

THE MEANING OF NIUTAO *FAKAVALEVALE* (CRAZY)
BEHAVIOR: A POLYNESIAN THEORY OF MENTAL DISORDER

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This study is concerned broadly with the relationship between culture and mental disorder.¹ More specifically it is concerned with the perception and classification of mental disorders by the people of the west Polynesian island of Niutao. Among the important questions that are addressed are the extent to which organic deficiency is perceived to be at the root of abnormal behavior and how abnormal behavior, indicative of psychiatric disorder, is distinguished from deviant behavior in general.

These and related questions are addressed through the analysis of the Niutao concept of *fakavalevale*, loosely translated as "crazy." This term is applied both to certain forms of abnormal behavior and to certain individuals regularly guilty of engaging in this behavior. The "abnormal behaviour" of Niutao men and women in this context fits the definition of mental disorder advanced by Leighton (1969: 180) "patterns of behavior and feeling that are out of keeping with cultural expectations and that bother the person who acts and feels them, or bothers others around him, or both."

Analysis of the *fakavalevale* concept reveals that the people of Niutao do have a theory of psychopathological disorder, although it is a theory implicit in their perceptions and categorizations of those around them. It must, therefore, be explicated by the anthropologist. In part, the problem of explication is one of meaning; that is, how best to translate some Polynesian terms into English without doing considerable violence to the integrity of the semantic boundaries of both Polynesian and English concepts. Accordingly, the first part of the paper consists of a short linguistic analysis of the most important Niutao concepts. A semantic analysis follows, along with description of the major sub-types of *fakavalevale* behavior and an analysis of the underlying characteristics of Niutao mental abnormality in general.

The People and the Land

The Polynesian speakers of Niutao occupy one of the nine islands making up the small nation of Tuvalu in the Western Pacific Ocean. The

island has a total resident population of approximately 900, with between 300 and 400 others living and working at off-island labor, primarily at the phosphate mines of Nauru and Ocean Island.

The economy is basically horticultural. The root crops taro and atoll taro (*Cyrtosperma*) are supplemented with coconuts, breadfruit, bananas and fish. For some families rice, flour, and sugar, purchased with gift money from phosphate laborers, have become staples.

The local land area of Niutao is approximately one square mile. Its elevation averages about six feet above sea level. Its highest elevation, the site of the village complex, is about 20 feet above sea level. Rainfall averages 112 inches per year.

The Method

The core data described in this paper were collected as part of a series of classifications of “kinds of Niutao people” over a five month period during 1970. This particular work was with one thirty year old informant, married, and mother of two. She is typical in her home situation, social status, and education of other Niutao. All interviews and collection of data were carried out in the Niutao language.

In each of the classification tasks the informant was given approximately 500 cards containing the names of all adults entered on the head-tax rolls for Niutao in 1969. She was asked simply to classify *fakavasenga* people. When she asked “How?,” I replied, “If all people are the same then they cannot be classified. Are all people the same?” When she replied that all people are not the same, I again asked her to classify them. In this way I hoped to avoid imposing my own categories and instead elicit the categories that were relevant in Niutao culture. In all she produced nine separate classifications (containing approximately 120 categories) before she felt she had exhausted the possibilities. After the first classification, concerned with such social identities as married persons, bachelors, widows, and so on, the great bulk of categories consisted of local personality and character types. The second classification, from which the *fakavalevale* (“crazy”) category is drawn, includes such categories as “liars,” “generous people,” “show-offs,” and “selfish people.” While the categories are only partly mutually exclusive, some of them contrast directly with others (e.g., “generous” vs. “selfish” people). The *fakavalevale* category has no single contrasting category, but is in partial contrast with people who are “knowledgeable/skillful in work.”²

Each classification was followed by an in-depth interview in which I was concerned to understand the meaning of each adjectival or noun cate-

gory, and the degree to which it contrasted with other categories. I also asked for specific examples of behavior of particular individuals indicative of the manner in which they communicated their personality or character type to others.

Inevitably the kinds of things people know about others on a small island like Niutao draws heavily upon gossip. But for most people this does not make the knowledge any less real than direct observation. As Arthur Wolf (1970: 510) points out in his study of Chinese villages, "In the small communities in which my subjects and informants live, what people say about one another is not easily forgotten. In this world, gossip is more than malicious talk, it is part of a person's social identity, no more likely to be forgotten than the person himself."

The necessity for analyzing the *fakavalevale* concept became evident to me only after nine months of fieldwork, when I suddenly realized that Niutoans were using the term in ways I could no longer comprehend. The incident which brought this about was an announcement over the Colony radio that police were investigating a reported case of incest on a neighboring island. When Niutao men and women talked about the broadcast the following day the common expression was that the man involved was *fakavalevale* (the case involved a minor girl). I could understand this well enough since many English speakers would also consider incest as "crazy" behavior--although they probably wouldn't go as far as the Niutao in considering incest to include even fourth cousins. But things became confusing when further remarks were made about the man. Several Niutao pointed out that when he had once lived on Niutao he acted in a *fakavalevale* manner there too. When asked what he did in Niutao that was *fakavalevale*, the reply was that he would go over to other people's houses to "chat," "gossip," or "swap stories" (*faitala*). I was unable to see the connection between "incest" and "chatting" that made them both directly comparable as "crazy behavior."

Clearly the problem is one of meaning. My approach to the solution of the problem is to examine the broad range of actions holding membership in the "crazy" category, each action to be considered within its cultural context. The meaning of *fakavalevale* is then derived from the common elements in the actions labeled as *fakavalevale* by the Niutao.

The Term

The compound term *fakavalevale* is built up through the re-duplication of the base *vale* and the causative or transitive prefix *faka-*. Re-duplication, a common device in Polynesian languages, functions to indicate

continuity or repetition of action through time. The prefix *faka-* in this case can be glossed roughly in English translation as “act like” or “act in the manner of.”³ An early approximation for *fakavalevale* is then “act in the manner of” one who is *vale* repetitively.

‘The base *vale* has several usages. By itself it can be used equally well to denote severe psychosis or mental retardation. In another context it refers to the condition of drunkenness and the associated body sensations (said to be a “numbness” and lack of “proper feeling” in body parts). A man who frequently has conversations with himself on the village paths will also be described as *vale*. As a modifier of verbs, the base identifies the action as somehow “non-productive,” “without purpose,” “without value” or “in vain,” as in the forms *taafao-vale*, meaning “play without purpose” (of the behavior of children), and *ikuvale*, meaning “end in vain.” In the related form *valeu* the generic meaning is recognized as “ignorant,” but in the pejorative usage the usual value given is “stupid.” In the re-duplicated form *valevale*, as a modifier of verbs, it generally characterizes the action as being in some way “indiscriminate” or “without (proper) order(ing),” as, for example, *tavili valevale*, meaning “speak indiscriminately” (i.e., to fail to take into consideration such factors as age, sex, and social position of the person addressed). In the context of meetings of village organizations, *valevale* can be used to connote informality, as in the expression *fai valevale*, meaning “proceed informally” indicating that the meeting will take place without regard for the normal rules of formal speech, precedence, and introduction of subject matter. As a modifier of nouns *valevale* takes on the meaning “of all kinds,” “of all sorts,” as in *laakau valevale*, meaning “plants of all kinds.” The combination of the prefix *faka-* with the re-duplicated base *valevale* produces the form *fakavalevale*, sometimes translated as “(be) crazy,” or “act crazily,” and sometimes perhaps better translated as “(be) irresponsible” or “act irresponsibly.” An examination of the range of improprieties to which this appellation is applied reveals that there is always a strong association with one or more of the qualities indicated above as denoted by forms involving the base *vale*. I will return to these considerations later.

The Behavior

The description which follows examines the kinds of behavior characteristic of the 67 men and women over the age of fifteen classified as *fakavalevale* out of a total sample of 518. The discussion follows the subcategory arrangement used by my informant to illustrate the several ways *fakavalevale* people reveal themselves to others. This arrangement

reflects focal areas of *fakavalevale* behavior rather than mutually exclusive behavioral patterns. Many people are said to behave in a *fakavalevale* fashion across several cultural focuses.

1. *Inadequate Work Behavior.* One important focal area of *fakavalevale* behavior involves the accomplishment of work and the products of work. Within the successively wider domains of household, kindred, and island community, a person's work is viewed as a valuable resource that ought to be applied conscientiously and never squandered in non-productive pursuits. The skill and industry with which an individual accomplishes his work expresses two of the most important elements in the evaluation of social worth. But the work behavior of a person who combines the qualities of "ignorance" (*valea*), inattentiveness, and laziness has value neither to his kinsmen nor to the wider community. These negatively valued characteristics are attributed to people whose work behavior is viewed as *fakavalevale*. Examples of this behavior are found in producing work that is sub-standard in quality through faulty execution, working in a manner that produces very little in the way of quantity because of the failure to stick to a task once begun, and contributing work to persons and groups who do not have primary rights to it such as a man's in-laws.

The forms of *fakavalevale* behavior expressed in relation to work, particularly that of faulty execution of work, are especially interesting since these behaviors, more than in relation to any other focal area, are attributed to some sort of organic deficiency of mind. This is evident in the frequent application to people who behave in this way of such labels as "insane and retarded" (*vale*); "ignorant and stupid" (*valea*); "bad brain" (*faai ai maasei*); and "sick head" (*ulupoko masaki*).

2. *Spirit Possession.* A pattern of sub-standard work behavior is also evident among other groupings of *fakavalevale* people. This is true, for example, of a group of women described as subject to frequent bouts of spirit possession. Although the poor quality and small quantity of work may be pointed out as one of the things that is bad about being possessed by spirits, it is the frantic and frenzied behavior of a person while possessed that is focused upon as *fakavalevale*. Spirit possession can happen to anyone regardless of age, but it is predominantly a condition that affects women. A woman possessed may rip off her clothes, scream obscenities, mistreat her children, hurl accusations of sorcery, or behave in a number of other ways that are considered beyond the bounds of acceptable behavior for responsible adults. (She may also speak in strange languages,⁴ but this in itself is not improper.) The behavior displayed by a

woman while possessed is not considered truly her own but is rather the behavior of the spirit in temporary control of her body. However, while the cause of the behavior is attributed to an outside force, a woman frequently given to spirit possession will, like people with organically deficient minds, suffer a low estimation of social worth.

3. *Inappropriate Public Deportment.* Another focal area of *fakavalevale* behavior involves the relationship between individuals and groups in formal assembly. The kind of social error involved here is most often made by young unmarried women, seemingly oblivious to what is going on around them. It occurs on such occasions as the gatherings of women's clubs and village sections and for choir singing, an activity which brings men and women together in close proximity. Acts particularly demonstrative of inappropriate public deportment are the use of obscene language and laughing or giggling aloud during the discussion of important matters. These acts are considered to be in exceedingly bad taste and are viewed as disrespectful to the dignity of the gathering. The use of obscene language is especially abhorrent when both men and women are present, as on occasions of choir singing, since both parties to real or classificatory "opposite sex sibling" (*tuangaane*) relationships are likely to be present. Obscene language should never be used in the hearing of both parties to "opposite sex sibling" relationships since it violates the rule requiring that a high degree of sexual distance be maintained between these parties.

4. *Residence Impropriety.* *Fakavalevale* behavior appears most often in certain acts which violate the set of rules defining the proper relationship between an individual and his residence unit. It is said of people who behave inappropriately in this context that they "don't know where home is." Although there is relative ease of movement between related households when friction among family members becomes too great, changes in household affiliation should not occur too frequently. Everyone should have a permanent residence; wives should live with their husbands, and all others should reside with their fathers or closest patrilineal relations.⁵ A person who repeatedly moves back and forth between his primary household and another household (from quarrel to quarrel), or who moves serially among several households, will be viewed as behaving in a *fakavalevale* fashion. Other kinds of behavior which merit this label involve the regular dereliction of day-to-day household duties. Commonly, for both men and women, this failing consists of wasting time with extensive "gossip" or "idle conversation" (*faitala*) at other people's houses.⁶ Some men are additionally prone to joining in bachelor games, getting drunk, or

joining in activities of their wives' relations. Unless a person has occasion to fulfill a specific obligation elsewhere, his time should be spent at his own residence or in the pursuance of household and close-kindred concerns. From the point of view of members of a household, any time or labor expended among others, or for their benefit, is wasted effort--effort without value.

5. *Heeding Others.* Another type of *fakavalevale* behavior is spoken of as "heeding the wishes of others." The impropriety of acts described in this way derives from the fact that the counsel of near kin or clear-cut obligations to near kin were ignored. In American society, the same types of individuals would be those unable to refuse a request. Several of the people guilty of "heeding others" are known for the ease with which they can be tricked or cajoled to other's benefit. These people are spoken of as *fakavalevale* when, for example, they allow themselves to be talked out of freshly caught fish or praised into donating labor. A man who follows his wife's urging to move in with her family rather than establish his own patrilocal residence is also spoken of as acting *fakavalevale*. Another example is seen in the behavior of a girl who, against the pleas and demands of her family, went off with a bachelor who falsely promised marriage at the end of a journey. This last case is notable also for its violation of the negative injunction to act in no way that will bring shame to the household and kindred.

6. *Illegitimate Marriage and Parenthood.* Another important focus of *fakavalevale* behavior is closely bound up with features of marriage, parenthood and illegitimacy. Prior to marriage, bachelors and unmarried women are considered incapable of sexual propriety in unsupervised interaction. Consequently, girls are closely watched over during daytime ventures outside the village and chaperoned during nighttime movements outside the home. Bachelors, however, have freedom of movement and are prone to sexual forays in the form of "sneaking into girls' sleeping nets" (*moetolo*) an activity which, when successful, enhances a bachelor's sense of manhood as well as his prestige in the eyes of his peers. Since a careful watch over an unmarried girl is difficult to maintain over a period of several years, unwanted pregnancies sometimes occur. If the girl's lover is unidentified or refuses to marry her, both she and her child will suffer from the stigma of illegitimacy. In time, provided that she is humble, hard-working, and circumspect in behavior, her illegitimate motherhood may be forgiven as an understandable but unfortunate error in growing

up. But if, by having still another illegitimate child, she demonstrates that she has learned nothing from her mistake, people will refer to her and her behavior as *fakavalevale*. They will say that she is ignorant of the difference between right and wrong.

The wrong choice of a marriage partner can also lead to the *fakavalevale* label. This is the case, for example, when a “bachelor without children” (*tamataene*) insists upon marrying a woman who has previously given birth to an illegitimate child. “Bachelors” should only marry “young women” (*tamaafine*) who are similarly unencumbered. Illegitimate children must also exercise prudence in their choice of spouses. Should two illegitimate children insist upon marrying each other, both will be said to be *fakavalevale*. Clearly related to this labeling is the fact that children of bastard parents are spoken of as having extremely bad character and are believed to be strongly inclined towards such improper behavior as lying, stealing, and producing more illegitimate children. That is, the character defects of the illegitimate parents are believed to be inherited by the illegitimate children and by later legitimate grandchildren.

Following marriage, both men and women are expected to put aside the frivolous activities of youth. The marital relationship should be one of responsibility and trust. Women are no longer chaperoned and watched over, and men are expected to give up both their bachelor friends and their sexual escapades. Married persons who engage in extra-marital sexual activities are referred to as *fakavalevale*. “Sexual activities” include not only intercourse but also any behavior calculated to make oneself attractive to the opposite sex, such as flirting and using perfume.

7. *Rough-house Play Between Opposite Sex Siblings.* The last major type of *fakavalevale* behavior consists of indulging in a form of “play” behavior: that of touching, hitting, or wrestling with an “opposite sex (real or classificatory) sibling” (*tuangaane*). Such behavior defies the principle upon which almost all behavior rules for siblings of opposite sex are based, that of sexual distance. For example, a “brother/sister pair” (*tautuangaane*) should never touch, sit next to each other, sleep in the same house unless others are present, or speak of sexual matters in each other’s presence. The kind of rough-house play in which a “brother/sister pair” are brought into intimate contact is viewed as almost incest. The Niutao imagine that opposite sex siblings who act in this manner have either already committed incest or will shortly do so.

The Meaning

In summarizing the underlying features of *fakavalevale* behavior it will be useful to keep in mind the dimensions of meaning glossed at the

beginning of the analysis as “lacking in value,” “ignorance,” “indiscriminate,” “lacking in (proper) order(ing),” and “irresponsibility.” A characteristic common to all behavior classified as *fakavalevale* is the failure to produce anything of material or social value. Rather, from the perspective of an individual’s household and kindred, such behavior is either non-productive or counter-productive. The failure to produce something of material value is most evident in regard to work and the products of work, where *fakavalevale* behavior produces work of poor quality or small quantity, or it may consist of the squandering of work to the benefit of other households. *Fakavalevale* behavior is also viewed as non-productive and lacking in value where work and material objects are not directly involved, as for example in an adulterous union, a marriage between a pair of illegitimately born persons, and the bearing of numerous illegitimate children. All such acts bring shame, embarrassment, and disgust to offenders’ close kin and co-householders. These acts also bring about a loss of “points” (*kai*) on the value scale which measures respect and prestige in the ceaseless intra-village competition between households,

People whose behavior is *fakavalevale* are viewed as possessing minds which are deficient in the ability to reason effectively and to distinguish proper courses of action from improper ones. Among the group of people who are labeled consistently as *fakavalevale* in thought and behavior are three or four who, more than any others, show clear evidence of organic deficiency of mind.’ The Niutao recognize this condition in observations which point out that such persons’ conditions as *vale* (“insanity,” “retardation”) derive from “bad brains” or “sick heads.” On occasion, other persons will also be observed to be suffering from “sick heads,” although not to as great a degree. But the large majority of people who commit *fakavalevale* acts are generally conceded to have minds that are well and whole. Their problem is that in spite of seemingly whole minds they sometimes act as if this were not the case. When these people behave in a *fakavalevale* manner, the shorter expressions *valea* (“stupid,” “ignorant”) and *vale* (“insane,” “retarded”), are also used to characterize their mental condition. In such cases the use of the term *vale* seems to be largely a metaphorical extension based upon the true or complete *vale* condition of “insanity” or “retardation.” *Valea* as “ignorant” or “stupid,” although largely overlapping with the usage of *vale*, is more strongly associated with a deficiency of mind resulting from poor upbringing and faulty learning. The expression *fakavalevale* can itself be used to denote the condition of one’s mind, adding to the notion of organic or super-organic deficiency--the connotation that one’s thoughts deal “indiscriminately” with

appropriate and inappropriate considerations. But when it appears in contrastive association with *vale* or *valea* it serves to characterize the nature of behavior produced by deficient conditions of mind. The gloss “crazy” is appropriate here for *fakavalevale* since it preserves the strong association of this kind of act with unsoundness of mind without signifying that a given actor is himself suffering from “insanity” or “retardation.” *Fakavalevale* behavior is then the kind of behavior one expects from insane people and retarded people but is not confined only to them.

Earlier I indicated that *fakavalevale* behavior is associated with the features of “indiscrimination” and “lack of (proper) order(ing).” This association is closely bound up with the aspect of the meaning of *fakavalevale* glossed here as “irresponsible.” To the Niutao observers the individual whose behavior is *fakavalevale* seems often to be acting “indiscriminately” in that he fails to recognize that the different kinds of relationships obtaining between himself and others call for varying constraints on behavior. That is, he fails to acknowledge that social relationships are, necessarily, ordered relationships, and that this order is maintained only when behavior is consistent with the expectations of the community for the conduct of different categories of person. For example, a “married man” (*tangata*) who engages in sexual intercourse with someone other than his wife, or who joins the “bachelors” (*tamataene*) in their drinking and gaming, is behaving according to the set of expectations people have for “bachelors,” expectations which are quite different from those that people have for “married men.” When, by the act of marrying, he signaled to the community that he was prepared to accept the responsibilities of full adulthood, he exchanged his membership in one social category (“bachelor”) together with its attached set of expectations for membership in a new social category (“married man”) with a different set of expectations, including the expectation that “bachelor” activities will be put aside. Similarly, a “bachelor” who marries a “woman” (*fafine*) with an illegitimate child is also failing to conduct himself properly. The only appropriate marriage partner for a “bachelor” is an “unmarried girl” (*tamafine*) yet to conceive a child. And again, an “opposite sex sibling pair” is expected to maintain an extreme degree of sexual distance. In rough-house play both parties are acting like “non-kinsmen.” In each of these examples the offenders are behaving irresponsibly in relation to the social categories in which they hold membership. Each is demonstrating the inability to restrain behavior within the bounds deemed appropriate to their respective social categories.

The Causes of *Fakavalevale*

Table 1 summarizes the causes of *fakavalevale* behavior in relation to the types of abnormal behavior associated with them. It represents a combination of both informants' and my own observations. As such some explanation is necessary.

Table 1

The Causes of *Fakavalevale* Behavior

<i>Causes</i>	<i>Types of Abnormal Behavior</i>
Organic deficiency	
Sickness of the head	Inadequate work behavior
Psychosis	Inadequate work behavior
Mental retardation	Inadequate work behavior
	Heeding others
	Inappropriate public deportment
Old age	
Faulty learning and/or willful ignorance	Inadequate work behavior
	Residence impropriety
	Illegitimate marriage and parenthood
	Inappropriate public deportment
	Rough-house play between opposite sex siblings
Inherited character defect	Illegitimate marriage and parenthood
	Residence impropriety
Spirits	Spirit possession
	Inadequate work behavior

"Organic deficiency" is my own label for the causes informants refer to as a "sickness of the head," "they have been like that all their lives"

(mental retardation), and “being old” (senility). The Niutao have no label directly corresponding to “psychosis.” I have included it under “organic deficiency” because the only person on the island definitely psychotic was included among those referred to as “sick in the head.” This person, a woman of about fifty, was rarely able to do work of any kind. My informant said of her that there was never a time when she knew what was going on around her. Whenever I was nearby she either hid or ran away. Her relatives reported that she felt that I was plotting to come back at night to kidnap and eat her.

Being perceived as “sick in the head” here is to be perceived as having an organic deficiency of some kind. This is clear when those with this condition are contrasted directly with those whose *fakavalevale* behavior is said to be due to a problem in “thinking” (*maafaufau*) rather than a problem with their heads (*ulupoko*) or brains (*faaiiai*).

The label “mental retardation” refers to those reported to have “just grown up that way” or who “have been that way all their lives.” These people are frequently referred to as “ignorant” (*valea*). They are especially ignorant of how to begin a work project without direction, or how to complete it once begun. Because they are unable to distinguish truth from lies and propriety from impropriety they are sometimes taken advantage of by others. They then become guilty of “heeding others.” At least two of ‘the young women guilty of “inappropriate public deportment,” that is, giggling and laughing aloud during public assemblies, are characterized in a way suggesting they are of lower intelligence than the average person. They show this especially in the kind of work behavior mentioned above. Both are also characterized as having habitual responses of giggling in whatever situation they find themselves.

“Old age” is also perceived as sometimes causing *fakavalevale* behavior. I have no examples of abnormal behavior among the types appearing in this analysis. From other data, however, I have the example of a man said to be suffering from “old age” (senility) who would suddenly appear at a gathering of individuals (e.g., for choir singing) and begin questioning those present as to some imagined wrong of theirs in the past. Interestingly, senility which does not constitute interpersonal behavioral abnormality is not considered *fakavalevale*. For example, one old man of ninety who was frequently incontinent, rarely lucid, but never threatening, was not considered to be *fakavalevale*. He was a custodial problem for his family, not a behavior problem.

Those whose abnormal behavior is characterized as being due to “faulty learning” or “willful ignorance” are not perceived (in theory) as having an organic impairment. Their thoughts (*maafaufau*) are perceived

as the problem rather than their brains (*faaiiai*). There is no sharp boundary, however, between faulty learning as a lifetime pattern and behavior that is due to lowered intelligence. A particular individual might sometimes be perceived as unable to learn and therefore “not like the rest of us” on one occasion, but on another occasion spoken of as being essentially normal but obstinate in refusing to learn from past mistakes.

Nor is there a sharp distinction drawn between “faulty learning” and “wilfull ignorance” as a cause of *fakavalevale* behavior. The major informant for this study displayed both attitudes toward guilty parties. An excellent example of this is the *fakavalevale* characterization of women who have multiple illegitimate children. Having one illegitimate child does not lead to being labeled as *fakavalevale*. But a woman who has been advised, scolded and beaten for a first illegitimate child should certainly know she was in error. Having a second or third illegitimate child in the face of such instruction makes it clear that she was either unable to learn proper behavior or she was willfully ignorant of it. To the observer it makes no difference which was the actual cause.

Faulty learning or willful ignorance produces the widest range of *fakavalevale* behavior of any of the perceived causes. The people involved should know better. On most occasions they are like any other normal person except they persist in their repetitive or intermittent abnormal actions. To the Niutao observer these are the most confusing and perplexing cases.

The cause labeled as “inherited character defect” is never cited as the sole cause of *fakavalevale* behavior. It is perceived as a contributing factor, especially in regard to illegitimate parentage. Because it is thought of as inherited somehow through the “blood” (*toto*) it should perhaps be included among the organic causes. However, in spite of the fact that the tendency toward *fakavalevale* behavior is said to be inherited, those with this problem are held entirely responsible for their actions, while those with an organic deficiency are also held responsible for their acts. The fact that they presumably cannot do otherwise acts as a partial excuse for them.

The final cause of *fakavalevale* behavior, that of “spirits,” produces the possessed person. Those frequently possessed also display inadequate work behavior. “Spirit possession” is the only one of the types of abnormal behavior discussed here for which a person is not held responsible to some degree. This was illustrated during the course of a case tried in the local criminal court. One woman, during a bout of spirit possession, accused a man of working sorcery. He filed a claim for libel against her with the criminal court. The court found her not guilty on the grounds

that it was not her but the spirit in possession of her who made the accusation of sorcery.

CONCLUSION

Recalling now the incident described in the introduction where incest was compared directly with spending time chatting at others' houses, it is clear that the two kinds of action are both *fakavalevale*. Incest confuses the rights and duties of kinsmen with non-kinsmen, and spending time chatting at others' houses ignores one's obligations to the household unit. There would also seem to be an additional confusion here of the relative freedom of action permitted a bachelor with the more restricted set of expectations people have for a married man. Incest, wasting time chatting away the day at others' houses, establishing residence with one's in-laws, and (for a bachelor) marrying a woman who already has a child, are all acts sharing a basic commonality, a commonality they do not share with such acts as killing, lying, and thievery. The latter delicts, although reprehensible, are not acts which call into question an individual's soundness of mind or his understanding of the basic orderliness of social relationships.

All *fakavalevale* ("crazy, irresponsible") acts create social confusion by bringing about a kind of ungrammatical situation whereby the behavior of individuals expresses social relationships which cannot appropriately obtain between the social categories they occupy. The acts which express such relationships are valueless and without meaning within the Niutao framework for social order. Their meaning as "crazy" or "irresponsible" acts accrues to them because they occur outside this framework. In the Niutao view positive value and meaning derive only from behavior that is structurally consistent with the Niutao design for living, the grammar for appropriate combinations of categories of person, group and behavior.

NOTES

1. The fieldwork upon which this paper is based was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health through Public Health Service grant number MH44650.
2. The full set of categories which constitutes what I am glossing here as "kinds of Niutao people" does not represent a "contrast set" as defined by Frake (1962: 76-79). Instead it is a grouping (actually a series of groupings) of people arranged by my informant according to the characteristic in which each is said to be "strongest" (*maalosi*). The aspect of person that is involved can usually be termed "personal identity" as defined by Goodenough (1965: 3-4).

3. As a prefix to verbs *faka-* frequently functions to change an intransitive verb to a transitive verb, as in *oti* as “be finished” and *fakaoti* as “finish (a task).” When it can be translated the meaning generally approximates “cause to.” For example, *maasei* as “bad” and *fakamaasei* as “cause to be bad” (i.e., “ruin”).
4. The glossolalia of a possessed woman has been said to produce English, German, and other “strange” languages unknown to the woman.
5. One’s patrilineal relations are assumed to be those with whom one shares primary rights to land. In the unusual case where a person’s primary rights to land are shared with matrilineal relations, residence with the latter is also legitimate.
6. There are many acceptable occasions for idle conversation. Among them are public feast days and gardeuing work parties in the bush.
7. There are no persons consistently considered *vale* in the sense of “insane” or “retarded” who are not also characterized as *fakavalevale* (“crazy,” “irresponsible”). The section on “causes” discusses “insanity” as organic in origin.

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