

CHAPTER 4

Fathers and Sons, Trajectories of Self

Reflections on Pintupi Lives and Futures

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Totemism 'as a social institution is a defense organized against separation anxiety' (Róheim 1945a: 249).

Questions about childhood in Indigenous Australian communities have become very significant politically, but – with some exceptions – anthropologists have not developed the ethnography of childhood as one might have imagined. What this would involve, I have often thought, is a much greater attention to the interactions and communicative practices (linguistic and otherwise) between children and caregivers as well as among children themselves (see Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin 1990). I always wished I had been able to do this with the attention it deserved, because the general models of childhood and socialization that have been developed (of nurturance, autonomy, and so on) – however appropriately drawn from Indigenous theories of personhood – do not engage with the range of practices and subtleties of variations that must exist and which inform actual histories of socialization.¹ As significantly, I believe, the questions we sought to ask were not as theoretically elaborated as they needed to be in order to generate the empirical materials for understanding how children become adult persons. I believe that the recent work of the editor of this volume makes important contributions to reestablishing the questions that should be asked about childhood. With these caveats, my own contribution is surely more speculative than I would like, but my interest lies in the development of 'sociality' in Western Desert Indigenous subjects and the relationship of this sociality to what I would call, with the existential psychiatrists, 'ontological security'. Laing (1965: 39) describes a person who feels secure in his being as someone who has 'a sense of his presence in the world as real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person'. My hope is that

some perspective from the past may be worthwhile in drawing attention to important questions around the continuity of being here posited as a social phenomenon. How is ontological security established in these communities? Indeed, what does it mean to establish this kind of trust or security?

In the past two years, I have had the opportunity to revisit some of the men I had known originally as boys in 1973 – some of whom I have seen only very briefly and intermittently since 1988. Since the early 1970s, as is known well by most who will read this, the lives of Indigenous people in remote communities have been marked by trauma and loss, with what has seemed to me to be a dramatic increase in the deaths of young men and the passing on of the elder generation. All along the road to communities like Kintore are plastic crosses and flowers marking the location and identities of deadly motorcar accidents, commonly fuelled by heavy drinking. Deaths by violence are certainly not a novel phenomenon, as I have discussed elsewhere (Myers 1986), and the problems of ‘loss’, ‘grief’ and ‘attachment’ are enduring cultural dilemmas in Central Desert Australian communities (see *also* Morton 1987b). But the scale has changed, and these changes presumably are working themselves out against the existing cultural forms. The centrality of ‘separation anxiety’, as Róheim (1945a) articulated it, suggests a vulnerability of attachment in the processes of life’s trajectories towards a healthy self-regard. Indeed, in the face of these losses and with an economy of little prospect, one wonders how young people and children in these communities might envisage a future – a topic that some of my colleagues, such as those represented in this collection, are addressing. Lacking data specific to intrapsychic processes, I would prefer to bracket the psychoanalytic implications of Róheim’s insight in favour of a broader notion of attachment or, perhaps better, of *belonging* as necessary to maturation and development. I intend this paper to reflect back on the lives of my young friends with the knowledge of present and past. Insofar as my knowledge is primarily of boys and young men, it should be seen as reflecting on the processes of socialization and identity formation of males towards what appears to be a particular desert Aboriginal masculinity.

Childhood and Social Production

I am particularly struck by the continuing close relationships between the men I once knew as boys, sustaining their intimate knowledge of each other from childhood over thirty years ago. This sustained intersubjective continuity seems a very steadying influence on people’s self-regard. I was

also very struck, in my original field study, by the affective ways in which one young man, who had lost both his original mother and father, articulated his situation as an 'orphan' (*yapunta*). Later, I wrote about the ways in which the painter Linda Syddick constructed through her art her first father's loss and his replacement by her attachment to her second father (Myers 2002, 2004). Seeing how the Pintupi communities – like many others – have suffered much significant trauma and loss, I would like to look at some details of the families and cohorts of the young people I first knew in 1973, to consider how they have fared in these situations.

When I arrived as a young American anthropologist at the Pintupi outstation community of Yayayi, there were nearly three hundred people living in army tents, with the tents principally providing shelter for 'families' and 'single women' (or widows) and the older boys and young men living with more informal shelters of galvanized iron. I have striking memories of the older boys: Tjampu Tjakamarra – then a young adolescent and recently in from the 'bush' – wearing a denim jacket with 'Make Love not War' on the back and the sleeves cut off, and Bobby West's interest in me as an 'American' like a previous visitor, an American Vietnam veteran, and Paul Bruno's desire to engage with me in English. Even in such a recent community, older boys were living in a world intersected by many fields of attraction. They knew a great deal about their own culture, spoke Pintupi as a first language, but were already adopting the Papunya Luritja style of speech developed at the larger community nearby, and most professed little interest in their own culture or country. Whether the boys were simply circumspect or uninterested, discussion or reference to *tjukurrpa* (Dreaming) either as stories or as sites was not frequent, although after initiation and deeper ritual exposure, they all demonstrated more pride in gaining knowledge about it. It was not clear that these young men were aspiring with the same vigour to becoming knowledgeable in the Law as their fathers did, and they certainly resisted prolonged withdrawal from secular social life for ritual matters. This speaks, I think, to some vulnerabilities of the transition to Aboriginal adulthood. These young men, or late adolescents, considered their elders and realized that the cultural frames had changed; they had other ways in which to imagine themselves.

Hanging around the camps at Yayayi – especially of my friends Freddy West, Shorty Lungkarta and Pinny Tjapaltjarri – I had considerable opportunity to spend time with and learn about family life, no matter how untutored I was in developmental psychology. Four themes particularly express my strongest memories of 'childhood' – of the situation of childhood – there. First, the close contact of small children with their caretakers and the constant attention they received, some of it rather invasive

and aggressive – attempting to get a response. Second, the frequent tantrums of small children, whose desires for some object or attention were inconsolable and ultimately to be satisfied by older children giving way to the needs of the younger.² Third, what I found to be a ‘strange’ affective distance of adolescent boys towards their fathers (and mothers), so much so that I was sometimes surprised that a person we were discussing was their father! Fourth, the noticeable and explicit discussion of some young people as orphans (those who had lost close ‘parents’ who were raising them) and the compassion expressed for them. This was matched by the very noticeable demonstrations of loneliness and grief expressed particularly by young men who were ‘orphans’ when they were drunk – when their loss (that is, their not having anyone to ‘look after’ them) was commonly highlighted.³

All of these dimensions of children’s lives entered into my accounts of the qualities of personhood among the Pintupi and into my understanding of the ways in which persons managed their relationships to others – and particularly into the salience of ‘nurturance’ (drawing on the metaphors invested in the concept of *kanyininpa*, ‘having’, ‘holding’, ‘looking after’) in the organization of sociality (Myers 1979, 1982, 1986, 1988b, 1993). These analyses from my first periods of fieldwork were based on a life-history and developmental-cycle methodology and a theoretical framework focused on social reproduction. In that work, the principal orientation was to what I described as ‘the production of the social person’ and in this sense, I approached the ‘child’ as an intersection or site of value production, a cultural subject in formation. The life cycle of a person comprised, at least for classical Pintupi society, the elementary cycle of social production. While none of my study was what could be called an *ethnography* of childhood, it did depend on the recognition of certain key themes in the lives of children I knew. The key Pintupi concept that, as I have argued, organized this cycle of production was expressed in the word *kanyininpa*, which means ‘having’, ‘holding’, ‘looking after’, or perhaps more figuratively ‘nurturing’. Perhaps the most powerful image of this relationship is that of a child being ‘held at the breast’ (*kanyinu yampungka*). In the first instance, the metaphor would seem to draw on the mother’s relationship to the child, of nursing, a theme which Róheim (1945a) took to be central to a subsequent anxiety about separation from the mother – an unwholeness or rupture which he understood to be resolved by or replaced through male initiation and identification with male objects and fantasized permanent union (or what I would regard, following Munn 1970, as ontological anchoring). This suggests the existence of cultural practices to deal with loss. To look after someone, I have maintained, involves a combination

of restraint or control in the interests of that person's well-being, and it expresses as well a basis for intergenerational legitimate authority. Finally, and perhaps crucially, in my later considerations of this process, I came to understand that the relationship of looking after also involves an investment of identity in the nurtured person, a contribution. Thus, I wrote (Myers 1993: 38): 'Such "holding" – which connotes a kind of nurturance, protection, or management – confers a significant transmission ... of identity to those who are held'.

More closely, in taking some issue with Francesca Merlan's (1986) characterization of nurturance as only a *general* contribution to identity, I argued that 'nurturing' establishes a *specific* individual identity, as part of the kinship system that mediates between two often-contradictory sociopolitical relations – between, on the one hand, relationships a person has with temporary coresidents and, on the other hand, long-term relationships with those who are spatially distant but potential coresidents. Only some seniors actually – in the end – 'look after' a person, and this active relationship establishes a particular component of the younger person's identity – whether expressed somewhat formally in taking on particular rights to place and knowledge (and thus, the senior person's subject position) or more informally in providing an easy nexus of social relations of sharing and exchange. *These are quite literally points of attachment both to a social order and through a sharing of identity.* An implication of these arguments was that being looked after – as materialized in receiving nurturance in the form of food, care, and later esoteric knowledge and rights – was a critical component in one's establishment of, or attachment to, a meaningful social (and psychological) identity. This analysis suggests that lack of 'holding' (of nurturance) could impede the development of adult identity. Insofar as it was a critical component, then, an interruption or loss of this care was potentially very costly – even a trauma. In an admirable recent paper discussing the nearby community of Docker River, Pauline Fietz (2008) describes a thirteen-year-old girl for whom the lack of proper care giving by senior female kin had left her 'significantly socially impaired'. While the girl was able to draw on a broad kinship network for basic support, she lacked the vital provision of 'the moral and ethical support' which proper 'nurturance' requires. The observation of orphans – and neglected children – was fundamental to my development of a similar, if less carefully articulated, understanding. And, as other recent observers have suggested (Dussart, personal communication summer 2007), there may now be a lack of sufficient attention from older men for their younger charges,⁴ a decline in ceremonial transmission occasioned both by a demographic decline in numbers of middle-aged men and by their pursuit of interests (in town or elsewhere)

that draw their energies away from the activities I described as ‘social production’. (Without more systematic observational data, I should acknowledge that I cannot say whether support from kin other than parents – such as brothers, sisters and so on – can substitute or make up for losses, or in what conditions this might be so.)

Vulnerabilities of Attachment

My attention here, however, is more with what one might discern of the vulnerabilities of the local socialization process, of attachment and reattachment. I am not able to characterize confidently why some losses affect individuals differently, which would involve closer study than I was able to do. However, the child’s age or level of maturity seems to be important, a guarantee of successful attachment perhaps. There are families in which the older children seem to have adjusted fairly successfully to the loss of a parent – especially through a violent death or accident – but younger children in the same family have done poorly. I can think of two such families, in particular. The younger siblings of one successful friend – who shared a mother with him – mostly died early deaths, from accidents or petrol sniffing, following their mother’s tragic and untimely death in an accidental killing by their father. The children of others who died, for example, during the great loss of life in the early Papunya settlement period, were not as marked by that loss. My friends Titjiwin Tjampitjinpa and his half-sister Marlene Ross, for example, both suffered the loss of their father from heat in the Gibson Desert just before the Papunya era, but they have become successful adults. Others I can recall crying mournfully in moments of drunken despair that ‘I got no mommy, no daddy. I can die, no worries’. Linda Syddick, the Pintupi woman about whom I have written before (Myers 2002, 2004), has cogently presented in her paintings the sense of loss occasioned by the death of her biological father in her infancy, along with the healing effect of her attachment to her adoptive father – expressed through his giving to her the right to paint his stories. Significantly, the kinship loss (her father) is articulated with the displacement from country occasioned by the early Pintupi relocation and settlement in themes of *E.T.* (Spielberg 1982) and return to country, suggesting that for some in the Pintupi communities, the trauma of loss is compounded culturally by changes in the capacity to maintain the attachments to place in which self-regard is also organized and managed. Indeed, relationships to place constitute an endpoint of the developmental process in which, in a sense, death is transcended, in that the relationships to the senior generation who nurtured one are converted

to more enduring identification with them through place.⁵ If R  heim explains the resolution (or mediation) of a fundamental separation anxiety with the male individual's identification with a hard (stone, wood) sacred object, this is not the end point. The developmental process ends, as it were, in establishing a subject's relationship to place – a material form characterized by its enduringness, permanence and resistance to change (see Myers 1986, 1988b, 1993). It comprises the existential security that Nancy Munn once called an enduring 'anchor' (1970) and resonates with Craig San Roque's (this volume) emphasis on the necessity of having 'a place to go to' or to be.

Attachment and Reattachment: Changing the Ratio of Autonomy and Relatedness

If such successful processes would be the desirable outcome of the Indigenous socialization process, the point of young people's leaving their natal families must be a very vulnerable point. Indeed, as I think of the dynamic of young men's reserve towards their fathers mentioned above, it seems to me now a rather precarious moment of autonomy – freer of direct control and nurturance and not yet transferred into the nurturance of ceremonial sequestering and discipline by older men. Further, the embeddedness of Indigenous communities such as Yayayi in a larger field of racial and cultural difference adds significantly, I believe, to the vulnerability of this transition. When, as Marika Moisseeff points out (this volume), these young people see the greater value attributed to Euro-Australian culture (marked by the greater material wealth, respect and authority of Euro-Australians in these communities), their identifications and options for identification become more complex.

On the very day I drove out to Yayayi for the first time, to seek permission for research in 1973, thirteen-year-old P. B. Tjampitjinpa jumped into my car at Papunya. When, later, I arrived at Yayayi, it was P. – with a serviceable English – who informed me that 'the old men' were ready to see me. P. spoke to me often in the first few months, teaching me Pintupi words, facilitated by the English he had learned while he lived at the nearby Warlpiri community of Yuendumu. I always felt that I failed him, in some ways, by not reciprocating the attention he desired. His father S. B. Tjangala was, in 1973, the head of the Yayayi Village Council and a strong supporter of my presence, but P., I came to learn, had largely been raised by others at Yuendumu, where he had become a successful student (as marked by his very good English) and acquired a veneer of comfort with Euro-Australian ways. As far as I could determine, P. saw

himself as a little different from some of the ‘new Pintupi’,⁶ speaking better English and having resided at Yuendumu – which regarded itself as superior in ‘Whitefella ways’ to Papunya people. He was, in some ways, also ‘between’ the two worlds of identification with Euro-Australian models and recourse to the newly emerging discourses of Black Power. An age-mate and friend of Bobby and the others, P. seemed also to hold himself somewhat apart from them. Was it because his mother, S. B.’s first wife, had become ‘mad’ (*ramarama*) and wandered the camp, had been cast out and replaced by subsequent wives? P., I was told by an older classificatory ‘brother’, had been raised more by other Pintupi ‘fathers’ at Yuendumu, men whose nurturance of him gave them a special place in his initiation. But in this sense, he might not have been very securely any of their ‘sons’, and he sought attachment elsewhere, as with me.

As I have written elsewhere, the situation at Yayayi was tense. I remember that it was P. who told me that the radical Aboriginal activist Neville Perkins had visited Yayayi and that the White Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) community adviser ‘doesn’t help the Pintupi but that Neville does’.⁷ (Perkins had arrived with a truck being delivered from a government grant, which local people saw as his doing, but in fact he was delivering one supplied by the DAA.) Neville and Laurie Owens (the DAA adviser) had an argument, P. told me. He reiterated that Laurie ‘doesn’t do anything for the Pintupi but Neville does’. The old men, according to P., were thinking of kicking Laurie out and putting Neville in as community adviser. I realized something political was going on, and I thought I could hear Neville’s words echoed in P.’s. I certainly felt very ill at ease, myself, as a possible target of activist anger as a White interloper and also someone who had received some help from the actual target of Perkins’s accusations, but I now also see that this discussion shows a great deal of P.’s struggles with identification. He admired Whites, I believe, with whom he found some success as a schoolboy and whom he sought to emulate (in hygiene, styles of living), but – as was typically the case – he could not really be White. Thus, he had contradictory options, once the straightforward option of becoming adult had become complicated by intercultural options, troubled by his parental dislocation and embarrassed by his mother’s demise. With whom could he reliably identify?

It is some indication of the mixing of cultural worlds that my notes record the conversation with P. swinging abruptly to talk about a classical anthropological topic – *kurtatjas* (magical revenge killers, the ‘featherfeet’ killers made famous in Spencer and Gillen [1899]) – intended, I believe, to warn me of the dangers of living alone in an Aboriginal community:

They sneak up in the dark and you can't see their footsteps. If you kill a *kurtatja* you must pick up a stone and break it in your teeth; your head opens and you won't die. Otherwise that man still might kill you. Old men can see a *kurtatja* approaching – they can see inside and they sing and he can't harm them. [P., author's journal, Saturday, July 28, 1973]

But who was I to P.? I was a newly arriving White person from America. Perhaps he sought common ground or some assurance from a presumed Christian, another option for identification, like the missionaries he knew? Shortly after this, P. began to talk about God 'who is coming very soon. He will say to the dead: "You aren't dead, only sleeping. Wake up now!" God gives people a chance, and if they don't take it, he might punish them'. 'God made everything', P. said, 'me, you, the earth, the trees. He sees everything, even in the dark. Some of the old men tell me not to believe ... but I do'. I think this is part of the story of our interaction, but more important is P.'s active construction of a relationship between us and his hope for sharing and sorting out these complexes of information. A few years later, when P. was a teacher's aide in Papunya, he formed a very close friendship with the schoolteacher-poet Billy Marshall-Stoneking – an affiliation with many of these qualities. By this time, P. had more anger towards Whites, less innocence about his acceptance by them and resentment about his situation. Marshall-Stoneking was identified with a more literary group of Euro-Australians working in Papunya, and differentiated himself politically from many others. In affiliating with Marshall-Stoneking, P. may have been able to manage some of his concerns, of being both Indigenous and different. This, too, probably ended in disappointment, when the teacher returned down south. I do know that P. died an untimely death, and I believe it to be a consequence of failing to find an adequate place, a secure belonging – as it were, an enduring anchor.

Apart from P., efforts to create attachments were something I found happening repeatedly with older boys in the age range of twelve to fifteen years. For example, despite my close relationships with their fathers, I hardly knew that P. was S. B.'s son, or that Bobby was Freddy West's son. Indeed, these older boys seemed to seek out new people from whom to gain recognition, attention, goods and friendship beyond their immediate families. At this age, my impression was that their fathers reciprocated and perhaps affirmed the boys' growing aloofness from them by treating them in turn with a degree of diffidence and distance, more comfortable in expressing their intimate affection with the younger children. The theme of their 'growing up', I argued, was in establishing such relationships beyond the family of orientation as a means of gaining autonomy through increased social connections. Following the longstand-

ing, prescribed habitus of reattachment, these older boys, then, did not hang around their families or their families' camps – except for visiting their mothers for food. And, in 'classical' times – that is, 'in the bush' – their activities must have been even more independent, travelling with young men and getting food. They are and were regarded as somewhat wild, as difficult to control and unlike mature men who have seriousness of purpose and direction (see Myers 1986). They lack understanding and before becoming men they must submit themselves to discipline and control by older men. But clearly, as well, this is a vulnerable point in the cycle of personal development, a point at which secure prior attachments – as marked by expressions of 'nurturance' – are significant. Such cultural psychodynamics are part and parcel of 'man-making' – the work that men (and women) do for society – which had also been perceived by Stanner. He observed that 'older Aborigines had much insight into the elements of human psychology', and they would seize on natural stages of growth for the purpose of fitting boys into the adult scheme of life, often beginning 'when a boy had given up playing in mixed groups of boys and girls, and is starting to run around with a gang of boys of about his own age' (1979: 346). From then on, in the long course of male initiation,

[t]hey worked on the boys' imaginations. They built up the sense of being prepared for an unknown and mysterious climax. Discipline and kindness, fear and reassurance, gravity and jollity, danger and protection, mystery and mundane things were blended within a wider plan to make the boys feel all the time they were in good hands. (Stanner 1979: 349)

Identity in an Interracial Field

What I did not recognize effectively, it seems clear now, was the complexity of becoming an Aboriginal adult in this intercultural or interracial field, where being 'Aboriginal' – in the history of its derogation – can produce ambivalent feelings. I am not saying the young are simply ashamed of their parents, but to become like them is surely more complex. That the feelings are not simple is evident in people's discussions of themselves. For example, once when I went out hunting in an old Land Rover with a group of Aboriginal men, we broke down and had to sleep out for the night. When the young men from Yayayi came out looking for us, one told me in laughter: 'I told you never to go out in any *Wongga's* [Aboriginal person's] motorcar!' But this kind of travel was all right for them, I learned. They could travel '*Yarnangu* way [Aboriginal way]. Any way!'

For most of the boys, the movement to adulthood consolidates their Aboriginal identity as men. With initiation, almost all the boys I knew

became far more confident of their identities, more interested in their traditions and confirmed in their course – if, perhaps, resentful of or competitive with what they took to be Euro-Australian models. They could be mildly contemptuous of White men like me who were not really ‘men’ (*wati*). Yet, the frame has changed; they have more information and fantasies of options than was typically the case in the past, for their predecessors.

Perhaps it is of significance that a number of the older girls, especially those who had gone to school and were friendly with the women schoolteachers, seemed to want to be married to White men. They had learned how to keep a house, how to cook and other modes of comportment transmitted in the school, and the future in which these modes of comportment were possible involved the imagination of being married to a White man. If, in fact, this was not a very likely or productive option, it was fantasized as one, a way to take on the hygienic and stylistic way of life to which they were introduced. It struck me, if I might put it this way, that the boys wanted to be like or liked by White men and the girls wanted to marry White men. It has sometimes been suggested, indeed, that the Papunya painting movement’s start, with old men painting Ancestral designs onto the school wall, represented a claiming back or competing with this new setting of socialization and young people’s novel aspirations, as it did more explicitly at Yuendumu (see Warlukurlangu Artists 1987).

Cohorts and Produced Familiarity

I camped at Yayayi in the company of young men and older boys, and – indeed – more with some groups of them than with others. For much of my time during 1973–1975 at Yayayi, I lived in a small caravan very close to what was known as a ‘single men’s camp’ (*tawarra*), which included unmarried males ranging from the ages of nine or ten to twenty-five years.

These were my closest personal relationships – with young men like Jeffrey James Tjangala (now a leader of the community at Well 33), George Yapa Yapa Tjangala (now at Kiwirrkura), Kanya Tjapangarti (a well-known painter at Kiwirrkura, recently deceased), Joseph Tjaru Tjapaltjarri (another well-known painter, at Kiwirrkura), Bobby West Tjupurrula (at Kiwirrkura), Tjampu Tjakamarra, Titjiwinpa Tjampitjinpa, Ray Tjangala and Morris Gibson Tjapaltjarri. There were others, but this was the ‘single men’s camp’ (*tawarra*) that was often my home. Some have passed away – too many before their time – victims of the traumatic his-



Figure 4.1. ▼ Members of the Single Men's Camp at Yayayi, 1973

Note: Boys and a young man who were members of the single men's camp at Yayayi in 1973, including Ray James Tjangala (far left), Jeffrey James Tjangala, Bobby West Tjupurula (far back) and Titjiwinpa Tjampitjinpa (far right) (Fred Myers).

tory that has accompanied the incorporation of Indigenous Australians into more settled life. I spent a good deal of informal time in this camp, sitting and chatting, and these young men and boys frequented my caravan for food, cigarettes and entertainment in a small remote community. Indeed, these were the first of the Pintupi people I knew. This was rather a large group, an artefact of settlement, surely larger than was common in precontact times, when people lived in small bands for most of the time. Yet, as Fietz's (2008) article suggests for young people at Docker River in the recent period, it was not just the entire 'peer group' of young men.

Inter- and Intragenerational Ties

There was a logic to the inclusion of these people in this *tawarra*. They were largely the children of the western, 'new Pintupi' mob, those who arrived in Papunya in the early to mid-1960s from areas out near the Pollack Hills (Walawala) and Jupiter Well (Puntutjarpa), and they were closely related in kinship terms – through marriages of their parents and siblings. For example, Joseph Tjaru's sisters Payungu and Parara were married to Bobby West's father, as was Tjampu Tjapaltjarri's sister. Kanya

Tjapangarti's father had been Bobby West's father's mother's brother. Ray Tjangala's sister was promised to Morris Tjapaltjarri's father. Indeed, they had grown up together in the 'bush' – by which I mean that their families had often camped together during periods of the year. This made them, by Pintupi reckoning of the time, *ngurrakutjungurrara* or 'one country-men'. While Fietz's critique of the youth culture 'peer group' model is certainly well taken, showing that young Pitjantjatjara are most actively influenced by those of their 'family groups' rather than 'the peer group', in fact, it is rather difficult to separate inter- and intragenerational relations. As the brief discussion of genealogy suggests, the *relationships of the past were also projected into the future as enduring ties* among these boys and men, perhaps transformed into affinal connections and – ultimately – ritual sharing of ties to country. At the time, however, the boys of this group showed no interest in such futures, and were tied together as much by everyday histories of juvenile disturbance (stealing cars for joy rides) and exuberance as by anything as portentous as kinship and marriage in the formal sense.

It is not easy to figure out how to think about the tensions between the forms of solidarity developed between the nurturing generations and among the closely resident peer group. I think it likely that in the precontact past, when the age demographic was far less weighted towards the young, there were not always large enough numbers of children to constitute the intragenerational groups for long. These presumably intensified with sedentary life and larger and increasingly younger groups, even though other forces might have led to greater emphasis on individual families. Children may have travelled for periods of time with other families, with their uncles/aunts and with other relatives, which would have increased their contact with people in their own generation. This is how the relationships of nurturance, the shared identity with senior kin who 'looked after' one, are reproduced in the relationships within the peer group that is established through shared residence. Indeed, I remember that in Shorty Lungkarta's life story, I often came to realize a good deal about current political relationships by learning with whom he had lived in the past. The connection between inter- and intragenerational ties is important: if your mother or father's 'close relatives' are people with whom they regularly aggregate, then the children of those people would also be likely part of your intragenerational group. I think this is a natural extension of past ties into the present, and it is engaged by the notion of 'countrymen' – which, for example, would collapse more distant kin categories into closer ones. For men, too, the intragenerational ties are certainly reified and marked in initiation. In this group, I do not see that school cohort ties or Christian identifications have reorganized affilia-

tion, but that may be a factor for others. As for the present, I am inclined to see the intragenerational ties as extensions of ties from the past generation. They are both intra- and intergenerational at once – more like descending kindreds. When people are asked to list relatives, they show all the siblings of a generation (in birth order from left to right) and then below them all the children of all those siblings (see *also* Hamilton 1971; Dousset 2003). That has to mean something about how they experience this. So, I am inclined to see the parental home as aggregating more than immediate biological kin, but as regularly including the children of siblings who, as a group, are replacing the older set of siblings.

Undoubtedly, other dimensions of childhood escaped my immediate understanding, but more than a trace of them surfaced in the life- and travel-histories that I recorded – most in 1973–1975 and a few others in 1981. Listening to those histories – of life in the bush mostly – were what allowed me to understand what Pintupi people meant by ‘one countryman’ – which, I came to realize, included anyone with whom one frequently camped (see Myers 1976). Something very like this is what Basil Sansom described in his monograph, *The Camp at Wallaby Cross* (1980), as ‘people running together’. I believe this is a very significant structure of Indigenous sociality more widely. However, it may be even most important as a formative structure of childhood extended into the future. Shorty Lungkarta’s travel history first brought this home to me (published under the pseudonym of Maantja [Myers 1986]). In following his life, and particularly his accounts of those of his contemporaries he knew as a boy, I heard about what I took to be the equivalent of the ‘single men’s camp’ I frequented: Shorty recounted his visits with the family of Mick Namarari (another well-known Papunya Tula painter) in the north and east of Shorty’s home country, and his visits with Tapa Tapa Tjangala, who preceded him in leaving the bush for the Lutheran Mission at Hermannsburg in the 1930s, and with Ratji Tjapangarti, the father of Willy Tjapanangka and one of the important senior Pintupi at Papunya in the 1960s. These men, in turn, formed a core of the ‘old Pintupi mob’ at Papunya – a cohort who had known each other since childhood, men whose familiarity with each other was not simply the assumed familiarity of people in a small-scale society, but a *produced* familiarity, the outcome of family and visiting relationships projected onto a new generation.

Thirty Years On – Return to Kiwirrkura

After many years away, in May 2006, I was able to return to Kiwirrkura for a few days and this visit brought me back first to the voices of 1973 – the voices of my friends that I had first heard then were coming back

to me when I saw them in 2006. Here is what happened. I had planned to visit Kiwirrkura – the remote community of Pintupi and Kukatja people in Western Australia established in the early 1980s. This community included mainly people who had previously lived in Papunya and Balgo Hills Mission when they first left the desert. While they had entered the Euro-Australian administrative domain in different places, they had a prior association from living together in the bush. These were mostly people from the regions of Pollock Hills and Jupiter Well, and they had reaggregated after these many years close to their home countries at Kiwirrkura.

In 2006, I was bringing to Kiwirrkura ten hours of very lightly edited film from 1974, shot by my friend, the filmmaker Ian Dunlop and a Film Australia crew at the then Pintupi community of Yayayi. The footage, now stored in the National Archive of Australia, had never been made into a film and had never been seen by the people from the community (although I had translated the film in Sydney with two men from Yayayi). Because we did not know whether seeing the film was desirable, I wrote to my friend Bobby West Tjupurrula – now one of the leaders of Kiwirrkura. He wanted to have it shown and offered to oversee its screening. We set a date for my travel.

Bobby was – along with P. (who I discuss above) – one of the first people I knew at Yayayi in 1973, and he had sought me out as a friend. Very comfortable with White people, as was his father Freddy, Bobby had been to Darwin shortly before I knew him. He had been a resident of Essington House, he told me, a juvenile home, for stealing a teacher's car with his friend David Yupupu Tjampitjinpa. Bobby had really enjoyed Essington House, where he was taught to drive a tractor and had three square meals a day. Bobby has always been popular with White people – having a great interest in new opportunities and new phenomena – and he is very able to accommodate and negotiate with people. In 2000, when I went to Sydney as part of the retrospective celebration of the painting movement, *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*, I saw Bobby for the first time in some years, but he greeted me with the warmth of our old relationship – built out of my closeness with his father, his mother and his brothers. Indeed, he asked me to speak in translating his words when he opened the celebration at the art exhibition and he told me that he hoped when they got their land back in the Native Title case that I would be there with them on that day. I say this because it indicates something about the relationships we had as part of the same *tawarra* with the implications this has for attachment to country, and because it explains why it made sense for us to collaborate on showing the film.

I drove out to Kiwirrkura with two friends to help screen the footage. After stopping at Kintore, the first Pintupi community on the route,

we made our way to Kiwirrkura for what was to be the initial screening. When we got there, however, Bobby was gone. He had gone up to Balgo in pursuit of some ends of his own, and he seemed to have forgotten our arrangement. Because of the limitations in my travel time, we had a preliminary viewing of the footage in private with another senior Pintupi man (Jimmy Brown) who told us he thought it would be okay for people to view it. That night, at the meeting hall, we showed the first few hours of the footage. Still uncertain how people would respond to seeing their deceased relatives, talking and acting, I sat with Joseph Tjaru (another resident of the original *tawarra*) – who rolled with laughter and pleasure at the sight of his relatives, enjoying the sounds of their voices and what he identified as their personal antics. It was not until the second night of screening, however, that Bobby was able to return from Balgo – arriving just as we turned the lights off. He had not returned alone. He had brought back with him Titjiwinpa Tjampitjinpa – his close friend from their boyhood. Titji was always a lively and voluble person, and I was very happy to see him along with Bobby.

Now I began to see a shape of social relations. I had talked with Kanya Tjapangarti the day before, but he had remained distant. On the following day, yet one more visitor arrived, Jeffrey James Tjangala, asking to see any pictures I had of his father, who had died in 1977. Another *tawarra* person, and he came to visit with Kanya, who was now openly



Figure 4.2. ▼ Bobby West Tjupurrula, Fred Myers and Titjiwinpa Tjampitjinpa
 Note: Bobby West Tjupurrula (left of author), and Titjiwinpa Tjampitjinpa (to the right), Kiwirrkura 2006 (Fred Myers).

friendly, the distance and diffidence overcome. My position and identity was coming into focus. Tjangala asked me to come back to where he was camped, to show the pictures to his son, and the pictures ignited recollections of the events we had shared. I sat with Kanya, Jeffrey and his son, as he pulled out the blanket next to the fire in front of a house. Then Bobby and Titjiwinpa joined in, and if I closed my eyes, the voices sounded no different than they had some thirty years before, the natural continuation of conversations and events shared.

Conclusion

I have argued that 'produced familiarity'⁸ that is a projection from the past is the template of cohort relationships. In this formation of sociality, intergenerational histories are constantly 'updated' on each generational level. This fits with the general model of knowledge transmission and ideology organized around the conception of *tjukurrpa* and also with a ritual model in which relationships within one's generation are necessary to become like – or take the social place of – one's adult parent. Since my knowledge of this process is based primarily on my experiences of young men, I have entitled the essay 'Fathers and Sons'.

It has always seemed to me that there was something vital in Róheim's delineation of what he called 'totemism' – really the whole complex of objects and ritual involved in male initiation and the ideology of *tjukurrpa* – in his view that such totemism 'as a social institution is a defense organized against separation anxiety' (Róheim 1945a: 249). To me, the vitality of his argument does not lie in the specifics of psychoanalytic theory. Róheim saw male initiation as substituting for the separation of sons from their mothers, the rupture of a fundamental identification, and its replacement by relationships with men and the return of one's autonomous self in the form of a sacred object (the newly integrated self) that combined male and female. Any reader of this essay will recognize that I do not have as much information as I might like to clarify the attachments I describe in such a way. But surely the crying of men with compassion when they visit their country testifies to the significance of this identification. Nonetheless, I see 'attachment' less as a particular theory of psychology but more in its original ethological formation, more sociologically. Thus, I am referring to the detachment and reattachment of subjects as points in a social trajectory. These points, I believe, represent possible loci of identification and articulation but they are also points of vulnerability – especially insofar as the means of establishing trust and security – what I am referring to as 'ontological security' – may not be

available in ways they previously have been. Moreover, I believe it is possible that some of the traumas of the present have echoes in the experiences of orphaned young people in the past, so that the circumstances of the present are not utterly distinctive. These are communities in flux, and we should be concerned to identify the sources of security and challenge. Róheim's brilliance was to recognize a trajectory in the formation of Aboriginal selfhood in Central Australia, to draw attention to its dynamic as one of attachment and identification and also to the profound insecurity addressed in the social production of a self. Ultimately, the significance of the 'unchanging landscape' as the fundamental anchor of identity is meaningful within the terms of this dynamic, as a particular resolution. But surely, these matters are more unsettled than they once were, and identities may be constructed out of other materials – with unknown effects. There is much to be done to understand the responses of individuals and to clarify the gendered dimension of selfhood. After all, not every orphan is or was traumatized, and we do not know how much the contribution and nurturance from nonparental kin may distinguish one person from another.

I left my visit at Kiwirrkura with a sense of what joy there can be in the recognition of oneself in familiarity with one's long-time countrymen. When, more recently, I viewed David Betz's (2007) film about Paddy Sims Tjapaltjarri, I also recognized the sadness he expressed that none of his countrymen were left to help him with his ceremonies. 'Only one fella living now', he said. 'Me'. The sorrow in that expression is central to the dynamic of selfhood in Central Australia.

Notes

My thanks to Ute Eickelkamp for urging me to write this and for spectacular editorial comment, and to Bambi Schieffelin for her careful reading and comments on this paper and long-term contribution to my understanding of the issues of studying childhood and culture.

1. Bambi Schieffelin and Elinor Ochs (see 1986; Schieffelin 1990) have made me profoundly conscious of these lacunae in the existing work.
2. Unfortunately, I cannot tell whether there is a gendered dimension to this pattern.
3. My impression is that loss of this magnitude was most typically related to loss of a parent or parents, although people clearly felt sorrow in other losses.
4. In a different way, Nicolas Peterson has also frequently made a similar observation to me about the demographic profile of Central Australian communities.
5. An analyst might say that human ancestors 'accumulate' at a place and become *tjukurrpa* – which, in this way, comes from people.

6. The 'new Pintupi' were those who came in from the bush to Papunya in the 1960s, and who differed from the 'old Pintupi' who had left the bush for the mission station/government depot of Haasts Bluff before most of the population shifted to Papunya.
7. A nephew of the very well-known Aboriginal activist and leader Charles Perkins, Neville Perkins had family origins in the Alice Springs area, but had grown up down South and was a student at the University of Sydney.
8. I thank Ute Eickelkamp for this coinage and for helping me clarify what the main points of my argument should be.