

## 8. 'Who you is?' Work and identity in Aboriginal New South Wales

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Ideas and practices relating to work, productivity and leisure are a source of much disagreement and ill feeling between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. For dominant Western cultures, labour in its most common guise of 'work' offers a cogent means through which people come to know themselves and become known to others (Crawford 1985). How does this notion translate to Indigenous social realms? This chapter offers an ethnographically grounded examination of the intersections between work, employment and identity for Indigenous people living in a country town in far western New South Wales, Australia.<sup>1</sup> What does it mean to be a productive and valued person within Aboriginal society and in what ways is this tied to and/or antithetical to participation in the mainstream economy? How are Aboriginal people figuring ideas of work and productivity as a means to forging a particular identity? This chapter explores the tacit and reflexive cultural import of these questions and some of their lived effects.

### Attitudes to work

This chapter offers some personal accounts of the various functioning of notions and practices towards work, culture and identity within, and across, black and white segments of the Australian population. In so doing, differing values and attitudes towards work, identity and Aboriginal culture are seen for their role in black and white relationships and for Aboriginal socioeconomic engagement. Importantly, the chapter shows the ambiguity, ambivalence and slipperiness pertaining to these categories as they are differently and reflexively experienced and interpreted, and how ideas and attitudes towards work and employment are tied in complex ways to belonging and to identity politics. In so doing, it points to the challenges for effective policy and practice in areas

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<sup>1</sup> 'A longer version of this paper appears in *Oceania* Vol. 80 entitled 'Making a life: getting ahead and getting a living in Aboriginal New South Wales'.

of education, vocational training and sustainable employment. In many parts of settled Australia, stereotypical relations between blackfellas and whitefellas are constantly being played out in damaging and unproductive ways. When whites talk of 'lazy black bastards' who sit on their 'fat arses' all day, and blacks respond by asking if whites want them 'to work like white cunts—24 hours a day', these judgments make for easy rhetoric yet mostly go unanalysed. In these ways, the ground is laid for cultural differences that are often unexplored for their complexity and effects.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Wilcannia between July 2002 and the present, the chapter only scratches the surface of this complexity, as it is limited to the particular circumstances of Wilcannia—a small town with a fluid population of between 550 and 650 residents of whom at any given time the substantial majority are Aboriginal. Having said this, my current research in Moree, Kempsey and in Glebe in Sydney over the past two years demonstrates that many of the economic and social circumstances and attitudes of Wilcannia can be extrapolated out to other NSW country and urban locations.

## Who you is?

In the dominant culture of Australia and indeed in Western cultures more generally, there is a tendency to conflate a person's social value and worth with their occupation and to socially position them accordingly. 'What do you do?' is often one of the first questions asked in social situations in the way of making small talk (itself arguably a dominant cultural predisposition of the dominant culture). The inferences made from this small talk are, however, not so insignificant. A person is often located and marked within the social structure by occupation as well as by the perceived nature of the work undertaken. *What* a person *does* has become increasingly conflated with *who* a person *is*, both for the self and others. The question 'What do you do?' is not, however, in the main, part of Aboriginal discourse in far western New South Wales. Instead people ask, 'who you is?'<sup>2</sup> The question 'who you is?' performs a function similar to the dominant-culture question 'what do you do?' in that it operates as a two-way process that serves to locate interlocutors in the social structure. The

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2 Discussion with the linguist Paul Monaghan provided the following explanation for the form of 'who you is?' 'There are many varieties of Aboriginal English that defy the norms of Standard Australian English. In many varieties the copula (i.e., the various forms of the verb "to be") is omitted, and this is a feature shared by pidgin varieties of English and creoles. Examples are "who that", "where she". My guess in this case, which is concerned with personal identity, is that it serves a useful function. What other resources are there to express this concept? The syntax—the order of the words—probably just reflects the non-standard variety of English being spoken. It does, however, seem to capture the emic or in-group aspect. So it is most likely a useful phrase that carries local character and marks the speaker accordingly' (Personal communication, Dr Paul Monaghan, Adelaide University, 11 May 2010).

kind of information fed back and its implications differ in the two cases. While the question 'who you is?' is regularly asked of any new white face in town, whites do not approach blacks to seek out this kind of information. Blacks also do not voluntarily or regularly identify themselves in these terms to whites. The answers being elicited by Aboriginal people are not related to job title or perceived income. Here, my experience in Wilcannia reflects that of MacDonald's work with the Wiradjuri around Cowra in central New South Wales—namely, that their ontology remains to some extent 'a *relational ontology* [that] sees people defined through *relationships* rather than roles' (2004:15).<sup>3</sup> When an Aboriginal person in Wilcannia asks 'who you is?' of another Aboriginal person, the response being sought locates a person relationally—for example: 'I'm X's nephew' or 'my Mother is A' or 'Y is my cousin'. In responding to questions such as this, Aboriginal people explore kin relationships and social networks across towns and cities. This serves to socially and geographically locate the people being met, thereby positioning them within recognised frameworks and the kind of social intercourse that may or may not be entered into. An example of this process took place one night in the Wilcannia golf club. An Aboriginal woman in her mid-twenties came over to the table where I was sitting with four Aboriginal people having a drink. She asked one of the men, 'Remember me, Uncle Brian—you used to nurse me?' Uncle Brian said, 'No, what your name?' The woman replied by giving her name and saying who her mother and father are. Those present then linked these kin connections to other kin connections and events. Uncle Brian then went on to tell everyone at our table that when the woman was a little girl he used to nurse her on his knee. The woman was quite large and Uncle Brian went on to say, 'I wouldn't wanna fucken nurse you now.' This produced gales of laughter and the story, building up to the punchline, was retold again and again to every person who joined the table. At the end of the evening, all the people who sat at our table throughout the night knew who the woman was (if they did not before) and had shared in past events of her life and the lives of related kin. It is incidents such as this that strengthen, highlight, renew and expand kin and social networks and sociality. They locate people within the social strata in ways that are grounded in knowing and being known in relation to others, to place, to events and in time.

The question 'who you is?' when asked of a white person may not necessarily have as its *preferred* purpose the elicitation of an occupation, but, in the experience of the Aboriginal people of Wilcannia, most non-Aboriginal people respond to this question with an occupational answer. This is to a great extent

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3 After I gave this paper at the AAS conference in 2008, Diane Austin-Broos approached me to say that my observations in western New South Wales resonated with, and echoed, her observations on social roles and introductions in relation to her work with Arrernte people in the Central Desert. We were excited that we had come up with these observations independently of one another, taking into consideration the very different histories and structures of the communities in which we work. She has written about her observations in her excellent (at that time upcoming but now published) book (Austin-Broos 2009).

how the people responding perceive what is in fact being asked. 'I'm a teacher at the school' or 'I'm a nurse at the hospital' is *who* as well as *what* these white professionals perceive themselves to be. Occupation is often their *purpose to being* in Wilcannia (double entendre intended). Occupation is what white people for the most part are *doing with—doing for*—Aboriginal people in Wilcannia. This is a world of whitefellas ostensibly doing things for blackfellas through work. Indeed, blackfellas' contact with whitefellas 'at work' is often blackfellas' main experience of whitefellas. According to Austin-Broos (2003:124), blacks and whites 'meet only at the point of service delivery in a highly bureaucratised welfare economy'. These primarily work-defined relationships shape interaction as they also create perception. This point of meeting and coming together is also, however, a point of separation and difference.

Willis (1977:2) considers Western societies' mode of identification with work to result from the fact that 'labour power...is the main mode of active connection with the world: the way *par excellence* of articulating the innermost self with external reality'. The self is expressed through work and working relations as these are understood. As Willis (1977:2) goes on to say, this active connectivity with the world through labour power is 'the dialectic of the self to the self through the concrete world'. For the dominant culture, labour in its most common guise of 'work' offers a cogent means through which those in the West come to know themselves and become known to others. Personhood in this model is in part defined through "'badges of ability", achievement, and the symbols of consumption that only success at work can buy' (Crawford 1985:78).

In the Wilcannia labour context, non-Aboriginal people hold most of the better-paid and more permanent positions. Therefore, Aboriginal experience of who whitefellas are—that is, job-holders and town service providers—meets the self-perception of the white job-holder. In other words, white people *are* nurses, police, managers and administration/office workers; black people, for the most part, *are not*. Of the few Aboriginal people employed in Wilcannia, these include teacher's aides, health workers, a police liaison officer and a shifting handful of cultural site officers and trainee site officers with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Two positions administer the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program, one the Job Network office and one the Local Aboriginal Land Council.<sup>4</sup> The State Aboriginal Land Council, which purchased Weinteriga sheep station outside town also has an Aboriginal manager. These account for approximately 16 positions. During school holidays and busy tourist times, there are also a few casual jobs for tour

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4 The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program is a government initiative. Until changes introduced in 2008 that saw its reach reduced, the CDEP sought to generate sustainable employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Known colloquially as 'work for the dole', the program requires people to work, on average, two to three days a week and receive 'top-ups' to their welfare payments. In 2004, 42 people were registered to work with the CDEP in Wilcannia.

guides at Mutawintji National Park. These, and the 16 positions mentioned, are all Aboriginal designated jobs. In terms of mainstream positions, during 2005, Aboriginal men held six out of eight jobs on the outdoor staff for the Central Darling Shire Council (CDSC General Manager, September 2005).<sup>5</sup> The two motels each employed Aboriginal women as casual room cleaners; the golf club employed two women part-time behind the bar; one woman worked casually at the local food store; one woman worked part-time as a lifeguard/caretaker at the shire-run swimming pool; and two white local builders each employed two particular Aboriginal men on a fairly regular basis as general labourers. The experience that Aboriginal people form the majority of the population, yet hold a fraction of the mainstream and more skilled jobs, elicits and further ingrains cultural differences; these are a source of much ill feeling as well as misunderstanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Wilcannia.

When a white policeman comes to work in town and his wife is appointed as a shire clerk; when a local white farmer whose farm is suffering a downturn, and who is known by most Aboriginal people in town as a bigot, is appointed as a 'Cultural Sites Supervisor' over Aboriginal workers, when his wife is appointed as a clerk at the shire; when a new-to-town white is appointed as the town's Community Development Facilitator and subsequently appoints his wife as a 'mentor' for Aboriginal people paid at consultancy rates; when these things happen, Aboriginal people note and remark on them: 'Why don't our own people get these jobs?' There is little awareness of the training and skills required for certain jobs, and the allocation of jobs to whites is not rationalised in these terms. It is seen as giving a preference to whites, which is undoubtedly sometimes the case. The reasons for this preferencing, however, which are much more complex, are reduced to consolidating the Aboriginal experience of who fills these kinds of jobs and why.

It might be argued that if few Aboriginal people are employed (in what is overall a relatively small pool of available jobs) then identification with an occupation is not possible or is, at best, a limited option. By looking historically to a time in Wilcannia when employment was, relatively speaking, quite readily available (cf. John White, this volume) and in comparing it with the uptake of contemporary available employment in Wilcannia, a sense of the place accorded to work as a part of life can be more fully expressed. Before the 1960s, many Aboriginal men in Wilcannia were employed within the pastoral industry. From the late 1960s, the pastoral industry declined across the far west and indeed the nation (Beckett 1958). There remains for those local Aboriginal people aged from their forties, however, a strong verbally expressed connection between identity and jobs held in the past. Older people said things such as, 'I was a ringer' (a

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<sup>5</sup> Outdoor staffers are those who, as the title suggests, work outdoors in mostly general labouring positions. For Central Darling Shire Council (CDSC), there are no Aboriginal workers among the 16 'indoor staff'.

stockman) or 'I was a concreter with the DMR' (Department of Main Roads), when talking about their past.<sup>6</sup> These kinds of statements were not responses to questions or discussions about work; they were an unsolicited part of everyday talk as people walked around town with me pointing out such things as gutters, concrete culverts and tarred roads that they had helped to construct. In the case of Wilcannia, 'things' such as concrete culverts invoke a sense of place as they also reinforce relatedness. When telling stories such as this, people indicate who was present, who the people were in relation to themselves and significant others, where these people are now, if they have 'passed away', who did what on the job and some of the laughs and incidents they shared.

They are stories about people, place and activities, more than work-related stories. They involve a sharing and a reliving of experience, which reinforce and/or remind the self and others of important aspects of social relations (cf. Austin-Broos 2006 in relation to the Arrernte of Central Australia). I contend, however, that, even though jobs in the pastoral industry were a source of pride, the extent to which a sense of self—cultural identity proper—was, and is, currently linked to being in employment or a particular occupation remains limited. Beckett's work in the 1950s and my own work in Wilcannia from 2002 suggest that then, as now, being employed (or more specifically, being regularly employed) as a particular way of looking at life is, for most, at once peripheral to, irrelevant to and resistant to the 'business' at hand—that is, the 'business' of being Aboriginal (cf. Peterson 2005). Beckett writes of the far west in 1958 that

even when regular jobs are to be found in the locality, many aborigines [sic]—particularly those from Murrin Bridge and Wilcannia—find the regular working week irksome...Aboriginal workers go home for a weekend and fail to return until Tuesday or Wednesday—or not at all! A family illness, the hangover from a drinking spree or some petty distraction has kept them back. (Beckett 1958:194–5)

This appears to suggest a 'take it or leave it' attitude to employment as well as a prioritisation of other things. Beckett (1958:195) goes on to state, 'Men will say "I don't want to work all the time like some people do". Leisure is something for which they are ready to forego the money they could otherwise be earning.' MacDonald (2004:12; cf. Eades 1994:99) also asserts that financial considerations are not a priority and 'Aboriginal understandings of relatedness often take precedence over working for the sake of work or for the pay packet'. The situation in the 1950s that Beckett (2005:114) describes whereby Aboriginal people made little effort to go out and find work, and where 'some quite literally wait for it to come to them', is one that resonates in Wilcannia today. This is

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<sup>6</sup> The Department of Main Roads employed Aboriginal people as labourers until it moved its operations to Broken Hill in 1987.

despite a strong Aboriginal rhetoric that having a job is the answer to the social ills, including alcohol abuse and alcohol-related violence. What is done in terms of the low uptake of available jobs seems to contradict this. The taking up or rejection of employment is, however, no simple equation; jobs and job prospects appear at face value to be available, yet many factors work against the taking up of these opportunities.

If one feels that the only jobs available to you are the 'shit jobs' that Aboriginal people say whitefellas would not take, the tendency to 'knock them back' is understandable. Why strive for the shitty jobs of the white working class?<sup>7</sup> High unemployment and the offer of what are perceived to be lesser-valued, lesser-paid, often short-term government-funded jobs and work programs that do not lead to employment encourage neither a strong work ethic nor any sense of personal worth in relation to mainstream regular 'work'.<sup>8</sup> Good jobs are seen to be the domain of the whites or those who are *like* whites. Here, we enter the territory of the 'coconut': those Aboriginal people who are said to be black on the outside and white on the inside—people who are charged with keeping 'a white house'; people who, 'don't sit down with us', 'who don't share', who 'big note' themselves and whose patterns of work, consumption and communication leave them open to the charge that they are not Aboriginal enough. A Koori from Sydney who was teaching a part-time Technical and Further Education (TAFE) art course for Aboriginal people in a neighbouring town said that the students had taken exception to his manner. Although Aboriginal, he was seen to be acting like a 'white boss'. He told me that the people in the art course responded to him by calling him 'a fucken coconut'. He said he took out his payslip and showed it to the class, saying: 'See this, this is what I take home every week, I'll be a fucken banana if it means I take this home.' In saying this, he was telling the class that it did not matter what names the class called him, in the end he took home a sizeable pay packet, which we can read as something he valued and which allowed him to live the way he wanted to live. Yet, this is precisely part of what the class was criticising. There was a clear difference in values operating, which indirectly inverted the meanings of the class/teacher interaction. By demonstrating his worth and values in his own terms, the teacher for his part thought that he had 'got one up' on the people calling him a coconut. For those naming him a coconut, however, his actions simply confirmed the label.

Whereas coconut status and behaviour are generally agreed on and some people never seem to be free of the title, it is not a fixed title or status. One may shift

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7 While fruit picking used to be a popular means of earning income without a constancy of work, this form of work has fallen out of favour with younger people. They say the work is too hard and that there is little financial recompense. It is seen as a lesser job (cf. White, this volume).

8 The 'counter-culture' of the 1960s, when Timothy Leary exhorted people to 'tune in, turn on and drop out', is one example of the rejection of the Protestant work ethic and its values by many young (and not so young) non-Aboriginal people.

in and out of the status as behaviour is modified and/or a situation is perceived. Although having a job is never specified as being the cause of coconut status, and not all who hold jobs are named coconuts, it is often the prerequisite of having a job, and therefore access to certain resources, which enables coconut behaviour and naming.

The much promulgated pan-Aboriginal trope of caring and sharing is implicated here in ways that have become increasingly complex as a changing cultural dynamic has led to unequal access to social, political and cultural resources and authority. This in turn has seen a great deal of ambivalence and ambiguity in what it means to be a culturally successful and productive blackfella in Wilcannia today. Systems of sharing that used to operate on the basis of more basic needs are being reworked as greater access to, and desires for, material goods has entered the informal economy, and as networks increase in number and across areas. This situation of change has destabilised some longer-standing hierarchies and more understood patterns of sharing (cf. Peterson 1993).

While the threat of social ostracism is ever present for those who do not participate in the sharing economy (Beckett 2005:108), a small but increasing number of people are nevertheless choosing this position with varying degrees of reticence or assertion. Some are feeling torn in ways that have little precedent as people negotiate their chosen path of higher education, a more nuclear-style family and the accumulation of the material that generally requires leaving town, and often means cutting certain kin ties and perceived obligations. These forms of intra-cultural social and economic change have created a realm of much intra-cultural misunderstanding, anger and confusion. The contradictions and impossibilities are, here, at times a double bind and a double burden.

Asserting blackness often means positioning oneself against whiteness and against white ways of working and being, by means of particular identificatory practices, relations and alliances. Such attitudes and practices can, however, entail a continuation of subjection in certain terms—a self-damnation of sorts (Willis 1972). For some, and at some level, the recognition of this situation causes degrees of ambivalence, bitterness, anger and envy, as well as laughter and irony. Such responses may or may not be subject to any cognised examination and are directed towards both white and black. Yet, for those who resist this subjection, regular employment and associated choices have other effects and connotations. Intra-cultural divisions and attitudes towards employment and those employed are indicative of an increasing reflexivity and raised consciousness about differing social and economic expectations and positions. Through the trope of caring and sharing differing expectations, desires and actions feed into a complex system that shapes ideas and practices relating to kinship and relatedness, social obligation, personhood, morality, and goods and services (cf. MacDonald 2003, 2004; Schwab 1995:3). Despite increasing social divisions in relation to jobs and



material goods, one cannot, I believe, speak of classes in the Marxist sense of a relationship to the capitalist division of labour—nor are Aboriginal people asserting such a class position. Certainly, while most unemployed and low-paid employees are aware of differences between themselves and those with better-paid jobs and higher living conditions, there is little in the sense of a working-class consciousness whereby people are aware of their 'interests and of their predicaments as a class' (Thompson 1980:781).<sup>9</sup>

Most Aboriginal people in Wilcannia have a different subjectivity altogether in relation to mainstream employment—not harnessed, not subject to self-surveillance and not defined in terms of work and leisure. Subjectivity in Wilcannia is connected (if not always in practice, then ideologically) to different domains such as kinship and the pan-Aboriginal trope of 'caring and sharing', which have their own economic and moral values. For many Aboriginal people, work and its rewards sit uneasily with the upholding of a distinct identity. They recognise that regular employment affords some of the material things that many would like to have, but are not prepared to forfeit other culturally perceived and culturally attributed values, social obligations and desires (as well as the time to fulfil these). Family illness, a hangover from 'a big night on the drink', Nana's need to do some shopping, the arrival of family or friends from out of town or an unexpected occurrence of interest continue to be the causes of much non-attendance at 'work'. I was talking one day to an Aboriginal woman about my two sisters in Scotland and she told me about her two sisters who live in South Australia and Sydney. She said that one of her sisters and her immediate family visit Wilcannia two or three times a year and stay for two or three weeks. She said that during these visits she did not go to her work as a teacher's aide at the local school. This woman was highlighting to me the *importance* of family, not the *unimportance* of work. Non-attendance at work by virtue of these kinds of reasons is, for whites, however, a sign of irresponsibility, if not laziness.

Some Aboriginal people oppose and resist the identifying link of whiteness and work more directly. A white workplace supervisor who works for an Aboriginal housing service told me about an incident that took place between himself and one of four Aboriginal workers fixing up a house. According to the supervisor, the workers had arrived late and then proceeded to make a cup of tea and have a smoke and a yarn. The supervisor indicated that the work being done was spasmodic and often delayed while the workers talked with people they knew

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9 These are big issues and cannot be explicated fully here. My current research is exploring the notion of social placement, class and class consciousness for Aboriginal people in a comparative study across Moree, Kempspey, Glebe, Wilcannia and Alice Springs. During the 1940s, Reay and Sittlington (1948) asserted an argument for class and status among 'mixed-blood' Aborigines in Moree. They divided the town into four classes—two highest and two lowest—which were, in part, designated in terms of dwelling types and location. My early research impressions show distinct differences in what could be termed class awareness between Wilcannia and more regional centres where greater work opportunities exist, such as Moree and Kempspey.

passing by. After lunch, one of the Aboriginal workers said that he was leaving. The supervisor asked him where he was going and the man replied that he had a doctor's appointment. The supervisor then asked him why he had made the appointment on a day he knew people had been organised to come together in order to complete the job. The supervisor told the worker that his presence was required for the job to be completed that day. According to the supervisor, the worker 'went off' at him, saying he had to look after his health and that he had diabetes. The supervisor said that he did not mean that the man should not to go to the doctor, but that it might be better if he could plan his visits around work. The worker asked the supervisor if he wanted him 'to work like a white cunt'. When the supervisor asked him what he meant, he replied, '24 hours a day'. Inhering within this dialogue is an assertion of differentiation, as well as a mutual assertion of 'rights', with inter-cultural overtones. In voicing his rights to good health, and in not wanting to work 24 hours a day, the man is asserting his difference from whites as well as his perceived rights as a worker. The supervisor, on the other hand, is asserting what he sees as his 'right' to expect a worker to account for time considered to be work time, *paid* time, time *owned* by the employer. The cultural characteristics of attitudes to work here are, in Cowlshaw's (2004:118) words, 'a kind of companion to racial identity'.

It is not unreasonable to say, echoing Weber (1976:182), that for most people in mainstream society, 'the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs'. For the dominant culture, paid work continues to be a moral obligation and St Paul's dictum that 'he who will not work shall not eat' still resonates, albeit in less specifically religious terms. Although some whites also reject this view, it remains a view of 'moral agency vested in white identity' (Cowlshaw 2004:100). When white people in Wilcannia talk about 'lazy black bastards', this statement is not unconnected to the fact that whites perceive most Aboriginal people to be doing quite well by virtue of unemployment benefits and other perceived government 'hand-outs'. They eat, but 'they don't fucken work'. There is a sense of outrage and not a little jealousy.

The majority of Aboriginal people in Wilcannia are unemployed and are seen by whites to have no desire to work in the way that the majority of employed whites do. Aboriginal people have a way of living and a perceived attitude to 'work' that the majority of whites condemn. The fact that Aboriginal people say that they do not want to work 'like those white cunts' is an assault on whitefellas' way of life and their moral values. Not only do whitefellas consider

that it is 'our taxes' paying for the blackfella to 'sit on his black arse', but welfare payments are seen to support a way of life that encourages what is seen as a lack of self-discipline and social responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

In small towns such as Wilcannia there is a justification of white moral values that finds its power and persuasiveness through discourse that gives force to the 'alleged 'transgressions by Aborigines of mainstream social patterns' (Morris 1997:166). It is *not* work in Western definitions to 'look after country', 'go huntin' an' get the old people some wild meat', to take Nana shopping, to nurse children, look after sick family or stay with family or friends who have come to visit rather than attend work. For many Wilcannia Aboriginal people, hunting, fishing and spending the day along the riverbank with kin and friends are as, Povinelli (1993:26) remarks (in the case of the Belyuen mob), 'a form of production in the fullest cultural and economic sense of this term, generating a range of sociocultural meanings'. To say that Aboriginal people do not consider regular work a social responsibility is to miss the importance and nature of what 'work' is.

The overall point to be made is that for most Aboriginal people in Wilcannia, you are who you are, not by virtue of what you have 'become' in any economic, professional or educational sense. In a particular sense, 'who you are' is not a becoming; it is established at birth. A person does not become somebody, a person already has become, is somebody by virtue of being born into a family: 'People enjoy the complete acceptance of belonging by birth and of right' (Keen 1994:13). The person is a Hunter girl or a Bugmy boy, or one of the Bates, Clarks, Johnsons, Kings, Lawsons and Whymans, and in so being is inextricably linked to all others within these wider family networks. This sense of self, for most, is not determined by engagement in the capitalist division of labour; indeed, the greater the engagement in the capitalist economy, the more problematic and fraught a sense of self and of belonging can become.

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10 Although not framed in quite the same way, some Aboriginal people (including leader Noel Pearson) also express concern about the detrimental effects of welfare dependency, which has killed 'the will to work' (Pearson 2000).

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