhero allies also narrows the range of categories available to Acacia, should she try to develop the activity again. The involvement of husbands also appears to afford Mavis and Molly considerable authority over their new husband-allies, which also appears to translate into a degree of authority over the activity itself. Molly displays the authority derived from her category membership to ‘wife’ when Acacia, in line 8 of excerpt 8.10, below, attempts to remap herself onto the category, Captain America.

Ex.(8.10)

\[^66\] At the time of my data collection, the marriage equality bill had not yet passed Australian parliament. As such, only heterosexual couples could legally marry.

\[^67\] Mavis refers to nangkun ngay, ‘my husband’ at LAMP_20150927_LD_02_00:46:17.721 however it is not clear who her husband is beyond this family category membership. If she does articulate a particular identity for him, it is inaudible. (Due to the considerable screaming in this interaction, this is entirely possible)
Through this utterance, Molly explains that Captain America is in a separate location to where Acacia is, and he is with her (Molly). Molly does not refer to her husband in the singular, but instead uses the dual morpheme *nginthwa*, to refer to herself and her husband together. Molly therefore refers to him only in connection to herself; not ‘he’, but ‘we’. The particular ‘we’ that the morpheme *nginthwa* conveys is ‘a pair of non-siblings, at least one of whom is female’. This is the way in which adult Murrinhpatha speakers tend to refer to a spouse, and ‘husband and wife’ is the default interpretation of this construction (Blythe, 2013). Molly’s production of this verb form can therefore be seen as a performance of her membership to ‘wife’. The fact that Acacia exhibits Hulk-like sounds in line 12 indicates that she accepts the authority over the category, Captain America, that Molly displays, and reorients to her initial category of Hulk. While it is Molly, not Mavis, who uses this verb form in excerpt 8.10, it is Mavis who first incorporates the category of husband into the activity. Given that she does so shortly after Acacia tries (twice) to renegotiate the dynamics between the three of them, it is likely that Mavis chooses the category of husband specifically to reassert the social dynamic that Acacia was trying to change: her allegiance with Molly, and a disaffiliative relationship with Acacia.

Children’s use of categories in activities between ages 3 to 6 years suggests a development in terms of the degree to which they engage in the associations of a category and the category membership of their participants. At the age of three children’s orientations to categories, either in an embodied fashion or in speech-based activities, tend to be fairly repetitive. Children demonstrate coordination by orienting to the same categorisation device as each other, yet they tend to do so by producing a single category multiple times over. Category-bound activities at this age appear to be incorporated non-verbally if at all. Tabitha and Casimira’s use of categories as four year olds suggests a step up in collaboration. In their extended narrative activity the girls orient not only to the same categorisation device, but they draw on shared associations with categories to build on one another’s utterances. In activities amongst children aged five and up, it appears that categories are used not only to develop, or demonstrate participation in activities, but also to manage relationships and power asymmetries between co-participants. Examples from Acacia and Mavis suggest that six year olds are more adept at this than children at the age of five.

8.2. **Disaffiliative actions**

The disaffiliative actions that are included in this section are the action of opposing a peer’s statement or utterance, asserting authority over an entity/space, speaking as a caregiver, before a brief note on teasing.
8.2.1. Oppose another’s statement or action

One widely pursued action across the cohort is that of opposing another’s statement or action. As mentioned in 7.3 of the previous chapter, all children in the cohort pursue this action. Seven children, aged from 3;0 to 7;1, use categories to oppose another child’s statement, while three children, all four year olds, oppose a peer’s action with categories.

The younger children in the cohort appear to oppose others’ use of category terms on the basis of ‘ownership’. That is, they oppose a peer’s use of a category term by claiming it for themselves. The following excerpts from three year olds, Tabitha (3;0) and Damien (3;6), illustrate this. Excerpt 8.11 begins with Tabitha’s cousin, Adam (3;8), individuating himself in relation to the kardu thipmam category of totem. The totemic entity he claims a connection to is ku tek, the red tailed black cockatoo. Bernadette, Tabitha’s mother, responds positively to Adam’s statement. However, Tabitha opposes Adam’s assertion, in line 3, on the basis that it is hers. She follows this by asserting her connection to the category ngakumarl, ‘totem’, with respect to this entity, in line 5.

Ex.(8.11)

1 Adam: ngakumarl ngay-ka tekyu ngakumarl ngay
My totem is the black cockatoo, that’s my totem

2 Bernadette: nhinta mamba thinanginthangerren
That’s it, come on, you two talk

3 Tabitha: [awu ku tek ngay ]
No the black cockatoo is mine

4 Adam: [ngakumarl ngay-ka] thangkan
My totem is… what

5 Tabitha: ngakumarl ngay-ka ku tek
My totem is the black cockatoo

6 Bernadette: Tabitha kanhingu
Tabitha, over here!

7 Adam: ngakumarl ngay-ka kanarnturturt
My totem is the crocodile

As Bernadette’s response in line 2 indicates, Adam has a ratifiable connection to the black cockatoo. However, it is not his primary totem, as it is for Tabitha. In line 7, Adam responds to Tabitha’s opposition (at line 3), by identifying a different entity for himself: ku kanarnturturt, the crocodile, and his main totem. That Adam switches entities in this way suggests that he accepts Tabitha’s opposition to his prior claim and her justification for it. Adam’s claim to the crocodile in line 7 suggests that he cannot claim ku tek for himself, as it is belongs to Tabitha.

Six months older than Tabitha, Damien (3;6) opposes the use of a category term by his brother Nathan (5;10) in a similar manner, in excerpt 8.12. Here the categories in use are superhero personae. Damien (3;6) is engaging in an activity with numerous others, in which each child orients to a category in an embodied manner. This appears to be a reprisal of the activity he engages in with his cousin, described in section 6.4 and mentioned above, in 8.1.2. When Grace
orients to the category, *spadamen*, ‘Spiderman’, in line 2, Damien opposes this, and bases this opposition on his own claim to the category.

Ex.(8.12)

1 Felicity:  
   alk smesh  
   *Hulk smash!*  

2 Grace:  
   spadamen  
   *Spiderman!*

3 Grace:  
   o bammat  
   *Argh I fell*

4 Damien:  ***

5 (1.1)

6 Damien:  wurda  
   ((raises hand to hit Grace))  
   *no!*

7 Damien:  *spadamen ngay*  
   *Spiderman is mine!*

8 Adam:  *aa spadamen*  
   ((to self))  
   ((walks off from the group of children))  
   *ohh spiderman*

9 Damien:  *SPI-DA-men*  
   ((holds arms out straight in front of him))  
   *SPI-DER-MAN!*

10 Damien:  ((jumps off the platform))

Damien follows his opposition in lines 6 and 7 by orienting to the category ‘Spiderman’ himself in his subsequent turn, in line 9. This is another way in which Damien’s treatment of categories here mirrors Tabitha’s in the prior excerpt. Both children re-establish their category membership in their subsequent turn after opposing their peers.

Four year olds in the cohort also reject statements by their peers on the basis of ownership. Where opposition by four year olds looks different to that of three year olds is when they oppose a peer’s actions, which they do by harnessing local associations with categories.

As reported in chapter 7, Tabitha (4;1 & 4;2) and Damien (4;6) oppose actions with the help of category terms, and they do so by attributing category (non)membership to themselves and/or others. Tabitha uses categories of race, and Damien, the stage of life category *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’. They use these categories, and the particular rights and expectations associated with membership to them, as the basis for their opposition. Raymond (4;5) also employs categories in this way, as excerpt 8.13 shows.

In excerpt 8.13, Raymond (4;5) produces a category term to oppose an action that his sister Alice (0;7) tries to engage in. When Alice reaches for a nearby object\(^{68}\), Raymond informs her that she is not permitted to handle the item (line 2). The reason he provides for this opposition, in line 6, is her membership to the category, *kardu wakal*, ‘child’.

\(^{68}\) The precise entity that this is cannot be seen clearly on the video.
By opposing Alice’s action on the basis that she is a member of ‘child’, Raymond positions the handling of the object as inappropriate behaviour for a member of this stage of life category. Through this, Raymond implicitly connects the action with this category’s standardised relational pair, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’. Raymond’s use of the emphatic marker, -wa, on the category term in line 6 seems to further encourage a contrast between ‘child’ and ‘non-child’; Alice and himself.

This strategy, of disaffiliating with a peer on the basis of category (non)membership, is not exclusive to the four year olds in this study. Children aged five and up also disaffiliate with peers in this way, however they pursue fewer disaffiliative actions than those aged four, and they also pursue slightly different actions. Mavis (5;11) justifies her opposition to another child’s utterance by attributing a particular category membership to her interlocutor. This was detailed in excerpt 7.9 and is similar to Raymond’s use of categories in excerpt 8.13 above. In the example provided below, Charlie (5;6) rejects a statement made by his cousin, Rebecca (2;11), by using a category for its associations, but without asserting membership to it.

Excerpt 8.14 begins with Charlie telling his mother, who is adjusting his backpack, that he is about to climb up a nearby tree, and that he will do so successfully. Rebecca expresses doubt about Charlie’s climbing abilities, stating, in line 4, that he might fall. Charlie opposes his sister’s warning in line 5 by orienting to the category, ekspet, ‘expert’.

Ex. (8.14)

1 Charlie: ngay thathpirr *** mere nganiyegarlu nanthi pana
   I’ll do it properly *** I won’t fall down from that thing
2 (0.8)
3 Charlie: nawa
   isn’t that right
4 Rebecca: ngawu thaniyegarl-nukun
   hey, you might fall
5 Charlie: awu ekspet nhinanu
   No, I’ll climb up like an expert
Charlie uses the category, ‘expert’, in line 5 to counter Rebecca’s claim that he will fall. This indicates that he connects climbing abilities with membership to this category. Unlike Raymond, in the previous excerpt, Charlie does not explicitly assert category membership for himself to this category, or category non-membership for his interlocutor. Instead, he invokes ‘expert’ for its associated abilities, which he claims he will display.

Mavis and Benjamin, as six and seven year olds, use categories to correct children’s inappropriate selection of category terms, and to assess other children’s behaviour. They also engage in caregiver talk, which aligns with these priorities, in that the speakers use categories to teach, and to control the behaviour of other children. At 6;5, Mavis uses categories to correct statements about kardu thipnam category membership with her younger sister and younger cousin (ex. 7.32). At the final time point, however, she (6;10) and Benjamin (7;1) each use categories to oppose an utterance by their respective younger siblings in a different manner. In each of these instances, Mavis and Benjamin mark their interlocutors’ choice of category as inappropriate, but do not supply an alternative term for their sibling to use. Benjamin does this with a kardu thipnam category of land, and Mavis with a collectivity term. As the example from Benjamin was provided in 7.7, the example from Mavis is described here, in excerpt 8.15.

The excerpt begins with Mavis and Acacia seated near each other on the ground, near a stand-alone microphone. They are engaged in a collaborative speech activity, in which one child speaks into the microphone, and the other facilitates with what to say. In the stretch of talk shown in ex. 8.15, Mavis is the facilitator, and Acacia the primary narrator. When Mavis prompts Acacia to say ‘me and Mona’, in line 6, Acacia produces the non-sibling dual form to refer to the two of them, in line 7. Mavis opposes her sister’s use of the term, in line 8. Mavis does not, however, supply Acacia with a more appropriate form to use. Instead, she leaves Acacia to select the relevant collectivity term herself, which she does, in line 11.

Ex.(8.15)

1 Acacia: wiye warda kardidha
    Then it turned bad
2
3 Mavis: i:: nganku-gathu-ya
    1.DU.SIB
    A::nd came towards us (two siblings)
4 Acacia: nganku-yu
    1.DU.SIB
    Us two (siblings)
5
6 Mavis: ngay Mavis-yu thama
    Say ‘me and Mavis’
7 Acacia: ngankungintha-ka
    Us two (non-siblings)
8 Mavis: mere ngankungin[tha ***
    (stops digging in the dirt, looks up at Acacia))
    Not ‘us two (non-siblings)’ ***

---

69 This is the sole recording in which backpacks were not used (due to a missing battery for one of the transmitter packs)
Looking at the ways in which children of different ages employ categories to oppose a peer’s statement or action, it appears that three and four year olds pursue this action when they consider an entity, or a category membership to belong to them, rather than their addressee. Four year olds also employ categories more creatively in their opposition. They use categories for the rights and expectations that they associate with membership, and base their opposition on this. The two five year olds who pursue this action of opposing use categories in a similar way to this. At six and seven, opposition appears to take on a different nature again, with children either correcting peers’ use of categories, or simply marking their peers’ selection of category as inappropriate.

8.2.2. Assert authority over an entity/space

It is predominantly the younger speakers of the cohort who pursue the action of asserting authority over an entity or space, yet the data suggests various age-related differences. What’s more, these differences echo those seen for the previous action, opposing. For the very youngest children in the cohort, categories and the entities that a speaker asserts authority over tend to be one and the same. At 3;0, Tabitha’s invocations of the categories, ‘mum’ and ‘totem’, relate directly to the entity she is asserting authority over. The sole exception to this is Tabitha’s use of the occupation category, ku neth, ‘nurse’, with Casimira (2;10), described in the previous chapter, in ex. 7.14. In this instance, Tabitha asserts membership for herself to the category of nurse, in order to convey her greater claim over a toy stethoscope. Casimira (2;10) instead simply produces the term without explicitly orienting to the category as a member. Tabitha’s assertion of category membership for herself appears to override Casimira’s mention of the category term.

Excerpt 8.16 sees Tabitha (3;0) allude to the kardu thipmam category of ‘totem’ in an interaction with her cousin, Adam (3;8). Earlier in this recording, the pair vied for greater authority over an imaginary spear and their respective mothers. The excerpt begins midway into an oppositional exchange in which each child is claiming an imaginary, generic fish as their own. In line 8, Adam switches the topic of talk to kanarnturturt, ‘crocodile’, his main totem. Tabitha asserts her own authority over this entity in line 12⁷⁰.

Ex.(8.16)

1 Bernadette: thang[ku:: ]
   what l::s-

2 Tabitha: [awu] ku ngulmirl NGAY ((pretends to hit Adam))

⁷⁰ While neither child produces the category term, ngakumarl, ‘totem’ in this section of dialogue, their caregivers’ utterances in the latter part of the excerpt indicate that the children are in fact orienting to the kardu thipmam category of totem, as opposed to claiming a miscellaneous crocodile as their own (as they each do with respect to the fish).
The seamlessness with which the totemic entity is incorporated into the children’s talk suggests that both children orient to a (generic) fish and a totemic entity in much the same way. However, the allusions to the category of totem raise the emotional intensity of the interaction. Tabitha screams her utterance vehemently in line 12, when she asserts authority over the crocodile, and Adam appears to be verging on tears in line 20, while he implores his mother to intervene. This, and Tabitha’s utterance in line 16, indicate that the invocation of totem also affords the children to call on outside authorities to support their claim. Unlike claims to a generic fish, claims to totemic entities can be ratified by others. While these utterances that the children direct to adults are not
included in the dataset, they indicate the broader interactional potential that a totemic entity can offer children. Furthermore, as can be seen in line 22, the exchange ends when Adam’s mother intervenes and confirms his greater claim.

Moving to instances of this action involving four and five year olds, Damien (4;6) and Charlie (5;6) each assert kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, category membership for themselves in order to establish their authority over a particular object. Damien asserts authority over the video camera, as seen in ex. 7.14, while Charlie justifies taking the bigger of two pandanus fronds. Rather than simply claiming that the object is theirs, each child bases their claim on the category membership that they declare for themselves. In doing so, the speakers link the desired entity with the category, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, and imply their category-based right to the object, as members. While Damien’s use of the term kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’ involved little more than repeated assertions of his category membership, Charlie’s employment of the term sees a more fully elaborated justification for his claim over the object, and is provided here, in excerpt 8.17.

The excerpt begins with Charlie handing his brother, Lenny (3;5), the smaller of two pandanus fronds, keeping the bigger specimen for himself. Charlie categorises himself as a kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, in line 10, to justify this distribution of the fronds.

Ex.(8.17)

1 Charlie: nhinhi-ka nebirl  
   This is yours, look
2
3 Tout: ((holds one of the fronds in front of him))
3 Charlie: nhini-ka kanhi ku tupi wakal?  
   Yours is this one, the tiny little one
4 Charlie: hey kanhi nebirl  
   and here, look
   ((nudges Lenny on the shoulder))
5 ((turns to look at Charlie’s hands))
6 Charlie: nhinhi-ka kanhi ku tupi wakal? an nga:y ne  
   This is yours, here, the tiny little one, and this is mine, isn’t it
7 ((crouches down to the ground))
8 Charlie: <nebirl>  
   ((stands up))
9 look
10 Lenny: yu yu  
   yeah yeah!
11 Charlie: >nhinhi kanhi< ku tupi wakal nga:y kanhi kardu ngalla  
   Yours is here, the tiny little one, and I’m the grown up
12 Lenny: ngay  
   ((reaches to take the pandanus))

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Charlie’s use of the category, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’ in relation to himself, in line 10, appears to simultaneously imply Lenny’s non-membership to this category. Non-membership to ‘grown up’ equates to membership to its standardised relational pair, ‘child’. Yet while Charlie describes the pandanus frond that he gives Lenny as wakal, ‘small’, in lines 3, 6, and 10, he does not mention the category term, kardu wakal, ‘child’ (lit: small person). In fact, Charlie appears to actively avoid explicitly attributing Lenny this category membership. At every mention of wakal, ‘small’, Charlie
also produces the nominal classifier for animate non-humans, *ku*. This marks his use of the word ‘small’ as ostensibly relating to an inanimate object (i.e. the pandanus frond), rather than to Lenny himself. In contrast to this, Charlie does not use the word *ngalla*, ‘big’, in relation to his own pandanus frond, instead only to himself in the form of the category term, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’ (lit: big person). In orienting to this category, Charlie indicates his right to claim the bigger, rather than smaller, object. Inferred through this is Lenny’s lack of right to the bigger object, due to his implied membership to ‘child’.

While no three year old in the cohort uses categories to assert authority over physical spaces, three four year olds do, Casimira (4;0), Tabitha (4;2), and Acacia (4;7), and they do so in a similar manner to one another. All three children pursue this action by claiming a *kardu thipnam* connection to their present location. Furthermore, they appear to do so in response to prior displays of authority by a peer. It appears that at the age of four, category membership can be wielded in interactions defensively, to rebalance power asymmetries. Two excerpts featuring Casimira are provided below. The first, excerpt 8.18, is an example of her asserting authority over a physical area, and entities within it, by claiming category membership to ‘country’ for herself. The second, excerpt 8.19, shows an almost identical context 6 months earlier, in which Casimira does not use categories in this manner.

The interactions presented in both of these excerpts take place at a location to which Casimira (4;0) has a ‘country’ connection. In excerpt 8.18, Casimira asserts this category membership at numerous points, seemingly in response to other people’s (particularly her sister Tabitha’s) shows of authority, however moderate. Just prior to the start of ex. 8.18, Annunciata, Casimira’s mother, spots a boat on the horizon. She and the children talk about it excitedly. Casimira matches each mention of this boat with declarations of her *kantri* membership, beginning in line 2.

Ex.(8.18)

1 Annunciata: kurran[wa:: ]
   *There it goes*

2 Casimira: [da ngay] kanhi kurran kanhi da ngay ***
   (*points out to sea*)
   *It’s my land here. It’s going on my land***

3 (0.8)

4 Tabitha: kurra::n
   *There it goes*

5 Casimira: tharntu ngay-wa banganurt ngarra kantri ngay
   (*points towards the sea then points to herself*)

6 (0.9)

7 Bernadette: *** Maurice, Declan, dangkardu
   *** Maurice, Declan, look!

Casimira asserts her category-based connection to their present location in lines 2 and 5. In both of these utterances she incorporates the boat that they have just spotted. In line 2 she picks up her mother’s utterance, *kurran*, ‘it’s going’, from the prior turn. She refers to the boat using this same verb form in between her claims to country. Following Tabitha’s comment on the boat in line 4,
Casimira explicitly links the boat, and the event of its ‘finding’, to her *kantri* category membership. Implied in Casimira’s assertions of category membership in this stretch of talk is that she has a claim to the boat itself, as it is within the bounds of her country. Casimira appears to use *kardu thipmam* categories to maintain, or reassert, an authoritative position in the interaction.

Excerpt 8.19 sees an almost identical context, six months earlier. Yet here Casimira (3;6), as a three year old, displays markedly different linguistic behaviour. At this same location, to which Casimira has a *kantri* connection, Annunciata again spots a boat on the horizon. The excerpt begins with Annunciata whispering her discovery to the children. Casimira repeatedly claims the boat as her own (lines 3, 12, 15, 17 & 19), and does so without any mention to category membership. In fact, the sole category term that she does produce in this excerpt is the collectivity term, *ngankungime*, 1.PC.EXC, with which she groups everyone together.

Ex.(8.19)

1 Annunciata: “tharntu” ((whispered))
   A boat
2
3 Casimira: tharntu ngay
   It’s my boat!
4 Annunciata: nhinta kurran ((points towards the sea))
   Here it comes
5 Casimira: tharntu ngay *ngankungime* kanhi warda mamba (0.5) kanhi[matha] 1.PC.EXC
   It’s my boat. Right here where we are
6 Tabitha: ((looks out to sea)) [“tharn]tu“
   A boat
7
8 Tabitha: hey (.) Lucy? tharn[tu ] ((waves arms at Lucy))
   A boat, hey Lucy, a boat!
9 Casimira: [ya]:y
   ya:::y!
10 Tabitha: tharntu ((points out to the sea))
   a boat
11 Lucy: ((crouches down and looks in the direction of Tabitha’s point))
12 Casimira: tharntu ngay
   It’s my boat
13
14 Lucy: ((gasps)) aa yu:;;; Oh! Oh yea:::h
15 Casimira: tharntu ngay-wa
   It’s my boat
16
17 Casimira: tharntu ngay-wa
   it’s my boat
18
19 Casimira: tharntu ngay-yu
   my boat

These two interactions, which take place 6 months apart, and in near identical contexts, see considerably different speech behaviour from Casimira. At the age of 3;6, Casimira simply claims
the boat as her own, with no category-based reason as to why. At 4:0, on the other hand, Casimira asserts authority over their location, and everything within it, via her membership to the *kardu thipnam* category of land.

Different again, Charlie and Mavis, at 5:6 and 6:5, respectively, justify their assertions of authority over spaces by implying their category-based right to them. Charlie asserts membership for himself to *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’, while Mavis mentions the category, *nangkun*, ‘husband’, to imply her membership to ‘wife’. The example from Mavis is provided in excerpt 8.20.

Mavis (6;5) asserts authority over a particular physical space, in a recording with her sister Acacia (4;7) and cousin, Marie-Therese (4;6). In excerpt 8.20, Mavis pursues this action by referring to a patch of sand as her ‘room’ (line 2). She then invokes the family category of *nangkun*, ‘husband’, in line 4, and locates him in the space that she claims.

Ex.(8.20)

1 Mavis: ((turns and starts to walk away to the other side of a tree from the group))
2 Mavis: rum ngay-ka indangu-yu
   *this is my room over here*
3 (2.3)
4 Mavis: kanam *nangkun* ngay-ka
    *my husband is there***
5 (1.0)
6 Mavis: kanam kanhi
    *there he is*

By referring to her husband in line 4, Mavis speaks as part of a married couple. Through this, she appears to assert her right to a private space in a domestic context, and justifies her claim to the area that she marks out for herself. Mavis uses the category, *nangkun*, ‘husband’, to imply her membership to ‘wife’, and her rights associated with this.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, children’s uses of categories to assert authority over entities and spaces at various ages appear to echo the age-related differences described for opposing the statements/actions of peers. Three year olds appear to assert authority over entities and categories alike by claiming ownership over them. At this age, objects and categories appear to be treated in a fairly similar manner. From the age of four, children display an increase in creativity and dexterity in their orientations to categories when asserting authority over entities and spaces, and invoke membership categories for their associated rights in order to justify their authority. This discernible shift from the way that children assert authority over entities at three years of age to how they do so at four is exemplified in the excerpts involving Casimira.

8.2.3. Caregiver talk

While the use of categories in caregiver routines by children covers the age span of 3;5 to 7;2, only half the cohort engage in this speech behaviour. Of those four, three children, Benjamin, Mavis, and Casimira, do so at multiple time points. What differs most noticeably with each child’s age
with respect to this action is their choice of addressee for this talk and/or the way in which their addressees respond. First Mavis and Benjamin’s engagement in this action is described, followed by Casimira’s.

At ages 5;7 and 5;10/6;4 respectively, Benjamin and Mavis direct most of their productions of caregiver talk to siblings only slightly younger than themselves or to older peers. Younger siblings display their opposition to this caregiver talk non-verbally, by mooning (as Raymond (3;2) does to Benjamin (5;7)) and blowing raspberries (as Acacia (4;0) does to Mavis (5;10)). Older addressees ignore the caregiver talk, make fun of it, or correct its informational content.

Excerpt 8.21 sees Benjamin (5;7) being corrected by both his peer interlocutor and his mother. In this interaction, Benjamin and his cousin Jeremiah (6;0) stand in front of the camera, with numerous other children around, as well as Benjamin’s mother, Deborah, who is seated nearby. The excerpt begins with Deborah calling on Jeremiah to talk. In line 6, a cousin of Benjamin’s, Matthew, suggests Jeremiah demonstrate his traditional dance, wultjirri. Benjamin then prompts Jeremiah in line 6 to repeat a particular utterance featuring the kardu thipman category of totem. Benjamin is immediately corrected by his mother, followed by Jeremiah.

Excerpt 8.22 shows Mavis (6;4) posing her teenage cousin, Chester, a display question about his (Murrinhpatha) name, in line 3, and then again in line 5. Rather than providing his own name, Chester produces Mavis’ in line 4, which suggests that he treats her caregiver-like prompts as a joke.

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71 LAMP_20140308_LD_01_00:05:36.213
72 LAMP_20140910_LD_01_00:18:32.126
In contrast with these two excerpts just shown, from age 6;10 and 6;8, respectively, Mavis and Benjamin’s verbal orientations to the category of caregiver appear to be ratified by others. They also appear to direct their speech to appropriate interlocutors; that is, children who are a certain degree younger than them. Benjamin’s successful examples of kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, talk are when he addresses his baby sister Alice. Mavis’ ratified attempts are those she directs to her youngest sister, Penelope.

An example of Benjamin (6;8) is provided in excerpt 8.23, in which he teaches his baby sister, Alice (0.7), about her connection to the kardu thipmam category da, ‘land’. In this interaction, Benjamin is sitting with his siblings, Raymond and Alice, three adult caregivers, Martha, Deborah, and Judith, plus myself. The adults are telling me about a new shop that is now open in the community. Benjamin, although seated close to the adults, interacts solely with the preverbal Alice in this stretch of talk. In line 5, Benjamin talks to Alice about her kardu thipmam connection to their current location, and continues to do so in lines 7 and 12.
teabags, sugar, milk…

10 Raymond: AWU (to Renata)

11 Deborah: everything

12 Benjamin: [palyirr thuykem nganaka (0.4) palyirr thuykem thama]

13 Martha: [she buy power ca:]rd

14 Benjamin: Martha!

LAMP_20150323_LD_03_00:00:55:336

While the adults are engaged in their own talk, Benjamin is seated on the same picnic rug as them, well within earshot. The fact that no one opposes his use of caregiver talk to Alice suggests that such behaviour between siblings at Benjamin’s and Alice’s respective ages is considered to be appropriate. Relative to Alice, Benjamin can speak as a kardu ngalla, a ‘grown up’.

Mavis (5;10) first engages in caregiver talk at the behest of her mother, as was seen in ex. 7.39. In this excerpt, Valerie instructed Mavis to help manage her younger sister’s behaviour, by scaring her with invocations of folkloric personae. Mavis acquiesces and invokes ku karrath, ‘devil’, however after producing this category term, Mavis laughs. In fact, she does so every time she engages in caregiver talk throughout this recording, suggesting that at she is not entirely comfortable producing this style of speech. At 6;10 and 6;11, Mavis uses categories from this same collection, of nonhuman characters, to manage the behaviour of her youngest sister, Penelope. On these occasions she is not enlisted by a caregiver, but instead engages in the behaviour of her own accord. What’s more, she does not laugh in subsequent instances of caregiver talk, which indicates an increased ease at engaging in such behaviour.

In excerpt 8.25, Mavis (6;10) engages in caregiver talk for behaviour management purposes with her sister Penelope (2;5) numerous times. The interaction takes place near the edge of the mangroves. Penelope is upset due to being told that she cannot follow the older children into the thicket of trees. Mavis employs numerous strategies to try and stop Penelope crying. In line 5 she announces the appearance of the old man spirit, ngalantharr73. Following this, in line 7, Mavis points to the ground, claiming the presence of ku nguluguy, an echidna, which is also one of Penelope’s totems. This could be viewed as a distraction technique.

Ex.(8.24)

1 Mavis: kaya
   let’s go!

2 Penelope: ((vocalisation))

3 Mavis: nhini wakayNU
   that’s enough of THAT

4 (0.3)

73 Mavis produces the nominal with the classifier kardu, which is used for living Aboriginal people, as opposed to ku, Aboriginal spirits. Given the context, I assume that she does not mean a living old man, but rather the spirit. Language workers who helped transcribe this also believed it to be a slip of the tongue.
5 Mavis: wakaynu kardu ngala:nta:rr-yu
   *that’s it, here’s the old man (spirit)*
(1.2)

6 Mavis: ku nguluuyguy pangu
   *there’s an echidna there!*
(0.6)

7 Mavis: WA MANANGKA THULATH-ya:: ((points Penelope up, sits her on her hip))
   *don’t you eat it!*
(0.4)

8 Mavis: manangka thulath-ya
   *don’t eat it!*
(0.5)

9 Mavis: ya aa aa aa ((bounces Penelope in her arms in time with her utterances))
10 Mavis: (kisses Penelope twice on the cheek)
11 Mavis: thi warda nga ngarra Lucy ((puts Penelope down on the ground))
   *you wait there, with Lucy*
12 Mavis: ((starts to walk off further into the mangroves, after her mother and cousin))

In addition to this use of caregiver-like speech, Mavis exhibits physical behaviour towards her sister in this excerpt which could also be viewed as related to the category, *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’. Mavis carries Penelope on her hip (line 9), bounces her up and down (line 13), and kisses her (line 14). These actions appear to be a physical performance of Mavis’ category membership.

The use of caregiver talk by Casimira, the youngest child in the cohort, displays a different pattern from that of Benjamin and Mavis. In contrast to the two older children, Casimira (3;5) successfully elicits responses to her caregiver talk from her sister, Tabitha (3.7), when she takes over a caregiver’s guessing game about totems. Described in ex. 7.35, Tabitha responds to Casimira’s prompts as she does to her mother’s, thereby ratifying Casimira’s orientation to caregiver, and the resulting power asymmetry between them.

Excerpt 8.26 shows a similar interaction one year later. In this stretch of talk, Casimira (4;7) engages in similar caregiver talk to that which she did one year prior, but is pointedly ignored. Extending from a discussion about football teams, the end of which can be seen in line 1 of the dialogue, Casimira produces a display question about their brother Maurice’s football team in line 7. When her utterance prompts no reaction, Casimira pursues a response, first minimally, in line 10, before explicitly her question again, in line 12. Casimira faces Tabitha (4;9) when she produces this reiteration of the display question, suggesting that she directs her utterance specifically, or predominantly, to her sister. Casimira’s question again fails to prompt a response from her peers.

Ex. (8.25)

1 Tabitha: pangu-ka crow-wa karrim pangu-yu pangure-yu ((points ahead of her))
   *Over there’s the Adelaide Crows mob, over there. Round that way*
6 turns removed

7 Casimira: Maurice-ka >Declan nuku-ka< THANGKU MANA:: ((gazes towards Tabitha))
   *Maurice and Declan’s team, WHAT IS IT?*

8 Casimira: >Maurice-ka tim nuku-yu<
   *Maurice, what’s his team?*
9 Beatrice: bere derrk da manangka nhini *** ((facing Pearl, throws some orange peel behind her))
   *Right, shh. This isn’t the place for that***
10 Casimira: aa?
   Huh?
11 (0.7)
12 Casimira: (turns to Tabitha) Maurice-ka thangku (. tim nuku nu-yy Maurice-yy
   What about Maurice, what is Maurice’s team?
13 Majella: rabish nganaka *** ((leans forward to put orange peel in a plastic bag))
   hey, rubbish ***
14 (1.2)
15 Beatrice: thangku tim nuku nu-yy Maurice-yy ((leans forward towards Casimira and Tabitha))
   What is Maurice’s team?
16 Tabitha: Dimen::
   The Demons::!!
17 Casimira: [Dimen] ((throws a stick away, turns to look at Beatrice))
   The Demons
18 Beatrice: [nhinjika ((looks at Tabitha))
   What about you?

Casimira’s use of caregiver talk in this interaction is met with a resounding silence from her peers. In stark contrast to this lack of uptake, when the children’s adult caregiver, Beatrice, takes over from Casimira in line 15, and produces the same caregiver talk, both Tabitha and Casimira respond, in lines 16 and 17 respectively. The girls’ responses indicate that they are each still willing to speak as a member of the category ‘child’ at the ages of 4;9 and 4;7 respectively.

The contrast between Tabitha’s reaction to Casimira’s prompts (i.e. silence) and that of Beatrice demonstrates that the question Casimira poses is not a problem. Rather, it is the questioner that is the issue. Casimira engages in the same style of caregiver talk with Tabitha at the age of 3;5 and 4;7. It is Tabitha’s response to Casimira’s orientation to ‘grown up’ that differs. In ex.7.35, Tabitha (3;7) speaks as a child, responding to prompts, irrespective of the speaker. Her refusal to speak as a ‘child’ to Casimira’s ‘caregiver’ in ex.8.26 suggests that, at 4;9, Tabitha is aware of the power hierarchies created through such caregiver speech routines.

Drawing on these three children’s use of categories in caregiver talk, at different ages, it appears that up until the age of around 6/7 children experiment with who they can and cannot successfully direct such talk to, with predominantly unfavourable reactions. After this, children appear to select socially appropriate addressees to engage in these socialisation routines.

8.2.4. Four years old versus seven

For the disaffiliative actions described in this chapter, there appears to be discernible differences in the use of categories by 4-5 year olds and by 6-7 year olds. These differences are perhaps demonstrated most clearly in an interaction between Benjamin (7;2), Raymond (4;9) and their cousin, Concepta (4;4), described in part in 7.6, and produced in full in excerpt 8.28.

The excerpt begins with Raymond excluding and then teasing his cousin Concepta, aided by gender categories. Raymond rejects Concepta’s attempt to join him and other male relatives on the basis of her being a member of mardinhpuy, ‘girl’, before tauntingly suggesting that she is a
member of its opposite. In line 4, Benjamin joins Raymond in challenging Concepta’s membership to ‘girl’, by implying that her behaviour is incongruous with this category. Benjamin positions Concepta as a wayward category member of ‘girl’.

Ex.(8.26)

1 Raymond: nhinhi-ka mardinhpuy-wa kulbuy wakal
You’re a girl   Or are you a little boy?
2             (1.2)
3 Raymond: nhinhi-ka kul[buy]
You’re a boy?
4 Benjamin: [ nga]rra kul- ngaarra kulbuy-ya le thanam
With the bo-
You like being with boys
5 Judith:    awu ((growly voice))
no!
6 Judith:         nigunu-ka mardinhpuy de ngay Mary Lucy
She’s a girl just like me, Martha and Lucy

While Raymond explicitly challenges Concepta’s category membership to mardinhpuy, ‘girl’, Benjamin instead reproaches her for exhibiting behaviour that is not in line with local expectations with respect to this membership. By orienting to the device of gender, and helping Raymond ostracise Concepta, Benjamin also forges an allegiance with Raymond as he produces this negative assessment of her.

In many ways this short stretch of talk is emblematic of age-related uses of category terms when disaffiliating with peers. Raymond, at four years, uses a category and its associations to justify his disaffiliative action towards his cousin. He then uses a category to tease; an action that no child five years or older pursues. Benjamin, on the other hand, uses categories to highlight the inappropriateness of Concepta’s behaviour with respect to local social norms. In negatively assessing his cousin he simultaneously manages another peer relationship, forging an alliance with Raymond.

8.3. Summary

While no single child is tracked from age 2;10 to 7;2, the age range represented in this study, the linguistic behaviour of the cohort appears to indicate a movement towards becoming a member of broader society. The younger children’s use of categories suggest a focus on themselves and their own category memberships. From this, children move to demonstrating an awareness and understanding of broader social categories, and a desire to experiment with the social clout these categories afford speakers in interactions. Four year olds appear to harness the social meaning of categories for personal goals, and at around age five children begin to display more subtle uses of categories, pursuing multiple social goals through a single interactional move. By the age of six, categories appear to be predominantly used to uphold social norms, to monitor other people’s knowledge, and to negotiate interpersonal relationships. At this older stage, categories are used in relation to other children, for society-based goals.
9. Discussion

The previous four chapters described the Murrinhpatha speaking children’s uses of categories from a number of angles. Chapter 5 provided an overview of each individual child’s productions of categories at the four different time points, and the affiliative/disaffiliative actions they pursued with them. Chapters 6 and 7 focussed on the various ways that categories were employed in specific affiliative and disaffiliative actions. Chapter 8 then looked at children’s productions of categories with respect to speaker age. This chapter discusses aspects of these results in relation to existing literature on children’s linguistic behaviour in interactions with peers, and finishes with a discussion of the contribution this thesis makes to the field. First, however, various challenges of the present study are detailed.

9.1. Challenges

A central topic of research into children’s talk-in-interaction, and of the present study, is how children use language to manage interpersonal relationships with peers. Yet despite this common interest, it is often difficult to compare findings across studies, resulting in many questions as to what children do remaining unanswered. This lack of comparability is due in large part to the nature of interactional studies (MCA or otherwise), which provide detailed, highly contextualised snapshots of a small number of speakers and/or actions. Without relating findings to other speakers and other speech situations, studies on peer talk offer rich but disparate glimpses onto individual groups of children. The more these descriptions can be linked with one another the more comprehensive the insights will be as to which linguistic behaviours are specific to particular children and which can be attributed to ‘children’ more generally. It has been suggested that in order to address the remaining gaps in knowledge as to how children interact with other children, a degree of “ingenuity” is required from analysts, as are well chosen tools (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004, p.300).

Two aspects of the present study facilitate comparisons with existing descriptions of children’s linguistic strategies when affiliating and disaffiliating with peers. One is that children’s explicit productions of categories were analysed, as opposed to their implicit orientations or allusions to them. This allows for comparisons with children’s uses of category or category-like terms in other peer talk studies, irrespective of the particular interactional approach applied. The second aspect of the present study that aids cross-study discussion is its breadth of description. Rather than focussing on a single action, a single membership categorisation device, a single stretch of talk, or a single ‘type’ of discourse, all of the Murrinhpatha speaking children’s uses of categories with peers were examined, in relation to a range of affiliative and disaffiliative actions. These two methodological decisions were made not only to ensure a broad and robust description of what
these eight children from Wadeye do, but also to maximise the potential for comparisons across studies. The particular interactional approach applied, MCA, proved to be a flexible analytic tool, and its focus on actions and categories does indeed facilitate comparisons with existing research, as will be demonstrated shortly.

Yet this attempt at ‘ingenuity’ also poses risks. Specifically, there is a risk that in the pursuit of breadth and comparability this study sacrificed too much analytic depth and subtlety. After all, attention to detail is the backbone of interactional analyses. While children’s uses of categories were organised into particular ‘affiliative’ and ‘disaffiliative’ actions that emerged from the data itself, some instances of children’s uses of categories fitted more compatibly into this matrix than others. The issue was not about shoehorning data into this mould but rather that this presentation of data did not allow for a full picture of certain interactional moves by children. This was particularly the case for instances in which children pursued multiple actions simultaneously. The presentation of data in this study aimed for a balance between breadth and depth, comparability and sensitive description. This somewhat experimental application of MCA appears to readily facilitate comparisons, between the cohort itself and with children from existing reports, yet certain comparisons are thinner than others.

Another potential issue with this study relates to the definition of ‘peer talk’. As explained in chapter four, it was not ethically or culturally appropriate to record children of these ages without the presence of a caregiver, and at least one Murrinhpatha speaking adult was present in every recording; sometimes very close, at other times a distance away. Due to this, all utterances that were not directed specifically to adults were analysed as peer talk. I compare this generous conceptualisation of peer talk to studies of children interacting in child-only groups with little adult engagement. Yet very few existing studies draw on data in which there is no adult presence. It is also worth noting that researchers themselves, if present at recordings, as most are, also bring a non-child presence to the situation, even if they attempt to behave in a ‘least-adult’ (Mandell, 1988) manner. While not ideal for the study of children’s peer talk, the presence of adults in the Murrinhpatha recordings does not seem to impede valid comparisons with other studies.

On the topic of contextual factors, three children, Charlie, and brothers Benjamin and Raymond, were not filmed at a location that they have a ‘country’ connection to in any of the recordings made. Given the salience of membership to kardu thipnam categories in Murrinhpatha speaking society, the physical location of an interaction, and an individual’s connection to this location or lack thereof, can be assumed to influence the use of category terms in a given interaction. Yet while unfortunate that these children were not recorded on their country, it is not considered critical to the analysis, as this is not a study on children’s use of kardu thipnam categories alone. Furthermore, the physical context of an interaction, while an important factor, is not the sole element that informs children’s linguistic choices.
Having collected longitudinal data for these eight children, the elephant in the dissertation-shaped room is the fact that this study does not focus on individual development. As mentioned in chapter 2, interactional analyses of longitudinal data present a number of methodological challenges (Doehler et al., 2018). One of the main issues has to do with a lack of consistency across interactions. In the present study, this lack of consistency across recordings for each child proved to be insurmountable. For most of the children there were too many variables at play (speech context, interlocutor, nature of the interaction, topic of talk, etc.) to be able to make robust developmental claims across the time span. In other cases, children’s use of categories and/or their pursuit of particular actions were sporadic across the four time points.

Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of not focusing on the children’s individual development is that some children in this study are afforded less of a voice than others. Those speakers who produced more category terms, for a larger variety of actions, garnered more attention in this dissertation than those who produced fewer. My attempt to somewhat balance out this inequality can be seen in chapter 5, in which each child’s behaviour was described in turn. Here I highlighted the dissimilarities between the children, rather than gloss over them. Reports of individual differences amongst children are equally as valuable as the description of patterns across children (Bates et al., 1995). While the opportunity to write a neat description of a cohesive cohort would have been convenient, it would also lack the uniqueness of real speakers and the sublime messiness of their everyday talk. The individual differences apparent amongst the children in this study further impress the value of treating children within research as independent agents.

The final limitation outlined here relates to my own category membership with respect to race. As a non-Aboriginal person, a *wathpala*, I am keenly aware that the worlds I describe in this study, and the language and culture of those worlds, are not my own. In a recent talk, Indigenous fiction writer and academic, Tony Birch, spoke of people’s rights to tell their own stories, particularly those people “who have been silenced” (Birch, 2018), such as the Indigenous people of Australia. While he was speaking of adults, it is also valid for children, who are so often spoken for. The decision was taken to approach the data in this study from an emic perspective in order to minimise the children’s voices being stifled or misrepresented. Hopefully this was successful, however even emic analyses involve analyst decisions. As for who facilitates children’s voices being heard, ideally more *kardu thipmam* will soon be involved in documenting and describing their children’s language use. However I would also argue that the urgent need for more research on Aboriginal children and language in Australia calls for (sensitive and respectful) work to be done, irrespective of who undertakes it.

Despite these challenges, the broad description of children’s linguistic behaviour in this thesis facilitates valuable discussion with respect to Murrinhpatha speaking children and children more generally. The chapter now moves to discussing the results presented in this study. In the following section of this chapter, age-related aspects of children’s category work, described in chapter 8, are discussed.
9.2. Age related uses of categories

As highlighted in chapter 5, each child in this study exhibits unique linguistic behaviour. However, the data also suggests certain age-related uses of categories. This is particularly true with respect to the ways in which children pursue the various disaffiliative actions examined in this study. Four year olds appear to use categories to disaffiliate in different ways to when they are three years old. Different again are the uses the two eldest children in the study put categories to at six and seven years of age. These age-related patterns of use were cautiously proposed in the previous chapter. They are now discussed in relation to existing theories and findings. Aspects of children’s category work that are linked to these age related uses are interwoven throughout.

9.2.1. Three year olds

As outlined in chapter 8, three year old speakers tend to use categories in relation to themselves rather than others, when pursuing both affiliative and disaffiliative actions. This apparent focus on the self could be understood with respect to perspective taking, and, linked to this, Piaget’s (1926) ideas of ‘egocentricism’. Children have been found to demonstrate the ability to take another’s perspective by the age of four (e.g. Flavell, 2004), but at age three they are considered to be still in the process of developing these skills. Three year olds have been found to fail false belief tasks (the standard approach to assessing children’s perspective taking abilities) with “mind-numbing regularity” (Chandler & Sokol, 1999, p.213). Yet some researchers believe that children at this age do in fact hold a ‘theory of mind’ to some degree, but that is simply difficult to test (e.g. Hala, Chandler, & Fritz, 1991).

A number of category mentions by children in the present study support this latter idea of three year olds and perspective taking. As seen in 6.6, Casimira (3;4) and Tabitha (3;6) both design utterances from their interlocutor’s perspective when they facilitate their brothers’ participation in an activity. Similarly, the sole instance in which Raymond (3;8) produces a kardu thipmam category at the second time point (T2) is to individuate a peer, not himself. These instances demonstrate that, while children at three years of age tend to use categories in relation to themselves, they do not do so exclusively. The examples also show a capacity to take another person’s perspective.

Ownership

Certain three-year-olds employ categories for disaffiliative actions in a similar manner to how they claim objects. The interaction between Tabitha (3;0) and her cousin, Adam (3;8), in excerpt 8.16 is an example of this. The children’s claims to the totemic entity of kanartur...
Further suggesting a link between category membership and ownership are the instances, detailed in excerpts 8.11 and excerpt 8.12, in which three year olds, Tabitha and Damien oppose the use of categories (totem and Spiderman respectively) by others, on the basis of the category membership being theirs and not their interlocutor’s. These examples suggest that a child’s membership to a particular category precludes a similar aged peer’s membership to that same category. This can be likened to the way in which an individual’s possession of a tangible object prohibits that same article being contemporaneously possessed by another.

A preoccupation with ownership and possession has been widely noted amongst preschool aged children within Western cultures (e.g. Corsaro & Schwartz, 1999; Ross & Conant, 1992; Whalen, 1995), and the claiming of ownership has been described as a “an important interactional device” (Cobb-Moore et al., 2009, p.1479) amongst 3-6 year olds for managing the participation of peers. However, most examples of this preoccupation with ownership in the literature do not involve categories. When they do, these categories tend to be implicit rather than explicit (e.g. Cobb-Moore, Danby, & Farrell, 2008; Cobb-Moore et al., 2009). The uses of categories by Murrinhpatha speaking three year olds appear to support this idea of young children being preoccupied with ownership, and their employment of it as an interactional resource when they pursue disaffiliative actions.

Instances in which children use kardu thipmam categories to tease a peer provide additional backing for this idea. All examples of teasing with kardu thipmam categories involve a speaker claiming for themselves a kardu thipmam connection of their peer. This action can be likened to the speaker playing with ideas of ownership; taunting their peer by claiming for themselves what belongs to their interlocutor. Yet, as noted in the previous chapter, the effects of such teasing at the age of three are not the same one year later. Tabitha’s impassioned reaction at 3;6 to Casimira’s teasing with kardu thipmam categories contrasts with her non-reaction to Casimira’s attempts when Tabitha is 4;7. The difference in Tabitha’s behaviour at 3;6 and at 4;7 could be taken to suggest that ownership claims are an effective resource for pursuing disaffiliative actions amongst three year old Murrinhpatha speakers, but less so by the time they are four.

This would contrast with existing ideas about Western children and ownership, which identify a preoccupation with ownership and possession up to and including the age of six (e.g. Corsaro & Maynard, 1996). Given that Murrinhpatha speaking society can be described as collectivist rather than an individualistic in nature (Muecke, Lenthall, & Lindeman, 2011, p.5), it is plausible that children’s focus on ownership would be shorter lived at Wadeye than for children in Western cultures.

9.2.2. Four year olds

Where three year olds in the present study tend to use categories in relation to themselves, at four years children employ categories more readily for their social import. At around four years of age, children in this study begin to use categories for the associated rights and expected behaviour of
members. They use these shared local understandings, these ‘category bound activities’, as the basis of, and justification for, many of their disaffiliative actions. Rather than basing a disaffiliative action on matters of ownership, children at this age invoke social understandings of categories to bolster their personal claims.

An example of four year olds using categories in this way is the instance described in 8.2.2 in which Damien (4;5) asserts membership for himself to the category of kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, in order to assert his right to interact with the camera. A similar use of categories is described in Sheldon (1997), in which a North American child aged 4;6 orients to a particular category in order to assert authority over an object that her peer (4;9) is in possession of. She invokes the category of ‘nurse’ to gain control over a toy syringe: “Arlene, remember, I’m the nurse and the nurses getta do shots, remember?” (p.235). Just as this English-speaking child does over the syringe, Damien uses category membership and its associations to justify his assertion of authority over the camera.

A four year old using category membership as the grounds for a disaffiliative action was also seen in excerpt 8.13. In this instance, Raymond (4;3) opposes the action of his younger sister, Alice, on the basis that she is a kardu wakal, ‘little kid’. In doing so, he positions her current action as being at odds with her category membership, and uses this disjunct to justify his opposition. Similarly, Evaldsson & Tellgren (2009) describe an interaction in which 4 and 5 year old Swedish children justify their exclusion of a peer from an activity on the basis that she is “only four years” whereas they are “grown ups” (p.16). The children inform their peer who is trying to join in that the activity is “too scary” and dangerous for her, given her membership to the category of ‘4 year old’ (child).

These American and Swedish examples show four year olds using categories in a similar way to the Murrinhpatha speaking children of this age. Where the examples differ is in their degree of explicitness. The American child articulates the right/expectation to administer injections that is associated with the category ‘nurse’, just as the Swedish child elaborates as to why the activity is unsuitable for someone who is “only four years”. However, the Murrinhpatha speaking children who use category memberships to justify their disaffiliative actions leave their category-based reasoning implicit.

A likely factor in this lack of elaboration is that, on occasions when a speaker uses category membership as the basis for their disaffiliative action, it is rare that their interlocutor responds in any discernible way. This contrasts with the Swedish interaction mentioned above, in which the child who is being excluded asks her peers directly “Why can’t I join?” (Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009, p.16). Such questions prompt the original speaker/s to articulate the reasoning behind their disaffiliative action. When an interlocutor responds to an action with silence and stillness, there is considerably less impetus for the speaker/s to explain. Extended silences have been proposed as a feature of conversational style amongst Indigenous people in Australia (e.g. Walsh, 1991, p.2). It is therefore possible that the lack of discernible responses that children in the present study display could be an aspect of culturally-specific interactional style.
As shown in excerpt 7.11, Tabitha (4;1) uses a race category as a means to oppose her brother’s treatment of her. Reminding him of his lack of membership to *ku wathpala*, ‘non-Aboriginal person’, Tabitha’s use of categories also works to dissuade her brother from continuing with his behaviour. This echoes the invocation of gender categories by Swedish-English bilingual children aged considerably older, at 8-10 years (Cromdal, 2011). In this Swedish example, a boy is labelled a ‘tattle-tale’ when he threatens to report two girls to the teacher. One of the girls then incorporates categories of gender, exclaiming, ‘the boys always call the girls tattle tellers’ (Cromdal, 2011, p.301). With this utterance, she connects the boy’s threatened action- telling the teacher- with the category, ‘girl’. By positioning the action of ‘tattle-telling’ as a category bound activity of ‘girl’, the boy risks being seen to violate local ideas of gender category membership if he proceeds. Equally, when Tabitha links her brother’s behaviour to the race category of *wathpala*, ‘whitefella’, she implies that he is violating local ideas of race category membership. Just as the Swedish child does with gender categories, so does Tabitha invoke local understandings of particular categories to oppose her brother’s behaviour and encourage him to desist.

There are also examples of preschool aged children from other backgrounds using categories to oppose and dissuade in a similar manner to Tabitha. For example, an upper-middle class, English speaking prescrawler in the United States rejects a boy’s attempt to join an activity, by declaring: “If you play with girls, then you are a tomgirl!” (Aydt & Corsaro, 2003, p.1317). This example is similar to that of Tabitha, in that the speaker excludes her peer on the basis of his category membership and its incongruity with his actions, rather than rejecting him personally. Not only does the speaker “[change] the nature of the rejection from ‘Don’t play with me’ to ‘Don’t play with girls’” (Aydt & Corsaro, 2003, p.1317), she also makes explicit what Tabitha and the Swedish child in the previous example only imply. She verbalises the consequence of pursuing an action that is seen to be incompatible with one’s category membership: the transgression of category membership.

**Category transgressions**

In fact, the risk of transgressing categories remains implicit in all such disaffiliative uses of categories by the Murrinhpatha speaking children. This too could be attributed to a culturally specific interactional style. Blythe (2009) describes how adult Murrinhpatha speakers not only tolerate but make dramatic use of vagueness when referring to people and entities in conversation. It is wholly possible then that children in this speech community are comfortable leaving certain things implicit rather than fully articulated. The closest a child comes to articulating the consequence of inappropriate behaviour (as in, ‘if you do x then you are a member of category y’) is Raymond’s teasing of his cousin, Concepta, as in excerpt 8.28. In this interaction he questions Concepta’s gender category membership (*nhinhika kulbuy wakal*, ‘Are you a little boy?’) after she attempts to join him and other male relatives in an activity. Yet Raymond stops short of attributing ‘boy’ membership to Concepta. He does not label her a boy for her actions, but rather uses the term in question forms only.
This contrasts with an example from an(other) American preschool, in which a boy is told, slowly and deliberately, “you’re a girl” after he screams while digging for worms (Kyrtatzis, 2001b, p.365). Equally, a group of 7-9 year old Swedish speakers inform a peer that he is a girl (itje), on the basis of the shoes that he is wearing (Evaldsson, 2005, p.772). In fact, most category memberships that Murrinhpatha speaking children attribute to peers in relation to a particular behaviour or object are either positive or neutral: kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, ekspet, ‘expert’, and nonhuman characters from films. The one exception to this is Mavis’ assessment of her younger siblings as kardu wiye, ‘bad people’, in excerpt 7.29, which she directs to her cousin. However in the example from Mavis (5;11), it is the category itself that is negative/socially punitive, rather than their transgression from that of ‘good person’.

### 9.2.3. Five year olds

Children in the cohort at around five years of age use categories to pursue disaffiliative actions in a similar manner to four year olds, invoking shared understandings of category based expectations and rights. However, from around five years, children often also pursue secondary actions with their affiliative or disaffiliative moves. These secondary actions tend to relate to managing interpersonal relationships. An example of this was described in 6.2, where Acacia (5;0) responds to Damien’s (4;5) positive assessment of their brother (who is present) by producing the same assessment as Damien, together with the agreement seeking nawa, ‘isn’t that right’. Another example is seen in ex. 7.29, in which Mavis (5;11) pursues an allegiance with her cousin Molly (6;7) by negatively assessing her younger sisters (who are out of earshot) and prompting Molly to agree. Complaints about others, for examples, are often at least as much about the speaker affiliating with their interlocutor than about the complaint itself (Butler, 2008; Drew & Holt, 1988). Given their use of agreement seeking markers, the assessments produced by Acacia and Mavis can also be viewed from this same perspective. Affiliating with their respective interlocutor appears to be just as much of a social goal for the girls, aged 5;0 and 6;7, as assessing a third party, if not more so.

Two more examples from Acacia (5;0), in excerpts 6.16 and 6.17, see her attempting to develop the activity she is engaged in order to negotiate a more affiliative relationship with her co-participants. She pursues this by incorporating gender categories into the interaction and positioning her older sister and cousin as leidi, ‘lady’ members of her own category (first Hulk and then Batman). Numerous existing studies describe children selecting categories to encourage a particular relationship with peers. For example, children orient to the categories of ‘teacher’, ‘mother’, or ‘boss’ to promote a particular relationship with peers who are members of ‘student’, ‘child’, ‘doggie’, or ‘slave’ (e.g. Björk-Willén, 2012; Butler, 2008; Griswold, 2007). However, this selection process tends to occur when a child is first seeking entry into an activity (e.g. Cobb-Moore, 2012), or when an activity is first being established (e.g. Kyrtatzis et al., p.408). What’s more, most of these instances involve children using ‘positioned’ categories (Sacks, 1992), which invoke a normative hierarchy between the categories in use. When pursuing an affiliative relationship with peers, the speaker tends to orient to the subordinate category of a pair or group (e.g. Anh, 2016), or they
orient to the same category as a peer (e.g. Kyratzis et al., 2001). Acacia, however, does neither. She attributes different membership to herself and to her peers (‘lady’ membership to them, and ‘non-lady’ membership for herself), and there is no evidence to suggest that her use of the term leidi invokes a hierarchy between ‘female’ and ‘non-female’. Such a use of categories, to negotiate an affiliative relationship with peers without notions of hierarchy or sameness, does not readily compare with existing reports in the literature. Acacia’s use of ‘lady’ indicates that, for her, at 5 years of age, interpersonal dynamics can be negotiated with membership to constrasting, non-hierarchical categories.

9.2.4. Six and seven year olds
Mavis and Benjamin’s respective behaviour at around six and seven years of age suggests that a change has taken place in terms of how they use categories with younger peers. This is indicated in the particular disaffiliative actions that they pursue at these ages. They are the only speakers in the cohort to use categories in negative assessments, which is an action that indicates a concern with the appropriateness of member behaviour, and the upholding of social norms. Mavis and Benjamin also engage in the most caregiver-like talk out of the cohort. What’s more, as outlined in 8.2.3, Benjamin and Mavis’ use of ‘grown up’ talk at this older stage contrasts with their earlier attempts, at a younger age, in which they appear to experiment with the appropriateness of different interlocutors. While Mavis and Benjamin are only two children, the similarities in their age-related use of ‘caregiver talk’ suggest that a focussed investigation would be worthwhile as to the process in which children learn to engage in caregiver-like speech in a culturally appropriate manner.

Scholars across disciplines refer to ‘the 5 to 7 year shift’ (Sameroff & Haith, 1996), which is viewed as a period of time in which children are afforded new social roles and are considered “teachable” by adults (Rogoff et al., 1975, p.367). Mavis and Benjamin’s change in the latter recordings as to who they direct their caregiver talk to could be seen as aligning with this idea of a ‘shift’. Equally, their use of negative assessments could be taken as another indication of these children shifting to disaffiliative actions that relate more to the social sphere rather than the personal. Acacia’s use of categories at 5;0, to negotiate relationships while developing an activity, could also be viewed in relation to this shift, in that she demonstrates an awareness of the social elements of interactions. The peer talk engaged in by these three children could be taken to support a ‘5-7 year shift’, however analyses of child-adult interactions would be needed to explore this notion thoroughly.

Context
It is not only a child’s own age that appears to impact on which categories they produce, how they employ them, and for what purpose. The relative age of an individual’s interlocutor is also important, as are children’s respective memberships to kardu thipnam categories, and, connected to this, the physical location of an interaction. Kyratzis (2004, p.633) suggests that in cultures where children’s peer groups are made up of their kin relations, the older of whom perform caregiving
Older children use categories to disaffiliate with younger peers on more occasions that younger children do with older. However, Damien uses the stage of life category *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’ with his older brother, in section 8.2.2, while Tabitha uses the race category, ‘whitefella’ (ex. 7.11), and the gender category, ‘girl’, (ex. 7.22) with two of her older brothers. These examples suggest that there is scope for using categories when pursuing disaffiliative actions with older siblings, however it appears to be less possible than with children of a similar age. This (restricted) potential for siblings of different ages to negotiate the social order aligns with descriptions of *Muang* children in Thailand (Howard, 2007), and contrasts with work on Hawaiian children (Boggs, 1985) and children of the Marquesas Islands (Martini, 1994).

The majority of instances in which Murrinhpatha speaking children use categories in disaffiliative actions occur between similar aged peers. Raymond pursues actions such as excluding, teasing, and threatening to no one but his female cousins, Concepta and Renata. Acacia produces most of her disaffiliative actions in interactions with her cousins, Thomas and Marie- Therese. Sisters Casimira and Tabitha, two months apart in age, engage in a broad range of disaffiliative actions with one another. Tabitha and Casimira’s behaviour suggests that the propensity to disaffiliate has more to do with children’s respective ages than the particular relationship two people are in. It also indicates that a sibling relationship, for which there appears to be a societal expectation of closeness in the adult world, mentioned in chapter 3, does not prevent the pursuit of disaffiliative actions amongst children.

However, another aspect of all of the relationships between these similar-aged children listed above is that they all have memberships to different *kardu thipnam* categories from one another. This is unlike siblings with the same biological parents, who share the same *kardu thipnam* category memberships. While not all disaffiliative moves between these dyads involve categories from the *kardu thipnam* collection, many of them do. The cohort’s uses of *kardu thipnam* categories are discussed later in this chapter.

**Category-based power asymmetries**

One element of children’s peer interactions that is focussed on in many existing studies is the creation and management of power asymmetries. This tends to be explored in relation to the choice of particular categories, and the hierarchy that they promote in relation to others. Categories such as ‘teacher’, ‘news reporter’, ‘king’, and ‘mother’ are treated as ‘high status’ by children from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g. Ahn, 2016; Björk-Willén, 2012; Cobb-Moore, 2012; Kyratzis et al., 2001; Griswold, 2007). The ‘mother’s’ co-participants tend to orient to other family categories, on lower rungs of the family ladder.

In the Murrinhpatha data, one child only, Mavis, orients to categories that typically correspond with ‘high status’ categories in other children’s peer interactions. The particular categories she uses
are ku bas, ‘boss’, titha, ‘teacher’, and a non-Aboriginal category of ‘mother’, matha. These instances are not only few in number but most of them do not seem to achieve any discernible power asymmetry with peers. (Mavis’ implicit orientation to ‘teacher’, detailed in section 7.3, is one of her rare successes.) Categories that are regularly treated as ‘high status’ by children in other cultures do not appear to be treated as such amongst these children from Wadeye. Or, if they are, they are not readily employed by the children as interactional tools.

All of these ‘high status’ category terms that Mavis produces take the noun class marker, ku, relating to ‘non-Aboriginal’/‘animate non-human’ beings. In fact, almost all embodied performances of categories in the data involve categories from the ku class. When orienting to such categories, mostly superheroes, the children tend to speak in inkalith, ‘English’, or a representation thereof. In using a language associated with a specific category, the Murrinhpatha speaking children echo other children’s performances of category memberships (e.g. Orellana, 1994; Paugh, 2005). Children’s playful orientations to categories of superhero, whitefella, and folkloric personae contrast with their orientations to other categories, such as those from the family, stage of life, and kardu thipmam collections, all of which relate to the noun class, kardu, ‘(Aboriginal) person’. This contrast relates to the degree of ratifiability of category membership. That is, children tend to orient to kardu categories that they or their referent have a ratifiable claim to; they commonly use ‘real world’ categories in relation to their ‘real world’ category memberships. It could be argued that these Murrinhpatha speaking children’s apparent general reluctance to ‘play’ with kardu categories reflects the salience of these categories within the adult social world at Wadeye. Children’s use of various kardu categories (that is, those relating to Aboriginal people) is now discussed.

9.3. The use of particular category sets

In the present section of this chapter, children’s uses of categories from specific collections are discussed. The category sets focused on are family, kardu thipmam, gender, and stage of life. As with the previous section, observations from the Murrinhpatha data are related to existing studies where possible, and themes extending from these observations are woven throughout.

9.3.1. Family

With the exception of vocatives, which are not included in this study, children produce family categories in their peer talk relatively infrequently. Often, rather than using a family category, children refer to relatives by their personal names or nicknames. Charlie provides the most extreme example of this, as mentioned in 5.6. The action most commonly pursued with family categories across the cohort is the affiliative action of participating in an activity, which six children do. Most instances of this action see children orienting to particular family categories in their talk, rather than orienting to category membership for themselves. What’s more, on almost all occasions, children use family terms to refer to a particular individual who has a ratifiable
membership to the particular category. That is, all children’s mentions of the term *kaka*, ‘uncle’, or *mangka*, ‘paternal grandmother’, refer to individuals who are in fact in such a relationship to them.

9.3.1.1. ‘Playing families’
One striking difference between Murrinhpatha speaking children’s use of categories and that of children from other backgrounds is that there is not a single instance of children engaging in an activity that could be described as ‘playing families’ (as in Bateman, 2014; Björk-Willén, 2012; Cobb-Moore, 2012). The children in the present study are in kin relationships with their interlocutors, whereas most examples of children ‘playing families’ describe interactions between children who are not related to each other. The Murrinhpatha context is also one in which kin relationships are central to understanding the social world and how individuals belong within it, quite unlike Western concepts of kin relationships. These could be explanatory factors behind there being no instances of ‘playing families’. The only Murrinhpatha family categories that children use in a playful manner, that is, not in reference to ratifiable members of these categories, are those of *nangkun* and *palngun* ‘husband’ and ‘wife’.

In this kin-based society, it is reasonable to imagine that children treat family categories as a resource for referring, rather than a resource for playful activities. All children would know numerous ratifiable members of categories such as ‘mother’, ‘brother’, ‘aunt’, and ‘grandfather’. ‘Husband’ and ‘wife’ are the only kin relations that the children do not (yet) have. It appears that this lack of ratifiable members allows children to orient to them creatively with peers.

9.3.1.2. Husbands and wives
Although there are no instances of Murrinhpatha speaking children ‘playing families’, multiple children do orient to the categories for ‘husband’ and ‘wife’. Their productions of these terms, while classified in this study as belonging to the family collection, also appear to intersect with age. Most productions of these terms occur in interactions between children of different ages, and they appear to create a division between the older children and the younger.

As described excerpt 8.9, Mavis (6;10) and Molly (7;6) orient to the category of ‘wife’ in an activity with Acacia (5;0). In doing so they simultaneously strengthen their allegiance with one another and the divide between themselves and Acacia. Categories relating to marriage are described as helping to create a two-against-one dynamic by two North American preschool girls (Sheldon, 1996). Rather than each claiming a husband, however, these American girls strengthen their alliance by claiming that they are each other’s spouse. This works to exclude a similar-aged peer, as there are no available categories within the married relationship for this third party to map herself onto. Mavis and Molly do not assert themselves to be the other’s spouse. They each claim a husband of their own. By rights Acacia is free to claim a husband for herself, yet she does not.

In a recording one month later, Acacia (5;1) does produce the category term ‘husband’, in an exchange with her younger sister, Daisy (3;7), from whom Acacia individuates herself as a ‘wife’. Acacia therefore does not orient to the category of wife with her older relatives, but does with her
younger sister (who, in turn, does not orient to the category of wife in the exchange with Acacia). This suggests that, for these Murrinhpatha speaking girls, categories indexing membership in a married couple are an interactional resource for relatively older speakers only, which builds on an apparent difference in age.

An interaction involving Raymond and his older cousin Jasper also suggests that the use of these category terms can be used to create a division with younger peers. Described in section 6.5, Raymond (4;9) tries numerous times to enter into an activity that Jasper instigates with the older boys present. The activity involves orienting to the category of ‘husband’ by claiming wives of various degrees of absurdity. Despite aligning his own use of the category with that of his cousin, and attempting multiple strategies to affiliate with him, Raymond does not succeed in gaining entry. Jasper does not treat Raymond as a participant, and engages in the activity exclusively with Raymond’s older peers.

These examples of disaffiliating with younger peers suggest an intersection between the family categories of ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ and categories relating to stage of life. This link between heteronormativity and older selves echoes a study on pre-adolescent English speakers in the USA (Goodwin, 2006), in which a group of girls describe their own futures. A ‘husband’ is an assumed element of this future that they imagine. However, there do not appear to be any previous examples of children asserting their membership to a category relating to marriage in order to highlight an age difference between conversational participants.

9.3.1.3. Perspective taking and compliance seeking

Children in this cohort mention family categories on surprisingly few occasions given that family, and the particular kinship relations that people have with others, is fundamental to Wadeye society. Howard (2007), in her study on Pon Noi Muang children from Northern Thailand, also found a relative paucity of kin term usage by children, despite the salience of age hierarchies in the local culture. She reports that when children do use kinterms it tends to be in compliance-seeking activities. For example, a child would refer to themselves as ‘elder sibling’ when trying to direct a younger child’s behaviour. The productions of family categories by three children in the present study can be likened to this. Casimira, Damien, and Raymond use family category terms when trying to influence a peer’s behaviour. Raymond does so in an affiliative action, and Damien and Casimira for a disaffiliative. On all of these occasions, the children use the family term from their interlocutor’s perspective.

As described in section 6.6, Raymond (4;9) encourages his younger sister to join him and Benjamin by fore-fronting the familial relation they share: ngarra paba nanku, ‘to your two brothers’. Damien (4;0) (in section 7.5) excludes his younger cousin Elsie by encouraging her to move away from him and his mother by telling her to go over to her own: ngarra mama nhinhi, ‘to your (own) mum’. Although quite different speech situations, Raymond and Damien appear to use family terms for a similar purpose. They direct their peers’ behaviour by using family categories which make salient
the obligations that their interlocutor can be expected to have towards members of such categories. Given that family categories are relational, using a term also makes salient the interlocutor’s category membership, and the expectations associated with it in relation to the family member mentioned.

9.3.2. ‘Kardu thipmam’

One way in which the present study contrasts most obviously from existing work on children’s peer interactions relates to kardu thipmam categories. These categories, which constitute and index a person’s Aboriginal identity, are not readily transferable to other cultural contexts.

9.3.2.1. Social organisation

As reported in the results chapters, seven of the eight children in this study use kardu thipmam categories to individuate themselves and/or others, and half the cohort groups themselves together with others by invoking shared ties to categories from this set. These numbers indicate that children employ categories from the kardu thipmam collection for social organisational purposes with peers. They use these categories to mark people as ‘same’ or ‘different’ from themselves; as members of an ‘us’ or a ‘them’.

As outlined in chapter 3, kardu thipmam categories are fundamental to the organisation of adult Murrinhpatha speaking society. Whether and how two adults interact is often largely informed by their membership to particular kardu thipmam categories. That the children use categories from this collection to organise people in their own speech indicates an awareness of the social function that kardu thipmam categories have in the adult world. Numerous peer talk studies describe the ways in which children demonstrate their awareness of aspects of the adult social world in interactions with peers, and experiment with these resources in their peer interactions (e.g. de León, 2007; Reynolds, 2007). The employment of kardu thipmam categories by children to group and differentiate people appears to support this idea. Children use kardu thipmam categories with peers to manifest what happens within adult Murrinhpatha speaking society.

What should be noted, however, is that in all recordings the focus children’s co-participants are close family members, either siblings or cousins. The children are therefore all in affiliative relationships with one another, according to kardu thipmam (and family) categories. Even in situations in which the children’s personal memberships with respect to kardu thipmam categories differ from one another, they nonetheless share links to such categories through common relatives. At a societal level, the children who appear together in recordings are allies rather than enemies. Any animosity that is apparent between children in recordings is therefore personally, rather than socially, engineered.

As detailed in 6.1, Tabitha, Mavis and Damien group themselves with others in relation to totemic entities, and Acacia does so with respect to land. All other affiliative uses of the terms occur within activities, in which children take it in turns to declare their membership to kardu thipmam
categories. That is, the differences between children in relation to kardu thipmam categories form a common basis for peer activities. With the exception of a handful of instances, then, all uses of kardu thipmam categories in affiliative actions involve a sense of contrast, rather than sameness.

Furthermore, most children in the cohort employ kardu thipmam categories with peers for a greater number of disaffiliative actions than affiliative. This suggests that the ways in which children use kardu thipmam categories to organise the social group differs to adults’ use of the same terms. This difference could also be taken to support the idea that children use peer interactions as an ‘opportunity space’ to experiment and play with their understandings of the adult world (Corsaro, 1985; Zadunaisky Ehrlich & Blum-Kulka, 2010). That many children use kardu thipmam terms to disaffiliate with other children suggest that they are exploring the potential of wielding such categories in interactions, which they appear to do in different age-related ways.

9.3.2.2. Kardu thipmam categories to disaffiliate

In terms of the rather benign disaffiliative action of ‘individuating’, children’s use of kardu thipmam categories for this purpose could be viewed with respect to performing membership to the category of (good) child.

Performing membership to (good/bad) ‘child’

Understandings of childhood are culturally specific, as are local ideas around how children ought to behave (Berman, 2014). As outlined in chapter 3, in most Murrinhpatha socialisation routines, caregivers prompt young children to declare their own membership to kardu thipmam categories. Such linguistic routines mark their content as important within the local sociocultural context (Demuth, 1986, p.77). The ability to verbally differentiate oneself from others with respect to kardu thipmam categories, therefore, is positioned as important, and the demonstration of this ability desired and expected. Many caregivers further encourage this behaviour in children by linking it to the category kardu patha, ‘good person’. A child is labelled kardu patha when they announce their connections to kardu thipmam categories. Some caregivers also connect a refusal to comply with their directives (to assert their membership to kardu thipmam categories) with the binary opposite category, kardu wiye, ‘bad person’. Children who produce kardu thipmam categories to individuate themselves can therefore be viewed as pursuing two actions at once: marking themselves as different from their peers, and, through this, orienting to the category of (good) ‘child’.

This use of the categories ‘good/bad person’ by caregivers is similar to that which Nguyen & Nguyen (2017) describe for English speaking families in Singapore. Adults are reported as using the category of ‘good girl/boy’ to encourage particular behaviours in children, and ‘naughty girl/boy’ to discourage others. One child in this Singaporean study, aged 4;2, produces one of these categories himself. Using it in relation to his own behaviour, he asks his father, “am I a good boy?”. Numerous children at the age of three and four in the present study do the equivalent of this in Murrinhpatha, asking their caregiver, ngayka kardu patha, ‘Am I a good person?’. Furthermore, they often produce this question after having individuated themselves in relation to
kardu thipmam categories. In fact, Murrinhpatha speaking children produce the category term, kardu patha (‘good person’), only in interactions with adults, and not once to peers.\textsuperscript{74} This suggests that for these children adults are the sole people who can ratify membership to such a category. While adult-directed utterances are not included in the present analysis, this is mentioned here so as to better contextualise children’s use of kardu thipmam categories for actions of individuating. On numerous occasions, children’s selection of kardu thipmam categories might be as much about pursuing a particular action with a peer as it is to be heard producing the terms by nearby adults.

‘Kardu thipmam’ categories to assert authority

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Tabitha and Adam’s adversarial exchange in ex. 8.16, involving the kardu thipmam category of ‘totem’, appears to be based in ideas of ownership, and the interaction ends when Adam is declared to have the greater claim to the crocodile. This episode can be likened to an interaction between a group of American four year olds (Johnson (2004), reported in Goodwin (2006, p.157)), which sees two children argue for the greater claim to the role of leader on the basis of the ‘power rings’ they are wearing. One child claims to be wearing a gold power ring, before another declares that she is wearing a diamond ring, which is “more money than her ring” (Johnson, 2004, p.19), and so is the rightful leader. For these English speaking children here, being in possession of the most expensive ring, a show of the greatest material wealth, establishes authority in the group. For the two Murrinhpatha speaking three year olds, authority is instead determined by the greater claim to a totemic entity. In Tabitha and Adam’s interaction, the kardu thipmam category of totem operates like a power ring, with Adam’s caregiver-endorsed claim to the totemic entity being the diamond to Tabitha’s gold.

A number of children aged four years and up also use kardu thipmam categories to gain authority in an interaction, however they more commonly orient to kardu thipmam categories of land rather than totem, and they do so in relation to the physical context of talk. They also make use of category non-membership. At this age, connections to categories of land appear to be linked to overarching authority in an interaction, and non-membership is accordingly synonymous with a person’s lack of rights. Children use assertions of category membership and non-membership to pursue actions such as threats, asserting authority over space, and excluding.

‘Kardu thipmam’ categories to exclude

Benjamin (7;2), Raymond (4;9) and Acacia (4;6) demonstrate this in interactions with their respective cousins. All three children invoke kardu thipmam categories of land when pursuing disaffiliative actions. As detailed in section 7.5, Benjamin (7;2) excludes his cousin, Concepta, by highlighting her lack of kardu thipmam claims to the land they are on: puy da manangka nhinhi kanhiya, ‘Move, it’s not your land here’. In this utterance, Benjamin uses Concepta’s lack of kardu thipmam connection to their current location as a reason to exclude her. He links membership to

\textsuperscript{74} Mavis (5;10) produces the term kardu wiye, ‘bad people’, to her cousin, Molly, when negatively assessing her younger siblings. However, this usage is not related to assertions of kardu thipmam membership (or rather, a refusal to make such assertions).
*kardu thipmam* categories of land with an individual’s legitimacy of presence. Concepta’s non-membership thus equates to a lack of rights.

This mode of exclusion, through situating a peer as a non-member, and thus socially illegitimate, echoes Goodwin’s (2002) description of power asymmetries amongst pre-adolescent American girls. In Goodwin’s study, one child, Angela, is repeatedly ostracised from the peer group. Angela is labelled a ‘tagalong’, which characterises her as a non-member of the group. She is also told ‘You’re not even here!’ (p.406), through which she is characterised as a kind of non-person. These girls exclude Angela by delegitimising, if not denying, her presence. Through this they cast her as powerless and without rights, just as Benjamin does to Concepta. While Benjamin uses categories that are intrinsic to *kardu thipmam* identity and belonging, the American girls explicitly position Angela outside of their friendship group.

**Kardu thipmam categories in threats**

Detailed in 7.8, Acacia (4;6) and Raymond (4;9) each use *kardu thipmam* categories of land when they threaten a similar aged cousin. Yet both children do so only after having employed multiple other argumentative strategies in the interaction. This delay suggests that they treat the allusion to *kardu thipmam* terms as the strongest of threats, or the most effective of strategies. That these final threats are met with silence could be taken as evidence that the children’s interlocutors also interpret the *kardu thipmam* categories as wielding great force in this context. This is particularly striking in the interaction between Acacia and her cousin, who, up until Acacia’s mention of *kardu thipmam* terms, responds to her non-category-based warnings and threats by firing her every utterance back at her.

In her study of conflict talk in urban Australian preschools, Church (2009) found that there was a particular sort of threat that children used near the end of an oppositional interaction, which often ended/won the adversative exchange (Church & Hester 2012). This common argumentative strategy amongst the four year old English speaking children was to threaten to withdraw their friendship from a peer, for example, “I’m not gonna be your friend if you don’t ever give me that” (p.138). Similar threats are also reported for North American children of the same age, also in an institutional context (Corsaro, 1985; Sheldon, 1997, p.237). Another type of threat described by Church (2009) involves a symbol of withdrawn friendship: the withholding or retracting of an invitation to a birthday party. Although employed in similar ways to *kardu thipmam* categories, the concept of friendship and *kardu thipmam* are markedly different in the context of this study.

9.3.2.3. Social belonging

In Murrinhpatha speaking society, the concept of friendship relates to non-Aboriginal people only. Furthermore, in a context with family members, a threat to sever the relationship is less of an option. Rather than threatening exclusion from social events and relationships, Acacia and Raymond threaten peers by characterising the other child’s presence in the current location as
illegitimate with respect to *kardu thipmam* categories. Through this they warn their interlocutors that they do not belong, nor do they have authority or rights in the current location.

Drawing the Murrinhpatha speaking examples together with work by Church (2009; Church & Hester, 2012) and Goodwin (2002) we can say that social inclusion is of high importance amongst children from four years of age, and allusions to it can function as argumentative trump cards. Where American preadolescents and Australian pre-schoolers use friendship and symbols thereof, the Murrinhpatha speakers wield (non)membership to *kardu thipmam* categories of land.

Another aspect of these children’s assertions of *kardu thipmam* membership is the fact that none of them have a ratifiable claim themselves to the physical location of the interaction. What’s more, the children’s interlocutors, their cousins, each have either an equal if not greater claim to the area than the speaker who is disaffiliating with them. This indicates that the interactional force of *kardu thipmam* categories has less to do with their veracity and more to do with their assertion. This idea of ratifiable membership/non-membership itself being less important than the verbal positioning of individual’s as members or non-members can be linked to performative (Butler, 1990), or constructivist views of identity. Acacia, Raymond and Benjamin harness member-associated authority, not through ‘having’ particular connections, but by speaking as though they do. It appears to be the show of category membership that is their interactional strategy, rather than the category membership itself. This also exemplifies the idea in MCA that a category’s meaning is determined in every occasion of its use, rather than by any ‘inherent’ meaning of the term (Stokoe & Attenborough, 2014).

### 9.3.2.4. Charlie

Charlie is strikingly unique in that he produces fewer categories than all of the other children in the cohort, and those categories that he does produce come from a restricted number of collections. They are also more often used for affiliative actions than for disaffiliative actions. That Charlie does not produce a single *kardu thipmam* category in his talk requires a closer focus.

As mentioned in his introduction in chapter 4, Charlie’s membership to certain *kardu thipmam* categories appears to be unclear, due to his father, Leon, not having been acknowledged as a son by his own biological father. A disputed paternity complicates Leon’s connections to *kardu thipmam* categories (determined by one’s patriline), and as Leon’s son, this is the same for Charlie. While Charlie is aware of his mother’s country, and of his father’s mother’s country, the lack of clarity with regards to his patrilineally determined *kardu thipmam* category membership could be a factor in Charlie’s (non) use of categories.

Described in chapter 3, people’s ties to *kardu thipmam* categories continue to play a crucial role in contemporary daily life of Wadeye inhabitants, adult and child alike. The peer interactions discussed in the previous section suggest that *kardu thipmam* terms can be wielded as powerful weapons for children when pursuing disaffiliative actions with one another. What’s more, *kardu thipmam* categories appear to be directly linked to social inclusion and exclusion. While not
possible to make any definite claims, it could be predicted that Charlie’s unclear connections to *kardu thipmam* categories would impact directly on his life in Wadeye. In fact, given that Charlie regularly avoided school due to the bullying that he endured there, it is likely that he feels this impact already. Further supporting this idea is the fact that when Charlie moved to live at Peppimenarti, near his mother’s country (his *kangathi*), he happily attended school every day. This, and the use of *kardu thipmam* categories in disaffiliative actions by numerous other children in this study, suggest that this is more than a mere correlation.

9.3.3. Category sets in previous studies

Category terms from the collections of gender, stage of life, and collectivity are commonly investigated in research on children’s peer talk. Below, the children’s productions of category terms from these three sets are discussed, so as to explore the ways in which these Murrinhpatha speaking children use terms in relation to children from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

9.3.3.1. Gender

While there are limited mentions of gender categories in the data for the present study, those that children do use appear to support existing claims in the literature. With one exception, all uses of gender terms by the children invoke a sense of difference, if not division. This is seen in excerpts 7.20 and 7.22, in which Raymond (4;9) and Tabitha (4;2) each use gender categories as a method of gatekeeping, excluding peers on the basis of their gender category membership. This application of gender terms is seen in many existing studies on children (e.g. Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Cromdal, 2011; Goodwin, 1990; Kyrazis, 2001; Minks, 2008; Thorne, 1993). A sense of opposition is also evident when Tabitha (4;8) pursues the affiliative activity of developing an activity with Casimira (4;6), the premise of which is ‘boy’ sticks and leaves fighting their ‘girl’ counterparts, detailed in excerpt 6.12. Thorne (1993) and Goodwin (2011) (amongst others) describe instances of English speaking children who organise their activities around the premise of ‘boys versus girls’, with members of different gender categories being treated as natural opponents. Gender categories do substantial organisational work in adult society at Wadeye. Children’s use of these categories to predominantly highlight differences between themselves and peers could be seen to reflect their understandings of this.

Children from a range of cultures associate certain activities and objects with membership to the category ‘girl’ and others to that of ‘boy’ (Evaldsson, 2005; Goodwin, 2011; Kyrazis, 2001a; Tarım, 2016). For children in these studies, being seen to transgress gender category bounds is socially punitive. Damien (4;0) indicates an awareness of gender-specific tastes in an interaction with his female cousin, in excerpt 6.34. In it, he switches his question from one about whether Elsie likes *alk*, ‘the Hulk’ to one about its female variant, *alk mardinhpuy*, ‘girl hulk’.

In terms of member behaviour, Benjamin (7;2) indicates an understanding of gender-based appropriateness when he negatively assesses his female cousin’s behaviour (ex. 8.28), just as Raymond does in his teasing of Concepta immediately prior to this. Raymond’s use of gender
categories in this action suggests that being seen to transgress gender category bounds is socially punitive in Wadeye, too. However, gender categories are not used by Murrinhpatha speaking children to disaffiliate with peers of the same gender, unlike certain other children (e.g. Evaldsson, 2002; 2005; Kyratzis, 2001). This, and Benjamin’s creation of a ‘boy’ group, in excerpts 8.5-6, could be taken to suggest that gender categories are more of a tool for promoting in-group solidarity than division.

9.3.3.2. Stage of life
Children in the present study display a usage bias towards the category, kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’, in both affiliative and disaffiliative actions. It is even displayed in the negative assessments that Mavis and Benjamin make of their respective younger siblings, described in 7.7. Rather than informing Acacia she is behaving like a kardu wakal, ‘child’, for example, Mavis reminds her that she is a kardu ngalla, ‘grown up’. Equally, Benjamin avoids labelling Raymond a ‘child’, by attributing ‘grown up’ membership to himself alone (ngay matha, ‘just me’). This preference for ‘grown up’ over its standardised relational pair is consistent with ideas around young children’s preoccupation with becoming older (e.g. Skattebol, 2006).

In fact, there are no examples in the data of a speaker orienting to a younger stage of life category themselves, either to affiliate or disaffiliate with peers. This contrasts with studies in which children use the excuse of being too young to engage in a particular action (e.g. Hellman et al., 2014; Sealey, 1999), to reassert an age-related hierarchy with an older sibling (Sealey, 1999), or to pursue an affiliative relationship with a peer (Ahn, 2016). A mere two productions of the category, term, kardu wakal, ‘child’, exist in the data, both of which are used for the disaffiliative action of opposing (Raymond (4;3) in ex. 8.13, and Mavis (5;11) in ex. 7.9).

Just as the children in the present study use almost all family terms to refer to particular individuals who are ratifiable members of those categories, so do they tend to use stage of life categories in keeping with the relative (real life) ages of themselves and their peers. This contrasts with studies of Swedish (Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009) and American (Kyratzis et al., 2001) preschool aged children, who pursue disaffiliative actions with peers by claiming to be considerably older than their interlocutor. Murrinhpatha speaking children almost exclusively use Stage of life categories as a resource to index participants’ true age relative to one another.

9.3.3.3. Collectivity
Given the nature of categories in this set, it is not surprising that the most common action that children pursue with collectivity terms is the affiliative action of creating a group. However, as evidenced in the literature, children’s use of terms from this category can also work to exclude (e.g. Bateman, 2012; Butler et al., 2016; Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009; Goodwin, 2011). In languages such as English and Swedish, with few specific collectivity resources to draw on, the precise referents of collectivity terms can be rather opaque. For example, ‘we’ (or in Swedish, ‘vi’), for example, in the utterance ‘we’re playing a game’, can be used inclusively or exclusively (Butler & Weatherall,
Murrinhpatha collective pro-terms, on the other hand, allow for the encoding of following features: dual, paucal and plural number, inclusivity/exclusivity, and sibling/non-sibling. It could be presumed, then, that the Murrinhpatha speaking children would exploit these distinctions when pursuing actions relating to social organisation: grouping and individuating.

As mentioned in section 6.1, Murrinhpatha speaking children appear to use the inclusive/exclusive distinction differentially when grouping themselves with others, yet not even the older focus children in this study appear to encode siblinghood strategically in interactions. Siblinghood is entrenched in the morphological structure of Murrinhpatha. As such, speakers must remain alive to this aspect of people’s relationships with one another, just as speakers of Lao, for example, are required to be aware of hierarchical relationships, given the particular morphology of their language (Enfield, 2007). Yet the children in this study mark siblinghood predominantly for referring purposes, rather than to manage the social order of their peer group. Somewhat ironically, the Murrinhpatha speaking children in this study do not appear to exploit the specificity of collective pro-terms available to them in their language.

Collectivity terms are often described in in the literature in relation to the action of excluding peers. Unlike a preadolescent American child using the term “our gang” to exclude (Goodwin, 2011, p.258), no speaker in the present study uses the category *mup*, ‘mob’, or a paucal collective pro-term, to marginalise another child. In fact, the only Murrinhpatha collectivity terms that are used for a disaffiliative action other than individuating are dual pro-terms.

Acacia (4;6 and 4;7) and Mavis (6;5) are the only children in this study’s cohort to use collectivity terms for disaffiliative goals other than individuating. Both of them use dual forms to marginalise a third party (their cousin, Marie-Therese) who is present. In most instances the girls use the inclusive form, *neki*, to assert joint authority with another person over a physical entity, such as a crab claw, as seen in excerpt 7;16. This method of excluding a third party by asserting co-ownership is similar to descriptions of 7-8 year old English children (Butler et al., 2016, pp.58–59), who claim joint ownership over a house they are building, and exclude a third child in the process.

Where Mavis and Acacia differ in their method of disaffiliating is in whom they direct their collectivity term to. Acacia addresses her co-member of the duo that she establishes, and does not say a word to the individual she is disaffiliating with. Mavis, on the other hand, directs her utterances to the individual that she is disaffiliating from. Like Mavis, English- and Swedish-speaking four year olds have been found to exclude peers with the use of *we/vi* (Bateman, 2014, p.174; Evaldsson & Tellgren, 2009, p.12), and to direct their utterances to the child being excluded. Acacia’s mode of disaffiliating with her cousin, by emphasising the allegiance forged with her interlocutor, is less commonly observed in existing studies on children’s talk.

Siblinghood
Chapter 8 outlined children’s encoding of sibling/non-sibling features in collectivity terms at different ages. This appears to align with preliminary findings by Forshaw (2014, 2016) on
Murrinhpatha speaking children’s encoding of sibling/non-sibling features on verb forms. Forshaw reports that two children aged around the age of 5 produce sibling/non-sibling verb forms inconsistently if at all. Two older participants in his experimental study, at 5;8 and 7;1, each produce sibling verb forms in response to the picture stimulus which shows two siblings. Further, focussed investigation would be required in order to address developmental questions around children’s use of sibling/non-sibling distinction in collective proterms and on verbs. However, data from the present study, supported by Forshaw (2014), suggests that children do not readily encode siblinghood before the age of four and a half, and do not use the terms systematically until around one year later.

**Discourse management**

Certain children also use collectivity terms to group themselves together with others in what appears to be an attempt to gain attention, and/or the interactional floor. Acacia (5;0) and Damien (4;6) preface their suggestions for an activity (in excerpts 6.7 and 6.8) by collecting all present together with the inclusive paucal term, *nekingime*, and linking them to a shared *kardu thipmam* category. This is similar to the 7-8 year old English children described as using the ‘cohorting’ term, ‘everybody’ before suggesting their activity idea to the peer group (Butler et al., 2016). Acacia and Damien’s method of cohorting differs in that they use a collectivity term as well as invoking shared connections to *kardu thipmam* categories.

Tabitha (4;2) and Casimira (4;0) also use a paucal collectivity term in a manner that is similar to one previously described for English speaking children. The girls use *ngankungime*, 1.PC.EXCL, when engaged in a narrative activity with one another, seemingly when requesting the floor from one another. This echoes a study on preschool children in Wales, who use terms such as *we* and *everybody* to gain the floor when telling stories amongst peers (Theobald & Reynolds, 2015, p.422). The authors of this Welsh study suggest that the use of such ‘cohorting’ terms (Butler, 2008), which organise the speaker and others present as members of an ‘us’, invokes a moral obligation towards the group. This moral obligation is then thought to afford the speaker a strong claim to the floor. As Tabitha and Casimira are the only two participants in their activity, they are only requesting the floor from each other. However this does not invalidate the idea that the children use the form *ngankungime* to secure the floor, by flagging the relevance of their story to the broader group. It would be interesting to explore how Murrinhpatha speaking children tell stories in a context when more than two children are participating.

9.4. **Summary**

While numerous similarities exist between the linguistic behaviour of the children in this study and those in others, the differences cannot be understated. What is evident in this discussion is the extent to which a child’s cultural context impacts on their linguistic behaviour; the category terms they select, the goals they employ categories for, and the ways in which they pursue these actions.
A child’s selection of categories reflects their cultural availability and their relevance to that speaker’s life. The category of ‘friend’, fundamental to Western societies, is not a resource that Murrinhpatha speaking children can draw on in their interactions, just as categories relating to kardu thipmam identity are not meaningful tools in non-Aboriginal societies. Those social categories which are common to all societies, such as family, stage of life, and gender, cannot be assumed to provide speakers with the same interactional opportunities across cultures, and can be expected to incorporated into talk in different ways. For example, the actions that children in the present study pursue with family categories, and the ways in which they orient to them in their talk, bear little resemblance to uses of such terms by Swedish- or English-speaking children. When invoking concepts in interactions that are shared across cultures, such as social belonging, children draw on different resources, depending on what it means to ‘belong’ in their local sociocultural context. Through their language use, the children in this study demonstrate their similarities to children from vastly different backgrounds while they also highlight how thoroughly unique they are.

The differences in how children use language when interacting with peers reflect their understandings of the worlds in which they operate. By examining children’s uses of categories in an under-studied context, this study helps to reveal these understandings, providing evidence of the theorised connection between language and culture (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) in the process. The findings of this dissertation highlight the importance of investigating children’s use of language, not only within the immediate context of their interactions, but in relation to their broader sociocultural environments. Only then do we come close to learning what people truly intend and achieve with their words.

9.5. Future directions

The present study suggests numerous avenues of research with respect to specific aspects of children’s interactional strategies and practices, and individual developmental trajectories with respect to these. Some of the possible future directions prompted by this study are outlined below.

As hinted at by Acacia and Raymond’s use of kardu thipmam categories in threats, children’s category work interacts with structural and sequential aspects of interaction. While these elements of conversation were not explored in this study, this is a line of inquiry worth pursuing. Also worth undertaking is a comparison of specific actions that children pursue with and without the use of category terms. Where the data allows it, such analyses could be carried out with respect to the development of individual children. For certain actions, this could also be compared cross-linguistically/culturally.

An investigation into children’s peer talk at the local school in Wadeye would be another valuable next step, with a focus on interactions that children consider to be thu kuy, ‘fighting/bullying’. Recording children interacting with non-kin peers would facilitate a comparison with disaffiliative linguistic practices that children engage in with family members. This would help map out
children’s interactional strategies more fully, as well as potentially provide insight into variables that could not be teased apart in the present study, for example age, relationship, and context. These factors could then be examined in relation to existing studies of children’s talk in kin and unrelated peer groups.

Having demonstrated the value in analysing children’s language in and of itself, separate from adult speech, a logical future project would be to investigate how caregiver speech relates to children’s use of categories, and their linguistic behaviour more generally. Aspects of the use (and non-use) of categories by the children suggest that an examination of the language socialisation practices of individual family units would also be worth undertaking. The apparent connection of kardu thirn mal categories and social belonging/legitimacy also warrants interactional research with Murrinhpatha speaking children from a wider distribution of clan groups in the Thamarrurr region.

The final example provided here, of future research the present study could lead to, relates to hearing impairments. As mentioned in their introductions, Mavis and Benjamin were each diagnosed with acquired hearing loss near the end of the data collection period. Given the rate of otitis media in Aboriginal communities, it is highly likely that other children within the cohort have also since been diagnosed with hearing impairments. While the data was not analysed in relation to their diagnosed conditions, there appears to be no obvious evidence of communication issues when Mavis and Benjamin interact with others. This prompts the question as to whether children with hearing loss use different communicative strategies compared to those with unimpaired hearing. And, if they do, what is the nature of these differences. The relationship between ear health and language amongst Aboriginal children is currently being investigated with respect to phonological awareness (e.g. Wiglesworth, Savage, Sharma, & Demuth, 2018). Children’s use of language in communicative exchanges, however, is rarely looked at in relation to ear health. When it is, researchers assess children’s behaviour in interactions using checklists such as the ‘pragmatic protocol’ (Prutting & Kirchner, 1987) which allow for little nuance or cultural sensitivity in terms of what is deemed (by an adult and cultural outsider) pragmatically ‘appropriate’ in a given context. Such a topic demands focussed interactional analyses of everyday speech behaviour between children so as to elucidate their communicative strategies, and gauge the pragmatic ‘appropriateness’ of their utterances by the reactions of their interlocutors.

9.6. Concluding remarks

In this dissertation, I described the use of categories by eight Murrinhpatha speaking children as they pursued affiliative and disaffiliative actions in interactions with peers, at four different ages. For this, the interactional approach Membership Categorisation Analysis was applied to longitudinal speech data, recorded in Wadeye, a community organised in large part by categories. In undertaking this study I aimed to offer a small but revealing window onto the lives and behaviour of these individuals, the likes of whom rarely feature in research on children and
language. The value of focussing on speakers such as Casimira, Damien, Tabitha, Raymond, Acacia, Charlie, Mavis, and Benjamin is highlighted here with respect to two of the many categories of which they are members.

The first of these categories is *kardu wakal*, ‘child’ (although no doubt all eight participants would prefer to be attributed *kardu ngalla*, ‘grown up’ membership). As stated in the introduction of this thesis, decisions about children’s lives require a greater understanding of what children do and the ways in which they do it. Key to this is listening to what children say in their talk with other children. Interactional analyses of peer talk reveal aspects of children’s realities that are ordinarily hidden from adults. By illuminating the linguistic and cultural resources children draw upon to negotiate their place within the various social worlds they operate within, analyses make visible children’s understandings of these worlds. Entailed in studies of talk-in-interaction is the premise that speakers are worth listening to. This dissertation demonstrates the value of children’s talk by analysing it in its own right rather than in relation to adults’ speech. In describing what children do in their peer interactions this study adds to existing knowledge as to how children interact with one another at different ages, and the different communicative strategies they employ in their peer talk.

While co-members of the category ‘child’ share many similarities, their differences must also be acknowledged and accommodated. As is the case in research on children’s language more generally, most existing peer talk studies examine children from Western cultures, who speak an Indo-European language. Most studies also tend to draw on data collected in institutional settings such as schools or childcare centres. While such work is highly valuable, it is also highly context-specific; a fact that can sometimes be forgotten. The present study takes a step towards addressing the lack of diversity in the field with respect to children’s linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and also their social and situational contexts.

This brings us to the second category to which all eight children are members: *kardu thipmam*. This dissertation works to increase the representation of *kardu thipmam* children in linguistic research, and also in broader discourses of children and their development. While all children’s voices need to be listened to in order to better understand their needs, Indigenous children not only need to be better understood, the discourses around such children need overhauling. *Kardu thipmam* children, in Wadeye and in Australia more generally, tend to be spoken of in terms of deficit (Osborne & Guenther, 2013). The focus is not on what these children can do but on what they cannot do. This is particularly true with respect to language, and a particular language at that: English. A recent report card, entitled ‘The Wellbeing of Young Australians’ (Australian Research Alliance of Children & Youth, 2018) presents jarring statistics on the difference in numeracy and literacy levels in English between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. Yet there is no discussion of children’s abilities in their first language/s or language varieties. Compounding this English-centric approach to language and learning is the fact that little written evidence exists of the communicative abilities that *kardu thipmam* children bring with them to school.
While shocking discrepancies exist between *kardu thipmam* and whitefella children in terms of health and education, acknowledging and building upon the linguistic competencies that children already have is key to creating positive change. By analysing these eight speakers’ use of language from an interactional perspective, the present study foregrounded their linguistic and pragmatic dexterity. It is my hope that the richness of their talk, evidenced in this thesis, helps in some way to inform the current, harmful dialogue around Indigenous children in Australia.

The description of language use by these *kardu thipmam* children is also crucial from a language documentation perspective. In relation to other traditional Australian languages, most of which are no longer spoken (Marmion et al., 2014), Murrinhpatha is ‘strong’, as it is still being learnt by children. Yet in a postcolonial context such as modern day Australia, this linguistic robustness is tenuous, and aspects of the Murrinhpatha language are changing rapidly, with each generation of speakers. It is important to describe how children use Murrinhpatha in their interactions, in order to see how the language is changing. Furthermore, it is imperative to document these children’s use of Murrinhpatha at different ages, and over time, while children are in fact still learning it as a first language. This study and the broader Language Acquisition in Murrinhpatha (LAMP) project are an important step in the right direction on this front.

As language and culture are fundamentally interconnected (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), the documentation of Murrinhpatha-in-use is also the documentation of Murrinhpatha speaking culture. Examining children’s productions of category terms further highlights the connection between language and culture, in that it illuminates aspects of speakers’ understandings of the society and culture(s) they are growing up in. The connection an individual feels to their language and culture is considered to directly impact on that person’s wellbeing and sense of self. This is particularly the case with *kardu thipmam*, not only at Wadeye, but across Australia. It is reported that the use of traditional languages “improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people” (Marmion, Obata, and Troy 2014: 30). Equally, a sense of one’s identity is also crucial for wellbeing (Durie, Milroy, & Hunter, 2009). In fact, as a *kardu thipmam* involved in the ABC radio programs ‘Being Aboriginal’ explains, the two are one and the same:

> You have to know your language because you’ll never be able to learn your Dreaming and if you don’t know your Dreaming you can’t identify where you belong. If you don’t identify where you belong you may as well say you’re dead. (Bowden & Bunbury, 1990, pp.32–33)

In Murrinhpatha terms, an individual who does not know who they are is *kardu makardu*, ‘no one’, a ‘non-person’ (Nganbe & McCormack, 2009). Children are the caretakers of language and culture for their society. Their understandings of the world, and the ways in which they use language, inform what is retained and what it lost in a community. The wellbeing of future generations is therefore linked to what children say and do today. In describing the linguistic behaviours of these eight Murrinhpatha speaking children, this study aids children in their caretaker role, documenting aspects of everyday language and culture at Wadeye while the everyday is still
recognisably *kardu thipmam*.

While this study provides mere glimpses into these children’s linguistic and sociocultural realities, it nonetheless describes real interactions between eight very real individuals and peers, across 21 months of their young lives. Through their use of categories, the children themselves convey how they understand present-day Murrinhpatha speaking culture, and how they and others fit within it. While any study of language-in-use is also an examination of the speakers’ culture, this thesis, with its focus on categories and incorporation of ethnographic details, centres the language-culture connection. Given the importance of these elements with respect to an individual’s wellbeing, such foregrounding can be viewed as vital in linguistic studies with Indigenous people.

This dissertation described the actions that a group of young Murrinhpatha speakers use categories to pursue in interactions with peers, and attempted to maximise comparisons with existing research in the process. The resulting work shows that these eight individuals are, in many ways, ‘just’ children, similar to those from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds, at different ages. In many other ways, however, the children demonstrate behaviour that is highly unique to their sociocultural situation. This impresses the importance of examining children’s language use within, and in relation to, their cultural context. What this study also highlights is the value in listening to the little, everyday things that the littlest people of a society say. Now, just as Acacia ushered the reader into this dissertation by orienting to the category of Batman, so Tabitha leads us out with an utterance she produces when re-asserting her membership to the race category, *kardu thipmam*:

*bere ku kanamkek ngalla kanhithu wurrinidha  bere*

*Well, the giant rainbow serpent came here, to this place. The end.*

*(Tabitha 4;2)*
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Appendix I

Murrinhpatha kinship diagrams

Figure A-I.1 Simplified kinship chart for male ego
Figure A.1.2 Traditional Murrinhpatha kinship chart (with contemporary kinterm variants) for female ego. Adapted from Blythe (2018)
Figure A-I.3  Traditional Murrinhpatha kinship chart (with contemporary kinterm variants) for male ego. Adapted from Blythe (2018)
Appendix II

Examples of socialisation routines from the data

1. **Prompting with *thama*, 2s.SAY/DO**

In excerpt A-II.1, caregiver Deborah prompts her nephew, Terry (3), to assert his connection to a number of different *kardu thipmam* categories: *murrinh*, ‘name’, in line 1, *kangathi*, ‘mother’s country’, in line 8, and the general category of land, *da*, in line 12.

**Ex. (A-II.1)**

1 Deborah:  
murrinh ngay-ka Marang thama  
name 1SG-TOP man’s_name 2SG.SAY/DO  
*Say ‘my name is Marang’*

2  
(0.5)

3 Terry:  
murrinhka  
name

4 Deborah:  
<(Ma:ra:ng)> thama  
man’s_name 2SG.SAY/DO  
((exaggerated pronunciation))

5  
(0.2)

6 Terry:  
Marang  
*Marang*

7  
(0.8)

8 Deborah:  
kangathi ngay-ka <Na:ngu:> thama  
mothers_country 1SG-TOP place_name 2SG.SAY/DO  
*Say ‘my mother’s country is Nangu’*

9  
(1.4)

10 Terry:  
kangathi Nangu::  
*Mother’s country Nangu::*

11  
(0.4)

12 Deborah:  
da ngay-yu thama  
NC:PLACE 1SG-CTC 2SG.SAY/DO  
*Say ‘It’s my land’*

13  
(0.6)

14 Terry:  
da ngay-yu  
*My land*

As can be seen in the above excerpt, Terry struggles with reproducing some of the longer utterances that Deborah tries to elicit from him. Deborah’s simplified prompt in line 4 appears to work as a self-repair, after Terry’s partial production in line 3.

Caregivers also engage in this prompting routine in stages, building up to eliciting the full assertion of their connection to *kardu thipmam* categories. The following example shows caregiver Annunciata engaging her daughter, Casimira (2;10), in the routine. In line 1, Annunciata prompts Casimira to produce the totemic entity, *mamurt*, ‘noni fruit’. Only after this, in line 5, does Annunciata try to elicit from Casimira a full assertion of her connection to the category of totem.
Ex. (A-II.2)

1 Annunciata: mamurt thama Casimira
   noni_fruit 2SG.SAY/DO personal_name
   Say ‘noni fruit’, Casimira
(0.6)

2 (0.4)

3 Casimira: mamurt
   ((walks towards Annunciata, behind the camera))
   noni_fruit
(0.4)

4 Annunciata: ngakumarl ngay-ka mamurt thama
   totem 1SG-TOP NC:ANIM noni_fruit 2SG.SAY/DO
   Say ‘my totem is the noni fruit’
(0.4)

5 Annunciata: mamurt
   noni_fruit
(0.4)

2. Using thama as a discourse marker with preverbal infants

Excerpt A-II.3 shows Martha using thama as a discourse marker when speaking to her young daughter, Alice (0;7).

Ex. (A-II.3)

Martha:      kantri nhinhi kanhi Palyirr Thuykem (.) thama
   country 2.SG here place_name DM
   Your country is here, at Thuykem Hill, isn’t it
LAMP_20150323_LD_03_00:07:04.361

3. Elicitating via display questions

As seen in line one of excerpt A-II.4, Bernadette first prompts her daughter, Tabitha (3;0) to assert her membership to the category of ngakumarl, ‘totem’. Following Tabitha’s production of this information, Bernadette issues a display question in line 4 to test Tabitha’s knowledge of this content.

Ex. A-II.4

1 Bernadette: ngakumarl ngay-ka ku tek thama
   totem 1SG-TOP NC:ANIM red_tailed_black_cockatoo 2SG.SAY/DO
   Say ‘my totem is the red tailed black cockatoo’
2 Tabitha:  ngay-ka ngay-ka ngakumarl ngay-ka ku tek
   1SG-TOP 1SG-TOP totem 1SG-TOP NC:ANIM red_tailed_black_cockatoo
   My... my... my totem is the red tailed black cockatoo
   (1.3)
3 Bernadette: thangku ngakumarl nhinhi-yu
   what totem 2SG-CTC
   What’s your totem?
4 Bernadette: ku tek
   The red tailed black cockatoo
LAMP_20140313_LD_01_ 00:06:33.245
Here Bernadette appears to use a display question to check whether or not her daughter remembers the information she has just prompted her to repeat.

Excerpt A-II.5 shows a second example of a caregiver directin a display question to children. The caregiver in this excerpt is Bernadette, again, however on this occasion she is speaking to Tabitha (3;7) as well as Casimira (3;5). Rather than testing the girls on their own connections to the category, ngakumarl, ‘totem’, Bernadette poses a display question to quiz the girls about the category memberships of other people. After establishing that the creature flying above them is a pululu, ‘hawk’, Bernadette asks the children in line 9 who has a categorial connection to the totemic animal.

Ex. A-II.5

1 Bernadette: ngawu ngarra kalakkalak nebirl ngarra pangathu nebirl thangku mana
   *hey look at the clouds, look up there, look- what is it?*
2 (1.1)
3 Tabitha: kalakkalak
   *clouds*
4 (0.5)
5 Pearl: ku kem
   *There’s an animal!*
6 (1.0)
7 Pearl: hothon (.) murrurrbe
   *Hawthorn*, *A bird.*
8 (0.6)
9 Bernadette: pululu:: nangkal ngakumarl nigunu pululu-yu
   *ha-a::wk. Who (female) has the hawk for a totem?*
10 Casimira: [ngay]
   *me!*
11 Tabitha: [ngay]
   *me!*
12 (0.6)
13 Bernadette: wu-rda
   *no-o*       LAMP_20141001_LD_01_00:11:47.711

4. **Behaviour management routines**

*Invoking a spirit*

The first excerpt, A-II.6, sees caregiver Valerie call out to the old man spirit, ku ngalantharr, as one of her children, Daisy (2;6), starts to wanders away off. Valerie invokes the spirit so as to scare the child into coming back to her and her sisters.

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75 Pearl’s use of *hothon* relates to the football team, the Hawthorn Hawks. It demonstrates how closely tied totems and football teams are for most people.
Ex. A-II.6

1  Valerie: ku ngalantha::rr!
   Old man spirit:::it!

2 (2.4)

3. Valerie: ku ngalantha::rr!
   Old man spirit:::it!

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Announcing arrival of a spirit

The following excerpt, A-II.7, features caregiver Eleanor warning Acacia (3;0) of the impending arrival of the very same nonhuman character, the old man spirit, *ku nglantharr*. Eleanor produces the phrase *nhinta kurran*, ‘here he comes’, which is commonly used in this routine.

Ex. A-II.7

Eleanor: kanhithu ngawu ngalantharr ku ngalantharr murlak nhinta kurran
   Hey, the old man, the nasty old man spirit is coming. Here he comes!

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Threatening a spirit’s future behaviour

The final variation of behaviour management routine involves the caregiver articulating what the fearsome persona will do to the child if they do not stop behaving in a particular way. In the excerpt A-II.8 below, Alice (1;1) has begun to cry. Her mother, Martha, tries to encourage her to stop crying by warning her, in line 3, that is she continues to cry, the old woman spirit will take her away.

Ex. A-II.8

1  Martha: awu du pirda
   No, stop crying

2 (0.6) ((Alice continues to cry))

3  Martha: Alice Alice ngawu manhiberti-nukun [*** bere]matha
   Alice, Alice, hey she'll grab you and take you away for good

4  Judith: [ *** ]

5  Judith: neki kanhingu
   Over here, us two

6  Martha: nigunu () ku[nugunu kanhi- ka]napup
   Look, the old woman (spirit) lives here

7  Judith: [ kanhithu neki ]
   Come here, just the two of us

8  Judith: [ kanhi neki ]
   Here, the two of us

9  Martha: [mere le kani] () du-yu
   She doesn’t like crying

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Martha then validates her threat by explaining that the old woman spirit lives at their current location (line 6) and that she dislikes it when people cry (line 9).