Saying nothing: the language of joking relationships in Aboriginal Australia.

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the language of joking relationships in Aboriginal Australia with a special focus on the Eastern Kunwinjku language of western and central Arnhem Land. The main hypothesis is that joking relationship language as a discrete style of speech is a pragmatic index of the absence or renunciation of actual or potential affinity. It is argued that joking language also plays a phatic and sociable role in ratifying relationships. The form which joking relationship speech and interaction takes can be understood as the inversion of interactive norms observed between affinal kin who stand in relationships of constraint or 'avoidance'. Special constrained styles of marked speech and behaviour are used with actual affines but the joking style of speech is used with classificatory or 'fictive' affines with whom no actual affinal relationship obtains.

The theoretical perspective taken is in the vein of John Gumperz and the approach known as Interactional Sociolinguistics which seeks to analyse the totality of communicative signals both linguistic and paralinguistic used to convey meaning. There is great variance between the literal meaning of joking relationship language and the intended meaning which is reflected in some Aboriginal descriptions of joking relationship language as 'saying nothing'. That is, the literal meanings of joking relationship utterances are not the intended meanings and a variety of cues and shared background knowledge disambiguate the insults of joking interaction from those used in anger or serious abuse.
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Warning

This thesis contains examples of a style of speech (often involving explicit sexual material) which in Aboriginal societies is restricted to interaction between particular classes of kin. Caution should be exercised in reading out some of the examples of this speech as it may cause offence to some Aboriginal people, depending on the audience present.
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Chapter 1- Introduction.

1.1 Joking relationships in Aboriginal Australia.
Throughout Aboriginal Australia, certain classes of kin relate to each other with a conventional demeanour of joking, teasing and jocular obscenity. Similar kinds of behaviours exist in many cultures throughout the world, notably in Africa, North America, Melanesia and Polynesia. Another form of this behaviour known as 'the dozens' or 'sounding' has been described amongst urban African American youth (e.g. Labov 1972, Abrahams 1974) although this 'dialect of insults' (Dollard 1939) differs from the Australian Aboriginal form in that amongst other things, issues of kinship are not a consideration. The study of institutionalised 'joking relationships', as they have become known in the social anthropological literature, has its foundation in the work of Radcliffe-Brown whose essays 'On joking relationships' and 'A further note on joking relationships' (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 1949) prompted debate which continued for over thirty years.

For a behaviour which primarily manifests itself as verbal interaction, there are surprisingly few studies of joking relationships anywhere in the world, including Australia, which focus on the language of such relationships. Thomson's 1935 essay 'The joking relationship and organised obscenity in North Queensland' still remains as one of the most detailed social anthropological studies of the topic in Aboriginal Australia. Jackes' study of Wik Mungkan joking relationships (1967, 1969) is a social anthropological analysis which contrasts joking relationships in three societies; Manus in Papua New Guinea, a Bantu language speaking group in Zambia and the Wik Mungkan of Cape York Peninsula in Australia. The data on Wik Mungkan joking relationships in this study is drawn from Thomson's 1935 essay. Although often referred to as 'joking relationship language' (Thomson 1935, Sutton 1982), other references include 'light-hearted speech practices' (Goddard 1992), 'conventionalised' or 'formalised joking' (Malcolm 1982), 'light-hearted swearing and abuse' (McConvell 1982, 1988) and 'a kind of obscene verbal joking' (Haviland 1979). Tonkinson (1978: 62) describes joking relationships as involving 'rowdy exchanges of sexually explicit epithets and mock abuse, with much body contact, which amuse onlookers at least as much as the joking pair'.

A brief illustration of a very simple joking partner interaction involves the following actual exchange between two young men, both speakers of Eastern Kunwinjku, although speaker A initiates the conversation with an English greeting.

(1) [Context: Speaker B approached the house in front of which A, his joking partner was sitting early in the morning and suddenly came into view of A who greeted him in English. B uttered his response and kept walking showing no emotion.]

A: Good morning.
B: Yi-korn-badjan.
2sg-testicles-big
You’ve got big balls!
A: (laughter)

The apparently unprovoked use of swearing in the above example suggests some form of pragmatic dimension to the exchange, i.e. the speaker is achieving something beyond or other than the literal meaning of the utterance. The aim of a pragmatic analysis of joking relationships should be to explain the great variance between sentence meaning and speaker intentions. How can typical joking utterances be characterised as being 'relevant' to the conversation when the surface form of such utterances appear to be highly irrelevant to cooperative communication (Grice 1975)? Addressing this question will involve identifying aspects of the social meaning of joking relationship interaction which will require examining some of the background cultural knowledge which interactants share in conducting joking relationship interaction. Such cultural knowledge and shared assumptions provide a framework in which a process of inference allows highly relevant propositions to be retrieved from seemingly irrelevant ones

1.2 The characterisation of joking relationship language.
An ethnography of speaking approach which will be useful in part of the analysis in this thesis, will identify the Australian Aboriginal form of joking relationship language (hereafter JRL) as a speech style which only occurs between defined classes of kin. These defined classes of kin vary however amongst different
Aboriginal language groups throughout Australia. Most of the social anthropological literature on joking relationships consists of African case studies (e.g. Freedman 1977, Heald 1990, Rigby 1968) which largely focus on identifying generalisations about the social function of joking between both individuals and groups. Arguments such as those of Radcliffe-Brown's (1940, 1949) have centred on the validity or otherwise of explaining joking relationships as alliances between clans which develop in order to dissipate underlying hostility.

As a speech activity, JRL in Aboriginal Australia obviously has characteristics which perform social functions. This is the pragmatic dimension of joking speech. In achieving these social functions, JRL defines itself as a style of speech in opposition to another. As discussed in chapter 5 joking relationship language is a form of inversion of the speech behaviours and patterns used between kin in relationships of constraint. Speakers in joking exchanges therefore implicitly re-present another speech event in the metapragmatic sense of Silverstein (1993) and Lucy (1993). The analysis in this thesis characterises joking relationship language in Australia as a form of phatic communication consisting of a speech style employing an extensive use of irony. Joking relationship interaction is viewed as sociable behaviour which occurs only between classificatory affines. Such an analysis is necessarily interdisciplinary in that this is an examination of language use and utterance interpretation which is culturally and socially specific. Rhetorical strategies such as irony and forms of reflexive discourse vary from culture to culture requiring a theoretical grounding which takes into consideration the totality of the inferential process. One such approach which seeks to combine the linguistic, sociocultural and contextual elements of communication in actual conversational interaction is what Gumperz has termed Interactional Sociolinguistics (1982).

The examples of speech used in this thesis are drawn mostly from data which I have collected during the past eight years of association with Eastern Kunwinjku and Dangbon/Dalabon people of the Liverpool, Mann and Cadell Rivers districts of western and central Arnhem Land of the Northern Territory (see figure 1.1). This association has been by virtue of employment which for five years involved residing at various outstations or homeland centres where I recorded data by observing and participating in community life. Some of the data presented here
consists of joking partners engaged in actual joking exchanges, and other material includes interviews of senior Aboriginal people discussing their understanding of the use of JRL. Eastern Kunwinjku dialects (Kuninjku and Kune) are the primary case study languages throughout this thesis. Other languages mentioned and their locations are listed in figure 1.2.

1.3 Terminology
A distinction needs to be made between the swearing used in joking relationships and the swearing of anger and intentional insult. This distinction has been discussed by Langton (1983) who notes that serious swearing in Aboriginal societies plays an important role in the processing of disputes. The swearing of joking relationships is unrelated to this function and paradoxically has more to do with the creation and maintenance of amity.

In addition to the term 'joking relationship' other terminology such as 'teasing relationship' (Howell 1973) and as mentioned above, 'light-hearted speech practices' (Goddard 1992) can be found in the literature. Goddard's latter term, used in description of Yankunytjatjara ways of speaking, is a more inclusive term which in addition to institutionalised joking relationships includes any speech involving humour and relaxation of constrained forms of language. This thesis is concerned with the language of the institutionalised joking relationship as prescribed for interaction between certain kin categories. The use of the term 'joking' does not include the performance style 'narrative and punch line' form of joking so common in European cultures. Aboriginal joking relationship language is certainly light-hearted and does involve teasing or perhaps more accurately 'joshing'. This speech practice involves ironic insults with no intent to cause offense or serious argument but rather to create humour. In a culture where great emphasis is placed on sociability and kinship, humour has become an important obligatory aspect of the way that certain groups of people interact.

1.4 Summary of thesis arguments.
Radcliffe-Brown describes the joking relationship as:

...a relation between two persons in which one is by custom permitted, and in some instances required, to tease or make fun of the other, who in turn is required to take no offence (1952:90)
Figure 1.1: Outstations/homeland centres and language groups in the Central Arnhem Land region.
Figure 1.2: Languages mentioned and their locations.

1. Kunwinjku/Mayali dialects
2. Dalabon
3. Burarra
4. Yankunytjatjara
5. 'Mardu'
6. Gurindji
7. Wik Mungkan
8. Kuuku Yala
9. Guugu Yimithirr
10. Umpila
11. Tjungundji
12. Ngayarda group (includes Martuthunira)
13. Gija
14. Miriwoong
15. Mangarrayi
16. Tiwi
Such teasing consists of unrestricted language which allows a speaker to 'take liberties' with his joking partner so that what develops is humorous 'disrespect' (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:16, 21). Radcliffe-Brown notes that effectively, any analysis of such behaviour 'must be part of, or consistent with, a theory of the place of respect in social relations and in social life generally' (1952:91). To this end I will discuss the language of joking relationships in terms of opposition to the language of relationships characterised by respect, avoidance and constraint. Such an approach will also include ways in which Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness (1978, 1987) might be relevant to joking relationships.

My main hypothesis is that speakers in joking relationships use the inversion of constrained behaviours to index pragmatically the absence or renunciation of actual affinity. The humour created by such inversion serves to ratify relationships between those classed as classificatory or 'fictive' affines who it is expected will not become actual affines. The class of kin a person can call affinal in Aboriginal societies depends on the rules for preferred marriages in each group. Usually, a spouse is also a relative belonging to a particular class (e.g. MMBDC). Actual consanguineal kin in the preferred class are often not marriageable. Classificatory members of such a class are usually the preferred spouse whilst a third class consists of other classificatory affines with whom no actual relationship of affinity will develop (or is expected not to develop). Joking relationships occur between those in this third class, the fictive affines.

AVOIDANCE AND JOKING

Studies of Aboriginal 'ways of speaking' have tended to focus on the language of avoidance relationships and the special language registers sometimes associated with these relationships (e.g. Dixon 1972, 1980, 1990, Haviland 1979, Harris 1970, Rumsey 1982, McConvell 1982). There have been good reasons for such focus as special avoidance registers such as for example Kunwinjku Kunbalak, Dyirbal Jalnguy or Bunaba Gun-gunma can reveal much about pragmatic functions, the organisation of semantic domains and even language change (see for example Johnson 1990). Such interest in avoidance relationships however, has tended to result in joking relationships being ignored or referred to briefly as relatively insignificant or of little consequence.

JRL is in some respects the antithesis of the constrained speech of avoidance
relationships. I will show how a range of prohibited linguistic forms and speech behaviours associated with avoidance relationships are allowed and in fact must be used in joking relationships. That which is taboo in one context is exploited in another. Behaviours deemed inappropriate in avoidance relationships become the appropriate manners in joking relationships. Both avoidance speech practices and JRL however, relate to issues of affinity although there is variation throughout Australia in the categories of affines which are the focus of the prescribed behaviours. Generally, most relationships between genealogically close adult kin, at least in many Arnhem Land groups, are characterised by various forms of behaviour marked by respect, restraint or avoidance. The existence of joking relationships can be seen as a balance to the rigours of restrained behaviour.

Kin who are regarded as actual affines and treated 'respectfully', and classificatory affines who are joking partners are in some respects viewed by the Eastern Kunwinjku as sharing some form of structural similarity. There are a number of areas of evidence for this such as kinship and speech style terminology which are discussed in detail in chapter 4.

THE KIN BEHAVIOUR CONTINUUM

The relationships between different ways of speaking in Aboriginal kin systems have widely been described in terms of a continuum with special avoidance registers of constrained speech at one end and the apparently unrestricted or 'familiar' speech behaviours of institutionalised joking relationships at the other (e.g. Dixon 1980:60, Rumsey 1982:160, Tonkinson 1978:62, Goddard 1986, 1992, McConvell 1982). My argument here is that the continuum model holds good in so far as it compares a variety of different ways of speaking depending on the relationships between interlocutors. However, it has two major shortcomings. Firstly, it polarises the two extremes at the surface level but does not explain any relationship between them or explain how the polarisation can occur. Sutton (1982:187) argues that joking relationships are consistent with his 'generality principle' ('the more formality and circumspection with which one speaks, the more general will be the scope of the terms used for people' (1982: 187)) in that they are as obligatory and bounded by formal rules of usage as much as avoidance behaviours are. At the same time, the language of joking relationships involves
the inverse of the principles which are central to 'generality' and thus become behaviours of 'specificity'. This does not mean that the generality principle falls down in joking relationships but rather, joking relationships are defined in opposition to generality or in one sense are a reaction against it. The humour of joking relationships is based on the pleasure derived from a context where it is possible to deliberately flout norms which apply in most other interactions with relatives.

The second inadequacy of the continuum analogy has been recognised and discussed by Goddard (1992): it requires continuous reference to terms such as 'avoidance, restraint, intimacy, familiarity, solidarity' and the like, which have drawbacks. These terms are important as a starting point in describing how kin relationships in Aboriginal Australia are characterised but their usage runs the risk of ethnocentric connotations which may not be part of the Aboriginal concept of the relationship. The brevity of single terms such as the above to describe characteristics of complex relationships is also a difficulty. Goddard's solution to this problem is the use of Natural Semantic Metalanguage, a reductionist paraphrase as developed by Wierzbicka (1991, 1992) based on a set of semantic primitives which constitute the metalanguage. Using NSM formulations, Goddard constructs characterisations of both avoidance and light-hearted speech styles in an attempt to capture the essence and metamessages of both speech practices. Although quite useful in cross-cultural description of speech event types, NSM has also been criticised for creating 'syllogisticoid' reductions which in their universalizing 'pare away the real meanings' (Friedrich 1995:113).

THE INTERPRETATION OF JOKING RELATIONSHIP UTTERANCES.
The theoretical discussion in this thesis falls into two main areas. The first concerns the sociocultural knowledge involved in the interpretation of JRL. The second relates to the problems of variance between sentence meaning and speaker intentions in JRL. Discussion of the pragmatic solutions to problems of the latter question commences with the relevance of speech act theory to JRL (Austin 1962, Searle 1965, 1975). The question here is: in using JRL, what are speakers setting out to achieve; that is, what is the illocutionary force (Searle 1965, 1975) of JRL? If JRL uses ironic insults as a sociable and phatic ratification of a
particular kind of kinship relationship, what are the main features of this particular speech style?

An essential element (or in speech act theory terminology 'felicity condition' (Austin 1962, Searle 1965)) in joking exchanges is that the proposition expressed in a joking utterance must not be true and that both speaker and hearer have mutual knowledge of this fact. This raises questions of inferential processes in utterance interpretation. If the literal meaning of the joking utterances are not the speaker's intended meaning, then there are implicatures involved. Grice's discussion of cooperative communication (1975) when applied to JRL requires bold violation of his maxims of cooperative communication and yet, the cooperative nature of JRL seems to exclude it from Grice's mode of non-bona-fide communication which is designed as a category for other non-cooperative violations of the maxims such as deliberate deception. Many of the stylistic techniques involved in humour are similar to other forms of communication which are intended to flout the principles of cooperative communication. Raskin (1985:104), in an attempt to extend the Gricean model proposes the non-bona-fide-cum-humor mode of communication to separately accommodate joking language. Others have noticed that this 'humour mode of communication' also shares similarities with techniques which involve the use of non-humorous off-record face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson 1978). Zajdman (1995:330) lists some of these techniques:

- Hinting, presupposing, understating, overstating, tautology, irony, metaphors,
- ambiguities, contradictions, rhetorical questions, vagueness, incompleteness,
- overgeneralization, and use of ellipsis.

JRL on the literal surface appears to be face-threatening, but the intended meaning is humorous. Some of the above techniques can be identified in some of the examples of JRL given in following chapters.

JRL is heavily embedded in culturally specific shared background knowledge. Consider the brief joking exchange illustrated in (1) above by a speaker's greeting receiving an apparently insulting retort which in turn was treated as humor. In chapter 2 I discuss the role of a special form of irony in creating humour in joking
relationship interaction. Irony in JRL does not mean saying one thing and meaning the opposite. This would lead to irrelevant absurdity. Sperber and Wilson (1986:237-243) have shown how irony can be viewed in other ways apart from antonymy. This involves an analysis of irony in terms of echoic interpretation. The irony of JRL echoes the norms (albeit negatively) of socially correct ways of speaking to affines. Within a special context, the context of interaction between a certain class of classificatory affines, it is allowable to invert the norms of respectful behaviour and make fun of such norms.

JRL represents an example of propositions not expressed by the utterance itself but embedded into what Blakemore describes as a ‘higher-level description of the speaker’s attitude towards the expressed proposition’ (1992:61). In the examples of JRL given in this thesis, the attitudes expressed towards propositions via ironic echoing are also expressed by accompanying paralinguistic cues such as intonation and prosodic elements, and non-verbal behaviour such as facial expressions, hand signals and laughter. Such cues serve to negate the literal effect of the face threatening acts of typical joking relationship interaction. All of these elements in certain contexts will set up frames for both the launching and identification of JRL exchanges. These paralinguistic features are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

THE OPPOSITION OF CONSTRAINT AND JOKING.

Joking relationship speech events are heavily characterised by inversion of behaviours normal in constrained relationships. Raskin’s notion of script opposition (1985:107) is useful in describing this inversion. A script in this sense is ‘a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word [or topic] or evoked by it’ (Raskin 1985:81). The text of a joking exchange must contain two different scripts which must be in opposition to each other. This opposition as Raskin has shown (1985) is a feature of most humour. Some of these script oppositions in joking relationships involve the following:

(3) appropriate speech with affines vs inappropriate speech with affines
talk with circumspection vs talk directly
avoid sexually explicit topics vs concentrate on sexual reference
avoid bodily function topics vs concentrate on bodily function topics
The analysis of JRL examples in following chapters will show how these script oppositions have become conventionalised markers which with other elements combine to form familiar characteristics which can lead to instant identification of a joking frame. Joking relationship frames are also characterised by certain cooccurrence features or contextualisation cues (Gumperz 1982:131) which extends the participation to those Goffman (1981) would label as 'overhearers'. With the realisation that a joking utterance has been launched against a relative, overhearers will use a set of interjections which I describe as sympathy response cries (after Goffman 1981:136). These interjections pragmatically mark social deixis (Evans 1992) but also have a dimension to them which reflects the overhearer's ostensible but light-hearted shock at hearing a relative the butt of an ironic insult.

OUTLINE OF FOLLOWING CHAPTERS
Chapter 2 is a theoretical perspective on the language of joking interaction and examines the relationship between utterances and cultural knowledge and the pragmatics of joking relationship language. In chapter 3, I survey the literature on joking relationships in Australia and attempt to make some generalisations about the classes of kin with whom a person can joke. The diversity of joking kin classes show that joking can occur in same, adjacent and alternate generations, but the most common type and intense form of joking occurs between grandkin. Grandkin do not initially appear to be typical affines, but as it is grandkin who often make marriage bestowal arrangements or are the bestowers of mothers-in-law, their status within a wider class of affines becomes evident.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine joking relationships amongst the Eastern Kunwinjku of Arnhem Land. In chapter 4 I discuss the Eastern Kunwinjku kinship system and the terms used for joking and joking relationships which reveal that joking relationships are also considered affinal. Chapter 5 discusses the structure of Eastern Kunwinjku joking discourse and the various conventions, both linguistic and extra-linguistic, which mark joking interaction. A comparison between the manner of speaking and behaviour with actual affines and with joking relationship partners is examined in support of the hypothesis that joking
relationships are the behavioural inverse of relationships with 'avoidance' kin. Chapter 6 contains a summary of the elements of a well-formed joking relationship speech event and based on these I make conclusions about the stylistic features of joking relationship language and its social meaning.
2.1 Introduction

Joking relationship language (hereafter JRL in this chapter) as a special institutionalised form of speech behaviour is usually referred to in the literature in terms of its social significance in kinship structure. Very few studies actually refer to examples of language usage and as far as I am aware, there is little discussion of any linguistic theoretical framework for considering the form and use of joking relationship language. Some exceptions include McConvell’s (1982) discussion of the place of joking relationships in the wider kinship system of the Gurindji and Goddard’s (1992) application of reductive paraphrase, known as Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), to examples of ‘light-hearted speech’ amongst the Yankunytjatjara of the Western Desert. This chapter deals with theoretical approaches to the language of joking relationships which focus on both cultural knowledge in conversation and pragmatic aspects of joking speech interpretation.

The inferential process of understanding joking relationship speech must take into account the stylistic features of JRL, social and cultural considerations, and the pragmatic and rhetorical strategies used in face to face interaction. Expecting to find an existing theoretical framework which would be able to consider all these elements would be an extreme act of optimism. The current range of theories in the field of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology which are relevant to analysing the ‘total signalling process’ as Gumperz calls it (1982:4), tend to each focus on one aspect of this process and yet, despite advances in theoretical understanding of the diverse aspects of language use, Gumperz (1982:4) notes:

...‘we are still far from a general theory of verbal communication which integrates what we know about grammar, culture and interactive conventions into a single overall framework of concepts and analytical procedures.’

In the following discussion, I take an interactional sociolinguistic approach which considers both sociocultural dimensions of JRL and linguistic pragmatic approaches which deal with issues such as speech acts, inference, reflexive language, politeness and rhetorical strategies such as irony.
2. 2 The sociocultural context.

JRL AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE.

An understanding of the cultural knowledge which gives rise to and maintains joking relationships obviously underlies the use of JRL. The background knowledge that participants in conversation share, and attitudes based on previous experience, influence the way people speak to each other within particular contexts or speech events. Describing only the linguistic form of utterances in a joking relationship exchange will not give a total picture of, for example, the beliefs and attitudes of a speaker which influence the choice of linguistic form and what the speaker might be attempting to achieve through such choice. Communicative competence involves more than knowledge of grammatical rules and JRL is not particularly marked by special grammatical constructions. Certainly there are 'formulae' for proper joking relationship interaction, but the focus is more on content rather than form, and knowing with whom and on which occasions to use this particular style of speaking.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING AND INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS.

Ethnography of speaking is an analytical framework which emphasises the importance of the sociocultural context of language use. Duranti (1988: 212-3) identifies the following concerns in this regard:

...ethnographers of speaking have been concerned with the work done by and through language in (1) establishing, challenging, and recreating social identities and social relationships, (2) explaining to others as well as ourselves why the world is the way it is and what could or should be done to change it; (3) providing frames for events at the societal as well as individual level; (4) breaking, or more often sustaining, physical, political, and cultural barriers.

Duranti's first point here is relevant to the use of joking language in that its use is an expression of two individuals' choice about what kind of social relationship they place themselves in. Two people in a joking relationship constantly use the same kind of humorous strategy of jocular insults and teasing as a means of maintaining the recognition of the joking relationship. The content of the speech is very much the same on each encounter, but such a well-worn demeanour continually 'recreates' the relationship. In this respect, JRL is a 'sociable' activity in the sense of Schiffrin (1984) who describes non-serious 'sociable argument' in
Jewish American communities as a form of interaction engaged in as an end in itself and where the issues being argued are of no consequence. Joking relationship conversations are similar in that participants engage in the activity in order to enjoy the humour generated which in turn performs the social function of ratifying the relationship between joking partners. Initially it may appear improbable that the intense exchanges of obscenities and insulting remarks could possibly ratify a relationship. JRL however is not 'sociable argument' as Schiffrin describes. The non-serious nature of the activity and the notion of cooperativeness both lie much closer to the surface than they do in Schiffrin's 'sociable argument'. Evidence of this lies in the nature of the subject matter of joking exchanges which often is so ridiculous and obviously humorous that both participants share mutual knowledge of the metamessage that 'this is play'.

This social function of relationship ratification is extended beyond the participant roles or footings (Goffman 1981) of speaker and addressee. Exchanges of joking speech primarily concern the pair of participants who are joking partners. It is inevitable though that others overhear the exchange and there exists conventionalised verbal responses which are obligatory for overhearers. These are a special set of interjections which I have described above as 'sympathy response cries'. These are examined in more detail in chapter 5 but for the present, the point is that they reveal that the joking interaction speech event not only involves the two main interlocutors but it is also a demonstration to others of the existing relationship chosen by joking partners. The resulting humour of ribald joking duels is enjoyed not just by the participants but by all present as Thomson (1935: 475) was informed:

'the joking relationship induces a state of ritual well-being; in the words of the natives themselves it "makes everybody happy."'

In addition to announcing the ratification of relationships to all addressees and overhearers, choice of speech style can have powerful pragmatic force in Aboriginal society as Berndt and Berndt observed amongst the Kunwinjku:

A man may urge his close sister's daughter's daughter, his gagag [kakkak], 'Don't give your daughter to anyone but my son. It's not right to give her to someone who doesn't
talk gungurng [kunkurrng] to you, but only talks openly' (that is, in non-restricted language).

Likewise for the Kunwinjku, at least as an ideal, a man and his nakurrng [MMBS], who may also be his joking partner, would never fight or argue. Their bond of friendship and solidarity has been forged through constant exchanges of humorous and friendly verbal interaction. It is said that only a man's nakurrng may retrieve him from a fight or argument and calm him down. A fuller description of the nature of this relationship and the kin term -kurrng as in kun-kurrng 'constrained speech register' and na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng 'MMBS/MMBD' will be taken up in chapter 4.

The above examples also illustrate the connection between individual interaction and the social context of the kinship institutions in which such speech occurs. This is an important element in interactional sociolinguistics, an approach which as in Duranti's third point above, focuses on the creation of frames on the societal and individual level. Schiffrin (1994) discusses interactional sociolinguistics in terms of language being a system of symbols, the construct of cultural and social knowledge. This system of symbols used in conversational interaction reflects meaning on two scales; the macro-level which relates to the identity of the larger social group in relation to other groups and the micro-level, referring to what an individual does and says at any one time (Schiffrin 1994:102). In any joking language exchange, there will be a variety of cues given which will contribute to the setting up of a frame for a joking exchange (Goffman 1974, Gumperz 1982:21-2). For example, the physical proximity of two people in a joking relationship may set off the joking frame by default and certain topics of conversation and activities may provide a launching pad for the typical topics of joking language. The development of the joking frame and the maintenance of involvement in the conversation is via use of what Gumperz calls 'contextualisation cues'.

In joking relationship exchanges where there is no clear literal message being communicated, isolating contextualisation cues and suprasegmental features of speech such as formulaic constructions, intonation and other prosodic elements is an important step which leads to an understanding of the processes involved in conversational inference. The literal sentence meaning of a joking exchange
(i.e. swearing and insulting language) will be interpreted next to features which a listener knows are 'representative of socio-culturally familiar activities' (Gumperz 1982:162) which should allow the hearer to disambiguate serious anger from play. An interactional sociolinguistic approach to JRL will take into consideration the background knowledge joking partners will share, the acceptable topics used within teasing exchanges, the formulaic constructions which are always present in a joking exchange, the intonation used which, for example, might mark a speaker's distance from his humorous insults and so on. All of these components will construct 'co-occurrence expectations' which 'enable us to associate styles of speaking with contextual presuppositions' (Gumperz 1982:162).

The sum total of contextualisation cues combine to create an interpretive discourse 'frame' (Goffman 1974) within which meaning is interpreted. The 'play frame' (Norrick 1994: 410, Raskin 1985:35, Bateson 1972) of JRL, once it is established, requires hearers to reject the literal meaning of the verbal abuse and recover the pre-existing text of the conventional joking relationship. The play frame of Aboriginal joking relationship exchanges relies very much on irony as a strategy. Whilst some analyses of irony involve the rejection of the literal meaning in favour of 'something like its negation' (Norrick 1994: 411, Giora 1995), the irony of JRL involves making utterances that are an inversion of what would be appropriate in most other contexts. In joking relationships the usual conditions for actual affinity do not obtain and therefore to feign hostility will not cause offence but rather be interpreted as humour. Most analyses of irony involve identifying speakers as making utterances which are intentionally inappropriate to the situation, but in many cases so wildly inappropriate as to create humour. The importance of irony in JRL is discussed further in the following section on pragmatics.

Frames set up on the individual level, are related to Duranti's fourth point above (breaking or sustaining physical, political and cultural barriers), in that it is possible for someone to manipulate normative joking behaviour to create or modify a joking relationship or to use such a relationship for some kind of personal advantage. This might include for example, advantage in issues of affinity and bestowal of a spouse, or use of humour in order to avoid the face-
threatening acts involved in making requests. To determine how such manipulation of normative joking behaviour occurs, the creation of meaning in actual conversational interaction needs to be observed. That which is recognised as normative speech behaviour between certain classes of kin is not necessarily a fixed obligation. As relationships between individuals change, so does the language used and such changes in language may be used to express an intention to modify a relationship. Hiatt notes the changes in address terms used amongst the Burarra people of Northern Arnhem Land under changed circumstances relating to relationships of affinity:

A man who had not received a wife from a woman he called jabur [bestower of wife] might begin to address her as mununa [MM] when she passed child-bearing age; or he might change terms earlier to indicate resentment if he felt she had evaded her obligations (Hiatt 1965:50-1).

In a similar fashion, McConvell (1982:97-98) in discussing the joking relationship amongst the Gurindji, notes that the use of joking language and light-hearted swearing, usual between a man and his uncle (MB) in a potential relationship of affinity, is no longer continued once such a potential relationship becomes an actual relationship of affinity and the sister's son (ZS) has become a bestower of a wife. A theory which can therefore deal with actual language use and the expression of intentions through interaction is what is needed to consider examples such as these. Gumperz recognises this theoretical requirement:

There is a need for a sociolinguistic theory which accounts for the communicative functions of linguistic variability and for its relation to speakers' goals without reference to untestable functionalist assumptions about conformity or nonconformance to closed systems of norms. Since speaking is interacting, such a theory must ultimately draw its basic postulates from what we know about interaction (1982:29).

2.3 Other pragmatics approaches.

SPEECH ACT THEORY AND IMPLICATURE.

If the ethnography of speaking approach focuses on the socio-cultural context of language use, there is still a need to examine the logic of the linguistic form of JRL. One of the most important linguistic aspects of JRL is the relationship between sentence meaning and the intended utterance meaning. JRL, even with its use of swearing, insults and deprecatory language is not designed to cause
offence and it is interpreted accordingly. What is needed therefore, is some kind of pragmatic theory which can explain this.

Defining pragmatics has caused considerable difficulty for pragmatics theorists. No single all-encompassing definition has been satisfactorily accepted so far but Levinson (1983:32) notes that:

> The most promising are the definitions that equate pragmatics with 'meaning minus semantics', or with a theory of language understanding that takes context into account, in order to complement the contribution that semantics makes to meaning.

The literal sentence meaning (or semantic meaning) of typical joking relationship utterances carry little of the 'meaning' as Levinson defines it above. Indeed some Aboriginal languages describe joking relationship interaction as 'saying nothing' (Haviland 1979:382) which suggests that pragmatics plays an important role in the interpretation of JRL.

Speech act theory characterises utterances as capable of expressing both propositions and the performance of actions. This element of action (or the 'illocutionary force' as speech act theory identifies it (Searle 1965)), are in some classes of utterance encoded directly into the conventional structure of the sentence (e.g. I promise to do action X). There are other forms which make the performative implicit but with JRL however there appears to be no indirect illocutionary act associated with institutionalised joking relationship utterances (at least in the same manner that when someone says 'Can you close the door?' they are using a question to perform a request). In the case of JRL, there is no future performative, but rather the actual involvement alone of participants in a joking exchange instantiates the performative of the joking relationship speech act. The perlocutionary effect on the hearer of a joking relationship utterance is also a focus of JRL. The use of humour contributes to the ratification of relationships as discussed above. Ratifying the relationship between joking partners and creating phatic communication or channel maintenance is a possible illocutionary act of JRL but such ratification is not an explicit performative suggesting a metalinguistic dimension to the activity.
INFERENCE

The establishing of a 'play or joking frame' is what leads hearers to abandon the literal meanings of joking utterances and search for another meaning using the information available in context. The most widely accepted explanation for this inferential process is based on Grice's notion that participants in conversation do not usually set out to be untruthful or irrelevant. Should such a situation appear to be the case, a hearer can assume that another meaning other than the literal one is being communicated. Such implicature is recovered with reference to Grice's maxims of conversational cooperation concerning quantity, quality, relation and manner. Together these maxims combine in Grice's cooperative principle of communication as follows:

Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (1975:67).

The process of recovering such implicature is, as Grice describes using the following arguments:

a. He has said that p.
b. There is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims.
c. He could not be doing this unless he thought that q.
d. He knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that q is required.
e. He has done nothing to stop me thinking q.
f. He intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that q.
g. And so, he has implicated that q. (Grice 1975:50)

In the JRL situation, p is one (or more) of a set of offensive terms such as swearing or insulting language. q is the use of these offensive terms as joking relationship language which is intended as humour and not intentional insult. The crucial step for consideration here is the derivation of (c) which the above formulation does not explain. The recovery of q is what Grice calls conversational implicature and this is based on a reconciliation of p with the cooperative principle. Both joking and deceit are classed as non-bona-fide modes of communication. Joking relationship utterances do not conform to Grice's maxim of quality and they often appear to violate the maxims of relation and truth as in (1) for example. One of the conditions of a felicitous joking relationship utterance is that the proposition(s) expressed in p must not be true. But this does not mean
that joking language is therefore not a cooperative activity. The non-truth value of joking language propositions is overt, unlike with lying, when the violation of the truth maxim is covert.

Assuming that the cooperative principle is being observed will require the hearer of a joking utterance to reconcile the literal meaning with the hearer's understanding of the intention of the speaker. This triggers the inferential process which will not only draw on this process of natural logic but will also include all the interactive contextualisation cues (including background cultural knowledge) and co-occurrence features including extra-linguistic cues which assist in the recovery of meaning in a specific context.

INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS AND IRONY.

One pragmatic means of inference which requires attention here is the use of indirect speech acts. These involve the use of one speech act in order to mean another. For example to convey the meaning involved in the imperative 'Close the door!', Levinson (1983:264) gives the following indirect forms which effectively use questions to make a request:

- Can you close the door?
- Would you mind closing the door
- Hadn't you better close the door?

Although JRL can be described as 'indirect', Searle's description of indirect speech acts (1975) does not explain the communication involved in JRL. The semantic content of typical joking speech has little in common with the intended speaker meaning, unlike in the examples of the indirect speech acts given above.

Sentence meaning in joking relationship conversation is such a radical breach of Grice's cooperative principles, that it suggests some strategy other than an indirect speech act. My proposal is that JRL consists of the exploitation of conventional rules and expectations for speech styles used in relationships of respect or 'avoidance'. The result is ironic utterances.

If indirect speech acts are used to minimise face-threatening acts, for example when making a request or some other similar speech act, then why use irony to ratify relationships as joking partners do? Answering this question will involve
examining further issues in pragmatics such as politeness and rhetorical strategies. As far as irony is concerned there are a number of pragmatic and psychological theories which suggest explanations of how irony operates in communication. The 'traditional' view (e.g. Searle 1982) of irony is explained as follows:

...the mechanism by which irony works is that the utterance, if taken literally, is obviously inappropriate to the situation. Since it is grossly inappropriate, the hearer is compelled to reinterpret it in such a way as to render it appropriate, and the most natural way to interpret it is as meaning the opposite of its literal form (1982/1991:536).

This is still however, not accurate in describing the irony of JRL. The opposite literal meaning of a joking or teasing sentence is not the intended meaning, because this would make no sense. A speaker saying his joking partner has for example a big 'body part X' does not mean that he has a small 'body part X'! But the opposite perlocutionary effect is intended i.e. to not create offence. Searle notes that the above statement (quoted) is not the 'whole story about irony' and that 'cultures and subcultures vary enormously in the extent and degree of the linguistic and extralinguistic cues provided for ironic utterances' (1982/1991:536).

JRL involves the speaker wanting to convey a meaning other than that of the literal sense of the utterance. There is no intention to offend the addressee even though in different contexts, typical insults of joking language could cause such offence. Conversational implicature via an indirect speech act is used to convey a meaning in addition to the literal sense (Sperber and Wilson 1981/1991:552) which is not the case in JRL. If the irony of JRL does not involve meaning the opposite of the literal sense, how then does it operate in joking relationship speech? Some other theoretical explanation is needed for the case of joking utterances.

In addition to the traditional view as above, a number of other theories of irony continue to be debated in the literature. Two which have some relevance to JRL are Pretense theory and Echoic Mention theory. The pretense view of irony (Clark and Gerrig 1984) is a further development of Grice's view that irony involves a speaker pretending to use a proposition and at the same time, the speaker conveys a 'derogatory judgment or a feeling such as indignation or contempt'
(Grice 1978:124) towards such a proposition and the person the ironist pretends to be. However, the ironist intends his audience to uncover the pretense without actually making such an intention explicit. These however are still not quite the kind of attitudes conveyed in JRL.

The echoic mention theory of irony (Sperber and Wilson 1981, Sperber 1984, Blakemore 1992:164-170) is very similar to the pretense view but the focus is on the attitude a speaker has to the incongruity created by the irony. This attitude echoes some other speech, idea or concept.

In the case of joking relationships, an attitude of *'normally this is outrageous and inappropriate'* is directed towards both:
1. the act of ostensibly breaking the norms of otherwise proper kinship behaviour, and
2. the person the ironist pretends to be, who is expressing such ostensible 'inappropriate' utterances.

Of course, in the context of speaking with a person who is a classificatory affine, this seemingly inappropriate way of speaking paradoxically becomes the correct way of speaking. Within echoic mention theory, irony is to 'bring to mind' the meaning of the literal sense but not be committed to it.

These cases of mention are interpreted as echoing a remark or opinion that the speaker wants to characterise as ludicrously inappropriate or irrelevant (Sperber and Wilson p.559).

JRL has this element of *ostensible* inappropriateness, ludicrousness and irrelevance. In addition it is not merely individual remarks which are marked by this form of irony but a complete style of speaking and manner of behaviour. Consider the following joking exchange:

(3) Further joking partner 'greetings'.
[Context: Speaker A, as a passenger in a car, arrives at the front of the house where his joking partner B (his classificatory MMBS) is standing on the front verandah. 'A' asks a group of people if they know the whereabouts of A's brother. A and someone in the group have a brief conversation. A then looks at B (who is an overhearer to the previous conversation), and utters his verbal assault. B responds]
with a vulgar hand signal which involves poking an extended index finger (see figure 4.5 in chapter 4). The car in which A is a passenger then drives off.]

A: Yi-ngarreyabo:k [sing song tone, last vowel lengthened abnormally and vowel quality is changed by further closure]

2sg-'get fucked'

Get fucking!

B: [sign language meaning the same as A's utterance- index figure extended 90° to other fingers and pointed towards A]

The outrageous insults of joking relationships create humour by expressing an attitude to norms of language use amongst certain classes of kin. Such an attitude echoes or mentions the social norms of the rule; 'speak to affines using constrained speech and be circumspect in your behaviour with them'. Avoidance or respectful behaviour in this context is the basic standard from which joking speech and behaviour is derived. Propriety, politeness and respect for the class of kin who provide a spouse is a basic standard in most cultures. Joking language also conjures up a ludicrous degree of failure to observe such otherwise appropriate rules of propriety when speaking with relatives in the affine class. The flouting of the rules for correct behaviour is incongruous with their proper usage, with such a pretended breach of propriety only possible in a different context, the context of fictive affinity. By pretending to fight or exchange insults, joking ironists create seemingly inappropriate behaviour, an important element in irony. The attitude they direct towards this echoes the social norms as above.

Echoic mention in JRL reflects attitudes about standards of behaviour which are commonly treated in this manner in many cultures.

Standards or rules of behaviour are culturally defined, commonly known, and frequently invoked; they are thus always available for echoic mention' (Sperber and Wilson 1981/1991:559).

In the case of JRL, this expression of an attitude as ironic echoing is heavily socially embedded in a culturally specific context. A similar analysis is taken by Brown (1995: 156) for ironic expressions used by the Tzeltal of southern Mexico. In this language, ironies are used extensively as part of 'evaluative discourse'
including 'verbal play (joking, mockery, banter)'

Tzeltal ironic expressions lend themselves to a Sperber and Wilson (1982) type of treatment, which views irony (and loosely ironical utterance types) as echoic mention. All these sorts of 'figures of speech' are seen as essentially 'echoing' or more loosely evoking a proposition which is placed in the context to be laughed at, scorned, or whatever, in order for an attitude to be conveyed towards it.

JRL AS REFLEXIVE LANGUAGE.
I have mentioned above the metalinguistic aspect of the joking relationship speech event and have described joking language as being defined in opposition to the language used by kin in relationships of constraint or 'avoidance'. Of course, the joking style of speaking is not a form of reported speech either direct or indirect. Reflexive language such as direct or indirect reporting is what Lucy describes as 'overt reference to language regularities and reports of particular speech events' (1993:10). The joking style of speech is therefore in its indirectness a covert reference to another speech style, that of the respectful styles of speaking which in turn are contrasted with 'normal speech'. Such use of reflexivity is in itself a signal or in Bateson's terminology, a 'metacommunicative message' (1972) which in the case of joking style 'frames' the speech event as one to be interpreted in a particular way. Bateson also undertook a psychological study of 'play frames' which he notes contain 'metacommunicative messages' which signal that:

These actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions for which they stand would denote. (Bateson, 1972: 180).

As a speech style which is a reaction (i.e. the inverse) to the regularities of another speech style, joking relationship language is metapragmatic discourse. It is a manner of speaking which is derived from another manner of speaking utilising what Silverstein calls 'metapragmatic indexicality' (1993:47) which is a form of implicit metapragmatic sign-functioning as opposed to the more explicit forms of directly or indirectly reported speech. Joking relationship speech presupposes the existence of another 'event-framework of a particular sort' (p.47); the speech event of interaction between kin in relationships of constraint. The various indexical signs of joking interaction, e.g. the social relationship between interlocutors, the use of humorous verbal duelling, the use of sympathy response
cries and so on all 'signal something about the structure of events of indexical signaling, the event-framework'. Indexicals or contextualisation cues are according to Silverstein, arranged in specific particular co-occurring configurations for each speech event. The effects of ironic utterances in joking speech are arranged in speech-event-specific 'constellations'.

In light of the characterisation of joking relationship language as an inverted play on constrained speech, the 'event-framework' of joking speech is therefore a form of implicit 'second-order metapragmatic discourse' (Silverstein 1993: 43). Instead of the more explicit metapragmatics of reported speech, Silverstein's 'second-order' terminology is used here to refer to the use of JRL as one speech style derived from another.

POLITENESS THEORY.
I have mentioned above that the use of joking relationship speech results from an exploitation of rules about appropriateness in kinship interaction. Such appropriate behaviour can also be considered in terms of the formal features and rhetorical strategies which constitute 'politeness' in the sense of Brown and Levinson (1978). This approach connects with the above discussion on Grice's cooperative principle of communication in that it has been argued by some that cooperation in communication stems from a desire to satisfy certain principles of politeness (Lakoff 1973, Norrick 1994). Drawing on both Lakoff (1973) and Goffman's work (1956), Brown and Levinson discuss what are claimed to be universal principles of politeness involving interactional strategies of positive and negative face. Positive face concerns interactions in relationships based on terms such as equality, solidarity, being friendly and satisfying the wants of an addressee. Negative face relates to contrasts in social distance and an unwillingness to impose on others or restrict their freedoms. Relationships marked by respect and restraint are characterised by the maintenance of negative face.

This framework has been applied to an Aboriginal context in Rumsey's (1982) analysis of Gun-Gunma, a discrete avoidance register of the Bunaba language of the Kimberley district in Western Australia. Rumsey notes the high degree of negative politeness strategies employed in the use of avoidance register between
wife's mother and daughter's husband. In keeping with a view that joking relationships employ an inverse form of the avoidance style of interaction, it might be expected then, that joking relationships are characterised by a high degree of positive politeness strategies. This is indeed the case.

Brown and Levinson's approach to 'conventionalized (ritualized) insults' (1978:234) is to argue that in relationships of 'intimacy' bald-on-record insults in joke form are a means of asserting such intimacy and stressing 'solidarity' (1978:234) which is a positive face strategy. A high degree of social familiarity is a feature of joking relationships. I am told that the most intense joking relationships usually occur with 'people we have grown up with' (Charlie Djordila, pers. comm.). This 'cruel-to-be-kind' strategy has its origin in what has been termed 'the paradox of power and solidarity' (Tannen 1986, Norrick 1994), whereby:

A friendly greeting shows solidarity, but at the same time it implies a lack of distance and respect; a compliment on a new car from someone who already owns one can show solidarity, but it can also appear deprecating. Consequently, according to this paradox, acting disrespectful can signal solidarity, just as it can signal real aggression... (Norrick 1994:421)

The anglo-Australian use of swearing to signify friendship or 'mateship' such as is commonly associated with Australian 'pub talk' (e.g. 'How ya goin' ya old bastard') is also an example of this paradox. Norrick also argues that the use of mock disrespect reveals that the relationship is strong enough to withstand such verbal assaults and does not need to 'stand on formalities'. The playful aggression of joking relationships also serves to intensify interaction which leads to the primary social function of joking exchanges; the ratification of relationships.

Brown and Levinson also discuss the semantic 'degradation' of various honorifics which come to be used as insults such as 'my good man' in English and other Japanese and Swedish pronouns (1978:235). They suggest that this degradation of honorifics is a strategy of exploitation which is called 'ironic politeness' (p.235). The insults of joking relationships seem to be an example of the opposite of this; perhaps 'ironic insults' i.e. a negative or aggressive utterance evokes a positive face value, such as the Australian English term of endearment 'y'old bastard'. 
Politeness theory also identifies some strategies as being hybrid forms based on both positive and negative politeness. Zajdman (1995:329) has argued that; 'a humorous FTA [face threatening act] may be performed by violating the positive face within the frame of reference of negative politeness. Here, the humorous FTA seems to present an inverted logic...'. In the context of Aboriginal kinship, interaction between affines is normally within a frame of reference of negative politeness. In joking relationships the interaction of affines is still underlyingly based on negative politeness, but positive face is violated by the use of mock hostility.

The same [a humorous FTA introduced by violating positive face in a frame of reference of negative politeness] is the case in 'joking relationships' described by Radclifffe Brown, where H refrains from taking offence out of respect for S (Zajdman 1995:330).

Zajdman's use of joking relationships as an example of the combining of politeness types may not be as simple as is suggested. If 'H' (hearer) refrains from taking offence out of respect for 'S' (speaker), this may suggest an asymmetrical form of joking relationship (described in chapter 3). Symmetrical joking relationships are more based on the solidarity of close friendship rather than the social distance usually associated with actual affinal relationships which means that there is no 'frame of reference of negative politeness'.

Brown and Levinson recognise the need for a 'general theory of the exploitation of conventional rules and expectations...' (1978:235). Exploitation in the case of JRL means the following: in a relationship of constraint or avoidance, a special oblique register of language is used, but in joking relationships a form of the inverse is used by means of the 'power/solidarity paradox' as described above. Thus, as in figure 2.1, in context Z do X where Z=relationship of constraint or avoidance and X= oblique register of speech or 'respect/mother-in-law language'. However in a joking relationship the situation is: in context Y do X⁻¹ where Y is a relationship of classificatory affinity and X⁻¹ is the unrestricted language of light-hearted swearing and teasing etc., which is the inverse of constrained speech.
As mentioned earlier, an NSM analysis has been applied to some aspects of 'light-hearted speech practices' in Yankunytjatjara examples (Goddard 1992). I mention its use here, not because I intend to analyse all of my own data using this approach, but because NSM is sometimes useful in cross-cultural analyses of concepts, words and speech events. The use of semantic primitives in the description of concepts across cultures is based on the idea of defining such concepts using a set of lexically universal 'building blocks' which are said to be free of ethnocentric connotations. Such an 'alphabet of human thoughts' is said to be applicable in any language of the world (Wierzbicka 1992:13). Thus, it is claimed that we can tackle such problems as explicating terms such as 'intimacy', 'solidarity' and 'respect' for example, which are terms that appear often in ethnography of speaking studies (Goddard 1992). Goddard's NSM formulations for Yankunytjatjara general 'light-hearted speech' style, is in two paragraphs as follows:
1.a. I know you.
   b. I know you will not think anything bad about me.
   c. I don’t have to think how to say things to you.

and

2.a. I can say these kinds of things to you: 
   "I don’t want this"
   "I don’t think the same"
I can say these kind of things about you:
   "you are bad" 
   "you do bad things"

b. You can say the same kinds of things to me.

c. I know when we say things like this to each other, we both feel something good.
(p.119)

These formulations also allude to the style of language used in constraint relationships. 1(c) for example echoes the situation where a speaker must think how to say things to someone but this opposition is not made explicit. Joking relationships are in one sense a reaction to constraint relationships. What the formulations do overlook is that whilst joking relations are characterised by use of language with references to topics which are taboo in constraint relationships, e.g. references of a sexual nature or those referring to bodily functions such as 'toilet' words, there are still many topics which still would never be used as a basis for teasing and light-hearted insults. Thus, the element 'I don't have to think how to say things to you' is not necessarily accurate. Two people in a joking relationship in Arnhem Land would never mention each others' cross-sex siblings as a basis for joking as indeed they would not mention each other’s spouses or a range of other topics. There are restrictions too in joking relationships which the above formulations do not capture. The sections 'I can say these kind of things to/about you' is also very vague and the final section '...when we say things like this to each other, we both feel something good' does not explain why such an apparent paradox is possible. The inverted nature of joking relationship language which is defined in opposition to the language of constrained relationships may be difficult to express using the NSM formulations. It is also difficult to see how NSM could possibly capture the important elements of genealogical distance and social familiarity in joking relationships without reducing the speech event to a simplicity which pares away its complexities.
The question of whether or not NSM can fully deal with shades of meaning based on complexities of particular kinship norms of behaviour and deviations from such norms is beyond the scope of this study. If NSM is to be used to explicate the meanings of joking relationship utterances, it must be applied to a number of contexts, both general and specific, and be as exhaustive as possible in its coverage of the meaning being targeted.

2.4 Conclusion.
No one theoretical framework presently exists which will be able to integrate all the aspects of grammar, linguistic style, cultural knowledge, inference and interactional conventions which are part of the complexity of joking relationship speech. Interactional sociolinguistics does however cast the widest theoretical net for examining JRL in that it draws on a number of fields within pragmatics as well as across the disciplines of linguistics, anthropology and sociology, in an attempt to examine the totality of the inferential process. The joking relationship speech style heavily relies on the rhetorical strategy of ironical-type expressions as a means of intensifying conversational involvement through humour as a sociable speech event which ratifies relationships. The diversity of angles of approach all tie together in an attempt to describe the totality of the inferential process.

The other advantage of Interactional Sociolinguistics is the focus on application to actual analysis of 'face to face' interaction and the way participants in conversation negotiate their way through interaction and reveal to each other how they are interpreting each others' communicative signals. The notion of discourse frame (Goffman 1974) serves as a means of analysing these basic segments of interaction and identifying how such interpretive frames are launched, maintained and broken. Such an analysis is applied to more lengthy joking interaction as discussed in chapter 5.
Chapter 3 Classes of kin and joking relationships throughout Australia.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine a range of joking relationships throughout Australia as reported in the literature. In addition I supplement these details with my own observations of joking relationships in Arnhem Land and western Cape York. One of the most detailed discussions of Aboriginal joking relationships is Jackes' material on the Wik Mungkan of western Cape York which in turn is based on analysis of Thomson's (1935) Wik Mungkan material on joking relationships. I devote considerable attention to this data because of some of the difficulties raised by it. Wik Mungkan joking relationships are predominantly with grandkin and I discuss how grandkin of particular classes may be viewed as affines or involved in spouse bestowal arrangements. By listing the various kin classes where joking relationships are found throughout Aboriginal Australia, I also intend to identify some patterns from which some generalisations may be made. The language of joking relationships can then be analysed in following chapters in light of these generalisations, two of which are as follows:

1. Both restrained and joking relationships are associated with affinity.
2. Joking relationships occur with a class of affines I label the 'fictive affines', i.e. those who are classified as affines but it is expected will never realise relationships based on actual marriage links. Constrained relationships on the other hand, occur with actual affines.

The problem with the first generalisation is in accounting for alternate generation or grandkin joking which seems to appear throughout Australia as possibly the prototypical joking relationship. In a number of Aboriginal groups examined in this chapter, it is apparent that grandkin in some classes can be viewed as the parents of the mother-in-law or even the bestowers of the mother-in-law. The notion of mother-in-law bestowal has been discussed in the literature as early as 1899 by Spencer and Gillen in relation to various central Australian Aboriginal groups. Maddock's commentary on this is as follows (1972:46):

The fourth [method by which a wife might be had in central Australia] was for a man to marry the daughter of his promised mother-in-law. This was the commonest method. It consisted in two men arranging that the daughter of one would be mother-in-law to the
son of the other. Often the agreement was made long before the daughter was born.

Mother-in-law bestowal is reported in a variety of Aboriginal groups across Australia (see below). The practice is of central importance in establishing some classes of grandkin as affines or a class of kin closely involved in the arrangement of spouse or mother-in-law bestowal.

THE CLASSIFICATORY KINSHIP SYSTEM

The generalisations listed above are also based on the notion in Aboriginal societies of classificatory kinship. All consanguineal kin in Aboriginal societies and those non-consanguineal kin classed as equivalent to consanguineal kin by extension are included together within the same sets of egocentric kin terms. This does not mean that there is no conceptual distinction made between close and distant members of a certain kin category. Such distinctions are not based on a consanguineal vs non-genealogical basis however. Scheffler (1978: 26) explains this distinction as follows:

The evidence is quite clear that the so-called terms of relationship designate egocentric, genealogically defined categories and are polysemic; each term has a structurally primary and specific sense and a derivative, expanded, or broader sense (or senses).

Shapiro (1981:56) uses the terms 'primary or 'focal' and secondary or 'non-focal" to denote subcategories within basic classes of kin. Nevertheless, for ego, every other person in the social universe is related, which means that one's potential spouse will be a relative, known in most Aboriginal languages by a term meaning 'husband' or 'wife' but also by a kin term according to each system's preferred class of potential spouse. As Heath (1982:5) notes:

Moreover, spouse and affinal terms are not always distinct from genealogical kin terms. Since eligible spouses are determined by (real or classificatory) genealogical relationship to Ego, the kin terms which apply to the categories including potential spouses and affines may suffice to designate actual spouse and actual in-laws.

The second generalisation above is that joking relationships tend to be associated with classificatory affines (but non-realisable affines or not expected to be realised) and constrained relationships are between actual affines. This means that the same kin terms can sometimes be used for those in both joking relationships and
constrained or 'avoidance' relationships. Some of the following examples from around Australia illustrate this. This finer distinction is between classes of affinal kin who it is known will not become actual affines on the one hand and on the other, potential affines with whom it is expected an actual relationship of affinity will eventuate. Thus for the Wik Mungkan of western Cape York, there is a joking relationship between those in adjacent generations, namely a man and his classificatory mother's elder brother (MeB) but there is a kind of deference and constraint between a man and his mother's younger brother (MyB) (Thomson 1935:483). For the Wik Mungkan, preferred marriage is with MyBC.

The joking with the older lines may be compared with the avoidance of affinal younger lines which give wives to ego. Thus we seem to have a situation in which a man jokes with those [affines] who do not give him wives... (Jackes 1969: 131)

This situation seems to be a generalisation which holds throughout Aboriginal Australia. The system of extended classificatory kinship means that a certain category of all relatives will fall into the defined class of affines. The normative behaviour with actual affines is often demanding, being a demeanour of propriety which constantly demands attention to correct behaviour. Avoidance, respect, use of special registers of speech and the economic drain of affinal prestations can all combine to create stresses which are restricted to actual affines, realised or expected to be realised. Other kin in the affine class who will not become actual affines, a subclass of fictive affines as it were, are those with whom joking relationships and less institutionalised light-hearted speech practices develop. Joking relationships are therefore one means of avoiding the restraint of affinal relationships and allowing a more congenial interaction with those in an affine class. It should be mentioned here however, that the term 'fictive affine' does have some drawbacks. The term does seem to imply an extension of a somehow preordained category when in reality 'fictive affines', as I use the term, are those classificatory relatives who do not become in-laws or affines by chance or circumstance.

The discussions of joking relationships extracted from the literature here are mostly from language groups in the following geographical regions: Cape York, Western and Central Arnhem Land, the Yolngu of North-east Arnhem Land, the Western Desert and the Victoria River district of the Northern Territory. Other
regions of Australia are omitted due to lack of available data. Some major ethnographies of Aboriginal societies omit to mention the joking relationship (Warner's material (1937) on the 'Murngin' for example makes no mention of joking relationships). It is most likely however, that all Aboriginal societies feature (or featured) joking relationships. Major ethnographies have tended to focus on the more 'serious' topics of Aboriginal religion, ritual and other aspects of social organisation. I do not believe however, that joking relationships are some frivolous fringe aspect of Aboriginal kinship but instead they play an important role in social organisation, communication and interaction amongst kin. This study therefore probably raises more issues than I have the space to consider here. Some of the questions raised by the following comparisons, such as the historical changes in joking relationship behaviours, are beyond the scope of this thesis, but nevertheless are mentioned as intriguing problems, the solutions to which may contribute to further understanding of the present distribution of joking relationship types in Australia.

3.2 Joking relationships throughout Australia

WESTERN DESERT

Kinship systems within the vast region known as the Western Desert are basically that described by Scheffler as the Pitjantjatjara system or what Elkin called the Aluritja system (1964:103). Tonkinson (1991 [1978]) records that joking relationships amongst the Mardu of central Western Australia exist mostly between parallel grandkin (FF/SS nyamu, and MM/DD nyami) and also some same-sex cross-cousins such as a man’s MBS or FZS. Western desert kin systems do not terminologically distinguish parallel and cross cousins ‘which are called by the same term as siblings’ (Goddard 1986:302). Certain cross-cousins also belong to the class of spouse. This means that there exist marriageable and non-marriageable cross-cousins. The non-marriageable class are those who can be addressed as sibling. Tonkinson records yinkarni as 'cross-cousin 'Z' and wajirra 'cross-cousin 'B'. For a male ego there is 'restraint' behaviour exercised towards yinkarni and for the sibling wajirra, there is a joking relationship (Tonkinson 1978/1991:63). This seems to be consistent with the above hypothesis that joking relationships occur with a class of kin who belong to those who can be viewed as affines but who it is believed will never actually become affines. There is however the additional complication of a gender distinction possibly based on
brother-sister avoidance. The lack of terminological distinction between parallel and cross-cousins produces an affine-sibling ambiguity.

A joking relationship with a classificatory brother contrasts with the usual relationship between actual brothers where the younger brother usually shows deference to the elder. For the Yankunytjatjara Goddard (1992:97) comments that:

'a man may have a ribald joking relationship with a distant kuta 'senior brother', which is quite contrary to the expected behaviour with a close kuta.'

Tonkinson also lists other Mardu harmonic (same or alternate) generation light-hearted interaction as occurring with some classificatory wife's brothers yungguri 'WB'. Further joking relationships or at least less restrained patterns of kinship behaviour occur between those in disharmonic generation sets. These include between a man and his bunyayi MBDS/FZDS. It is worth noting that for this relationship, the joking is between a man and a classificatory father. Other language groups such as in Arnhem Land have a similar joking relationship where a man can joke with his classificatory WMB who is also in a possible classificatory relationship of F 'father' with Ego. This contrasts with the usual avoidance or constraint afforded an actual WMB who in numerous parts of Australia is referred to in Aboriginal English as 'poison cousin'. Tonkinson's data (1978/1991:61) also shows terminological equivalence for 'some' MBDS and 'some' MMBS both of whom are called bunyayi which is a joking relationship. We shall later see that these same relationships MBDS or MMBS (which are also WMB) are joking relationships in many Arnhem Land language groups also.

Another Western Desert disharmonic generation joking relationship exists between classificatory MB and ZC or 'uncle/aunt-nephew/niece relationship (kamuru/kuntili-ukari)' (for Yankunytjatjara, Goddard 1992:111). This form of the joking relationship is typically asymmetrical in nature with respect to the forms of normative joking behaviour and language whereas the joking relationships between grandkin are more symmetrical. The reciprocal terms of address used by grandkin also reflect this symmetry. Radcliffe-Brown used this distinction to classify joking relationships into the two types; symmetrical and asymmetrical.
In one the relation is symmetrical; each of the two persons teases or makes fun of the other. In the other variety the relation is asymmetrical; A jokes at the expense of B and B accepts the teasing good humouredly but without retaliating; or A teases B as much as he pleases and B in return teases A only a little. There are many varieties in the form of this relationship in different societies. In some instances the joking or teasing is only verbal, in others it includes horse-play; in some the joking includes elements of obscenity, in others not (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:90).

Other non-joking relationships between kin of disharmonic generations also reflect this asymmetry which suggests;

status difference and asymmetrical behavioural norms.; that is, one person will defer to the other, as in most relationships between adjacent generations, but also between older and younger siblings. (Tonkinson 1978/1991:60)

This distinction between harmonic and disharmonic generations whilst not unique to the Western Desert region is certainly quite marked in that special terms are used to denote kin in each generation class or moiety so that in Yankunytjatjara nganantarka 'we-bone' and tjanamilytjan 'they flesh' represent egocentric 'social category pronouns' (Goddard 1992:95) for harmonic and disharmonic generations respectively. These are also known as endogamous moieties because it is from within one's harmonic generation that one finds a spouse.

There is a temptation to class joking between disharmonic generations as asymmetrical and harmonic generation joking as being of the symmetrical type. The MB-ZC joking of Western Desert peoples mentioned above is identified as being asymmetrical as is the MB-ZC joking relationship for the Gurindji (McConvell 1982:98). However, the joking relationship between those who address each other by the reciprocal term bunyayi 'MBDS, MBDD, MMBS, MMBD' is a disharmonic generation relationship which is not identified in the literature as being asymmetrical in nature. The same goes for the joking relationship with MBDS, MMBS for Arnhem Land groups which is clearly not an asymmetrical joking relationship but symmetrical. It is also not possible to equate reciprocal terms of address with symmetrical joking relationship behaviour as demonstrated for example by the asymmetrical joking behaviour between those who call each other lambarra as in Gurindji (discussed below) and a number of neighbouring language groups.
The mother's brother joking relationship appears to be a form of the asymmetrical type wherever it occurs in Australia and in fact the only form of asymmetrical joking relationship. Much of Radcliffe-Brown's discussion (1952) of joking relationships in Africa is of the mother's brother asymmetrical type. Further examples of MB/ZC joking relationships occur with the Gurindji, Wik Mungkan and some Eastern Kunwinjku groups as discussed below.

In addition to joking between individuals, a form of corporate generational moiety joking is described by Tonkinson as occurring especially during regional ceremonies. This form of joking during rituals occurs mostly between 'wife-bestower' and 'wife receiver' (which implies WF and DH if the joking partners are in disharmonic generations).

In most ceremonial activities involving division into "sides," the two groups sit a short distance apart, and throughout the proceedings their members joust verbally with each other in loud and light-hearted fashion. (Tonkinson 1978/1991:76)

The subjects of these taunts, which seem quite typical of joking relationships throughout Australia, involve the mock offering of 'women as wives', 'gifts of meat or vegetable foods' and so on and the opposite 'accusations of stinginess in the provision of wives or of other failures to reciprocate' (Tonkinson 1978/1991:76). Such ritual joking may also be viewed not only as generational moiety joking but also as WF and DH are in opposite patrimoieties the activity is part of the feigned hostility which is part of inter-patrimoiety ceremonial divisions.

**JOKING AND CEREMONIAL GATHERINGS.**
A further generalisation which can be made is that joking relationship interaction is more pronounced during large gatherings of people such as for the performance of rituals or regional ceremonies. Many such major regional ceremonies can extend over a period of days and weeks and involve groups coming together who would not normally spend such amounts of time together. The intensified joking I have observed throughout Arnhem Land which occurs at times like this contrasts with the above form of generation moiety joking in the Western Desert. It includes groups of siblings, classificatory and actual, who 'gang up' on their joking partners (all those classed as their MMB and MMBS) to
create corporate performances of humour which as Tonkinson observes 'enliven[s] an already exciting and happy atmosphere' and is 'characteristic of religious activities that unite members of different groups in shared experience' (Tonkinson 1978/1991:76).

Occasionally in Arnhem Land ceremonies a form of moiety based joking occurs whereby members of one moiety jokingly threaten to undertake rituals which are expressly restricted to members of the opposite moiety. For example I have often heard the following joke between two Kunwinjku men of opposite patrimoieties at major duwa moiety regional ceremonies:

(2)

A: Nga-djangakme!
1sg-make.ritual.call
A: I'll call out a ritual yell.
B: Nga-bulukbu-rr-en!
1sg-wear.ceremonial.down-RR-NP
B: I'll wear ceremonial down.

This humour is based again on inversion of the usual norms for ritual behaviour. Speaker A who is a member of the duwa moiety threatens to undertake an activity reserved strictly for yirridjdja moiety people i.e. singing out ritual calls during the Kunabibi ceremony. In response to this mock sacrilege a yirridjdja moiety man will reply that he will do something reserved for duwa participants which in this case is to use body down decoration. This form of interaction does not occur between joking partners (who in Arnhem Land groups are nearly always of the same moiety e.g. MMB and ZDC) but is rather an example of light-hearted interaction which seems to be pronounced during extended ceremonies and conducted by those in opposing moieties.

Thomson (1935:477) describes the joking amongst the Kuuku Ya’u of Cape York between a pola (FF) and poladu (SS) which occurs in an intensified form during ceremonial activities and preparations for such ceremonies:

...during preparations for a ceremony, I have heard two men, pola [puula] and poladu
Likewise for the Gurindji, McConvell observes that interaction between joking partners may occur at any time but 'is at its most extreme during rituals and provides a kind of carnival atmosphere which complements the more serious events which are taking place (1982:98).'

Recently (September 1996) at a major regional patrimoiety ceremony in Arnhem Land with hundreds of men gathered I witnessed a Burarra man stand in the midst of the ceremony ground and deliver a serious speech exhorting everyone to follow correct procedure and ensure that initiates are kept awake and observe all the rituals planned for the coming evening. After completing his speech a cry of formal approval and agreement came in reply from the crowd, followed quickly by the man's joking partner who called out loudly in Kuninjku Yi-korn-badjan! 'you big testicles!' which dissolved the camp into laughter.

GURINDJI, VICTORIA RIVER DISTRICT
The central joking relationship amongst the Gurindji is between the MB and ZC (McConvell 1982: 99). As an adjacent generation joking relationship, the joking is typically asymmetrical with the MB allowed to swear without much restriction at his ZC but ZC may not reply with swearing based on references to genitals. Conversely, ZC may subject MB to horseplay and practical jokes which he must accept in good humour and only retaliate with verbal ripostes.

According to Gurindji elders MB/ZC joking has replaced a previous joking relationship with MMB which is common in other parts of Australia such as in Arnhem Land. A MB and ZS are in a classificatory relationship of father-in-law and son-in-law as MB is able to marry a woman in the subsection of ZSD. Such a potential father-in-law is addressed by the term lambarra. The diffusion of this term into Arnhem Land and the associated MB joking relationship poses an interesting puzzle as to its origin. McConvell reports that the Gurindji say lambarra joking originated amongst their neighbours the Warlpiri who in turn believe that it was introduced to them from further west in the Kimberleys.
The term *lambarra* has been retained in Kriol also which has then become a possible vehicle for the spread of *lambarra* joking. The Kune people (an Eastern Kunwinjku dialect of the Cadell River district in central Arnhem Land) also use *lambarra* joking but their immediate neighbours to the north-west, the Kuninjku of the Mann and Liverpool Rivers district do not, although there is evidence that this is changing. The term is used as far east as the Roper River district in south-east Arnhem Land and people from this area I have asked say that use of the term *lambarra* was introduced by the Rembarrnga and related groups from the Bulman and Barunga area near Katherine. The spread of the *lambarra* joking relationship is raised here as an interesting problem.

Changes in joking relationships from MMB/ZDC to MB/ZC may reflect other social changes relating to marriage and spouse bestowal practices, however solving the historical puzzle as to the origin and diffusion of *lambarra* joking is beyond the scope of this study.

**CAPE YORK**

The following material on joking relationships amongst Cape York groups is based on Haviland's study of Guugu Yimidhirr (1979), Thomson's discussion (1935) of joking relationships amongst various Cape York groups such as the Wik Mungkan, Umpila, Tjungundji and Kuuku Ya'u and Jackes (1967, 1969) study of Wik Mungkan joking relationships. I add my own observations on Wik Mungkan based on two years of residence at Aurukun, west Cape York. I have also converted Thomson, Jackes and McConnells' (quoted in Jackes) material on Wik Mungkan into the standard orthography based on Kilham et al. (1986).

**GUUGU YIMIDHIRR**

Haviland (1979:382) records the following two terms in Guugu Yimidhirr which refer to obscene joking: *manu ngudhu wuurii* 'neck fun play' and *guya-gurral* 'say/make nothing'. The latter term provides further evidence for viewing joking relationship utterances as pragmatic indexes 'which at once signal that a relationships obtains and which in a crucial way, themselves constitute the relationship' (Haviland 1979:387). Joking partners may be literally 'saying nothing' but by so doing are creating and maintaining relationships and advertising this fact to all. Haviland gives examples (1979:382) of some Guugu Yimidhirr sexual taunts which are typical between joking partners:
Such language is only possible between the joking partners gami (FF, MM(B)) and gaminhdharr (SC), and ngadhi (MF) and ngadhinil (DC) (1979:383). In addition, light-hearted speech occurs between a person and WZ, BW or BWZ. These are kin with whom Haviland was informed 'You can joke, laugh, anything' (1979:379). The latter group cannot really be classed as institutionalised joking relationships but are rather a group of kin with whom interaction is less restrictive but not as intense as that which occurs with grandkin joking.

Figure 3.1: Haviland's kin diagram for Guugu Yimidhirr showing joking relationships (1979:383).

WIK MUNGKAN
Thomson lists four kin classes of joking relationships amongst the Wik
Mungkan of western Cape York. For a male ego these include *muka* 'MeB', *ngechwuut* MF and *ngechwayyow* FMB, *puulwuut* FF and with a *muka* MeB who is skewed due to a wrong way marriage to become a grandkin joking partner. The lack of joking with MMB is noticeable considering the prototypical nature of the MMB joking relationship amongst many other Aboriginal language groups throughout other parts of Australia. MMB in some parts of Australia as will be discussed later, is also bestower of WM. However in the Wik Mungkan marriage system, WMF is the father of a woman classed as *piny* 'FZ' who is also WM due to a marriage rule which prefers marriage between a man and his FZD. The father of *piny* (FZ) is a man classed as FF, which is also a joking relationship class. Grandkin joking is possibly based on the position of grandkin classes being the providers or arrangers of a man's wife's mothers. The classes of joking relationships listed by Thomson are discussed in more detail as follows:

1. MeB-yZC (*muka*, classificatory 'mother's elder brother' and *mukayng* 'children of younger sisters')⁴. Mother's younger brother or *kaal*, real or classificatory is said to be *ngenchthayan* 'forbidden, taboo', literally 'restricted strong'. A man's ideal father-in-law will be his *kaal amp* 'mother's classificatory brother' or 'cousin brother' (MFBS) who is also called 'poison uncle' in Cape York Kriol. The Wik Mungkan terminology for mother's brothers shows the close connection between a joking relationship and an avoidance relationship within classes of affinal kin. In this case a pair of classificatory siblings are each treated differently by ZC, one brother is the joking partner, the other is treated with constraint or avoidance, although 'some decorum must be observed in the behaviour to the actual (own) *muka* ' (Thomson 1935: 483).

2. *ngechwuut* 'MF'/*ngechiyang* 'DC' (and *ngechwayyow* 'MFZ' for a woman) and *ngechwuut* 'FMB'/*ngechiyang* 'ZSC'. Once again, joking relationships are with *mal thanon* 'classificatory' (literally 'side another') of these classes of grandkin. Thomson's discussion of Wik Mungkan marriage rules (see also Jackes 1967: 113) are helpful here in explaining how these particular grandkin joking relationships might be derived. Thomson states a man marries 'a woman who stands to him in the relation of FMZDD' (1936: 375). Even more supportive of the grandkin as 'mother-in-law bestowers' hypothesis are the following comments by Thomson (quoted also in Jackes 1967:114) on Wik Mungkan marriage (underlining mine):
The woman whom a man may marry is determined by people in the second ascending (grandparents') generation, who select one or more of the 'sisters' of his father's mother (ngechwayyow) to be his ngechwayyow malan (literally: FM side/group). The daughters of this woman thenceforth become potential mothers-in-law to ego and whether they have daughters or not, are thereafter distinguished by a specific term piny kench, 'father's sister's tabu' (lit. piny, father's sister; kench, tabu). The daughters of piny kench, who are actual second cousins (MFZDD), are kuuth and muuy-terms which are applied to all first cousins including own or actual cross-cousins, i.e., to all daughters of piny. The correct marriage is for a man to marry the daughter of a piny kench (Thomson 1955: 40).

3. Classificatory puulwuu t 'FF/FFeB'/ puuliyang 'SS/yBSS'. This particular joking relationship is said to allow the greatest license with swearing and teasing of a sexual nature. This seems to be the situation for joking relationships amongst other Cape York groups also. The FF (and possibly FMB who is WM's uncle or WMMB) can be viewed as an affine considering the role of FF in providing a man with his mother-in-law. Scheffler (1978: 152) notes that:

According to Thomson, in orthodox marriage by betrothal, one or more of a man's classificatory 'father's mothers' (FM's or MF's 'sister') is chosen to be his prospective WMM, her daughters become his prospective WMs, and their children become his prospective wives and siblings-in-law.

Another consideration involving the lack of reference to MMB joking may involve the fact that both FF and MMB are designated by the same term pola.
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(probably puulwuu, or puula for short in standard Wik Mungkan orthography). In regard to the terminology of parallel grandkin Scheffler writes (1978:154):

"MMB may be designated in either way [i.e. by the term kema 'MM' or puula 'FF'], but male speakers tend to use 'father's father' ...... Clearly puula in addition to being the designation of the FF class, is also the cover term for the parallel-grandparent class as a whole.

4. A further joking relationship exists amongst the Wik Mungkan for a woman with a man who through a 'wrong way' marriage to a woman standing as ego's classificatory mother now stands as a classificatory 'F' to ego and is called kaath kalan 'mother takes/has'.

In summary, Wik Mungkan joking relationships are as listed by Jackes (1969):

Those members of the second ascending generation with whom a man jokes are: FF, MF, FMeB, FMyB, and FMeZ. A woman jokes with: FF, FFeB, MF, and MFeZ. Both men and women joke with MeB, but the joking is less obscene and sexual with this member of the proximate generation.

Figure 3.3 : Wik Mungkan joking relationships, female ego.

Jackes also tackles the problem of joking relationships which are created when a relationship between two people changes due to marriage such as in (4) above. Thomson describes such an arrangement as 'crooked marriage' joking and this is interpreted by Jackes as a system which as mentioned above, produces joking
relationships with a class of affines who will not become actual affines i.e. for the Wik Mungkan, the members of 'the older line' or for a man, 'the daughters and daughters' daughters of the elder siblings of his parents and grandparents' (Jackes 1969: 131).

KUUUKU YA'U
Thomson's list of joking relationships for the Kuuku Ya'u includes the prototypical Cape York FF/SS relationship and two other forms. The first of these two is between two men who call each other yami which is usually the term used for the restrained relationship of ego with the actual mother-in-law and her brothers but in this case extends to the joking relationship set up between two classificatory brothers 'after one has married a classificatory sister's daughter (mampa) of the other' (Thomson 1935: 476). Thomson does not clarify this situation but it is assumed that the ZD of one of the men is not the ZD of the other because of the genealogical distance between the two classificatory brothers. The Wik Mungkan also do not have the convenience of a subsection system for providing instant equivalent classification of distant genealogically unrelated people. As one usually marries the actual sister's daughter of one's real yami, it appears here that the joking relationship marks a situation where something similar to the real yami relationship has been established but the genealogically distant nature of the classificatory relationships creates an 'as if' affinal relationship which is removed enough to allow joking.

The other Kuuku Ya'u joking relationship is similar to the above yami joking but is between two classificatory brothers who call each other alma when one has married a classificatory mother of the other.

UMPILA TRIBE
Thomson reported that the Umpila had the same joking relationships as those of the Kuuku Ya'u but in addition there is a joking relationship between MF and DS. Also noted (1935: 480) is the case of two men who were originally in a classificatory 'older brother-younger brother' relationship (established after 'lengthy kinship discussions' to determine a common relative). One then married a classificatory mother of the other instantiating the alma joking relationship and then the other married the daughter of a younger sister of the
former creating the *yami* joking relationship.

**ARNHEM LAND - THE BURARRA AND YOLNGU**

Very little documentation exists concerning kinship and joking relationships in Arnhem Land with most ethnographies focusing on avoidance relationships (e.g. Berndt 1971, Berndt and Berndt 1970, Warner 1937). One of the few exceptions to this is Hiatt’s discussion of joking relationships amongst the Gijingarli or Burarra people of central-north Arnhem Land (1965:60-62). Hiatt describes joking relationships amongst the Gijingarli as being based on corporate relationships relating to rights to circumcision duties called *jarawarra* which are between patrilineal groups and members in each group who call each other *jerda* (MMB, MMBSS) and *ganggurda* (ZDS). A man whom a youth calls *jerda* (MMB) who belongs to a clan with whom the boy’s clan has a *jarawarra* relationship is the one who will seize him and supervise his circumcision. Hiatt notes that professional circumcisers were normally called on to perform the operation and that elsewhere the role was defined genealogically (1965:63). Other neighbouring groups such as the Rembarrnga and Dangbon say that a youth’s circumciser should be either his classificatory MMB or MMBS, both of which are joking relationship categories for these and most other Arnhem Land groups (including the Yolngu of north-eastern Arnhem Land (Williams 1981)). This contrasts with other groups south-west of Arnhem Land where amongst the Warlpiri (Meggitt 1962:304) and the Gurindji (Patrick McConvell pers.comm.), a boy is in an avoidance relationship with his circumciser (who for the Warlpiri is the boy’s ZS, MMBS, or MBS) after the completion of the operation.

From my own observations, the primary joking relationships amongst the Burarra (which includes the southern dialect Gun-nartpa) are between *jerda* ‘MMB’ and *ganggurda* ‘ZDC’, *mununa* ‘MM’ and DC and *jongok* ‘MMBS’ and FZDS.

Hiatt’s primary explanation for the existence of joking relationships centres on the Gijingarli or Burarra *jarawarra* relationship and the nature of the duties members perform for each other:

Joking between *jarawarra* relatives consisted of allegations of abnormally large sexual
organs or appetites and occurred both in ritual contexts and everyday encounters. It was always good-natured and appeared to be a recognized way of demonstrating friendly relations between two groups whose members performed unpleasant duties for each other (1965:62).

It is most likely that the term jarawarra is a loan from Kunwinjku djarewarre 'MM, MMB/DC, ZDC relationship' [literally: djare+warre 'desire+bad'] and is formative in kunmodjarewarre 'grandkin joking register'. The semantics of these terms are discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Hiatt also provides a structural analysis of joking relationships between individuals in patrilineal groups and recorded that joking for the Burarra only occurs with those who are called jerda (MMB, MMBSS and other equivalents), mununa (MM) and ganggurda (ZDS, ZDD and equivalents) and who do not belong to a patrilineal group to which WM or potential WMs belong. This at least is the ideal, but of course as Hiatt notes, marriages do occur between members of joking patrilineages and in these cases according to Hiatt (1965:61), joking between the man and the relatives of his wife's mother (WMF and WMB) ceases although other members of the two groups continue the joking with each other.

It is possible that with the gradual erosion of the orthodox wife bestowal system, the structures which determine joking relationships have changed. Burarra people with whom I discussed this matter told me that the most important factors for joking relationships are that the joking partner in addition to being a classificatory MM or MMB, must also be someone whom 'you have grown up with' (Charlie Djordila 1996 pers. comm.). It may be the case that genealogical distance and social familiarity are equally as important as the kind of patrilineal membership rules which Hiatt indicated in his diagram as follows:
Hiatt's interpretation of this diagram is as follows (1965:62):

Most patrilineal groups had joking relationships with several others, usually in different communities. People spoke of these as traditional and did not know how they had begun. In Figure 3.4 (above) group r has joking relationships with both p and s. Because Ego's WM belongs to s, he and his children must not joke with members of that group but may with members of p. Ego's SS and SD may joke with group s because their MM is not a member.

Burarra speakers have told me that the traditional jarawarra joking relationships are established by tradition through an obligation called majabala. This term is used in its primary sense as 'symbol of obligation to undertake revenge killing' and appears also in the term majabala mun-mama 'revenge killing message stick/token' which refers to a token from a dead person and invokes a sense of -mama 'bone' meaning 'a physical token of an abstract thing' (Margaret Carew pers.comm.). The relationship of this meaning to jarawarra relationships remains opaque but may have something to do with traditional responsibilities.
instituted in the ancestral past.

The joking interaction between superclasses of kin in specific patrilineal blocks is also described by the Burarra (Martay and Anbarra dialects) today as being based on relationships between a person and the patriline of their mari (MM and MMB) and the reciprocal ganggurda (DC or ZDC). The term mari is used in the following senses by the Burarra:

1. A reciprocal term of address between MM/B and DS when DS's wife was expected to come from MM's patriline.
2. The relationship between a person's patriline and their MM's patriline involves members of the two groups calling each other's members aburr-mari 'they of MM(B)/(Z)DC's patriline' (third person plural pronominal prefix + mari).
3. Using the male and female noun class prefixes, an- and jin- respectively to denote an individual's standing in a mari relationship to the member of the referent patriline thus: a man is an-mari to his potential or actual mother-in-law's patriline and she, the mother-in-law is jin-mari to the actual or potential son-in-law's patriline (Hiatt 1965: 42). The term mari nula 'MM(B) to him' (nula 3rd singular masc oblique pronoun) is also used (Margaret Carew, pers.comm.).

Speakers of one of the southern dialects of Burarra, Gun-nartpa, spoken in the Cadell River district of Central Arnhem Land place less significance on the relationship between superclasses of kin in patrlines and do not use the term mari for MM(B) but jerda. Whilst the terms jerda and mari have basically the same meaning, pronominal prefixing of the term jerda as *an-jerda is not acceptable. The acceptable usage is to add the oblique pronoun jerda nula 'MM(B) to him'. Any semantic differences reflected by this may be due to the lesser influence on the Gun-nartpa of the Yolngu practice of superclassing kin such as MM(B)'s into clan conglomerates which is also observed by the northern Burarra dialect speakers (Margaret Carew pers.comm.). Joking between MM(B) and (Z)DC for all Burarra, Gun-nartpa and Yolngu groups may be explained along lines of the distant and fictive affinal role of MM and MMB as bestower of WM. It is also worth noting that amongst the Yolngu of north-east Arnhem Land, the term
māri is also used in the term māri’mu ‘FF’ which suggests māri is a superclass term for all parallel grandkin. In light of the Cape York FF/SS joking relationship, this possible superclass is associated with bestowal of mothers-in-law. In Wik Mungkan society for example, FF is also the father of ego's mother-in-law due to an ideal marriage being between a person and the child of their classificatory mother's younger brother.

The Burarra and Yolngu term māri 'MM(B)' is also used in a number of compounds to denote individual kin relations to groups and their country as in the Burarra senses discussed above and the Yolngu terms mari-pulu 'MM's group’mari-watangu 'MM-holding group'. Apart from also having special ritual responsibilities and land-owning rights the 'mother's mother-holders or gutharra [ZDC/WDC]' as Keen (quoting Morphy) notes 'had the power to withhold rights in women as wives' mothers in the case of breach of ritual rights' (Keen 1994: 109) which is also consistent with the notion of MM(B) as a bestower of WM.

Another interesting aspect of the Burarra joking relationship concerns the terminological equivalence of the terms for WM (or MMBD) and WMB (MMBS) with the terms for MM and MMB respectively. As preferred marriage is with a MMBDD, this makes MMBD a WM. The MMB is in a māri relationship with his ZDC and is viewed as the one who gives or bestows the WM to his ZDC. When a person's spouse is expected to come from the patriline of a particular MMB, both MMBD and MMBS are called jabur (cf. Dalabon djaburlh 'MMBS/WMB') or jongok. If this is not the case and a person's spouse is not expected to come from a particular MMB patriline, the children of jerda 'MBM' instead of being called jabur or jongok can also be called by the terms of the generation above i.e. jerda 'MBM' for MMBS and mununa 'MM' for MMBD. The additional preferred condition for this is when one's jerda and/or mununa have died. This skewing is of the Omaha-type and can be stated as follows:

MMBS→MMB, MMBD→MM

Such a rule applies only under the conditions that ego's spouse is not from MMB's patriline + MMB and/or MM are deceased (although this second condition in practice is a preferred one and not applied strictly). Using a
Lounsbury (1969) style notation for this skewing rule would give:

\[ BC \rightarrow \text{sibling} // MM \]

This shows that a BS is equated with a brother and a BD is equated with a sister when the preceding linking kin is MM. In this case of skewing, there is a joking relationship between a man and MMBS called *jerda* and between a woman and her MMBD called *mununa*. Once again, the existence of the joking relationship seems to be a pragmatic index of the absence of actual affinity. This terminological equivalence is illustrated in Hiatt's diagram reproduced here:

![Diagram showing kinship relationships](image)

Figure 3.5: Hiatt's diagram indicating 'terminological distinction between potential wife-givers and others classified as their brothers and sisters' (1965:51).

Another reference to joking relationships in Arnhem Land is William’s (1981:80) brief comments and diagram of joking relationships in north-east Arnhem Land which reveal that joking with MMBS (or classificatory WMB) seems to be widespread throughout most Arnhem Land groups. Williams' diagram also illustrates avoidance with *rumaru* 'mukul' 'WM' and joking with this person's
brother *maralkur* 'WMB'. The diagram does not show the joking relationship between *māri* MM(B) and *gutharra* '(Z)DC':

![Diagram illustrating joking relationships](image)

The term *maralkur* is also used in the sense of 'MMBC' and is derived from *māri walkur* meaning 'child of *māri* (MMB)' or as one Burarra/Yolngu speaker translated the term 'from that grandfather'. The kin term *walkur* 'child (S/D)' is used in a number of Yolngu languages such as Gupapuyngu and Djinang but also in some dialects of Burarra, especially those who are the immediate neighbours of the Yolngu. This derivation also provides some evidence for viewing *māri* 'MMB' as a mother-in-law bestower.

**KUNWINJJKU**

Joking relationships amongst the Kunwinjku of western Arnhem Land are similar to the situation described for the Burarra. Explanations in terms of circumcision rites however are not as applicable as the Kunwinjku generally do not practice circumcision although the Eastern Kunwinjku do. Joking relationships are mostly amongst men although some southern dialect groups (e.g. Manyalalaluk Mayali, a dialect of Kunwinjku spoken today at the Manyalalaluk community south-east of Katherine) say that a woman and her MM or MMB may use light-hearted speech with each other. The main joking categories for the Kunwinjku are those called by the reciprocal terms *kakkak* 'MM, MMB and DC, ZDC' and *na-kurrng* 'MMBS/FZDC'. This pair of joking kin categories represent a father-son patri-couple (see the kin chart in chapter 4, page 65). As for Burarra, there is preferred marriage with MMBDC which means that joking with MMB is also joking with a classificatory WMF and joking with...
MMBS is joking with a classificatory WMB.

For the Manyalaluk Mayali (and unlike the other Kunwinjku dialects), there is a Kariera-like collapsing of grandkin MMB and FF under the term *kakkak* which is probably a result of the influence of neighbouring Djawoyn which has a Kariera system. It was stated by some Manyalaluk Mayali speakers that joking occurs with *kakkak* and it can be assumed then that this includes both MMB and FF but this needs further clarification with speakers of this dialect.

Some Kunwinjku claim that joking relationships also exist not only between a man and his classificatory WMB or *na-kurrng* but could also cite a few cases of joking with an actual WMB which is a relationship marked by an unusual mixture of both respect and joking. Berndt and Berndt record the *na-kurrng* relationship (MMBS and FZDS) as one of 'not real avoidance but simply constraint' (1970: 220). Although it is not exactly clear what is meant by this, I assume that within the gradations of conventional kin behaviour, demeanour with one's *na-kurrng* is of a lower order 'constraint' compared to the behaviour expected between a man and his mother-in-law. This may be true of one's actual *na-kurrng*, but classificatory *na-kurrng* who are distantly related and socially familiar are usually intense joking partners.

Once again, this patterning of joking relationships is consistent with the argument that institutionalised joking exists with the class of possible affines who no longer are viewed as potential affines. Shapiro (1981:51) even ventures to offer an example of what is the ultimate test of this pragmatic view; a joking relationship between a man and a classificatory mother-in-law. This situation is confirmed in my own data by an Eastern Kunwinjku man who commented on the practice of northeast Arnhem Lander mothers-in-law joking with distant classificatory sons-in-law. The Kunwinjku do not follow this practice and in fact frown upon it with some disapproval (see Appendix C39-50). Referring to the practice of affinal prestations amongst the Yolngu (or 'Miwuyt' to use Shapiro's term for the people of north-east Arnhem Land) the following observation is made (1981:51):

*Besides being used to signal certain prestations, milmarra* [the giving of gifts to affines]
may be employed in reference to potential WMs themselves, especially to females of the 'full' 'WM' subclass. I have already indicated that those of the 'partial' subclass of this class have only a questionable appropriateness as mothers-in-law. With these latter women there is an optional 'joking relationship', which carries the implication that potential affinity is renounced.

As mentioned above for the Kunwinjku, a joking relationship can also occur with a man who is in the same subsection as their father who is also a classificatory WMB (due to a man's FZD being a potential wife). In these cases such a pair will also address each other as na-kurrng. This is associated with skewing rules which result in joking with the children of a woman who is FZD who has been raised a generation by a skewing rule to FZ. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 4. Also mentioned previously, speakers of the Kune dialect of Eastern Kunwinjku recognise a joking relationship between MB and ZS, the lambarra relationship. Although the Kuninjku (the Eastern Kunwinjku people of the Mann and Liverpool Rivers region) do not have joking relationships between MB and ZS, one young Kuninjku man told me he joked with a Kune man of about the same age who was unrelated genealogically but a classificatory ZS of his. When I asked him why he joked with his kangkinj 'ZS' he replied:

(3)

kun-ekke kabirri-yime bedda
IV-DEM 3a-do/sayNP they
that's what they do [the Kune].

He also did not use the term lambarra but the Kunwinjku word kun-doy or na-binjdoj 'father-in-law' as referent terms for this category of joking partner. The joking is mostly based on mock refusals to promise each other's daughters as potential wives. An example of a typical exchange was given as:

(4)

A: Kan-berrebbu-Ø daluk.
   2/1-promise-IMP woman.
   Promise me a wife.

B: Larrk Ø-kaybu-n.
   No 1/2-refuse.to.give-NP
No, I won't give you. [both laugh]

DALABON/DANGBON

The following information on Dalabon joking relationships was collected from brief field work in 1996 at Bulman, Wimol and Momob outstation. Dalabon speakers from these communities described joking relationships between *winjkun 'DS' and kakkak 'MM(B)'*; and *winjkvndjan 'DD' and kakkak 'MM(B)'*. The same marriage rules discussed above for Burarra and Kunwinjku also apply for Dalabon.

The joking between cross-sex grandkin amongst Dalabon people is said to be somewhat less ribald than that which they report for their eastern neighbours. Cross-sex grandkin joking was reported to be quite risque at Roper River with the following comment given (with code mixing of Kriol and Dalabon):

(5) Roper River said, kvrdvkvrd. They filim yu, kurdih.

women[MM or ZDD] sorry for ribaldry

Ah nomo laikajed yu meikim mi shem.
Laik Dalabon-walvng "Mak kah-kalmli".
Dalabon-ABL Not 2/1-fiddle with

At Roper River, the women [your MM or ZDD], they feel you up, excuse me. "Hey don't do that, you'll embarrass me". Like in Dalabon [we say], "Don't fiddle with me [i.e. grab my genitals]."

Joking relationships also exist between male classificatory *djaburlh-ko 'a pair of WMB/ZDH':

(6) *djongok* orait, yu ken faniwan, im from yu father.

It's OK for you to joke with your *djongok* (MMBS, FZDS); he's from your father.

The comment 'he's from your father' describes a joking relationship between a man and the classificatory brother of his father (see figure 3.7 below). These two
men call each other *djaburlh* or *djongok* instead of father and son as might be expected. Sibling equivalence is broken between the two 'brothers' and the son calls his actual father *bulu-ngan* 'my father' and his father's classificatory (and genealogically distant) brother *djaburlh-ngan* 'my WMB'.

![Figure 3.7 Dalabon classificatory FB as *djaburlh* 'WMB'](image)

Typical Dalabon joking is said to include epithets such as the following:

(7)  
Djah-morlo-kardabun  
2sg-penis-long  
You long prick!

Or to a female joking partner, the rather vulgar taunt:

(8)  
Djah-dun-boyenj .  
2sg-hole[cave]-big  
You big hole!

Two women who call each other *djaburlh* (or in Kriol *gadjin-gidja* 'a pair of 'cousins'') will joke also, especially about accusations of lusting after men and oblique sexual references to hunting for *barnda* 'long-neck turtle'.

(9)  
Djabulh-ko keh-berr-ma-rrv-niyan.  
'cousin'-dyad 3duDIS-fun-get-RR-NP.  
A pair of 'cousins' joke with each other.

Finally, Dalabon speakers identify a joking relationship similar to the MB *lambarra* joking discussed above except that there is a special term for a
classificatory uncle with whom this joking occurs; *barnkarl* 'classificatory MB'.

(10)

Barnkarl from natha angkal, not yu ful angkal maitbi yundubala faniwan meikim.

*Your barnkarl is a classificatory MB not your 'real' MB and you two can joke together.*

3.3 Conclusions

Based on references in the literature, the pattern of joking relationships which emerges across the various Aboriginal societies described, is one of the creation of joking relationships between those who are classified as a particular kind of affines. Actual affines who establish their relationships by following the marriage rule norms for a particular kinship system, as a generalisation, tend to speak to each other with restraint, defer to each other (depending on the symmetry of the relationship) and display a circumspect demeanour to each other. That class of affines who it is recognised will most likely not become actual affines, (the fictive affines), are those with whom one can establish a joking relationship. This is especially the case where there is also a high degree of social familiarity and genealogical distance. The joking relationship can be viewed then as a pragmatic index of the renouncing or non-existence of potential affinity.

The prototypical joking relationship appears to be with parallel grandkin. As summarised in figure 3.6, every language group described in the literature appears to have a grandkin joking class (the MB/ZC joking in Gurindji is said to have overtaken a former MMB/ZDC joking class (McConvell 1982:99)). In many Cape York societies the prototypical joking relationship is between those classed as FF and SC. In other parts of Australia it is MNf/B and (Z)OC and in parts of the Western Desert it is both pairs of parallel grandkin who are considered possible joking partners. Based on the above view linking joking relationships and affinity, parallel grandkin can be included within the broad class of affines if the notion of 'mother-in-law' bestowal is subscribed to. Thomson, as discussed above in relation to Wik Mungkan, recorded that it is the grandparents' generation who determined the woman whom a man may marry. Shapiro (1981:48) describes in northeast Arnhem Land the rite known as *munyuk* or *bunitjun* where a boy's
chapter 3  Classes of kin and joking relationships throughout Australia.

MMB presents his daughter to the boy and there follows a ritual where the boy takes facial oil from the side of his nose and with his thumb rubs the oil down the abdomen into the navel of his MMBD. The girl is now promised to the boy as his mother-in-law. Shapiro cites this ritual as evidence of mother-in-law bestowal amongst the people of northeast Arnhem Land. If this notion (whether or not it is expressed in ritual) holds for other Aboriginal societies, then the WMF can be viewed as a kind of affine and therefore classificatory WMF who are not actual WMF can also fall within that special subset of affines with whom one develops joking relationships. In societies where preferred marriage is with MMBD, it is MMB who is WMF or mother-in-law bestower and in other groups where MBC is the preferred spouse, FF is WMF.

The Burarra of central Arnhem Land also practice the mother-in-law bestowal ritual described above and say it is still occasionally conducted. One senior Burarra man (of the eastern Maringa dialect) described the ritual in the same manner outlined by Shapiro (1981:48) and added that if the boy and his intended mother-in-law are of the yirrichinga patrimoiety their faces will be decorated with yellow ochre during the ritual and if both are of the dhuwa (or jowunga in Burarra) patrimoiety, red ochre is used.


> Among the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville islands the basic contract was what we might term 'mother-in-law bestowal', as compared with 'wife bestowal'. It was initiated on the occasion of a girl's menarche, normally by which time she was married. After the menstrual flow had ceased, her father placed a spear between her legs and then presented it to a man he had chosen as her son-in-law. The latter embraced it and henceforth addressed it as 'wife'. As holder of the spear he was entitled to claim all the daughters produced by his newly acquired mother-in-law.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mardu/Yankunytjatja Gurindji</th>
<th>Wik Mungkan Koko Ya’o</th>
<th>Guugu Yimidhirr</th>
<th>Ompela</th>
<th>Tjungundji</th>
<th>Arnhem</th>
<th>Kune</th>
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<tr>
<td>MM/DD, (MMB)</td>
<td>MeB/yZCh</td>
<td>FF/SS</td>
<td>FF/SS</td>
<td>FMB/ZSS</td>
<td>MMB/ZDCh</td>
<td>MMAOC</td>
<td>MF/OCh</td>
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<td>MMB/ZDCh</td>
<td>MB/ZCh</td>
<td>FF/SCh</td>
<td>MF/DCh</td>
<td>MF/DS</td>
<td>MBDH/WFZS</td>
<td>MM/DCh</td>
<td>MM/DCh</td>
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<tr>
<td>some MBS/FZD</td>
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<td>MF/DCh</td>
<td>’B’ alma</td>
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<td>MMBS/FZDS</td>
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<td>MBDS</td>
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<td>FMeB/yZSS</td>
<td>BW</td>
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<td>’B’ (some classificatory)</td>
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Figure: 3.7. Classes of joking relationships throughout Aboriginal Australia.
Hiatt continues his discussion of bestowal by noting that amongst the Gijingarli or Burarra of Arnhem Land, anthropologist Annette Hamilton was told by Burarra women that the right of bestowal belonged to various kin:

Some attributed the bestowal to the daughter's maternal grandmother [which could be the man's MFZ or FM], others to her maternal uncle [or the man's MMBS], and others again to her father.

For the Martuthunira of the Pilbara, Radcliffe-Brown reported that:

.... it is conventional for a boy's father to arrange for his (the father's) WMBD or WFZD [the boys MMBD or MFZD] to be the boy's WM, and the two are thereby "made nganyi" to one another. (Scheffler 1978:194)

There appears to be little ritual expression of mother-in-law bestowal for the Kunwinjku but it is worth mentioning that during the final public section of the Yabbadurruwa, a major patri-moiety regional ceremony, young men are expected to make effigies out of paperbark which represent goannas' tails and these are buried in the ground to be later dug up in the night by their actual or prospective mothers-in-law. If a young man does not have a mother-in-law there is discussion amongst the men inside the ceremony about who the chosen mother-in-law should be even if only for the purpose of the ceremony. It is not clear however, what the role of grandkin is in these discussions.

Notes.
1. In another major ethnography, Elkin's 1964 edition of *The Australian Aborigines*, there is one reference to joking in the context of kinship avoidance, '.... an individual is free to approach and talk to some relations, but not to others; he may joke with some, but on no account with others (p.148).

2. Kin based pronoun systems are found in numerous Australian languages. Non-singular forms can mark harmonicity of generations referred to such as in Martuthunira (a Ngayarda language of the Pilbara region of W.A. (Dench 1987:331)) *ngali* '1st person inclusive dual same generation' and *nganajumarta* '1st person inclusive dual different generation'. Similar kin-based pronominal systems are also found extensively in languages of central Australia, but also Lardil on Mornington Island and Dalabon in southern Arnhem Land.

3. One possible hypothesis for the origin of the term *lambarra*, based on discussions with Patrick McConvell, is that the word originates in Walmatjari as *lambarr*. As the term diffused to the east it was borrowed by Warlipiri which disallows final consonants resulting in the addition of the final vowel. From here the term has spread further to the east, possibly via the vehicle of Kriol as far as the Roper River in south-east Arnhem Land.
4. The Wik Mungkan term *muka* is possibly cognate with Yolngu *mukul* as in *mukul bapa* 'FZ' and *mukul rumuru* 'WM'. It is likely there has been some semantic shift from one kin type to the other. The distribution of cognate kin terms throughout Australia is discussed in more detail in McConvell (in press).

5. The term *mari* (spelt *miiri* in Yolngu orthographies to show the long vowel) is most likely a borrowing from Yolngu languages into Burarra. The Burarra are the immediate neighbours to the west of the Yolngu cultural block and there are no other non-Pama-Nyungan languages in Arnhem Land (to my knowledge) which use this term. The term is probably also cognate with Gurindji *mali* 'WM/classificatory MMBC' (Patrick McConvell pers. comm.), although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to determine in which direction this shift has occurred. In all cases of Yolngu *mukul* or Wik Mungkan *muka*, the term is used for kin in the class of spouse's parent. Other cognate terms in Western Pama-Nyungan are *mayali, mayili* 'parallel grandparents' (McConvell (in press)).

6. The term 'superclass' (introduced largely as a result of Scheffler's major work *Australian Kin Classification* (1978)) is used in relation to a particular feature of Australian kinship systems. Keen (1988:83) defines the term succinctly as follows:

A superclass is a 'generic, higher order, or more inclusive class, which consists of several subclasses'. For example, if the term for FZ is extended to all women whom Ego's father classifies as 'sister', and some of these kin who are Ego's potential mothers-in-law are picked out by an additional designatum, then the latter as well as the residual class both comprise the superclass 'FATHER'S SISTER'.

7. I am indebted to Peter Danaja, Aboriginal Heritage Officer at the Maningrida Cultural Centre for this information.

8. This is not a usual Lounsbury style skewing rule, due to the unusual conditions stated here. Conditions such as clan affiliation and whether or not a particular class of kin is still extant are not the kind of conditions considered by Lounsbury (1969) for Omaha and Crow-style skewing.

9. I use the affinal definition WMB here, as *djaburik* can also be defined in a variety of other consanguineal terms, e.g. MMBS, FZDS, MMP.
Chapter 4

Eastern Kunwinjku kinship and joking relationship terminology.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the kinship system of the Eastern Kunwinjku people of western and central Arnhem Land as it relates to the use of joking relationship language. I will examine the terminology used for both kin in joking relationships and the styles of speech used with these kin. Once again, I intend to show how joking relationships are linked to issues of affinity and that both restrained and joking behaviours are closely linked in opposition. This data will then be followed in chapter 5 by further examination of actual Eastern Kunwinjku joking discourse.

I use the term Eastern Kunwinjku here to collectively label two dialect groups of the Kunwinjku language. These are the Kuninjku (note the dropping of the 'w') of the Mann and Liverpool Rivers district and their eastern neighbours, the Kune of the Cadell River region. Members of both dialect groups live today on homeland centres or outstations south of Maningrida in Arnhem Land. Kune speakers also divide themselves again into two smaller sub-dialects Kune Na-rayek or 'hard' Kune and Kune Na-kerlk, 'soft' Kune. The former are also speakers of the Dangbon language, which is a northern name for Dalabon and the latter are also Rembarrnga speakers. Very few young Kune speakers (under the age of about 35) are able to speak Dangbon or Rembarrnga and Kune has become their first language. The Kuninjku on the other hand as dialect members of western Arnhem Land's largest language group and regional lingua franca remain monolingual. Some Kuninjku people say their ancestors were really Dangbon and they should be speaking Dangbon today but they have switched to Kuninjku.

4.2 The Kunwinjku kinship system

The Kunwinjku kinship system has been described extensively in a variety of studies with the most comprehensive being R.M. and C.H. Berndt (1970) and Berndt (1971). The kinship and social organisation of the Gijingarli (Burarra) as described by Hiatt (1965) is also basically the same as that of the Kunwinjku. Some differences are that amongst the Kunwinjku/Mayali, there are no formalised alliances between clans based on marriage exchange or ritual (Taylor 1987:72) and
A further difference is that Burarra lacks the matrilineal institutions found in the Kunwinjku/Mayali system. There appears to be some minor terminology variation amongst the various Kunwinjku/Mayali dialects, but all systems involve patrilineal descent groups although there are remnants of matrilineal organisation mentioned above, as evidenced by knowledge of matrimoiety terms. The Eastern Kunwinjku (Kuninjku) kinship system has been described by Altman (1987: 27-29) and Taylor (1987:72-77) as of the Arandic type with preferred marriage being with classes of cross cousins such as MMBDC, MFZDC, FZDDC and equivalents, but also with MBC or FZC. The kinship systems of other western and southern dialects such as Gun-djeihmi, also sometimes known as Mayali2, have been outlined by Evans (1991) who describes these dialects as having kinship terminology of the Kariera type due to the classing together of certain grandparents and their siblings within the four sets of grandparents distinguished (i.e. MM, MF, FF, FM). Further variation appears to exist with terms for grandparent categories in the dialect of Mayali spoken at Manyalaluk. The following table sets out the various terms across dialects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gundjeihmi:</th>
<th>Kunwinjku/Kuninjku:</th>
<th>Manyalaluk Mayali:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FF, MMB mawah</td>
<td>FF, FFZ mawah</td>
<td>FF, FFZ, MM, MMB kakkak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM, FFZ kakkak</td>
<td>MM, MMB kakkak</td>
<td>MF, MFZ, FM FMB mamamh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF, FMB mamamh</td>
<td>MF, MFZ mamamh</td>
<td>[FM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM, FMZ makkah</td>
<td>FM, FMB makkah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Manyalaluk Mayali appears to have merged all parallel grandkin and all their siblings under the term kakkak and all cross-sex grandparents and siblings are termed mamamh which therefore only distinguishes two lines in +2 generation instead of the four lines in the other dialects. On one occasion an informant at Manyalaluk gave the term makkah for FM and so I have included this in parenthesis above. Evans (1991) suggests the existence of the Kariera system in nearby Gundjeihmi may be due to the influence of neighbouring Jawoyn, which merges the same four pairs of grandkin and allows cross-cousin marriage. Kunwinjku and its eastern dialects are most likely free of this influence and therefore do not display the Kariera features. The Manyalaluk Mayali system needs further investigation for some possible explanation but this is beyond the scope of this study.

As with all Australian classificatory systems, there is the usual sibling merging
rule which results in the Kunwinjku/Kuninjku terminology merging opposite sex siblings of grandparents as above but also the merging of same sex siblings e.g. MMZ→ MM, FFB→ FF and for other generations MZ→ M, FB→ F and therefore MZC→ sibling, FBC→ sibling. Kuninjku terms for individual kin are complex and include referential and tri-referential or 'triangular' terms. The following are the set of basic unmarked terms with selected (but not exhaustive) consanguineal and some affinal definitions:

Kuninjku kin terms.

kokok eB
djakerr yB
yabok Z
ngane-danginj my sibling [we 2 exclusive-stood]
ngadburung B/Z (sibling)
karrard M
ngabbard F
berlu FZ
ngadjadj MB
korlonj S, D
kangkinj σ ZS, σ ZD, Ψ S, Ψ D, FMBC, FMF
kakkak MM, MMB
mamamh MF, MFZ
mawah FF, FFZ
makkah FM, FMB
kakkali actual or potential spouse, ZH, WB
kanjok classificatory brother-in-law, sister-in-law, any harmonic generation affine
na-kurmg WMB, σ ZDH, Ψ DH, MMBS, FZDS, MBDS, FFF, MMB
ngal-kurmg WM, Ψ HM, MMBD, FZDD, MBDD, FFFZ, MMF
doydoy FFM, MMB, MMBB

An eight-class subsection system is also utilised by the Kuninjku. Also known as 'skin names' or in Kuninjku -kurn (Baleh ka-kurn nungka? 'What is his/her subsection?') the subsection system is basically the same throughout the Top End of the Northern Territory and throughout some neighbouring groups to the south, although the use of the system in Arnhem Land is a relatively recent innovation (McConvell 1985). The subsection system provides an ideal and
abstract means of classifying all kin, and allows strangers to determine their
classificatory kin relationships on the basis of subsection rules.

The actual terms for the subsections vary from language group to language group,
with further variation even occurring amongst dialects of a single language such
as is the case with Kunwinjku/Mayali. The terms used by the western dialects
such as Gundjeihmi and Kunwinjku differ from those used by the southern and
eastern dialects Manyalaluk Mayali, Kuninjku and Kune. Figure: 4.1 (after Evans
1991:30) illustrates the system and the variation amongst western and eastern
dialects.

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 also show subsections numbered (1) to (8) along with
consanguineal definitions. These two diagrams show the ideal arrangement of
subsections allocated on the assumption that marriage is all of the first choice
option. Thus a male ego who is in subsection (1) has a father who is subsection
(5). Had this ego's mother chosen a second choice marriage partner (e.g. a
classificatory FZD), ego's father would be subsection (7) instead of (5). This also
demonstrates that a person's subsection is determined by their mother. Ego's FF
likewise could be either subsection (1) or (3).

The two diagrams each show a total of six generations; ego's generation, three
ascending and two descending generations. The third ascending generation
unlike the others does not show co-lateral kin but is included to show some kin
terms which do not fit the pattern of terminological equivalence for alternate
generation kin. Some terms such as kakkak and na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng appear
regularly every alternate generation. Other terms such as ngadjadj and kangkinj
also appear in -1, +1 and +3 generations. All grandparent categories show
neutralisation in that the terms for the four grandparent categories (mawah,
mamamh, kakkak and makkah) are all reciprocal. Berluh appears in +1 and +3
generations (FZ, MFM) whilst karrard 'mother' appears in +1 and -1. Ngabbard
'father' appears in +1 only but in +3 becomes na-kurrng, where it is also a
possible joking relationship. This close link between ngabbard 'father' and na-
kurrng 'classificatory WMB/ZDH' is based on the possibility of cross-cousin
marriage. If a classificatory father's sister's child is a potential spouse then this
makes the classificatory father a wife's mother's brother. A classificatory wife's
Figure 4.1: Eastern Kunwinjku subsections (after Evans 1991:30).
Figure 4.2 Kuninjku classificatory kinship. Male ego, (solid line box) has possible joking relationships with classificatory kin marked in striped boxes. Subsections are numbered (1)-(8) [adapted from Taylor (1987: 73)]
Figure 4.3 Kunjinjku classificatory kinship. Female ego (marked with a solid box) has possible joking relationships with classificatory kin marked with broken boxes. Subsections are numbered (1)-(8).
mother's brother as we have already seen is also under certain conditions classed as a possible joking relationship. In the present case, FFF may be distant enough to be seen as a fictive affine considering that a man could marry his FFFZDDD. The Kunwinjku semantic definition of father may also include the notion of a relative who can only be someone of the adjacent ascending generation thus precluding the use of the term in the +3 generation.

CROSS-COUSIN SKEWING RULE.

The other connection between ngabbard 'F' and na-kurrng 'classificatory wife's brother' is due to the classification of both these kin in the same subsection. A male 'ego' who marries a 'second choice' wife will be father to children who are the same subsection as those he calls na-kurrng or ngal-kurrng. Ego's brothers, especially much younger brothers, usually refer to his wife not as kanjok or 'BW' but due to a Crow-style cross-cousin skewing rule (FZD→FZ) they will call her berluh 'FZ' and her brothers they will call ngabbard 'F' (FZS→F). Ego may also call the wives of his younger brothers korlonj 'daughter' instead of some affinal term which is skewing of FZD~D. The skewing of cross-sex cousins from the same generation as ego up to the adjacent ascending generation has been discussed by Harvey (1990) for Gaagadju and Kunwinjku and for Gundjeihmi by Evans (1991). The following diagram figure 4.4, represents an actual genealogy which illustrates two brothers who share the same father but have different mothers. Ego calls BS na-kurrng instead of korlonj 'son' because they use the skewing rule BW (FZD)→FZ. 'FZ's' (FZD) children are called na-kurrng and ngal-kurrng by ego and treated as if they are on the same generation as ego. Sibling equivalence rules which would normally classify the children of a man as also being the children of his brother are broken by the skewing rule.
Note that in figure 4.4 despite the skewing and the raising of both FZD and BS (or FZDS) up one generation, the children of both ego and his ngadburung 'brother' still call each other siblings. In Kuninjku they are considered birri-kukudji 'the same generation/siblings'. There is a joking relationship between ego and his BS who call each other na-kurrng an affinal term but not an actual affinal relationship. The dotted line between ego's father and father's sister represents a distant classificatory connection.

4.3 The semantics of joking relationship terminology.

THE STEM -KURRNG.

The kin term na-kurrng or ngal-kurrng is translated into Aboriginal English with the word 'cousin'. Numerous Yolngu languages of north-east Arnhem Land have the term gurrung 'FZDC' which is most likely related to Kunwinjku -kurrng although the Yolngu term is not reciprocal; muralkur meaning 'WMB' (Williams 1981:61). In addition to the kin terms na-kurrng and ngal-kurrng the stem -kurrng also appears with the kun- (class IV) noun class prefix commonly used with words for language names or speech styles. Thus kun-kurrng means 'style of speech used with kin in the class of na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng'. The most common meaning of kun-kurrng is associated with the special register of
constraint language used between WM and DH. As mentioned in chapter 1, 'mother-in-law' or 'avoidance' registers in Australian Aboriginal languages have been the subject of a number of studies (e.g. Dixon 1972, 1980, Haviland 1979, Harris 1970, Rumsey 1982, McConvell 1982). Like many of the avoidance styles in such studies, kun-kurrng involves extensive lexical replacement of nouns, verbs and adjectives and avoids direct address as well as other stylistic features. In Dalabon, even the use of third person singular forms when referring to one's WM or DH (speaking to WM/DH is normally eschewed) is avoided by substituting a form of person disguise which uses third person plural forms. This occurs also in Kuninjku as in the following kun-kurrng example where a man asks his kun-doy or classificatory WF in a very circumspect manner for the loan of a generator and uses plurals for all pronominal prefixes as well as the irrealis and the conditional bu 'if':

(11)

Bu kandi-weybu-yi ngarri-djaloy-i.
If 2a/1a-give-IRR 1a-want-IRR
If you (pl.) could possibly give it to us we would like that.

This is contrasted with the everyday language which in a direct request between two individuals would be as follows:

(12)

Nga-djare kan-won.
I-want 2/1-giveNP
I want you to give it to me.

Kun-kurrng is also known as kun-balak or more rarely kun-mikme 'the language one uses with spouse's mother and spouse's MB (and equivalent kin)'. Balak is a synonym for -kurrng and is possibly loaned from Dalabon (also Ngalakan balak 'MMBD'). The term ngal-balak 'WM' in Kuninjku is a rare form, but the usual term in Dalabon/Dangbon is balak-ngan 'my WM/DH' (balak +possessive pronoun). The Kuninjku term -balakbun means to bestow a daughter in marriage (balak 'mother-in-law relationship' + bun '[verb root] 'produce'): 
One of the arguments of this thesis is that either joking or constrained behaviors can occur with the same class of kin depending on the presence of either actual or fictive affinity. Therefore avoidance and joking styles of speech paradoxically belong in the same class, a class of marked speech that one uses with affines. Avoidance or lexical-replacement register is used with actual affines and joking register is used with fictive affines. Kun-kurrng as mentioned above, is often applied to mean the avoidance register used between WM or WMB and QDH or σ ZDH. However, if some classes of a man's na-kurrng are joking partners, the term kun-kurrng is still applied to the marked register of humorous banter used in joking relationships. Consider the following texts which make this clear. The first is between a man and his na-kurrng as they speak on the telephone. I had asked the speaker in the following transcript if I could record him using joking language with his joking partner. He rang his customary joking partner, his na-kurrng, and spoke to him about my request on the telephone (the complete transcript of this conversation is in appendix A):

(14) Telephone discussion about kun-kurrng.

   Prop.n. You. Here 2sg-lookIMP 12-talkNP 3pl-wantNP  
   Balanda.  
   non-Aboriginal person  
   njamed 'cousin business' yi-bengka-n?  
   whatsit 'cousin business' 2sg-know-NP  
   GY[NAME]? It's you! Look, some non-Aboriginal people want us to do  
   some talking about whatsit, 'cousin business', you know what I mean?  

2. GY: [unrecorded utterance]
Well when we (jokingly) swear at each other using bad language that's what they're interested in, you know what I mean? They want you and I to do it.

3. GY: [unrecorded utterance]
   Yes, IV-like that 3pl-wantNP IV-'cousin'.talk III-REL 2sg-know-NP
Yeah, they want us to use kun-kurrng, that style of speaking with 'cousins' [MMBC/FZDC], you know?

In line 2, the speaker identifies the style of speech between na-kurrng as ngarr-durren 'you and I swear at each other' and kun-warre 'bad speech'. In line 3 such a style is labelled as kun-kurrng. Based on this use of the term, a definition of kun-kurrng is more along the line of 'a marked style of speech which is used by those who call each other na-kurrng'. A man does not joke with his ngal-kurrng (although in north-east Arnhem Land, as discussed in chapter 3, there is a possible joking relationship between a man and his classificatory mother-in-law). Women who call each other classificatory ngal-kurrng sometimes joke with each other but the intensity of the teasing is much less and references of a sexual nature are quite circumspect.

The patterns of behaviour that can be observed between two men who call each other na-kurrng is sometimes quite ambiguous. A pair of na-kurrng who are in a joking relationship still at the same time paradoxically display a demeanour to each other of circumspection and marked behaviour which suggests notions of both affection and respect. Both na-kurrng (WMB-ZDH) who are joking partners and actual na-kurrng in a constrained or avoidance (non-joking) relationship will pass food or other objects to each by using the respectful gesture of holding the forearm of the other arm being extended with the object being passed. Two brothers-in-law or any other pair of affines will do the same. Joking partners will
often use this physical advertisement of affinity, and at the same time exploit it by taking the pretence of respect up to a certain point and then delivering a humorous *coup de grâce* as in the following interaction:

(15) Two joking partners sharing food.

A: Nja,..... 'kas' [holds arm in respectful gesture] yi-ngu-ø! [pause] here.you.are 'cousin' 2sg-eat-IMP
    Ba yi-dedj-dabke-rr-en. so 2sg-bum-block-RR-NP
    Here you are my 'cousin', eat this [hands damper over]..... so you can block your arsehole with it!

B: Ngudda yi-ngu-ø, ba yi-kord-djabname-ø!
    You 2sg-eat-IMP so 2sg-shit-pile.up-NP.
    YOU eat it, so you can pile the shit up!

The ambiguity of joking relationships is also evident in some ritual contexts such as when young ceremonial neophytes have completed their induction into one of the patrimoiety cult ceremonies or other rituals such as the hollow log coffin installation ceremony *lorrkon*. Even as young infants, Kuninjku children are encouraged by their adult kin to use joking and good-humoured teasing with those classed as their joking partners. In Kunwinjku society, a boy and his older adult joking partner will continue this behaviour up until the time of the boy's induction into one of the various secret-sacred ceremonies. During the ceremony and after its completion, the boy will no longer be allowed to joke with his *na-kurrng* although he may still use the *kunmodjarewarre* speech style (the term used for grandkin joking) with his *kakkak*. In addition he will not be allowed to converse with or speak within hearing range of any senior affines. These relatives may include any senior kin the boy calls *na-kurrng*, *kanjok* or *kun-doy*. The restriction is on all speech rather than joking alone and the Kuninjku call the speech restriction relationship *-marnewokyak* for which the English translation given is 'shut-up for somebody'. If someone under such a restriction is addressed in the presence of a speech taboo relative, communication can only be by sign
language accompanied by hissing and whistling sounds which tend to imitate the intonation patterns of ordinary vocalised speech. Should a breach of etiquette occur, even inadvertently and a senior partner hear his junior counterpart speaking, the younger partner will be subjected to a fine such as the payment of food or in one case I observed a monetary penalty of ten dollars. If a person addresses someone in the range of hearing of their *marnewokyak* partner even the interaction with non-taboo kin must be carried on in sign language and hissing (voiceless alveolar fricative [s]). Occasionally such communication begins in the following way:

(16) A: [verbal address made to B, with C nearby in hearing range with whom B has a speech restriction relationship]  
B: [B replies to A with sign language and [s] hissing]  
C: Na-ngale yi-marne-wok-yak?  
I-who 2sg-BEN-speech-PRIV  
Who are you shutting-up for?  
B: [sign language; points to part of body as sign language to indicate kin relationship with C]

In the speech restriction dyad, the senior member may speak to his junior but junior must reply with sign language and hissing. If the two are joking partners the senior member may still tease his junior partner but the joking becomes asymmetrical with junior only allowed to joke in sign language (using the sign illustrated in figure 4.5) and only in response to being teased or sworn at by his senior joking partner. At times like this, the humour can be intense as ribald sign language leaves little to the imagination and the interaction takes on a theatrical tone. The most common non-verbal sign relating to joking relationships involves the poking of the index finger with the other fingers of the hand perpendicular as illustrated in figure 4.5 below:

It is almost a daily occurrence in Arnhem Land Aboriginal communities to see a passenger or driver in a passing car offering the joking relationship index finger gesture to their joking partner as they drive past. The Kuninjku call this gesture *dihdihme* 'to poke the finger at OBJ.' Sometimes the index finger gesture will be made behind the back of a person’s joking partner. In cases like
cases like this, someone outside of the joking dyad will be expected to inform the 'victim' of the antic who will then usually retaliate with a verbal retort such as in the following typical exchange:

(17) A: [joking relationship finger-poking sign done behind back of joking partner B]

C: ey! ngun-dihdihme-ng na-kkan!
   Hey 3/2-poke.finger.in.jest-PP I-DEM
   Hey, he's giving you 'the finger'!

B: Yi-ra-y yi-ngarreyabok!
   2sg-go-IMP 2sg-fuck.you
   Fuck off!

The speech restrictions of the -marnewokyak relationship can continue for
years and into adulthood for the junior member, especially between actual affines such as a man and his real father-in-law. At any time if both parties agree to lifting the speech sanction, a brief ritual is performed which is called *kabi-dangbarung* 'he will smear his mouth'. This involves both men sitting face to face, with the junior member of the pair biting a stick which is aflame at both ends. Whilst the flaming stick is held in the mouth the two take each other's hands and alternatively move their joined arms back and forth whilst surrounding relatives chant "*yarra yarra, yarra yarra* ". The burning stick is removed and the senior partner rubs his underarm scent over the mouth of his partner. The speech restriction is now lifted and the younger man will pay his older partner with gifts such as cloth, food or tobacco or the two will exchange gifts. Berndt discusses this speech tabu as being between *kakkali* 'ZH, WB' and describes it as an expression of a 'deep emotional bond between male *kakkali* ' (1971:181). That joking can be associated with classificatory affines with whom one has (or has had) a speech tabu is also noted by Berndt (concerning the Kunwinjku):

> Once the speech tabu is lifted, this is, conventionally, a joking relationship. Men bandy accusations such as 'I'll spear you because you didn't give me your sister' or *kakkak*; 'you've got my *kakkak* lighting a fire for you and I have no woman. 'But this licensed joking about sisters does not seem to take place between full *kakkali* (1971:183).

My observations suggest that the speech tabu reverts to a joking relationship after the restrictions are lifted only if the two people are already in a relationship which satisfies the conditions for a joking relationship ('fictive' or non-actual affines). Actual affines continue to observe normal respectful interaction after a speech tabu is lifted (they may speak to each other, but not as in a joking relationship).

Strong bonds of friendship and affection also exist between two (male) *na-kurrng* or two (female) *ngal-kurrng*. Often when visiting a neighbouring outstation community or another family camp, I have heard older adults encouraging the visitor to camp with his *na-kurrng*. The Kuninjku also say that the strong bond of friendship between *na-kurrng-ko* 'a *na-kurrng* dyad' also has a basis in traditional law and myth. One story tells of *Namarrkon* the lightning ancestral being who became enraged and started throwing lightning
bolts in a furious display of destructive force. In the end it was his na-kurrng who took hold of him and pacified him. Today the Kuninjku say that when a man bursts into a fit of anger and rage, it is only his na-kurrng who is able to restrain him and convince him to settle down. At funeral ceremonies a person who engages in self-mutilation is usually only able to be approached and restrained by their na-kurrng (or ngal-kurrng if they are a woman).

The ambiguous nature of the na-kurrng relationship is further demonstrated as above by the term kun-kurrng itself which includes both the lexical replacement register kun-balak and the banter of joking relationship interaction. The following text also mentions kun-kurrng as the joking language style used by those who call each other na-kurrng:

(Appendix C44-46)

   I-DEM IV-'cousin'.lect grandkin.joking OK 3a-swear-RR-NP.
   That 'cousin' language and grandkin joking style, they swear at each other.

2. MG: Kun-kurrng, kunmodjarewarre ka-rohrok?
   IV-'cousin'.lect, grandkin.joking 3sg-same
   Are kun-kurrng ('cousin' lect/mother-in-law language) and kunmodjarewarre (grandkin swearing/joking) the same?

3. MK: Yoh, ka-rohrok kunmodjarewarre rowk. Yiman kun-kurrng,
   Yes, 3sg-same grandkin.joking all Such.as IV-'cousin'.lect kun-kurrng rerri.
   IV-'cousin'.lect same.again.
   Yes, it's all the same as grandkin joking speech style. Its like 'kun-kurrng', its the same as 'kun-kurrng' (special register of speech to use with actual and potential affines).

KUNMODJAREWARRE GRANDKIN JOKING
The style of joking language used between those who call each other kakak (MM[B] and ZDC) has the special term kunmodjarewarre. This term is only used
for the joking speech used between parallel maternal grandkin. It cannot be used as a label to describe the joking speech between *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng*. Line 1 above makes it quite clear that the term *kun-kurrng* can be used to describe the joking speech style between two *na-kurrng*. The speaker describes both joking relationship speech styles *kunmodjarewarre* and *kun-kurrng*, which appear to have no stylistic differences, as being the same. *Kun-kurrng* then, is a broad term which encompasses all possible ways of speaking to those called *na-kurrng* or *ngal-kurrng*. These special marked forms of speech are either the lexical replacement style which can also be terminologically disambiguated as *kun-balak*, 'speech style with spouse bestower' or the humorous banter of the joking relationship which with maternal parallel grandkin (those who are called *kakkak*) is called *kunmodjarewarre* and with *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng* is referred to by the broader term *kun-kurrng*. Such a term seems to encompass stylistic opposites, avoidance speech and the often obscene humour of the joking relationship. This provides further evidence for strong connections between two speech styles which are often described in the literature as being at opposite ends of the patterned speech behaviour continuum.

The term used for the joking speech style used with parallel maternal grandkin *kunmodjarewarre* can be analysed as:

- kun- 'neuter noun class (includes language class) prefix'
- -mo 'bone'
- -djare 'desire, want'
- -warre 'bad'.

The concept of grandkin being related to 'bone' can possibly be equated with the same correspondence in other Australian languages such as we have already seen in Yankunytjatjara *nganantarka* 'we bone' meaning members of kin in the harmonic generations (same and alternate generations). Likewise in Burarra, the MM(B)-(Z)DC grandkin relationship is described as follows (M. Carew pers. comm.):

```
    an-ngardapa an-mama butala    'They have the same bone.'
     I-one    I-bone 3du OBLIQUE
```

However in Kuninjku, a father can also address his children as *na-mo* or
ngal-mo 'my son' or 'my daughter'. The segment -mo-, by one angle of analysis also appears in the Kunwinjku term for cross-cousin skewing as described above:

```
kabene-mo-djarrk-do-rr-inj  'skew generations'
3du-bone-together-strike-RR-PP
```

Another possible analysis is based on the segment -modjarrk which in some dialects of kun-kurrng avoidance register means 'nose' (kun-modjarrk) which produces a mysterious literal 'they struck noses together'. In Kuninjku however, the kun-kurrng (or kun-balak) equivalent for kun-keb 'nose' is different; kun-ngandjak. Taking the former analysis gives something like 'they struck generations together' which provides a more viable etymology for a term which means 'to skew'.

The segment djare 'desire' is more difficult to explain in terms of relevance to a joking speech style. Berndt & Berndt recorded the term djarewarre ('djuruwari' 1970: 90 and note also the Burarra term jarawarra discussed in chapter 3) which they discuss as a form of illicit extra-marital relations between a man and woman who call each other classificatory kakkak 'MM/DS or MMB/ZDD'.

One custom that was coming into vogue among young men and women in 1950 was the djuruwari [djarewarre], a sweetheart relationship between people calling each other gagag [kakkak]. Because they belong to the same matrilineal moiety (though to opposite patrilineal moieties) this is formally wrong, and manipulating subsection affiliations is wrong too. Consequently, it is something 'other people do', or at least not something to boast about too freely or too seriously. If it is handled lightly- and provided the others immediately concerned (husband, wife etc.) make no fuss- then it can be publicly regarded as an escapade-in-words instead of an actuality, like the accusations and threats that are a part of the content of joking relationships.

The joking between a male and female kakkak and the circumspect although rather relatively lame sexual innuendoes which are common in interaction between kakkak in cross-sex joking relationships may be the basis for such illicit djarewarre relationships. In this context the term djarewarre might be understood to mean 'illicit desire' but I suspect the term -warre has more to do with the classification of kakkak as a kind of affine. Numerous affinal kin terms in Kuninjku (and the other dialects) contain the segment -warre and the semantic shift from 'bad' to 'affine' has been discussed in the literature. Sommer (1978: 180) discusses the semantic connection between 'bad' and 'taboo' noting:
The use of the term 'no-good' in an opposing semantic sense is not only relevant to clan lands or food, but also to close consanguineal or affinal kin.

Sommer also lists a number of kin terms in Cape York languages (Ogh Undjan and Oykangand) which contain morphemes related to proto-Australian *wara 'no-good' (or *warri 'bad') (Evans 1990: 138)). Likewise, Sutton mentions the use of the Wik term waya 'bad' in reference to 'taboo[ed], dangerous or restricted' affinal kin 'which expresses formal shame at the making of references to wiinhtha [constrained relationship kin] people' (1982:190). Kunwinjku -warre is almost certainly related to *warri also. Consider some of the following Kuninjku kin terms which are all trirelational or kun-derbi 'triangular kin terms'. These terms are part of a complex system of referencing kin and are discussed in relation to joking relationships in the following section. The terms in the following list however are glossed as encoding three relationships in the following order: between the speaker and referent, the addressee and the referent and the speaker and the addressee:

berlungkhwarre
- my older brother, your kakkak 'MMB', you are my kakkak 'ZDC'.
berluwarre
- my kakkali 'wife', your berluh 'auntie FZ', you are my kangkinj 'nephew or niece ZC'.
ngal-dedjnawarre
- my berluh 'auntie FZ', your karrard 'mother', you and I call each other mamamh 'MF/DC'.
na-djumuwarre
- my kanjok 'brother-in-law', your ngadburungi 'brother', you are my kakkali 'spouse'.
ngal-mulawarre
- my wife, your kakkak 'MM/DD', you and I call each other mamamh 'MF/DC'.
makkawarre
- my kakkak, your wife, you and I call each other mamamh 'MF/DC'.
na-ngadjkewarre
- my ngadjadj 'uncle, MB', your na-kurrng 'WMB, MMBS etc', you and I call each other makka 'FM, SC, ZSC' (OR spouse or brother/sister-in-law).
ngal-yabokwarre
- my wife, your sister, you and I are brothers-in-law.
nakurndjewarre
- my djaker 'younger brother', your na-kurrng, you and I call each other na-kurrng.

Assuming that -warre in kunmodjarawarre is also of a similar semantic
connection to affinal terminology, *kakkak* grandkin joking can also be considered as joking with a class of affines 'of sorts', possibly with the bestower of one's mother-in-law.

4.4 Joking relationships and triangular kinship terminology.

The list of above trirelational kin terms are examples of a system of kin referencing which as Heath (1982:15) describes it 'simultaneously index speaker's and addressee's kin relationship to the designated referent (and to each other)'. *Kun-derbi* (trirelational) terms therefore in a single expression encode the relationship between a speaker and addressee, speaker and a referent and the referent and the addressee. This system is common to many Australian languages and in Kuninjku is known as *kun-rdebi*[^9] in Kune *kun-rdebuy*, Kunwinjku *kun-debi* and in Gundjejimi *gun-dembui* (*kun-dembuy* in Kunwinjku orthography). I include a discussion of the system here in order to examine some *kun-derbi* terms which encode kin in joking relationships. The data in this section shows that the same trirelational kin terms can be used when encoding reference to both kin in actual relationships of affinity and some classes of kin in joking relationships, which once again reveals the ambiguous nature of joking relationships.

In a trirelational kinship system, terms of reference do not always equally emphasise the three relationships encoded. Sometimes the relationship between a particular pair in the triad is emphasised over others. This emphasis has been referred to as 'centricity' in the literature (Merlan 1982, 1989, Evans n.d.). Terms which emphasise the relationship between the speaker and the referent are called 'egocentric' and those between addressee and referent are 'altercentric'. This distinction is useful in the following discussion.

The data I wish to examine in relation to these issues concerns an actual genealogy as represented in the following diagram. This genealogy is chosen because of the existence of joking relationships between Ego and his classificatory brother's sons:
In figure 4.6, Ego is a member of the *Kardbam* patri-clan. His classificatory brother has dual membership of a Kunibídji language group clan and a Kunwinjku clan called *Djalama*. Ego could call his classificatory brother's wife in this case *kanjok*, a cross-cousin affine, but here *kabene-modjarrkdorrinj*; 'they skew generations' and he calls her *korlonj* 'D'. With her children, ego has a joking relationship and he calls the sons *na-kurrng*, a reciprocal term. When Ego and his brother's elder son (BeS) use *kun-rdebi* trirelational terms with each other, the following terms are used:

- Ego to BeS in reference to ByS - *ngabbard* ['F'] OR *na-djumu*  
  [na-'masculine noun class prefix' + djumu]
- BeS to Ego in reference to ByS - *na-kurndjewarre*  
  [na-'masculine noun class prefix' + kurndje + warre 'affine suffix']
- Ego to BeS in reference to BeSW - *ngaluka*  
  [ngal- 'feminine noun class prefix' + (w)uka 'your spouse']
- BeS to Ego in reference to Ego'sW - *ngal-kanjok*  
  [ngal- 'feminine noun class prefix' + kanjok 'spouse class']
- Ego to BeS in reference to Ego'sW - *ngarduk kanjok*  
  [ngarduk 'my', kanjok 'spouse class']
In order to see some patterned usage for some of the above terms consider the following alternative applications:

1. *na-djumu*
   a. my daughter's son, your younger brother, you are my daughter's son.
   b. my father, your younger brother, you are my brother's son. (the reciprocal is *na-kurndje* )
   c. My uncle, your brother, you are my uncle (the reciprocal is *ke ngadjadj*).

2. *na-djumuwarre*
   a. my *kanjok 'brother-in-law', your ngadburrung 'brother', you are my kakkali 'spouse'.

3. *na-kurndje*
   a. my younger brother, your grandson, you are my mother's father.
   b. my younger brother, your father, you are my auntie 'FZ' (the reciprocal is *na-djumu*).

Evidence of skewing appears in the above usage of tri-relational terms. 1.(b) represents the situation illustrated in figure 4.6 above (Ego to BeS in reference to ByS) where although Ego calls BeS by the affinal term *na-kurrng*, the tri-relational term reveals avoids any affinal connotation by using the *kun-rdebi* term *ngabbard 'F'. The alternative term *na-djumu* is also based on the assumption that Ego is choosing to relate to ByS, his *na-kurrng* as a father, which also avoids any affinal connotation. 3(b) involves skewing a classificatory BD up two generations and calling her FZ. This is based again on the ambiguity of *na-kurrng* and *ngal-kurrng* who also can be 'father' or in the case of *ngal-kurrng* 'father's sister'. In 3(b) if ego relates to addressee as FZ he will use the *kun-derbi* term *na-kurndje* when speaking about the referent, ego's younger brother. If ego relates to addressee as *ngal-kurrng* instead of FZ, the correct *kun-derbi* term for ego's reference to ego's younger brother is *na-kurndjewarre*. The suffix *-warre* is used to denote an affinal relationship; that is- 'my younger brother, your *na-kurrng* (classificatory or actual son-in-law), you are my *ngal-kurrng*. Similarly in figure 4.6 above, BeS in addressing Ego in reference to ego's ByS uses the kun-derbi term *na-kurndjewarre*. This is use of the affinal suffix *-warre* for reference to 'my
younger brother your joking-relationship-na-kurrng, you and I call each other 
joking-relationship-na-kurrng'. However, ego in addressing BeS in reference to 
ByS may also use the term ngabbard 'F', clearly not an affinal term but once again, 
reveals the 'na-kurrng--ngabbard' ambiguity.

The use of terms which have the affinal suffix -warre in relation to kin in joking 
relationships is established from the following patterned usage of the above 
kun-derbi terms:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{djumu}= & \text{my (non-affine) X, your sibling, I call you (non-affine) X also} \\
\text{djumuwarre}= & \text{my affine X, your sibling, I call you affine X also.} \\
\text{kurndje}= & \text{my sibling, your (non-affine) X, you call me (non-affine) X also.} \\
\text{kurndjewarre}= & \text{my sibling, your affine X, you call me affine X also.}
\end{align*}
\]

The other pattern which emerges in the above examples concerns centricity. In 
figure 4.6 above, Ego says ngabbard 'father' to BeS in reference to ByS. Here the 
term is clearly egocentric. Ego can also call his na-kurrng 'father' as we have seen. 
The reciprocal term used by BeS na-kurndjewarre contains the affinal suffix 
-warre which reveals an altercentric usage. A man would not refer to his brother 
as an affine and so we can assume that the term na-kurndjewarre focuses on the 
affinal-cum-joking relationship that Ego has with ByS. Both the terms ngabbard 
and na-kurndjewarre therefore focus on the relationship between ego and his 
joking relationship na-kurrng. If joking relationships, as I have argued, are 
considered a special form of affinal relationships, then the kun-derbi emphasis of 
them as in the above examples is consistent with Merlan's (1982:131) maxim of 
centricity for 'avoidance relations':

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{... when talking of those relations which we may generally designate 'avoidance}
\text{relatives', the norm is for an adult speaker to refer egocentrically in terms of his own}
\text{relationship to those kin. Conversely, other people in speaking to him of his}
\text{'avoidance' kinsmen refer altercentrically in terms of his 'avoidance' relationship to}
\text{them- such is the salience of the 'avoidance' relationship.}
\end{align*}
\]

USING KUN-DERBI IN JOKING RELATIONSHIP INTERACTION.
The kun-derbi system is a complicated system for avoiding direct reference to 
other kin. It is a circumspect and polite way of talking about other relations, and
is especially useful in making direct references to kin with whom the addressee may have an affinal and in the case of actual or potential spouses, a possible sexual relationship. As joking relationship language tends to exploit etiquette and reverse the norms of other contexts to create humour, it is not surprising that *kun-derbi* is sometimes used to ironically insult one's joking partner. The following interaction is an example:

(18) Context: A and B are two male joking partners and are sitting on the corner of the verandah of a house. Suddenly an exceptionally mangy female camp dog with no fur, numerous sores and a pro-lapsed uterus appears from around the corner.

A: [to B] Ngaluka ka-m-h-re ngal-kka.
   triangular.kin.term 3sg-hither-IMM-go II-DEM
   Here comes your wife!

In this case, the *kun-derbi* term *ngaluka* means 'your wife, you and I are *nakurrng*'. The term *ngaluka* is considered for some combinations of kin to be an exceptionally polite and circumspect way of referring to someone's spouse or in-law. It is also often used in joking relationship sallies such as above. Clearly an altercentric term, *ngaluka* (underlyingly *ngal-wuka*) does not encode any relationship between the speaker and referent otherwise a suitable retort to the above joke would be 'well if she's my wife she must be your sister's daughter' (and one must never joke about a man's sister). The humour of *kun-derbi* joking lies in the creation of the following script opposition (as discussed in chapter 1):

| indirectness of kun-derbi usage for politeness | indirectness of kun-derbi usage for vulgarity |

4.5 Conclusion

Aboriginal kinship systems rely on a number of strategies to manipulate structural regulations and create relationships which meet the needs of individuals despite such regulations. A system which creates large numbers of classificatory affines combined with norms about relating to affines with burdensome responsibilities will most likely also develop means of relieving
such demands where there is no need to actually respond to them. In this chapter I have examined the place of joking relationships in the Eastern Kunwinjku kinship system and seen that they are one of a number of techniques used to minimise the obligations and weightiness of interaction between affines.

Various explanations for the purpose of skewing in kinship systems have been discussed in the literature (e.g. Murdock 1949, Welter 1988, Lucich 1968). Harvey (1990:41) discusses Crow-style skewing amongst the Gaagadju and Kunwinjku, as satisfying a preference that a mother-in-law should be on the same generation level as her prospective mother-in-law. Another function, (although not necessarily the primary one) of skewing as I have observed it, is the realisation of a maxim which seeks to remove people from the constrained contexts of affinity and move them into a generation of more social congeniality, such as berlu 'FZ' or ngabbard 'F' instead of kanjok, 'potential spouse' or 'brother-in-law'. The system of joking relationships with fictive affines is also based on the same principle. A combination of cross-cousin skewing, reclassifying na-kurrng and ngal-kurrng as F and FZ respectively and joking with the male children of ones skewed FZ are all realisations of the principle of affinal minimalisation. What an onerous situation it would be if it was expected that all classificatory affines, (who are commonplace by virtue of kinship systems which create classificatory affines by extension) had to be treated with the usual constrained demeanour expected with actual affines. Joking relationships solve this problem by lightening the load so to speak and at the same time show evidence of the affinal nature of the relationship which is evoked by the inverted character of the language and behaviour used between joking partners. It is this inversion and how it is interpreted in Eastern Kunwinjku joking relationships which is the focus of the next chapter.

Notes
1. Maddock (1969: 45) discusses the participation of the 'Gunei' (Kune) in Yabbadurruruwa rites at Beswick in the 1960s. Kyle-Little (1957:214), Altman (1987:15) and Taylor (1987: 70), all mention an eastern Kunwinjku dialect by the name of Gurra, Guru, or Kuru respectively. My information suggests that this term [guru?] in the Kunwinjku orthography is Kurruh and is a Kuninjku label for the Kune who use the emphatic imperative interjection 'kurruh' and whom the Kuninjku describe as kabirri-kurruhme 'they use the word 'kurruh''. Examples of Kune use of the word include the following; Kurruh bih 'Don't deny it!', Kurruh kan-dadjung 'Hey, give it to me'. For a description of some of the distinctive linguistic features of Kune and its position in the Kunwinjku/Mayali dialect chain,
2. Mayali is a term which means different things to different Kunwinjku/Mayali speakers. Also meaning 'thought, idea' and borrowed into Yolngu languages, the term Mayali is sometimes used as a broad label for all speakers who use the word kun-wok for 'language, word'. Sometimes the label is used to describe a particular dialect such as that spoken at Manyalaluk, Barunga and the Pine Creek area. Some Kunwinjku speakers at Kunbarlanja (Oenpelli) use the word in the 'idea, thought' sense but are hostile to its use as a broad label for all Kunwinjku related dialects. The Kuninjku (Eastern Kunwinjku) on the other hand say yoh, Mayali ngarri-wokdi rowk 'we all speak Mayali', but do not specifically refer to their variety of language as Mayali, but rather 'Kuninjku'. For a further discussion of the use of the term Mayali see Evans (1991: 1-12).

3. The term skin 'kinship subsection' is an Aboriginal English term used widely throughout the Top End. The Eastern Kunwinjku term -kurn as well as meaning 'subsection' also means 'right hand' (kun-kurn).

4. Unfortunately I was unable to record the speech of both participants in the conversation due to a lack of the necessary audio equipment.

5. The use of teasing by children and its encouragement by adults as a form of language socialisation has been the topic of a number of studies (Schieffelin 1986 in Papua New Guinea, Eisenberg 1986 in Mexico, Miller 1986 in urban USA).

6. I am grateful to an anonymous Kamarrang (subsection) at the Maningrida Cultural Centre for the photograph of his demonstration of this sign language.

7. A similar speech tabu lifting ceremony is described by Stanner for Aboriginal groups in the Daly River region (1937:305).

8. Actually the Berndts were mistaken here. Those who call each other ka k k a k do not belong to opposite patrilineal moieties, which adds to the illegality of the arrangement.

Chapter 5 The language of Eastern Kunwinjku joking relationships.

This chapter examines Eastern Kunwinjku joking relationship language based on recordings and notes of interaction between joking partners. Both the linguistic and paralinguistic features of joking speech are discussed and comparisons are made with examples in the literature and from my own observations of other Australian Aboriginal languages, mostly from Arnhem Land. So far, I have amongst other things sought to show that joking interaction is a form of inverse behaviour to the usual norms of constrained behaviour which exist between actual affines. To develop this hypothesis requires identifying in some detail the features which mark interaction between joking partners and comparing these features with the way that actual affines interact. Other aspects of joking relationship language such as the special interjection 'response cries' are also examined in this chapter.

5.1 Joking interaction terminology

In chapter 4, the Kuninjku speech-style label kunmodjarewarre was discussed as the term used for joking interaction between parallel maternal grandkin. Joking speech between na-kurrng 'WMB or MMBS' is described by the Kuninjku as kun-kurrng, a generic 'cousin talk' term which also includes the lexical-replacement register called kun-balak, usually used between a man and his actual mother-in-law. When describing in more detail the manner in which joking partners interact, Kuninjku people use the word -durren, a reflexive form of the verb -dung 'swear at', 'argue angrily', 'abuse' or 'berate'. Note also in line 9, the emphasis on direct use of the second person singular, which in polite speech is normally avoided.

(19) [see appendix C for the full transcript]

   Yes 3a-swear-RR-NP IV-DEM 3a-swear-RR-NP 3ua-goNP
   Yeah, they swear at each other. They always swear at each other.

   You 3/3-BEN-sayNP I-REL woman-GEN IV-bad 3/3-BEN-sayNP
   "You!", he says to him, and says vulgar things to him about women.

I-DEM IV-'cousin'.lect grandkin.joking OK 3a-swear-RR-NP.

That 'cousin' language and grandkin joking style, it's OK for them to swear at each other.

This same term -durren is used to describe both the humorous swearing of joking relationships and in serious contexts such as intentional insults or fights. This is part of the ambiguity of joking interaction and the source of the humour. Ambiguity as we have seen, also exists in relation to the terminology for 'cousin' talk as mentioned above. *Kun-kurrrng* is a term which encompasses two opposite speech styles used with *na-kurrrng* and *ngal-kurrrng*, bringing to mind the popular Aboriginal English adage 'same but different'. Arguing or swearing at each other is however something that those in constrained relationships cannot do. In opposition to this, joking partners are constantly engaged in mock argument and the exchange of abusive language.

Kuninjku terms which distinguish joking from angry insults include - *malelmarren* [fun+get+RR+NP] 'humour each other' and the associated reduplicated noun *malehmalel* 'joshing' or 'good-humoured teasing'.

(20)


Yeah, MM/B-ZDC 3ua-CONT-joke-get-RR-NP I-REL

Yes, it's grandkin (MMB/ZDC) who always joke with each other.

Another term *kun-berr* 'humorous talk' is also used but not exclusively for the humour of joking relationships:

(21)

A: Njale ngune-djekme?

What 2du-laughNP

What are you two laughing about?

B: Bonj, ngad kun-berr ngane-djekme.

finish, we.excl IV-fun 1ua-laughNP

Nothing, we're just having a private joke.
To the south of the Kuninjku, the neighbouring Dalabon term *dalaberr* 'fun [literally *dala+berr* 'mouth fun']' is usually associated with the joshing and badinage of joking relationships. The following quote from a senior Dalabon man recorded at Barunga is a Kriol (with Dalabon code mixing) explanation of the Dalabon term *dalaberr*.

(22)
Ngarrah-berr-ma-rrvn-iyan, laik wi fan yu no, laik wigen ple laf. Mait bi yu 1a-fun-get-RR-FUT
gen promisim o mait bi im promis yu, balak-ngu. They don sidaun laik WM-yours
salki wei they goda yu no, hepi. Samtaim maitbi tokin tu they tok "Ail givit yu mai doda". Yeah im telim laia! That not tru. Bykah-wurrhkah. 3/3-deceiveNP

Dalaberr is used between someone you call 'cousin' (e.g. MMBS). I can make a lot of fun for you (if you're my 'cousin'). We have a lot of fun and we are always laughing. We'll always joke with each other and laugh a lot. Maybe I will promise to give you my daughter in marriage or you can do the same for me. They (a pair of 'cousins') don't sit down and act serious all the time; they've got to, you know, be happy. Sometimes they might say something like this, "I'll give you my daughter in marriage." Yeah, but he's only lying. That's not true. He tricks him.

5.2 Joking discourse structure
LINGUISTIC FEATURES
The language used in joking interaction may be described as a discrete style but unlike the highly marked nature of *kun-balak*, the lexical replacement *kun-kurrng* register, joking style is almost identical to everyday speech in terms of grammar and lexicon. Of course, swearing and vulgarity is only appropriate in certain contexts such as serious conflict and in institutionalised joking relationships, and is not in this sense part of 'everyday' usage. In terms of sentence structure however, there are in Kuninjku few features which set joking style speech apart from ordinary styles of speaking. This also seems to be the case for joking style speech in most Australian languages.
The typical joking epithet in Kuninjku consists of pronominal prefix+incorporated noun (usually a body part)+adjective. Common examples include:

(23)

yi-dedj-warla [2sg-anus-wide] 'you greedy guts'
yi-mim-day-kimuk [2sg-eye-round.thing-big] 'you goggle eye'
yi-korn-badjan [2sg-testicles-big] 'you big balls'

Another compound involves the noun in final position:

(24)

yi-kord-beng [2sg-shit-mind] 'you shit for brains'

Perhaps one exception to the lack of grammatical markedness of joking speech is that described by McConvell for Gurindji (1982:98) who describes a distinct joking- style grammatical structure for short epithets of swearing in Gurindji which possibly has preserved an archaic pattern (P.McConvell pers. comm.) consisting of:

... a body-part term followed by an adjective or an adjectival phrase, to which the 2nd person subject pronominal clitic -n is added. ....... The difference between the grammar of these epithets and the normal grammatical structure of Gurindji is the attachment of the suffix -n at the end of the adjective. The normal structure of Gurindji predications with an adjective and a body-part term involves -n 'you' added to the Auxiliary ('catalyst') ngu-......

Some of the more noticeable differences between joking and ordinary speech styles are not grammatical, but relate to intonational prosody. These are discussed below in section 5.4.

LENGTH OF INTERACTION.

Kuninjku joking exchanges tend to consist of two types in terms of length of interaction; the brief one-liner epithet- exchange which may sometimes extend to a session of brief persiflage and the longer raillery of extended joking which is usually centred around some ongoing joint activity. Short encounters are often conducted as a form of greeting between joking partners who pass each other by
or occur when a person arrives at the camp or residence of their joking partner. In the latter situation it is usually the visitor who is subjected to the first humorous barb, although in the following example, it is the visitor who initiates the exchange which consists of a single word:

(25)

A: Yi-ngarreyabo:k  
2sg- 'get fucked'  
[sing-song tone, last vowel lengthened abnormally]  
Get fucking!

B: [no speech, but sign language meaning the same as A's utterance- index figure extended 90° to other fingers and pointed towards towards A]

[Context: Speaker A, as a passenger in a car, arrives at the front of the house where his joking partner B (his classificatory MMBS) is standing on the front verandah. A asks a group of people if they know the whereabouts of A's brother. A and someone in the group have a brief conversation. A then looks at B (who is an overhearer to the previous conversation), and utters his verbal assault. B responds with the above hand signal. The car in which A is a passenger then drives off.]

Example (1) given in chapter 1 is a further illustration:

A: Good morning.
B: Yi-korn-badjan.
   2sg-testicles-big  
You big balls!
A: (laughter)

[Context: Speaker B approached the house in front of which A, his joking partner was sitting early in the morning and suddenly came into view of A who greeted him in English. B uttered his response and kept walking showing no emotion.]

It's worth noting in this example that the Kuninjku do not usually greet each other with English salutations such as 'good morning'. The irony of A's greeting therefore may have suggested in B's mind some insincerity on A's part, which resulted in the launching of the swearing response.

Although often one-liners, and characteristically brief, joking used as a kind of humorous greeting is designed just as much to be heard by overhearers and other
present non-joking kin as it is for the targeted joking partner. In the following example, the target of the ribald 'greeting' is asleep when his joking partner arrives at the camp.

(26)

[to B who is asleep]
A: 'NAME'......'NAME'......yi-rollokka-∅, njale yi-bukirribun, man-barle
[laughter].

Prop.n. prop.n. 2sg-get.up-IMP what 2sg-dreamNP III-vagina.

(NAME)'......'NAME' get up! What are you dreaming about, .....vagina
[laughter]?

Longer ongoing joking interaction tends to be dependent on some shared activity which provides semantic links with the typical topics of joking exchanges. For example, a pair of joking partners butchering game after hunting is a sure launching pad for joking about body parts or topics such as circurndination, due to the obvious link with the cutting of flesh (see also a similar example in McConvell 1988:110). The following Kune example occurred during a hunting expedition as a buffalo was being butchered:

(27)

A: [points to the animal's sex organs] Man-ih⁴ ungke yi-ngu-∅!

III-this yours 2sg-eat-NP

This is yours, you can eat [pun:have sex with] it!

B: Man-wid, ngudda yi-ngu-∅, yi-manj-bekka-∅!

III-not.this you 2sg-eat-IMP 2sg-taste-feel-NP

Not that, YOU, you eat it and taste it! [euphamism for sexual intercourse]

Although I did not record fully the remainder of the interaction during the above buffalo butchering activity, the joking continued in the above vein at length. Longer joking exchanges as observed in chapter 3, are also conducted in the social environment of ceremonies and as Thomson observed on Cape York, such joking at ceremonies can continue for 'hours on end' (1935: 477). Two examples of more lengthy joking interaction are analysed below (see section 5.6).
THE STRUCTURE AND TOPICS OF JOKING RELATIONSHIP DISCOURSE.
The following section examines the structure of joking relationship discourse in terms of topic content and some basic sequential organisation. Most of the examples of joking interaction given in this study so far are based on the pattern of epithets which are produced in adjacency pairs. A verbal insult instigated by the 'assailant' is responded to with a riposte by the 'respondent'. This distinction disappears somewhat as the interaction extends into lengthy and ongoing rallying sometimes based on one topic or jumping from theme to theme. The initial joking insult is very often, if not primarily, a topical response to the previous turn taker who has raised a serious (i.e. non-joking) topic which provides some semantic link for the launching of a joking attack by the next turn-taker. Topic-initial joking turns also occur but are less common. The immediately preceding conversation is therefore quite important in the role it plays in the inferential process. Conversation participants know the convention that joking frames are launched from linking serious frames and when this occurs, it assists in the identification of the joking insults as non-literal play-frame utterances.

The most basic adjacency pair is the assailant 'attack' and return accusation based on immediate contradiction and direct reference as illustrated in the following example:

(28)
A: Yi-koykoy!
2sg-promiscuous
You sex maniac!
B: Ngudda!
You are!
A: Yi-dedj-yahwurd!
2sg-bum-small
You little arse!
B: Ngudda yi-dedj-yahwurd!
You 2sg-bum-small
You, you're a little arse!
The second form of adjacency pair consists of the verbal insult followed by a 
return insult based on the topic of the first but with some variation or humorous 
twist. The Kune example (26) above is representative of this type. The 'assailant' in this example has relied on the humour of the double entendre yi-ngun 'you eat it' which is also a euphemism for sexual contact. In response to this joke, the respondent finds another pun of the same meaning in order to retaliate, manj-bekkan 'taste' being a euphemistic reference to sexual intercourse.

The third form of adjacency pair is the complete-contrast type. Here, the initial joke of the assailant receives a response which appears unrelated in topic.

(29)
A: Nakkan ka-m-re, ø-wurridjimirri ku-kak.
I-DEM 3sg-hither-go 3P-prowling LOC-night.
Here he comes, the one who was 'on the prowl' last night.

B: Yi-ray yi-kord-wern.
2sg-go-IMP 2sg-shit-much.
Get lost you stinker!

THE SUBJECT MATTER OF JOKING LANGUAGE
It is by now quite obvious that most of the topics of joking exchanges deal with body part disparagement, frequent references to genitals, alleged sexual misbehaviour and exploits, and 'toilet terms' relating to elimination. Jokes relating to body part disparagement are usually not based on an actual physical deformity or any other actual salient physical characteristic of the joking partner. It is an important rule in joking relationship language that the insults are not based on truth lest the teasing be too close to the bone. Sometimes nicknames based on physical injuries, deformities or personal characteristics are used to refer to someone but never to address them. Examples of these nicknames are Ngal-bid-djurdu 'severed finger', Ngal-kodj-rayek 'fuzzy-hair' and Denge-wamba 'shark foot' (for a man who had his foot bitten by a shark). This kind of nicknaming is not restricted to joking partners.
The only occasion when a derogatory term based on physical characteristics can be used as address is when a man addresses his (usually) younger sister. Normally cross-sex siblings avoid speaking to each other if possible. There are times however where communicating is necessary and in these instances the sister will address her brother with special terms which refer to his status as a novice in various important regional ceremonies e.g. *kalawuddul* for a *kunabibi* initiate, *Ladjkurrungu* for a *mardayin* ceremony initiate and *Limbidj* for a *lorrkkon* hollow-log mortuary ceremony. In reply, I have observed in one case a man who consistently calls his younger sister by the derogatory term *mim-barli* 'crooked eye', which is an actual physical characteristic of the girl. These are not considered as insults by the sister and there is no intention to convey an angry insult. It is usual in Arnhem Land for men to address their sisters by derogatory terms such as in Burarra *wangarra* 'profane spirit' or in Kunwinjku *ngal-warre* 'rubbish'. Anatomical feature disparagement as a form of address can be used between joking partners except the difference is the disparaging terms have no basis in truth and are not used as nicknames.

The most intense form of joking is usually based on references to genitals. This is usually only possible between *na-kurrng* or *kakkak* and used only between two male joking partners who are not in the presence of 'avoidance' kin such as their actual WM. In a discussion I had with one senior Kuninjku man, typical joking language of this kind was described in the following terms:

(30)

"Yi-korn-kuyeng," yerrkka kabi-marne-yime.

2sg-testicle-long always 3/3-BEN-sayNP

"You've got long balls," he always says to him.


"You long prick," he says to him. They always keep swearing at each other ...

Sometimes joking may involve comparing one's joking partner with mythological beings or involving them in stories known for their sexual references. One such ancestral being is Djordbolongkidj, a spirit with a long penis:
Another Kunwinjku spirit being often referred to in joking interaction is Kodjok Bamdjelk also known in Dalabon as Kodjok Kah-njerrhno. This spirit who lives in pandanus groves is said to have multiple penes which spin around like propellers. As can be imagined, Kunwinjku joking partners get considerable mileage out of this topic.

Other popular topics for joking include mock refusals to share food or threats to greedily finish someone’s food and jokes relating to the refusal to bestow women in marriage (see examples (21) and (4), Appendix A- line 21).

Joking of a less obscene nature occurs between cross-sex joking partners such as a woman and her MMB (or a man and his MM). In these cases joking often focuses on accusations of having secret paramours or being overly active 'at night'. In addition, there is less mock hostility and contradiction as the following example in the Burarra language (Margaret Carew: pers. correspondence) illustrates:

(33) One example of joking between jerdja [MM, MMB] and ganggurda [DC, σ ZDC] centres on teasing about girlfriends and boyfriends and is quite gentle - no swearing. For example, if a man is entering the camp alone from somewhere, or is walking along by
himself, his granddaughter could call out something like: *jerda, jin-nginyipa mipilinyjirra ny-boya achila, ya?* ‘granny are you going to see your girlfriend?’. *Jerda* will go along with the joke, saying something like: *Ngaw jin-geka ngu-mangga* 'yes, I've got a new one'.

5.3 The opposition of joking and constraint relationships.

In comparing constrained behaviour and joking interaction, the pattern which emerges is that behaviour in joking relationships is an inversion of behaviour expected with kin in constrained or 'avoidance' relationships. Joking relationship language seems obsessed with obscenity, sexual references, ribaldry, bodily elimination, direct and specific references to people and contradiction. These are the forbidden themes and behaviours of avoidance relationships as illustrated in figure 5.1. So what then is the nature of constrained relationships?

The use of terms such as 'avoidance' 'formality' and 'respect' to describe relationships of constrained behaviour has been criticised by exponents of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory on the grounds that these terms are used by different writers to mean different things and that they are highly ethnocentric in meaning (Wierzbicka 1990, 1991 and Goddard 1992). Whilst I do not intend to evaluate actual NSM formulations of the meanings of these concepts (see Goddard 1992: 107-108), Goddard does summarise well the principles behind the behaviour of those in constrained relationships such as between a man and his mother-in-law. The behaviour of those in constrained relationships is the expression of the feelings of what the Kuninjku call *kun-yeme* 'shame or embarrassment'. This seems to be a universal concept in Aboriginal Australia and the principles underlying it are described by Goddard (1992:108) as:

First, there is an injunction against specificity of reference. Second, there is an injunction against expressing personal opposition, thus ruling out overt denial, refusal and disagreement. Thirdly (and perhaps most interestingly) there is an injunction against directly expressing a range of 'you-influencing' illocutionary intentions.

These principles describe nicely the 'way things are' between kin in constrained relationships but still require some explanation. Relationships of constraint are between actual affines and the central themes of affinity are of course marriage and sexuality. The most heightened form of constraint is between a man and his
mother-in-law and explaining the motivation for it as Hiatt notes in a recent essay on the topic, has puzzled anthropologists for over a hundred years. Drawing on 'fragments' from a range of ethnographies which have considered mother-in-law avoidance in Australia, Hiatt (1996:151) constructs the following profile:

If we attempt to construct a pen-portrait of the mother-in-law of a man from these fragments, a truly enigmatic phantom emerges. She is a benefactress, his [the son-in-law's] dearest friend because she gave him his wife. In return he must hunt for her and give her meat, yet he must not go near her, look at her, speak to her, or utter her name. She arouses in him feelings of profound shame, as well as fear, and her sexuality must be expunged from his consciousness. She is poison, a source of danger, polluting like a corpse. Yet myths tell of mother-in-law rape and son-in-law seduction, and rituals license forbidden conjunctions.

This expunging of sexuality is evident in all aspects of interaction between constrained kin and in language, sexual references and terms are widely reported as being non-existent in the lexical replacement registers which are also known as 'mother-in-law' language. In Kuninjku, the Kuninjku 'mother-in-law' register, there exist no words for intimate sexual terms such as genitals, sexual intercourse and other sexual behaviour. Haviland notes (1979: 373) the same for Guugu Yimidhirr on Cape York:

Strikingly, some words in the EV [everyday] language have no equivalent in BIL [brother-in-law register]. Words in this category clearly form a coherent and significant class. They include the EV words for 'bad smell (e.g. human sweat)', testicles', 'vagina', 'pubic hair', 'masturbate', 'woman's pubic area', 'have sexual intercourse'. 'penis (also means: greedy)', 'erect phallus', 'rape', and 'clitoris'. Of such words it is said:

You can't use those guugu [words] against your mother-in-law.

In addition to the avoidance of sexual topics, Tonkinson lists the following behaviours as restricted for those in what he labels as 'restraint relationships' (1978/1991:62):

.... touching, joking, passing objects directly hand to hand, sitting together, visiting the camp of, calling by name, looking directly while talking, and arguing with or physically assaulting any member of certain kin categories. This system is regulated principally by the pervasive inhibitor of shame or embarrassment rather than by threats of punishment.
The above topics and behaviours are exactly those focused on in joking relationships. Touching, horse-play, direct reference and address, mock arguing and threats and similar proscribed behaviours all appear in joking interaction or terms relating to joking relationship language. There are a number of descriptions in the literature which refer to the physical interaction of joking partners. Thomson records for the Kuuku Ya'u that 'men may snatch at one another's pudenda' in between exchanges of obscenities (1935: 477). Likewise, both Kuninjku and Dalabon men describe joking partner horse-play in a similar fashion:

(34)  
Kabene-du-rr-en kabene-re, kabi-karrme kabi-berd-karrme  
3ua-swear-RR-NP 3ua-goNP 3/3-take.hold 3/3-penis-grabNP  
kabene-berd-karrme-rr-en [laughter].  
3ua-penis-grab-RR-NP  
They always keep swearing at each other. He'll grab him and grab his penis, they'll grab each other's genitals.

A Dalabon man commenting (somewhat disapprovingly) on joking partner behaviour at Roper River in south-east Arnhem land, claims that even a man's female joking partner, a classificatory mother's mother will engage in such horse-play:

(35)  
Roper River said, kvrdvkvrd. They filim yu, kurdih.  
women[MM or ZDD] sorry.for:ribaldry  
Ah nomo laikajed yu meikim mi shem.  
Laik Dalabon-walvng "Mak kah-kalmi".  
Dalabon-ABL Not 2/1-fiddle.with  
At Roper River, the women [your joking relationship MM or ZDD], they feel you up, excuse me. "Hey don't do that, you'll embarrass me". Like in Dalabon [we say], "Don't fiddle with me [i.e. grab my genitals]."

Unlike with constrained kin there is no feeling of 'shame' between joking partners such is their special relationship of friendship. In fact almost all the
'shame' generating behaviours prohibited with kin in avoidance or constrained relationships become a focus of joking interaction demonstrating the absence of actual affinity and the strength of friendship in relationships that can withstand otherwise prohibited or embarrassing behaviours. Although classed as a kind of affine, but not an actual one, the joking partner is subjected to the kind of behaviour which is the opposite of that expected with constrained kin. The metamessage of this behaviour therefore is "you are an affine but not the kind with whom interaction brings embarrassment or kun-yeme 'shame'".

The speech and behaviours of both avoidance and joking relationships are compared in the following diagram:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Constrained or ‘avoidance’ relationships</strong></th>
<th><strong>Joking relationships</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirection - speaking “sideways”..........</td>
<td>Speak directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid direct address..........................</td>
<td>Address directly (e.g. not via an intermediary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No vocatives..................................</td>
<td>Use vocatives and 2nd person pronoun freely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not look at addressee......................</td>
<td>Look at addressee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak quietly and slowly ....................</td>
<td>Speak loudly and rapidly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No passing objects hand to hand ............</td>
<td>Pass objects freely, throw objects in jest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No close physical proximity ..................</td>
<td>Joking partners camp together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No physical contact...........................</td>
<td>Horse-play, snatching at each other’s genitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No visiting the camp of.....................</td>
<td>Joking partners always visit each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>avoid</em> sensitive lexical items such as.....</td>
<td><em>Concentrate</em> on sexual references, genitals, elimination, sexual relationships, exploit ‘sensitive’ connotations of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No</em> joking....................................</td>
<td>Constant joking and humorous interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No</em> imperatives ................................</td>
<td>Use imperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No</em> contradiction ............................</td>
<td>Contradict openly in jest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No</em> ‘strong’ speech, e.g. threats ..........</td>
<td>Mock threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No</em> refusal of requests ....................</td>
<td>Mock refusal to meet a request</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1: The inversion of constrained and joking relationships.

5.4 Paralinguistic features of joking interaction - prosody and gesture.
Much of the effect of joking relationship interaction lies in the ambiguity of the pretence of play frames. That which has the surface appearance of serious verbal abuse is really only designed to be humorous and non-serious play. Sometimes the pretence is carried out with few contextualisation cues which indicate that the joking play frame is in progress. The verbal abuse and insulting language of joking interaction sometimes appears to be identical to that of serious argument and angry abuse. In cases like this, it is the pre-existing kinship-based joking relationship alone which indicates that the play-frame is in operation by default.
Such a frame is automatically potentially operative whenever customary joking partners are together. There are occasions however when particular prosodic elements of joking relationship speech carry semantic information and cues which assist in identifying the utterance as part of a joking exchange. Combined with various forms of gesture, prosodic elements assist in cuing the joking relationship play-frame.

Prosody is taken here to mean 'variations in the three basic phonological dimensions of frequency, amplitude and duration' (Gumperz 1982: 100) or in other terms, the acoustic qualities of pitch, loudness and length. The overall pattern of the changes in pitch across more than one syllable is what is sometimes referred to as melody or intonation 'in the broader sense' (Bolinger 1986:24). Any of the above phonological dimensions can be applied to emphasise a syllable over other syllables and this marking is usually referred to in intonology as accent. The patterns of accented and unaccented segments throughout an utterance are what comprise 'contours' which Bolinger (1986:244) describes as consisting of:

.... a pre-head (the material before the first major accent), a head (the first major accent), a body (the material between the first and the last major accent), a nucleus (the last major accent and the most important of the contour) and a tail, (the pitch movement after the nucleus)\(^7\)

At times when a Kuninjku joking partner wishes to clearly identify an utterance as being 'only joking' and emphasise speaker's intention for a non-literal interpretation on the part of addressee, there is recourse to an intonation pattern which I will call the 'sing-song' intonation. In the following examples based on my own auditory impressions, I use the notation used by Crystal (1972). Normal intonation (i.e. non-singsong) patterns for the following Kuninjku swear words follow the usual stress and pitch patterns. The normal pitch contour for swearing epithets in joking interaction therefore is a high-falling-to-low distribution as follows (\(\dagger\) denotes an initial relatively high pitch. Segmentation does not indicate morpheme breaks.):

\[(36) \dagger yi-djurrk-djurrk \quad [2sg-sexually.promiscuous]\]
(37) yi-ngarreyabok [2sg-get.fucked]

In both examples above, primary stress is on the second syllable of each word which comprises the 'head' of the contour followed by a falling pitch movement indicated by the tail. The allocation of primary stress in Kunwinjku/Mayali is according to rules formulated by Evans (1991:49) and in the above cases follows Evans' 'Rule 1' applicable to verbs:

Working back from the end of the word, stress the first syllable of the rightmost morpheme of two or more syllables.

In the above examples the segments -djurrkdjurrk and -ngarreyabok are for the purposes of stress allocation considered as 'cohering morphemes' (Evans 1991:49). Although the swearing term yi-ngarreyabok contains the segment yabok 'sister' (which possibly has some etymological origin relating to some sexual offence by a man against his sister), this noun has been absorbed into the compound and is treated for stress allocation as part of a single morpheme -ngarreyabok. Secondary stress remains however on the first syllable of yabok.

In example (24) it was noted that a sing-song tone applied in the utterance of yi-ngarreyabok during a joking exchange the details of which are repeated here:

A: Yi-ngarreyabok
   2sg-'get fucked'
   [sing-song tone, last vowel lengthened abnormally]
   Get fucked!
B: [no speech, but sign language meaning the same as A's utterance- index figure extended 90° to other fingers and pointed towards towards A]

In contrast to the normal pitch contour for this swearing expression as illustrated above, the sing-song tone in this instance is (impressionistically) as follows:
In this case, accent has been shifted from the site of usual primary stress to the final syllable- *yingärreyabok* to *yingarreyabô:k* -which has an added fall-rise pitch tail. This contrasts with the usual pitch contour above of a high fall. Here the consistent falling pitch gradient has been changed to produce a fall-rise-fall-rise or sing-song intonation. In addition the quality of the final vowel has been changed by both lengthening and further closure. The information this carries is something in the order of: "I am not using this swearing in normal abuse or anger. I am only joking".

These impressionistic representations of the joking intonation for the above expletive *yingärreyabok* were later compared with the pitch contour analysis produced by a computer program which shows fundamental frequency displays for recorded utterances. These results are shown in Appendix D. The word *yingärreyabok* uttered with a normal intonation pattern was sampled from the recording transcribed in Appendix B and subjected to analysis by the above computer program. This utterance is compared with the analysis of a recording of a different speaker uttering the same word *yingärreyabok* with a singsong intonation. Because of the obvious difficulty in being able to obtain a recording of natural speech containing an example of this same word with a singsong intonation pattern, the speaker was requested to utter the word for the purpose of the recording.

The results of the technical analysis largely confirm the impressionistic representations. The normal intonation display in Appendix D1 shows a high-to-low falling pitch contour whilst the results shown in Appendix D2 show the fall-rise-fall-rise contour of the singsong intonation. Accenting of the final syllable -*bok* by further lengthening in the singsong utterance (as described above in the impressionistic representation) is also shown. The timed length of the final syllable for the singsong version is twice that shown for the normal intonation.
Another joking intonation which is commonly used is to retain the high-fall contour but to exaggerate it and combine it with a distinct phrasing or accelerated utterance chunking which follows the gradient (in that it is consistent phrasing without pause) of the high fall contour. By 'exaggeration' of the contour I refer to commencing at a higher pitch and stressing the nucleus (or final stressed syllable) and attaching a falling tail to further the overall shape of the contour. E.g.

(39) * yi-ngà-rre-ya-bok
      \__________________________\ ngudda° [2sg]
      . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
      \__________________________\ ngûdda
      . . . . . .
      cf. unexaggerated contour

The above intonation pattern clearly carries the message of humour and is an illocutionary advertisement of 'joking in progress'.

A similar exaggerated high-fall contour is found in text Appendix B(12) for the sentence:

*yi-ben-bolkan yi-re* 'you go around sniffing their scent [possible paramours]'

(40) * yi-ben-böl-kan yi-re
       \___________________________
       . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Exaggeration of standard contours can produce 'ironic overtones' as Bolinger observes in English also, 'the speaker overdoes it as a way of suggesting the opposite' (1989: 75) or in this case, as a means of indicating jest.

Finally, gesture is another paralinguistic device used in joking relationship speech to sometimes disambiguate joking and serious insult. As mentioned in chapter 4, the joking gesture called *-dihdihme* (as in figure 4.5) is a clear sign that the humorous joking frame has begun. Such a gesture is less subtle than ironic intonation patterns of joking interaction but combined with such prosody
provides the speaker with a detachment from the literal force of the swearing and insults of typical joking relationship interaction. Concerning this play between gesture and prosody Bolinger (1986: 213-214) writes:

A physical gesture is not tied directly to the stream of speech and may accordingly be posed before speech begins, serving as a kind of illocutionary announcement..... Similarly a gross body movement detached from speech is apt to be more decisive than an intonation: an annoyed interlocutor who gets up and walks away writes a categorical finis to a conversation. The same detachment permits attitudinal displays that the sender can deny verbally- irony and other forms of deception have wider play than the vocal stream alone will permit.

Indeed, in addition to its primary insulting force, the -*dihdihme* gesture is also an illocutionary announcement of the joking play-frame. Any language which on the literal surface appears to be offensive and that which might also be used in anger, is unambiguously signalled as play-frame humour by the detached gesture. Occasionally other gestures accompany joking language such as raised eyebrows, the neck extended forward and when appropriate, parodies of non-verbal behaviour normally associated with anger such as pointing and mock attempts to assault.

5.5 Sympathy response cries.
In earlier chapters I have mentioned the use of 'sympathy response cries' in joking interaction which are a feature of joking in various Australian languages. These consist of monomorphemic interjections which have been discussed in some detail by Evans (1992) who describes this special set of words as exhibiting 'highly specific presuppositions about social context' (p. 225). Evans labels this group of interjections as the 'sorry-for-the-swearing' set whilst a similar set in Gurindji are discussed by McConvell and described as 'sympathy expressions' (1982:99). For Mangarrayi, Merlan (1982b:222) calls these words 'exclamations used in relation to kin types'. These interjections are part of joking relationship interaction and are usually used by a third party or overhearer who responds to the joking abuse of a particular relative with one of the set of sympathy responses. The particular choice of interjection depends on the relationship between the third party overhearer and the relative who is being sworn at or subjected to the joking abuse. It needs to be made clear that in the following discussion the term 'swearing' refers not to swearing in serious anger but in
joking relationship jest. Thus if A and B are joking partners and C hears B swearing at A, C will utter one of the sympathy response cries depending on the kin relationship between C and A.

For Gurindji, McConvell (1982: 99) lists the various choices of sympathy responses in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'victim' of joke is Ego's:</th>
<th>Ego says:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F, C, B, Z, FF</td>
<td>warri, warri-warri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM, MMB, ZDC, W, WB</td>
<td>ngakuny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZC, C, MF, MFZ</td>
<td>wangka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WM, WMB</td>
<td>m-m, suck lower lip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gija and Miriwoong (Kimberleys)\(^{10}\):
In Miriwoong the only surviving term is *warriwarri* \(^{11}\) used as an unmarked term for all kin. In Gija the terms are:

- M, F: warriwarri
- Siblings: yigelany
- Mother-in-law: binybiny

For Gundjeihmi, Evans (1992: 238) lists the 'sorry-for-the-swearing' set which I have summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'insultee' is Ego's:</th>
<th>Ego says:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B, Z</td>
<td>balmarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W, F, M, MB, MBC, FZC, MF</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C, ZC, BC, DH, WM, MM, MMB, FF, FFZ</td>
<td>gabarani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Merlan's Mangarrayi list is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'insultee' is Ego's:</th>
<th>Ego says:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F, FZ</td>
<td>go:?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M, MB, MBC, FZC, MF, MFZ, FM, FMB, own C, SC, DC, BDC</td>
<td>gabarani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z, B, MM, MMB, FF, FFZ, BC, ZDC, self</td>
<td>warri, warriwarri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
spouse category ngagunj

For Kuninjku and Kune, my data is:

'insultee' is Ego's:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{B, Z, MB, } & \sigma \text{ ZC, } \varphi \text{ BC} \\
\text{F, M, MBC, FZC, MF, FM, } & \sigma \text{ MMBS ('WMB'), WB}
\end{align*}
\]

Ego says:

balmarded kurdih

It is interesting to note the use of the same term for different kin in various languages such as for *go:7* and *gabarani* in Gun-djeihmi and Mangarrayi and the use of *ngakuny/ngagunj* [ŋagun] in Gurindji and Mangarrayi.

In Kuninjku and Kune, there is no term used when one's MM or MMB is the insultee because, according to the Kuninjku, this is the joking partner kin class and there is no need to express sympathy or embarrassment when one's *kakkak* is being insulted jokingly. However, in the case of a genealogically close MM(B) who is not a joking relationship partner, one uses the term *balmarded*.

The Kuninjku set is identical for other languages in the Maningrida region of central Arnhem Land such as Dangbon, Rembarrnga, Ndjébbana, Nakkara and Burarra. Neighbouring Yolngu languages such as Djinang utilise a third term *bilngarr* for use when one's actual or classificatory wife's brother/ husband's sister or cross-sex cousin (the spouse set) is the insultee. Some Burarra speakers also use this term.

Kune speakers also have different terms which are used not by third parties but by the joking partners themselves. After being subjected to some humorous verbal abuse the insultee may respond to their joking partner with the term *na-wid* which very loosely can be translated as 'I hope you mean someone else' [literally: I noun class- another]. After uttering *na-wid* the person who is responsible for the swearing or joking should reply with the interjection *wardaw*. If the response is not forthcoming, the insultee repeats the word *na-wid* until the joking partner responds with *wardaw*. The following hypothetical example is typical:
(41) A: Yi-berd-badjan!
    2sg-penis-big
    You big prick!

    B: Na-wid!
    A: Silence [or laughter]
    B: Na-wid [higher pitch contour]!
    A: Wardaw!

If the joking relates to disparagement of the joking partner's clan country rather
than some remark about the physical appearance of the insultee then the
required response from the insultee is ku-wid, 'another place, (not the one you
refer to)' [literally: LOC-another]. The following hypothetical example is again
typical:
(42) A: Bulkay ka-bolk-kord-wern!
    Prop.n 3sg-place-shit-much
    There's a lot of shit at Bulkay!
    B: Ku-wid, kun-bolk-mak ku-mekke!
    LOC-another IV-place-good LOC-DEM
    Hey, not there, it's a good place.

The sympathy response cries balmared and kurdih, as mentioned above are
primarily used by a third party to express sympathy for a relative who has just
been subjected to joking abuse or swearing. However, the expressions can also be
used by the person doing the swearing in two situations. Firstly, if the joking
partners are na-kurrng, the swearer can follow his own insult or joking abuse
with the interjection kurdih, which seems to carry the illocutionary force of a
form of apology or 'I'm only joking'. Often this will result in the same response
(i.e. kurdih) from the insultee which seems to be an acknowledgment of the
joking-in-progress frame. I have also observed the insultee respond with kurdih
after being sworn at, which seems to bear the illocutionary force of 'you're only
joking aren't you'. The correct response in this case from the swearer is to reply
with kurdih, confirming the joking frame.

Secondly, in Kunwinjku dialects if someone who is not in a joking relationship
with another person, swears jokingly or humorously insults that person, the sympathy response interjection based on the relationship between swearer and insultee can be used (by the swearer) to excuse the offence. McConvell describes the same usage in Gurindji whereby the person uttering the sympathy response cry creates the fiction that it is someone else who has sworn at the insultee 'and therefore use[s] the sympathetic expression appropriate to that situation' (1982:99).

A final use of sympathy response interjections is as an expression of embarrassment. In example (34) above, kurdi is used to express some kind of embarrassment in describing how female joking partners engage in horse-play with their male counterparts.

Roper River said, kvrdvkvrd. They filim yu kurdi. women sorry for ribaldry

At Roper River side, women, they 'feel you' excuse me for saying it.

These comments were largely directed to two addressees, myself and another non-Aboriginal linguist. As one of the addressees, I was the speaker's 'son' based on the classificatory subsection system which today includes non-Aboriginal people who involve themselves in Aboriginal community life. As one uses kurdi with a father or son, this may explain its use here although there is still an element of semantic ellipsis (I was not the only person being addressed) which is why I will gloss kurdi here as 'sorry [my X] for ribaldry'.

I encountered a similar usage once at a Kuninjku outstation when a large group of people including myself were watching a television documentary about a large Hindu festival in India. Suddenly a scene of naked male Indian holy men came into view on the screen and one of the young female viewers called out "kurdi! ". In this case, the identity of one of the encoded referents remains unclear or indirect. There were about twenty people in the viewing audience at the time. The woman's parents were also present and it is possible that the use of kurdi encoded reference to them as the most senior or socially significant members of the audience able to hear the interjection. It is as if the television is the source of the 'ribaldry' and someone in the viewing audience, possibly the
exclaimant's parents are the target or those confronted by the 'ribaldry'. Assuming they were embarrassed, the exclaimant says *kurdih* to express some sympathy for their embarrassment. Although usually semantically specific, in this case the sympathy response cry seems to contain 'no overt coding of particular arguments' (Evans 1992:242) resulting in the need to work out the nature of the encoded referent by pragmatic means. Figure 5.2 illustrates the relationship amongst the three elements involved in the use of sympathy response interjections and the possible combinations of participant role:

![Diagram](image)

Figure 5.2: participants in sympathy response interaction

In figure 5.2 the top third of the diagram represents a situation where there are three participants in the interaction; A - the person who utters the sympathy response interjection, B - the person doing the swearing or insulting (the source of the 'offence') and C - the target of the joke. It is not necessary that C be physically present or aware of the verbal attack (see example (25)). The anecdotal data discussed above shows that sometimes there can be various combinations of these three participatory elements, resulting in two participants instead of three. In the middle section of figure 5.2 the person who is the source of the ribaldry, whether or not it is intended as a joke or insult can also be the person expressing redress by uttering the sympathy response cry, which results in the combining of roles A and B. The lower third of the diagram represents a situation where a
person who is the party affected or 'victim' of the ribaldry/swearing, can also utter a sympathetic interjection (combining roles C and A) in an attempt to have the play frame confirmed. Such confirmation comes in the form of the 'swearer' repeating the appropriate interjection as in the following hypothetical but typical example between two na-kurrng:

(43)
A: Yi-dedj-djorlok ngudda!
   2sg-bum-hole you
   You greedy guts/big hole!
B: Kurdih
   redressive.joking.relationship.interjection
   I'm only joking (relative 'X').
A: Kurdih.
   redressive.joking.relationship.interjection
   I'm only joking (relative 'X').

5.6 Analysis of two joking relationship texts.
TEXT 1
The final section of this chapter involves examining recordings of more lengthy joking relationship interaction. The first text (transcribed in Appendix A) is the telephone conversation mentioned in chapter 4 between joking partners DN and GY; two men who call each other na-kurrng. Unfortunately only the speech of one of the participants could be recorded due to the spontaneity of the conversation and the lack of a special telephone microphone. I had been discussing joking relationships with the recorded speaker when he suggested demonstrating how joking partners talk to each other by ringing his joking partner on the telephone and organising a time when I could record them both. This telephone conversation itself developed into a joking exchange. The transcript is produced in full in appendix A. DN was at the time in Darwin and GY in Maningrida.

The conversation commences with DN making the request to GY about the possibility of a recording of joking interaction. DN describes joking language register as kun-kurrng (A4) which will involve (A8) ngarr-durren nak kun-warrewhware 'you and I arguing using all kinds of bad language'. DN then in line
(A6) expresses affection for his kas 'cousin [MMBS]' with an interjectional phrase kornbayeng 'my good friend' [literally: ø-korn-baye-ng '1/2-testicles-bite'] possibly as reassurance that he intends not to cause any serious offence. In (A10) a raised pitch intonation may signal the commencement of actual joking and DN commences to swear at GY, calling him yi-korn-badjan 'you big balls' accompanied by much laughter. This is probably in response to a joking attack from GY judging by DN's responses to GY's turns in (10) and (11) which involve much laughter. DN then cites this actual bout of swearing in (11) which they have just completed as the kind of joking that he wants for the recording. (12-15) expand on this with the interesting use of the class III agreement demonstrative mane, (15) which is usually associated with man- class nominals such as vegetable food and plants. The other semantic domain in the man- class are body parts of a sexual nature and it is possible that the use of mane here is in agreement with these topics which are very much the focus of joking interaction. Thus in line (A15):

(44)

Mane kabirri-djare njamed kun-kurrng and ngarri-du-rr-en yi-bengka-n?

They want whatsit, kun-kurrng register speech and we swear at each other [using sexual expletives], you know what I mean?

(17-18) continue the swearing until a frame break in (19) when DN reminds GY that the conversation is being recorded. In (21) DN answers a question by GY about the whereabouts of other family members in Darwin and attempts to wind up the conversation by saying he will go and eat. DN responds with a joking retort that he will come and eat all of GY's food, leaving him none. The joking stops giving way to serious discussion in (23)-(27) as the conversation is brought to a close until GY hangs up in (28).

Throughout the conversation there is frame interweaving between joking and non-joking conversation. This provides no difficulty for the interpretation of joking versus serious frames due to the highly recognisable features of the joking style. The most obvious characteristic of joking is the choice of lexical items. The sudden use of sexual epithets yi-korn-badjan 'you big balls' in (10) and yi-dedj-
warla 'you greedy guts [literally 'arse-wide']' in (17) which had been preceded by serious but friendly interaction makes the shift to a joking frame obvious. There seems to be more than usual instances of laughter throughout the conversation and the other unusual feature involves use of terms of affection mixed in with obscene insults. In (17) and (27) DN uses the interjectional phrase *kornbayeng* 'my dear friend'. In (17) it is used immediately after abuse and in fact in the same sentence. This is somewhat unusual in joking interaction but can possibly be explained by the nature of the channel in this particular instance. Telephone does not allow many of the usual joking relationship non-verbal gestures which disambiguate serious abuse from joking. DN may be using compensatory signals such as laughter and direct expressions of friendliness in order to dispel any possibility that this is an angry telephone call from a relative who has travelled to Darwin and as is sometimes the case, is ringing family to berate them for not sending funds or some other resources.

**TEXT2**

The second text is the transcript in appendix B involving joking between another pair of *na-kurrng*, (D and A) both young men. This conversation was staged during the social visit of a group of four people to my residence in Maningrida. Before I requested the possibility of recording a joking exchange, D and A had already been joking during the visit and I asked them if I could record them. The resulting interaction was marked by typical obscene language much of which is contradiction and not based around any particular activity from which the joking launches. The subject matter is explicitly sexual, relating to allegations of promiscuity, ribald behaviour and derogatory insults relating to genitals.

Lines (1)-(12) involve 'serious' pretence. Both participants pretend to be angry and offensive until line (12) when the other two overhears burst into hysterical laughter which brings the pretence to an end and both participants begin laughing freely although A more so than D. The insulting epithets are fictitious allegations which by line (25) have taken on a duelling aspect where each speaker seeks to reply to the previous insult with ever increasing shocking obscenities. Line (4) takes up the theme of circumcision, a popular joking topic, and possibly raised here because D has recently returned from a circumcision operation although no personal attacks are based on this reality. Instead, the references to
circumcision remain fictional and D insultingly accuses A of being *berd-nud* 'uncircumcised' which due to his age is something both know to be untrue. In line (18) A widens the target by swearing not only at the addressee D but also at a group of his absent brothers who are named individually. D replies in like manner by listing the names of A's brothers who he claims are all 'sex fiends' and in so doing unintentionally calls the more private Aboriginal name of A himself, a *lapsus linguae* which generates laughter from everyone and the redressive interjection *ken* 'oops' from the speaker.

This particular joking duel is an example of the extreme opposite to the constrained behaviours of mother-in-law interaction and the lexical replacement *kun-balak* register. The speech is loud, rapid, contradictory, humorous, full of second person direct address, and totally focused on the normally tabooed topics of sexual activity, genitals and sexually explicit argument.

The high level of involvement and intensity of interaction in this example assists in achieving rapport between interlocutors which is one of the functions of joking relationship exchanges. Such intensity is marked by a number of features in this conversation which have also been discussed by Norrick (1994: 410) in a study of conversational involvement:

..... emphatic forms, modulations in prosody, overlapping and rhythmically coordinated speech, and other stylistic strategies identified by Tannen (1989), reflect a heightened excitement about the interaction itself; they count as signs of high involvement and convey a metamessage of rapport between the conversationalists.

All of the above strategies are found in the Appendix B text in addition to the very noticeable strategy of repetition (note the use of *yingarreyabok* in lines 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 17, 23, 24, 27 and 30). The conversation reveals a drama played out with equal enthusiasm by both participants who play along with the pretence of abuse throughout the entirety of the exchange. Such high involvement in the present conversation contrasts markedly with the studies of responses to teasing (as opposed to joking relationship abuse) common in English where it has been suggested that the common response is serious and 'po-faced' (Drew 1987).
Notes
1. Some Dalabon and Burarra examples are also included. Dalabon is spoken to the south of the Kunwinjku and Burarra to the north-east.

2. The verb -dtl in Kunwinjku is related to Proto-Australian *du-, cf. Gurindjiju- (P.McConvell pers. comm.) which has undergone the laminalization described for Pama-Nyungan by Evans 1988.

3. The Aboriginal English term 'cousin' is not a cousin in the normal sense, but refers to affines such as WM and WMB. In this case MMBS is also WMB.

4. The use of the 'man-' class above is a grammatical contextualisation cue which possibly points to the use of joking language. 'Man-' is a noun class prefix used for vegetable foods and amongst other things, body parts of a sexual nature. Normally the body parts of a butchered animal would not be classed in the 'man-' category. This classification may point to a sexual connotation and a cue for joking.

5. Shapiro notes this association in northeast Arnhem Land also and suggests the equation: hunting=killing=eating=sexual intercourse (1981: 71).

6. There is in some Australian languages however, a collapsing of fear and shame into one term. This is claimed by Hiatt (1978) for Burarra.

7. These terms are used differently by various writers. Crystal (1972:112) describes the head as 'the stretch of utterance extending from the first stressed and usually pitch prominent syllable (or onset) up to but not including, the nuclear tone.' Bolinger also notes that the inadequacy of the above contour description is that it 'tells us nothing about the differences between one accent and another..., the contribution made by unaccented syllables at various intervening pitches (higher or lower than an accent peak, for example), or the accenting or deaccenting of material between the major accents.' (1986: 245).

8. I am grateful to Prof. Andrew Butcher for technical assistance with this analysis.

9. Special joking intonation patterns are found on the second person pronouns in many Aboriginal languages. Gurindji uses reduplication nyuntu-nyuntu (P.McConvell pers. comm.), whilst some languages use special emphatic pronominal forms such as in Burarra where a common response to joking teasing is to reply with the emphatic second person pronoun nginyipya 'YOU' with a distinct high to low pitch contour (the unmarked form is nginyipa). In Aboriginal English the emphatic second person pronoun which is often used in response to a joking insult is You now with a falling pitch on 'now'.

10. I am grateful to Frances Kofod for supplying me with the Miriwoong and Gija terms.

11. It is likely warri, or the reduplicated form warritwarri is a reflex of the proto-Australian
*warri* 'bad'. The use here with the meaning 'poor fellow' (see Evans 1990:138) is most likely also related to the Kunwinjku interjection *worro* 'poor thing'.

12. *Wardaw* is an interjection meaning 'oh dear' or 'oh I'm tired' in all Kunwinjku/Mayali dialects and in fact most languages of central and western Arnhem Land and probably further afield (including Gurindji - P. McConvell pers. comm.).
Chapter 6 - Summary and Conclusions.

In this final chapter I summarise my findings and make some concluding comments about both the interpretation of joking relationship utterances involving the inferring of speaker intentions, and the wider social meaning of joking relationship language in Australian Aboriginal societies. As a culturally situated speech event, joking relationship interaction has a range of characteristics which combine to form the well-defined joking relationship speech event. These characteristics are best not formulated as rules but rather as general principles. Unlike the rules of grammatical well-formedness, discourse principles for a particular conventionalised speech event need to be applied in conjunction with some of the concepts discussed throughout this thesis such as shared cultural knowledge, rules about social relationships, the appropriate situations for using joking language, the roles of participants including overhearers and pragmatic dimensions to joking.

6.1 Joking and avoidance as 'two sides of the one coin'
By examining a variety of angles, linguistic and social, the wider view of joking relationships reveals that paradoxically they are very closely associated with what is usually termed in the social anthropological literature as 'avoidance' or what I have frequently referred to as 'constraint'. The most widely discussed theory of the social meaning of joking relationships is that developed by Radcliffe-Brown (1940, 1949) and recently briefly summarised by Hiatt (1996:146). This view is that both avoidance of affinal kin and joking relationships with affinal kin are aimed at achieving the same end, and for this reason both avoidance and joking relationships have often been described as 'two sides of the same coin' (Hiatt p.146, Jackes 1967:4). Marriage between two people who come from two very different 'families, lineages or clans' creates both conjunction and disjunction, according to this theory: One way of 'preserving harmony between persons simultaneously conjoined and disjoined is to enjoin upon them a maximum of mutual respect and a minimum of personal contact' (Hiatt 1996: 145). Another way of achieving this harmony is by the opposite i.e. permitted or privileged disrespect in the form of joking relationships. Whilst this provides an explanation for the existence of joking relationships on a very general level, it says little about why avoidance and joking are both necessary and in what
circumstances joking as opposed to avoidance should appear. I have attempted to account for joking relationships in particular kin relationships and also explain the relationship between both avoidance and joking.

Hiatt also states that joking relationships 'occur commonly between in-laws of the same generation, notably between a man and his wife's brothers and sisters, and are expressed through teasing, ridicule and horse-play' (1996:146). Based on both my survey of the literature on joking relationships in Australia and on my own observations I come to a different conclusion. Joking relationships can not only occur with same generation kin but also adjacent generation and especially alternate generation kin. The in-law type joking as for example mentioned by Haviland (1979: 379) between a man and his WZ, BW or BWZ is not really the institutionalised joking relationship which is prescribed amongst Guugu Yimidhirr for such kin as FF, SS and MF. Haviland describes the in-law interaction as 'considered to be very free' but it is better described as 'light-hearted speech' as opposed to the more prototypical grandkin joking which tends to be more intense and frequent and allows greater licence with swearing and obscenity. The same goes for Berndt’s description (1971:181) for the Kunwinjku of joking between a man and his classificatory ZH and WB. This interaction is of the 'light-hearted' type without the intensity of abuse and obscenity found between kakkak 'MMB and ZDC' or na-kurrng 'MMBS and FZDC'.

My characterisation of joking relationships does not so much describe them in terms of preserving 'harmony between relationships of simultaneous conjunction and disjunction' but rather as pragmatic indices of the absence or renunciation of actual relationships of affinity. Joking relationships deal with the problem of how to deal with that special class of affines, the fictive affines-classificatory affines who will not become actual affines. It is impossible to expect that all non-actual affines should be avoided and treated with all the usual affinal tabus and prestations which mark relations with actual affines, such as those who bestow spouses/spouse's mother or between a man and his mother-in-law (or for some groups between brother-in-laws).

6.2 A summary of generalisations about joking relationships.
In his 1972 study of adolescent African American verbal dueling called 'the
dozens' or 'sounding' (more recently known as 'scoring' or 'high-siding' (Walters 1995:565)), Labov considers the linguistic form of a wide range of 'ritual insults' of the following form:

Your mother so low she c'play Chinese handball on a curve.
Your mother so black she sweat chocolate (p.133).

Labov's formulation for the construction of a 'sound' is a rule as follows:

(1) If A makes an utterance S in the presence of B and an audience C, which includes reference to a target related to B, T(B), in a proposition P, and
(a) B believes that A believes that P is not true and
(b) B believes that A believes that B knows that P is not true...
then S is a sound, heard as 'T(B) is so X that P' where X is a pejorative attribute, and A is said to have sounded on B.

This kind of formulation is possible with 'the dozens' because of the highly formulaic syntactic structure of these particular utterances. The formulation of a single rule for typical Aboriginal joking relationship insults would not be possible in the same way because there is not such an emphasis on syntactic form. However, some elements of the actual utterances in Aboriginal joking interaction such as the nature of the propositions expressed may be formed together into a list of elements which combine to constitute a joking relationship utterance exchange. The following formulation is not meant to be a tight all-encompassing list of rules such as those for example composed by Searle for various speech acts such as promising, requests, warnings etc. Joking relationship exchanges vary considerably wherever they are found in Australia. What they do have in common however, I have intended to capture in the following formulation:

(i) A calls B 'joking relationship partner' (shared cultural knowledge, defined by kinship rules)
(ii) A makes an utterance or gesture S in the presence of an audience which may or may not include B.
(iii) Utterance or gesture S includes a proposition P which contains or infers a derogatory comment about B.
(iv) A intends B not to believe that A believes the derogatory comment in P is true.
(v) B (if present) believes that A believes that the derogatory comment in P is not true.
A summary of generalisations I have discussed in previous chapters can accompany the above formulation. These include the following:

(i) Joking relationship exchanges are more common and more intense between same sex than cross-sex partners.

(ii) Joking relationships tend to be more with genealogically distant kin who are also highly socially familiar.

(iii) Joking relationships occur with fictive affines; that class of classificatory affines who will never become actual affines.

(iv) Joking relationships are a means of avoiding having to relate to classificatory affinal kin with a demeanour of affinal restraint.

(v) The subject matter of joking relationship interaction is the inverse of what is the norm for interaction in constrained relationships.

(vi) The manner of speaking in joking relationships is the inverse of that expected in constrained relationships.

(vi) The subject matter of joking relationship interaction must not concern propositions which are true.

(vii) Joking relationships pragmatically communicate the absence or renunciation of actual affinity.

(viii) Joking relationships can occur with a variety of kin classes depending on the system of preferred marriage in any given Aboriginal society.

JOKING RELATIONSHIPS AND 'THE GENERALITY PRINCIPLE'.

In chapter 1 I mentioned Sutton's principle of generality which is stated as 'the more formality and circumspectness with which one speaks, the more general will be the scope of the terms used for people' (1982: 187). The more 'formal and circumspect' end of the patterned kin behaviour continuum is found in
interaction with actual affines as has been discussed. Such 'formality and circumspectness' is however not only restricted to interaction with actual affines. Tonkinson's chart of kin behavioural patterns for the Mardu show that at least two thirds of all kin categories are based on interaction described as 'avoidance' 'restraint' or 'moderation' (1978/1991:63). Joking relationships as 'informal' relationships are consistent with the generality principle in that joking interaction as I have shown, is marked by specificity of reference as shown by the free use of second person pronoun address and vocative use of personal names. At the same time, joking relationships stand in marked contrast to the usual formality of interaction amongst most kin in Aboriginal societies. As Sutton observes:

    To the European outsider, the degree of formality in interpersonal relations among traditional Aboriginal people - aside from joking relationships, in which much of the joking is in any case highly formalised and restricted - can seem truly amazing (1982:188).

But joking relationships are not only consistent with the generality principle just because they follow 'formalised and restricted' rules. Joking relationships are defined in opposition to the norms of 'avoidance' interaction and yet in such inversion joking behaviours are complementary to avoidance as Thomson also characterises them (1935:477, 478):

    .... the exchanges under the joking relationship do provide genuine mirth, as well as a ritual state of well being, that counterbalances, relieves, and gives point to, the austerity and restraint that characterise much of the behaviour under the kinship system.

IRONY AS A STRATEGY IN JOKING RELATIONSHIPS.
The use of irony in joking for the purpose of creating and reaffirming social relationships has been described recently by Brown amongst speakers of the Tzeltal language of Tenejapa, a Mayan Indian community in southern Mexico. Like the ironic joking in Australian Aboriginal kinship systems, Tzeltal irony is described by Brown (1995: 171) as:

    .... an essential element in constructing the social relationship between the interlocutors, insofar as it succeeds in constructing 'phatic communion' that inheres in demonstrations of mutual understanding. It is clear that in Tenejapa, for women at least, such interactions are an integral part of their social relations, they must have such conversations [marked by strategic irony] in order to consider themselves related to each other.
But in addition to this, Brown (p. 171) also observes another dimension to Tzeltal irony which I propose is similar to the Australian context. This involves viewing the use of ironic insults, joking and:

'literally false' assertions as a means of neutralising the destructive power of such falsehoods, just as joking about illness and death..... is a way of undermining the poignancy of fears about incapacity and death that both men and women have in this society.

If in Aboriginal societies, the generality principle and affinal constraint are so dominant, constant and inexorable a force in daily interaction between relatives, then joking relationships can be considered a means of neutralising the onerous burden of proper demeanour with affines and any associated fears of 'shame' which interaction with affines can bring. The irony and 'literally false assertions' of joking relationships are based on the sort of topics that no one would be caught dead saying to their actual affinal kin. The conventions of proper behaviour with affines are aimed to be broken in joking relationships suggesting some explanation in what has been termed the 'release' theories of humour.

RELEASE THEORIES OF HUMOUR.

Raskin (1985: 38-40) gives an overview of the literature on release theories of humour noting that 'the basic principle of all such theories is that laughter provides relief for mental, nervous and/or psychic energy and thus homeostasis after a struggle, tension or strain, etc (p.38). It is the 'conventions and norms imposed on us by everyday life' from which we seek comic relief. The conventions of affinal kin interaction become even more ever-present given a system that creates an unlimited class of affines by a system of kinship extension. Raskin (p.39) quoting Monro (1951) notes the role of:

"hack phrases" in humour, which he believes, "crystallise these conventional attitudes: often enough they are mere symbols which serve to evoke them....Humour upsets the pattern [of convention] by abruptly introducing something inappropriate.

The 'hack phrases' of joking relationship interaction are illustrated well in the text of the joking exchange in Appendix B. The constant use of these hack phrases such as swearing epithets based on genitals evoke the conventions of 'proper' affinal kin interaction which they so blatantly break. In relation to the use of sex
and aggression (see example (45) below) in release theories of humour Raskin notes further (p.39):

A special kind of relief takes place when a joke liberates us from an inhibition. The kind of release of psychic energy seems to be a logical companion of the suppression/repression laughter. In the literature, however, it is usually associated with sex and, less frequently, with aggression. As Mindess, suggests, "since sex and viciousness comprise the two major streams of impulse we normally try to control, it should come as no surprise that they fuel our gustiest laughter.... Ribald humour draws its sustenance from two main sources: sexual behaviour and elimination of body wastes."

JOKING RELATIONSHIPS AND SKewing.

In chapters 3-5 I have noted the correlation between skewing in kinship systems and the joking relationships which often result. For the Kuninjku, Crow-style skewing which involves FZD→FZ often results in ego joking with the children of 'FZ'. In Gurindji the skewing rules of the type MMBC→MMB and MBC→MB only operate with close matrilateral kin. Although McConvell does not state whether or not skewing sets up joking relationships, it may be possible to view the Gurindji skewing as consistent with the principle of affinal minimalisation discussed in chapter 4. In this case mali 'WM, WMB' is equated with jaju 'MM, MMB' and parnu 'MBC' with ngamirni 'MB' which all involve moving kin into the categories where joking relationships are possible. Also for Burarra, jabur/jongok 'WM, WMB' is equated through skewing with jerda 'MMB' and mununa 'MM' with the result that joking relationships are set up in the absence of actual affinity. Skewing in all these cases involves equating a class of kin usually associated with constrained behaviour with another class of less constraint. If a relative is in the marriage class, such as cross-cousin, but non-marriageable due to close genealogical connections or some other reason, then there is a tendency to skew such a relative so that they are addressed by a term which reflects the lack of actual affinity. In both Gurindji and Burarra, mother-in-law classes are skewed to equate them with the less constrained class of parallel grandparent.

THE PRAGMATICS OF JOKING RELATIONSHIP LANGUAGE.

I have described the language of joking interaction as primarily an advertisement of the ratification of particular social relationships. The literal meanings of the swearing and teasing is considered by Aboriginal speakers as 'saying nothing' and
based on the creation and expression of friendship as Thomson (1935: 475) also records:

When I asked two men of the Kuuku Ya'u tribe who stood in a joking relationship and who were perpetually exchanging terms of abuse, why they swore, one of the men replied "Yor'yor (nothing), ati (friend), make happy little bit, no swear proper!"

In the telephone conversation text (Appendix A), DN often addresses his joking partner as kornbayeng 'my good friend', which appears in the same sentences containing risque abuse. Other Kuninjku speakers have told me of the affection they hold for those joking partners with whom they are able to carry on the most intense ribald abuse and swearing. "He's my really good friend that bloke," is how one Kune man put it in English. Abrahams (1974/1989:243) in describing the social role of African American 'sounding' or 'the dozens' in establishing and maintaining friendships writes that:

........ friendship is not only defined by whom one may call upon for aid, but more important, with whom one may play.

We have seen that joking relationships mark the absence of actual affinity. I have provided examples of joking behaviour ceasing when affinal relationships become a reality (Hiatt 1965:61, McConvell 1982:97-98) and the reverse; constrained behaviour replaced by joking when affinity is renounced (Shapiro 1981:51, also the text in Appendix C(40)). Apart from this ratification of social relationships with fictive affines, there are occasions when joking interaction is used for other pragmatic purposes.

In a study of code-switching amongst a Gurindji, Wanyjirra and Kriol speaking community in the Victoria River District of the Northern Territory, McConvell (1988:110-111) discusses code-switching in a conversation which takes place during the butchering of a beast on a cattle station and subsequent distribution of meat. Two men in the conversation are related to each other as classificatory mother-in-law's brother (WMB) and sister's son-in-law (ZDH) and although this is not a recognised joking relationship category for this particular group (it can be in most Arnhem Land language groups), the sister's son-in-law commences joking with his mother-in-law's brother, possibly as a means of creating a fictive MB-ZS joking relationship in which a 'nephew can make strong demands on his
maternal uncle (McConvell 1988:121). This manipulation of rules relating to
talking relationships is undertaken presumably in order to secure better access to
the resource in question i.e the meat being butchered. Concerning this
manipulation of kinship rules of interaction McConvell comments (p.111):

A person can be related to another one not just through one tie, but through a network of
different ties, and may choose to emphasize a particular tie or a different aspect of a tie
and de-emphasise others in his dealings with that person to achieve particular effects, at
particular times. This may be done by using sociolinguistic devices, such as the indexing
of a relationship through the use of triangular kin terms, or by different degrees of
avoidance or joking registers.

Another secondary pragmatic use of joking relationships which I have observed
concerned a Kuninjku man asking his joking partner to fetch water so they could
boil it and make tea. In making the request, the speaker jokingly threatens to kill
his joking partner and 'leave his body lying there'. Although I was not able to
make an audio recording of this exchange, the man's request was along the
following lines:

(45)

Kela! Yi-lobme-n yi-bo-ma kadberre.
Prop.n. 2sg-run-IMP 2sg-water-getIMP us(incl)
Werrk! Yi-djare ø-bun ø-kuk-kurrme [laughter]!
Quick 2sg-wantNP 1/2-kill 1/2-body-putNP
Kela [subsection name]! Run and get us some water.
Quick! Do you want me to kill you and leave your body lying there!

Such a use of joking relationship language involves making the joke to reduce
the face-threatening act of the request for the joking partner to go and fetch the
water. Such joking redress of face-threatening acts is not uncommon amongst
Kunwinjku joking partners.

THE REVERSIBLE NATURE OF JOKING.
Throughout this thesis I have referred to the inverted nature of joking
relationship language when it is contrasted with the norms of interaction for
most other affinal relationships. Those who have described the patterned
behaviour continuum of Aboriginal kin relations usually place avoidance and
joking at opposite ends of this continuum without really explaining much about the relationship between these two extremes. The ambiguity of joking relationships which are characterised by both friendliness and verbal abuse has been illustrated by a range of terminologies and behaviours as observed in the case study of Eastern Kunwinjku. Both joking or avoidance relationships can occur within the same kin class. Terms for joking interaction can also mean the lexical-replacement register used with avoidance kin. Joking partners practice some of the same avoidance rituals (e.g. speech tabus) which are practiced by avoidance kin. Affinal kin terms are used to refer to those in joking relationships. Joking partners parody the norms of behaviour used between avoidance kin. Based on these ambiguities, the kin behaviour continuum should show some link between joking and avoidance as in figure 6.1.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 6.1: the patterned kin behaviour continuum and the link between avoidance and joking- at opposite ends but linked in that joking is the inverse of avoidance (adapted from Tonkinson 1978/1991:63).

The themes of reversal and symbolic inversion have been well documented in symbolic anthropology. Babcock (1978:14) broadly defines 'symbolic inversion' as:

... any act of expressive behaviour which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, or social and political.

Rituals of rebellion, role or identity reversal and ritualised clowning have all been included in studies of symbolic inversion. Joking relationships are an example of social and linguistic inversion which involve reversals of various kinds. Some of these reversals are summarised in figure 5.1. Hale's description of the Warlpiri tradition of antonymy is a further example of linguistic inversion. This practice involves using a secret ceremonial speech style called *tjiliwiri* where
nouns, verbs and pronouns of ordinary Warlpiri are replaced with an antonym (Hale 1971:473). Tjiliwiri is also a term used to mean 'funny' or 'clown' and as Hale notes 'refers specifically to formalised 'clowning' during kankarlu ritual and to the men who serve as guardians of junior kankarlu novices' (p.473). It is tempting to characterise such inversion as some peculiar aspect of Aboriginal cognition, but antonymy is also found in English as in the slang use of wicked to mean 'good' or in African American English bad to mean 'good'.

The paucity of references in the literature to Aboriginal joking relationships is surprising considering its pervasiveness as a daily observable kin interaction and its importance in kinship systems as a means of establishing and maintaining certain kinds of relationships. Most of the literature on joking relationships is based on African studies and debate has centered on the theory of joking relationships as a social mechanism for the dissipation of underlying hostility between groups or individuals who are said to be in social relationships of simultaneous conjunction and disjunction. This view is largely the result of the work of Radcliffe-Brown who surprisingly does not mention joking relationships in Australian Aboriginal societies let alone apply his theory to the place of joking relationships in Aboriginal kinship systems. The only major study of joking relationships in Aboriginal Australia is a study of Wik Mungkan joking by Jackes (1967) the 'major hypothesis' of which is the rather unsurprising observation that joking 'occurs regularly between people who are members of identifiable categories' (Jackes 1967:274). Further, Jackes concludes that 'there is simply not enough evidence to give full support to conclusions on Wik Mungkan joking' (p.244). Approaches such as Radcliffe-Brown's as Hiatt notes, have been at a 'high level of generality' (1996:146) and I have attempted to avoid concentrating solely on generalities by examining what joking partners actually say to each other, how such utterances are interpreted and the terms used to describe such interaction. Studies of the language of joking relationships in Australia have been scarce and cursory and with this present study I hope to have made some contribution to remedying this topical gap.
Appendix A

Joking conversation on the telephone.

(A small section of this text has been edited for reasons of privacy.)

   Prop.n. You. Here 2sg-lookIMP 12-talkNP 3pl-wantNP non-Aboriginal person
   njamed 'cousin business' yi-bengka-n?
   whatsit 'cousin business' 2sg-know-NP
   [NAME]? It's you! Look, some non-Aboriginal people want us to do some
   talking about whatsit, cousin business, you know what I mean?

2. GY:
   Well 12-swear-RR-NP 2sg-know-NP after IV-bad 3pl-want You
   ngayi ngandi-marne-djare ngarrku.
   I 3a/12-BEN-wantNP you-me[us].
   Well when we (jokingly) swear at each other using bad language that's what
   they're interested in, you know what I mean? They want you and I to do it.

3. GY:
   DN: Balanda
   White people.

4. GY:
   Yes, IV-like that 3pl-wantNP IV-'cousin'.talk III-REL 2sg-know-NP
   Yeah, they want us to use that style of speaking with 'cousins'
   [MMBCh/FZDCh], you know?

5. GY:
   DN: Konda kure Bulanj, Murray na-mekke 'recording' ngan-yime ngarrku.
   Here LOC subsection, prop.n. I-DEM recording 3sg/1-do us.
   Here with Bulanj [subsection name], Murray is going to record us.

6. GY:
   DN: Nn, yoh ngane-h-ni. Nga-korn-baye-ng kas!
   Non-speech.sound yes 1ua-IMM-sit 1sg-testicle-bite-PP cousin
   Yes, we're both here now. Oh 'cous' [Aboriginal English kin term], you're my
   good friend! [nga-kornbayeng- an interjectional phrase, used to show affection].

7. GY:
   DN:Malayi la, manih la recording manekke ngan-yime ngarrku.
   Tomorrow CONJ. IIIthis.one CONJ 'recording' IIIthat.one 3/1-do you.me
   Bulanj, nanih.
   prop.n I.this.one
   Tomorrow and, he's going to record us both. Bulanj, here.

8. GY:
Appendices

Yes 12-swear-RR-NP that IV-badREDUP 2sg-know-NP 
Yeah, we'll swear at each other really bad stuff, you know?

9. GY:
DN: Kunekke kabirri-djare mak Balanda, kondah. 
IVthis.manner 3pl-wantNP also prop.n. here 
That's also what those white people here want.

10. GY:
DN: [laughter] 
GY:
DN: [higher tone, underlying laughter] Ngoy, minj {incoh.} man-me 
Hey, not III-food 
yi-korn-badjan. 
2sg-testicle-big. 
Hey, don't....{incoh.} the food you big balls!

11. GY:
DN: [laughter] 
GY:
2sg-testicle-big. That.one 12-swear-RR-NP 
kun-warre dorrengh kunekke kabirri-djare. 
IV-bad with in.that.manner 3pl-wantNP. 
You big balls! We'll swear at each other like that, with bad language, that's what they want...

12. GY:
DN: Kan-bekka-n? 
2sg/1sg-hear-NP 
Can you hear me?

13. GY:
DN: Kabirri-djare kunekke ngarr-wokdi kondah. Kun-wok manih kabirri-djare 
3pl-want in.that.manner 12-talk here. IV-speech III.this 3pl-want 
Balanda. 
non-Aboriginal.people. 
They want you and I to talk like that. Here, these white people.

14. GY:
DN: Nane Bulanj nameke kurrme-ng tape ngan-wok-ma-ng ngarrku. 
I.this.one prop.n I.this[he] put-PP tape 3sg/12-speech-get-NP you.me 
Bulanj has put the tape on and is recording us both.

15. GY:
DN: Mane kabirri-djare njamed kun-kurrng and ngarri-du-rr-en yi-bengka-n? 
IIIthis.one 3pl-wantNP whatsit IV-avoidance.speech and 1a-swear-RR-NP 2sg-know-NP. 
They want whatsit, kun-kurrng register speech and we swear at each other, you know what I mean?

16. GY:
DN: Yo
   yes
   Yeah

17. GY:
DN: Ma! yi-re man-me wardi yi-yakwo-n yi-dedj-warla
Let.it.happen.now 2sg-goNP III-food most.likely 2sg.-finish-NP 2sg-bum-wide
Ø-korn-baye-ng.
1/2-testicle-bite-PP.
Well you go and stuff yourself and finish all the food you greedy guts, dear
friend.

18. GY:
DN: Aa?
GY:
DN: Ba wardi yi-korn-kimuk-men mak. [laughter]
   So most.likely 2sg-testicles-big-INCHO. also
So that you're balls will get big too.

19. GY:
DN: Med nene Ø-kurrme-ng kan-wok-ma-ng ngarrku.
   Wait this 3sg-put-PP 3/la-speech-get-PP you.me
Hang on, he wants to record us both.

20. GY:
DN: [laughter]
GY:
DN: [heavier laughter]
GY:
DN: Kayakki.
   No
   No

21. GY:
DN: NAME ngaleng nga-yawa-n namekke wanjh bonj. Kun-wern njamed
   Prop.n. her 1sg-search-NP this then enough. IV-many whatsit
man-me Ø-marne-yakwo-n.
Ill-food 1/2-BEN-finish-NP.
I'm going to look for [NAME] and her and then that'll do. I'm going to finish
up all of your food.

22. GY:
DN: [laughter] Yi-korn-badjan! [laughter].
   2sg-testicles-big
   You big balls!

23. GY:
DN: Ma! Well Bulanj med nane nga-marne-yime.
   OK.now well prop.n. wait I.this 1sg-BEN-sayNP.
   OK, well I'll tell Bulanj here then.
    3sg-go III-food 3sg-eat-NP. After 1ua-talk.
He's going to go and eat. We'll talk after.
[To GY] Bobo, e!
    Goodbye, non.speech.sound
    Bye then!

25. GY:
DN: Kaluk yi-bengka-n nga-m-wok-ngimen.
    After 2sg-know-NP lsg-hither-speech-enterNP
    After OK, I'll ring you again, you know.

26. GY:
DN: Bonj, nane nga-kurrme-ng ka-h-di nga-bongu-n afda.
    Enough I.this 1sg-put-PP 3sg-IMM.-stand 1sg-drink-NP after.
No, I've left it [or other 3rd person] here, I'll have a drink after.

27. GY:
DN: Ma ø-korn-baye-ng bobo. Kaluk ngarr-wokdi afda recording
    OK.now 1/2-testicle-bite-PP goodbye. Later 12-speak after recording
    kan-yime ngarrku.
    3/la-do-NP you.me.
OK, my dear friend, goodbye. We can talk after and he'll record us.

28. GY:
DN: La, kahirri-djare yi-na.........shit. ø-kurrme-ng ø-wam.
    And, 3pl-want 2sg-look.....shit. 3sg-put-PP 3P-goPP.
And, they want, hey.......shit. He's hung up and gone.
Appendix B

Extended session of swearing between joking partners

The following transcription conventions have been employed:

- dotted underlining denotes word internal laughter
- Square brackets indicate overlapping or simultaneous speech.
- curly brackets enclose a comment on an unclear, incoherent or untranscribable utterance.

(If following this transcript along with the cassette recording, an extraneous utterance around line 14 was not transcribed).

1. D: Yi-ngarreyabok.
   2sg-get.fucked
   You can get fucked.
   2sg-sex.maniac.
   You sex maniac.
3. D: Yi-ngarreyabok.
   2sg-get.fucked
   You can get fucked.
4. A: Yi-djal-lobme doctor ngun-berd-[dadje].
   2sg-just-runNP doctor 3sg/2sg-penis-cutNP
   Just run off and the doctor will circumcise you.
5. D: [Yi-berd-nud].
   2sg-penis-rotten.
   You stinking prick (the term 'berd-nud' also means 'uncircumcised' and the implication is that if 'I' should undergo circumcision, 'you' are still uncircumcised.)
6. A: [not clear] .......... ba yi-bekka-rr-imen razor
   so 2sg-feel-RR-IMP razor
   .....so feel the razor [bite]!
   2sg-get.fucked 2sg-penis-rotten 2sg-get.fucked
   You can get fucked you fucking stinking prick.
   2sg-get.fucked
   Get fucked!
   2sg-get.fucked
   You can get fucked.
10. A: Daluk yi-ngu-yi yiben-kad[ju-ng ba yiben-dedjdjo-ng]
    Woman 2sg-eat-IRR 2sg/3a-follow-NP so 2sg/3a-fuck-NP
you want to 'eat'[have sex with] a woman you follow them around so u can fuck them:

[[not clear]..yiben-karrme ngun]-nome, 2sg/3a-grabNP 3/2-smellNP ...you grab them and they sniff you,

[koy]

miscuous

x maniac!

[Yiben]-bolka-n yi-re 1sg/3a-follow.scent-NP 2sg-goNP go around sniffing their scent.

E, D, A: [laughter, all four] laughter][Kar-rowe-n nakka] (laughter), yi-ngarreyabok yi-djurrkdjurrrk 3sg-die-NP him 2sg-get.fucked 2sg-sex.maniac

urie yi-dadje-ng, na 2sg-cut-PP. illing himself laughing [referring to one of the overhearers], fuck you, you nia, you always slice open vagina [i.e. having sex].

'i-ngarreyabrneng yi-[berd-day-kimuk]. 1sg-'fucking.cunt' 2sg-penis-glans-big. i fucking cunt, you big dickhead. [Yi-ngarreyabok]. 2sg-get.fucked Get fucked.

'i-ngarreyabok]

sg-get.fucked fuck you!


'gudda yi-koykoy. [AB, JJ], na-ngale Burabura You 2sg-promiscuous. Prop.n., prop.n., I-who prop.n. you're the sex maniac. AB, JJ and whatsisname, Burabura (slip of all the name of addressee A). Ngudda [ngurri-berd-nud]. You 2pl-penis-rotten. (three brothers), you're all stinking pricks.

[intense laughter]

[Ken!]

INTERJ.Oops!

ops! (mistakingly calls personal name of A when intending to call his brother's name)

ughter) yi-ngarreyabok, 2sg-get.fucked Get fucked.
Appendices

24. D: Yi-ngarreyabok.
   2sg-get.fucked
   You can get fucked.

25. A: (laughter) Yi-djurrkdjurrk.
   2sg-promiscuous.
   You sex maniac.
   You 2sg-penis-promiscuous also.
   Your prick's a sex maniac too.

27. A: (laughter) Yiben-bolka-n yi-re, [yiben-dedj]-nome yiman duruk,
   2sg/3a-follow.scent-NP 2sg-goNP 2sg/3a-bum-sniff like dog
   You go around sniffing their scent, you smell their bums just like a dog.
28. D: [unclear]

   2sg-get.fucked 2sg-promiscuous I-REL 2sg/3a-fuck-PP
   Fuck you, you're randy with those you fucked.

   2sg/-faulk-PP 2sg/-penis-[-?]-P
   You fucked them and your prick was (?incoh.)...
   2sg/3a-fuck-PP then 2sg/3a-penis-sore-P. I-That 2sg/3a-penis-look-RR-IMP
   yi-berd-yil-kimuk. Na-wern, [yi-ngarreyabok].
   2sg-penis-vein-big I-many 2sg-get.fucked.
   You fucked them and now your prick is sore. Look at your own prick, fuck you, you big-veined prick.
32. D: [Na-kka] yi-na-o yi-ngarreyabok.
   I-That 2sg/3a-penis-look-IMP 2sg-get.fucked.
   Look at your own, fuck you!

   2sg-track-body.
   You always leave tracks around. (evidence of sexual intercourse)
34. D: Yi-berd-kuk.
   2sg-penis-body (raw).
   Your prick is raw (i.e. not treated by heating/traditional medicine after circumcision).
35. A: (laughter) Yiben-dedjdo-y.
   2sg/3a-fuck-PP
   You fucked them.
   2sg/3a-fuck-PP
   YOU, fucked them.
Appendix C

Mick Kubarkku discusses joking relationships.

(MK= Mick Kubarkku, MG= Murray Garde, LL= a relative of MK)

1. MG: Yoh kun-ekke Balang, kun-kare bu kakkak, yoh.....
   Yes IV-DEM subsection IV-before REL MM/B, yeah.
   Yeah, like that Balang, before when [people] with grandkin...

   Yeah, MM/B -ZDCh 3ua-CONT-joke-get-RR-NP I-REL
   Yes, grandkin (MMB/ZDCh) always joke with each other.

   3uaNP-CONT-joke-get-RR-NP after 1/2-grabNP 3/3NP-BEN-sayNP
   They always joke with each other. "I'll take hold of you" he says to him

4."ø-karrme kakkak ø-karrme kaluk ø-dadjdje med yi-djordmen ø-dadjdje",
   1/2-grabNP MMB 1/2-grabNP after 1/2-cutNP not.yet 2sg-grow.up 1/2-cutNP
   I'll grab hold of you grandson, I'll grab you and when you've grown up I'll
circumcise you!"

5.kabi-marne-yime. Kabene-re weleng ka-djordmen kabi-weleng-karrme,
   3/3NP-BEN-sayNP 3uaNP-goNP then 3sgNP-grow.up 3/3NP-then-grabNP
   he says to him. They go on like this and then when he grows up, he then siezes
   him

   3/3NP-grabNP I-REL finish. 3/3NP-penis-cutNP.
   he grabs him and that's it. He circumcises him.

7.MG:Kabirri-du-rr-en?
   3a-swear-RR-NP
   They swear at each other don't they?

   Yes 3a-swear-RR-NP IV-DEM 3a-swear-RR-NP 3ua-goNP
   Yeah, they swear at each other. They always swear at each other.

   You 3/3-BEN-sayNP I-REL woman-GEN IV-bad 3/3-BEN-sayNP
   "You!", he says to him, and says vulgar things to him about women.

   2sg-testicle-long always 3/3-BEN-sayNP
   "You've got long balls," he always says to him.
11. MG: Yoh...
   Yeah

    So 2sg-penis-long 3/3-BEN-sayNP 3ua-swear-RR-NP 3ua-goNP
    "You long prick," he says to him. They always keep swearing at each other

    3/3-take.hold 3/3-penis-grabNP 3ua-penis-grab-RR-NP
    he'll grab him and grab his penis, they'll grab each other's genitals.

    Then 3NP-go 3NP-grow.up 3ua-goNP 3/3-cutNP 3/3-take.hold 3/3-cutNP
    Then he grows up. They go together and he circumcises him, siezes him and
    cuts him.

15. Kun-ekke kabi-yime mak na-kurrrnh, mm na-’kurrrnh
    IV-DEM 3ua-doNP and I-WMB I-WMB
    That's what they do and also with 'na-kurrrngh' ('WMB')

    kun-ekke rerri-h ko-na-kurrrnh. Wamud yiman ngayi, ngane-du-rr-en bu
    IV-DEM same.way-CONT dyad-I-WMB. skin.name such.as I lua-swear-RR-NP if
    for a pair of 'na-kurrrngh' its the same. Such as Wamud and I, we swear at each
    other

    lua-swear-RR-PP I-who not lua-swear-RR-IRR.
    we used to swear at each other, but who now, we never used to swear at each
    other. (thinking to self, somewhat incoherently)

17. Na-ngale nuk ngane-h-du-rr-inj
    I-who don't.know lua-CONT-swear-RR-PP
    Who did I used to swear with (um?)

18. na-ngamed na-ni ngane-h-du-rr-inj.
    I-who I-DEM lua-CONT-swear-RR-PP.
    who was it now I used to swear with

19. Na-ngale na-kka, na-ngamed ngarduk na-kurrrnh Djumbiya,
    I-who I-DEM I-whatsisname my I-'WMB' prop.n.
    Oh whatsisname, my na-kurrrng Djumbiya.

20. LL: Djebberi bedda.
    Prop.n. them
    Djebberi (Jeffrey) and that mob
Who did I used to swear with, what? And Djeberri who?


23. MK:Djeberri na-ni ngane-du-rr-en. Yi-bengka-n Wamud? Prop.n. I-DEM 1ua-swear-RR-NP. 2sg-know-NP subsection.name Djeberri, we swear at each other. You know, Wamud?


He's the one I swear (joke) with. We used to swear at each other with that


27. Ngane-burriwe-ng nga-na-ng ngane-burriwe-ng weleng nga-h... ngayi 1ua-throw-PP 1-see-PP 1ua-throw-PP then 1-IMM... I We threw the spear, I watched, we threw it and then I

28. nga-burriwe-ng, barrawu. Baleh man-e ngal-e ø-burriwe-ng. 1-throw-PP shovel.nose.spear Where III-DEM II-DEM 3P-throw-PP I threw the shovel nose spear. Which one, was it he threw it.

29. Ngane-burriwe-ng ø-djabdi. Nga-burriwe-ng ø-djabdi wanjh nungan-wali 1ua-throw-PP 3P-stand.erect. 1-throw-PP 3P-stand.erect then he-IN.TURN We threw it and it stood in the ground. I threw it and it stood into the ground and then he

30. ø-wam ø-me-y ø-kudj-me-y. ø-Burriwe-ng na-wu 3P-goPP 3P-pick.up-PP 3P-wooden.fragment-pick.up-PP 3P-throw-PP I-REL ø-bakme-ng. 3P-break-PP. went and got it, threw it and it broke.

31. MG:Njale ø-yime-ng?
What 3P-do-PP.
What happened?

32. 3P-break-PP 3P-ITER-see-PP finish.
He saw it was broken and that was the end of it.

33. What 3P-break-PP
What was broken?

34. "Ahhh" nga-yime-ng "na-kurrrng na-kka na-ngale" na-wu yi-bengka-n
Hey 1-say-PP I-WMB I-DEM I-who I-REL 2sg-know-NP
3P-glans-hit-RR-PP.
The "prick" of the spear (the end of the point embedded into the shaft) had been pulled out (the joke is an analogy with subincision). "Hey 'cousin'", I said to him, "whose is this" you know, he had "subincised" himself.

35. Cut his own prick, like from the east, like the easterners, he subincises himself, like the easterners (?).

36. In the south they don't joke (swear) with their na-kurrrng?

37. Only with grandkin (MMB/ZDCh), yeah.

38. They swear with each other OK and in the south the women [i.e. one's classificatory WM] don't swear at all

39. Kandi-djal-du-ng incorrectly. 2sg-goNP 3a/2-swear-NP
In the east they swear at us.
Bulanj wardi ngundi-du-ng....[laughter].
subsection.name might 3a/2-swear-NP
The wrong relatives swear at us. The ones we call kakkak and ngal-kurrng, they just swear at us (playing jokes). If you go there Bulanj they'll swear at you! [this refers to classificatory (not actual) 'WMB' who in northeast Arnhem Land may have joking relationships with their 'son-in-laws']

41. Ngal-ekke makka ngarduk ngal-beh, la ngal-kka ngal-mak.
   II-DEM FM my II-ABL, and II-DEM II-good
   Ngal-buyika ngal-kabbomolodjo, ngal-kka
   II-different II-clan.name II-DEM
   My FM she's over there, but she's OK. She's different, from Kabbomolodjo clan.

42. Ngal-mak minj ngun-wernh-du-ng. But makka ngarduk an-ngulinj
   II-good not 3/2-properly-swear-NP. But MF my I(Burarra)-clan.name
   I-DEM not 3a/2-swear-IRR. Nothing 3aP-REDUP.OK prop.n. them
   She's OK she won't really swear at you. But my FMB, [i.e. the addressee's classificatory MMB, a possible joking relationship] of an-ngulinj clan, he won't swear at you. No they're fine [i.e they share the same joking relationship rules about who to joke with] . Bangkarla and that mob

   3a-swear-NP hey 2sg-move.away-IMP 3aP-REDUP.OK I-REL
   na-kka nuye-ke marrek kabi-du-ng kayakki. La na-buyika na-beh kan-du-ng.
   I-DEM his-GEN not 3/3-swear-NP nothing. And I-different I-ABL 2/la-swear-NP
   I-different 2/la-swaer-NP yes I-DEM
   They swear [to child: move away]. But they're OK. And that one of his (the an-ngulinj man's wife, who is speaker's kakkak), doesn't swear. Another from over there, he (she?) swears at us.

   I-DEM IV-'cousin'.lect grandkin.joking OK 3a-swear-RR-NP.
   That 'cousin' language and grandkin joking style, it's OK for them to swear at each other.

45. MG: Kun-kurrrng, kunmodarewarre ka-rohrok?
   IV-'cousin'.lect, grandkin.joking 3sg-same
   Are 'kun-kurrrng' ('cousin' lect/mother-in-law language) and kunmodjarewarre (grandkin swearing/joking) the same?

46. MK: Yoh, ka-rohrok kunmodjarewarre rowk. Yiman kun-kurrrng
   Yes, 3sg-same grandkin.joking all Such.as IV-'cousin'.lect
   kun-kurrrng rerri.
   IV-'cousin'.lect same.again.
Yes, it's all the same as grandkin joking speech style. It's like 'kun-kurrng', its the same as 'kun-kurrng' (special register of speech to use with WM).

47. MG: Kun-kurrng minj ngarrben-marne-wokdi na-wu ngal-kurrng?
   IV-'cousin'.lect not 1a/3a-BEN-talk I-REL II-WMB
   But don't we use kun-kurrng (special 'avoidance register) with 'WM'?

48. MK: Yoh, ngabin-marne-wokdi na-beh wanjh [?] la kureh kayakki.
   Yes, 1/3a-BEN-talk I-ABL but and LOC nothing.
   Kureh na-wu daluk. Na-ngale koyek na-beh Kunardbe an Wurlak. Na-kka
   LOC I-REL woman I-who east I-ABL Gunartpa and Wurlaki. I-DEM
   kandi-du-ng.
   3a/1a- swear-NP
   Yes, I speak to them (with kun-kurrng register) from here but not over there.
   Not the women from over there. Those easterners, the Gunartpa and
   Wurlaki. They (classificatory 'WM') swear (use joking style) at us.

49. Na-wu kun-kurrng. Ka-yimanek kandi-bawo-yi 'kadjin' ngad
   I-REL IV-'cousin'.lect 3NP-COUNTFCT 3a/1a-leave-IRR 'cousin' we
   ngarrben-marne-yime.
   1a/3a-BEN-say.
   Its about speech with 'cousins' (WM/WMB). They should leave off the
   swearing/joking, we're their 'cousins'.

    Woman 3a/1a-give-IRR. And I-DEM 3a/1a-CONT.-swear-NP.
    IV-DEM such as 1a-spouse-dyad also. Yes, III-DEM.
    They're supposed to give us wives. But they keep swearing at us (joking).
    And we're also like affines. Yeah like that.
Appendix D

Fundamental frequency and wave form displays for the joking expletive *yingarreyabok*.

Figure D1: Fundamental frequency and wave form display of the normal intonation pattern for the expletive *yingarreyabok*. The word is uttered twice. A high to low falling pitch contour is shown in the top half of the chart which shows fundamental frequency. The wave form section shows the final syllable -bok as having a duration of .2 of a second (the horizontal axis is in milliseconds and shows time alignment with the upper frequency display).
Figure D2: Fundamental frequency and wave form display of a singsong intonation for the utterance yingarreyabok. The display shows results for a single utterance. The fall-rise-fall-rise pitch contour can be contrasted with the high to low falling pitch contour of the normal intonation pattern in figure D1. The final syllable is also stressed in the singsong intonation by extra lengthening (.4 of a second compared with .2 of a second as in figure D1).
Appendix E

Abbreviations and orthographies

Throughout this thesis I have employed the practical orthographies which have been designed for the various languages mentioned. I use the Standard Kunwinjku Orthography (Carroll 1976) for all Kunwinjku dialects except for Gundjeihi which has its own distinct orthography (Evans 1991). The Dalabon orthography used is similar to that of Kunwinjku except for a sixth vowel phoneme ~ which is written using the letter 'v'. The Burarra orthography is that employed by Glasgow (1994) and also by the Burarra Bilingual Education program at Maningrida Community Education Centre. Aboriginal words quoted in references published before the development of practical orthographies have been converted to the modern orthographies. Some language names are spelt differently to the spellings which appear in earlier publications. Thomson's references to Ompela, Koko Ya'o and Wik Monkan have been converted to Umpila, Kuuku Ya'u and Wik Mungkan respectively based on O'Grady (1976) for Umpila and Kuuku Ya'u (a dialect of Umpila) and Kilham et al. (1986) for Wik Mungkan.

The importance of using a consistent and practical orthography is demonstrated for example by the confusion in the literature over the Wik Mungkan kin term kaath kalan (see chapter 3, page 44). Thomson (1935:484) spelt the term kat käll'n whilst McConnell's version (1940:442, 444, 1950:108) is ka'ta kalana. Jackes in her analysis of Wik Mungkan joking relationships speculates that the two terms therefore refer to two different kin categories which then become a basis for her further discussion (Jackes 1969, 1967:137, 147). A further illustration of the importance of understanding language in anthropological analysis is demonstrated by Maddock's discussion (1969:55) of the Dalabon terms dun 'hole' duninj 'actual, proper' and na?duninj 'real mother, genetrix' [literally 'mother actual']. The false assumption here is that two words, segments of which are homophonous are etymologically 'akin':

Duning [sic] appears to be etymologically akin to dun, 'hole'. The kind of hole in the ground or in a cliff face that reptiles or porcupines might go into is called dun. We might speculate that na?duning [sic] is the na? (mother's category) woman through whose vagina Ego issued.

The Kunwinjku orthography conventions used in this thesis are as follows:
stops-
bilabial b
alveolar d
retroflex rd
palatal dj
velar k
glottal h

nasals:
bilabial m
alveolar n
retroflex rn
palatal nj
velar ng

laterals:
alveolar l
retroflex rl
alveolar tap rr

retroflex r

glides:
labiovelar w
palatal y

Vowels:
front central back
high i o
mid e u
low

Transcription conventions are based on those used by Evans (1991):
CONT- continuous
LOC- locative
REDUP- reduplication
RR- reflexive reciprocal
NP- non past
ABL- ablative
GEN- genitive
REL- relative
PP- past perfective
DEM- demonstrative
IRR- irrealis
BEN- benefactive
COUNTFCT- counterfactual (particle)
INTERJ- interjection
IMM- immediate
CONJ- conjunction
IMP- imperative
DIS- disharmonic generation
OBJ- object

1 'first person', 2 'second person', 3 'third person', 12 'first person inclusive', sg
'singular', pl 'plural' du 'dual', I 'masculine noun class', II 'feminine noun class', III 'vegetable noun class', IV 'neuter noun class'. Subject-object verbal prefixes are shown with a slash e.g. *ngun-dadje* 'he will cut you' 3sg/2sg-cutNP 'third person singular acting on a second person (equal or higher animate) object.

Kinship Abbreviations:
M - mother, F - father, Z - sister, B - brother, S - son, D - daughter, C - child, H - husband, W - wife, ♂ - female ego, ♂ - male ego.
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