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Ghosts, Gossip, and Suicide: Meaning and Action in Tobian Folk Psychology

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> . . . individuals do not simply receive and spout out a cultural legacy. They
> live with it and through it, suffering it or evading it, perhaps even creating it
> at critical psychohistorical junctures.
>
> —Belmonte, *The Broken Fountain*

INTRODUCTION

Early one morning in 1972 on the remote Micronesian island of Tobi there
began a series of events which were so dramatic and unusual that they soon
involved the entire population. A man I shall call Alfredo, a forty-two-year-
old father of six, was the central figure in those events. Separated from his
wife, who was living on another island, his love affair with a young girl
had recently become a matter of public knowledge and discussion.

   After intentionally wounding himself with a knife, he called together
his children, bid them good-bye, and ran off into the uninhabited bush.
Alerted by his terrified children, who feared he would kill himself, small
groups of men fanned out through the bush looking for him. He was found
sitting in a tree to which he had attached a rope with a noose in it. He came
down out of the tree but soon ran away again. Thrice more during that
day he acted in a fashion that seemed to indicate that he was suicidal. Once,
he launched himself out to sea on a hastily constructed and completely
unseaworthy raft, only to come ashore again. Later, he paddled a canoe out
into the channel in the dark. Finally he returned home and once again turned
a knife upon himself, this time inflicting a stomach wound. This last act
ended Alfredo's sequence of "suicidal" behaviors.

In this chapter I report on that incident for methodological, ethno-graphic, and theoretical reasons. Its analysis will allow me to (1) demonstrate the utility of the case study method in ethnopsychological research, (2) explore one of the most potent metaphors of Tobian folk psychology, and (3) present some ideas about what Lutz has called "the ecology of ethnopsychological knowledge" (chap. 2). These three goals are interrelated and each can best be realized by an analysis of some of the statements that Tobians made in conversations both with each other and with me during and after Alfredo's attempted suicide. This procedure is based on the fact that, as Berger and Luckmann point out, "the most important vehicle of reality maintenance is conversation" (1966:152–153).

I begin with a consideration of the methods best suited for ethno-psychological research, given the several ways in which folk psychology enters into behavior. The body of the chapter consists of an expanded narrative of the case followed by an analysis in which the utility of certain methods for investigating important but often neglected issues in ethno-psychology is demonstrated. In the process "ghostliness" is shown to be one of the key organizing concepts in Tobian folk psychology, while gossip is shown to be an important feature of the islanders' social psychological landscape which is rather inadequately dealt with in their folk psychology. This leads to an investigation of certain elements of Tobian understandings about suicide which, when probed, prove unable to fully encompass Alfredo's behavior.

METHODS FOR THE STUDY OF FOLK PSYCHOLOGY

Folk psychologies are profoundly important in the social life of human communities. Their description and comparison form the heart of the ethnopsychological enterprise.[1] Unfortunately, folk psychologies are not particularly easy to study, largely because of the lack of an agreed upon vocabulary with which to map them.

It has often been pointed out that conceptions of personhood, as well as conceptions of relations between person, action, and meaning, are (to some as yet undetermined extent) culturally variable. Yet we still await an adequate vocabulary in which to express that variability. The difficulty arises from the fact that there are severe limitations on the use of academic psychologies in this task, because of their embeddedness in Western folk psychology. This is a serious problem, for if academic psychology is too badly contaminated with Euro-American folk notions to serve as an objective, pancultural system with which to map folk psychologies, then how

can we hope to even standardize our translations, let alone carry out comparative analysis?

Two possible strategies for doing comparative analysis come to mind. One can attempt to disentangle academic psychology from its Euro-American folk cousin by directly addressing the issue. (See Lutz's discussion of this point, 1982a and chap. 2.) Or, one can do the ethnography of one or more non-Western folk psychologies using as nontechnical a vocabulary as possible and providing as "thick" a description as is practical of the contexts in which such knowledge is salient. In this manner much that is usually left implicit by ethnographers can be made explicit. Essentially, what this second strategy calls for (and it is the one I have adopted here) is the translation of non-Western folk psychology in a very straightforward fashion.[2] Those psychologies can then await the outcome of the inevitably complex and difficult decontamination of academic psychology. The use of this strategy, which makes it necessary to take into account the full complexities of folk psychological systems, is also a way of meeting a second fundamental challenge for the doing of ethnopsychology—the necessity of moving beyond unidimensional methods.

In a statement that calls to mind Hallowell's notion of the behavioral environment (1955), Rorty notes that a "complicated biological fact about us . . . [is that] . . . humans are just the sort of organisms that interpret and modify their agency through their conceptions of themselves" (1976:323). A good part of that complexity is due to the fact that such conceptions are not mere representations. Therefore (and this is my point) they need to be studied with an assortment of ethnographic approaches.

Numerous scholars in the field of ethnopsychology have modeled their research and explanations on ethnoscience. In their conceptualization of what they are studying they draw a strict parallel between folk systems for classifying persons and behavior and folk classificatory systems dealing with plants, animals, colors, and other terminological "domains." Drawing on the research tradition grounded in the work of Pike (1954) and developed into a sophisticated methodological framework by Conklin (1962), D'Andrade (1965), Frake (1962), Goodenough (1956), and others, they investigate folk psychologies as though they were comparable to native botanies or astronomies. Although excellent work leading to intellectually polished descriptions has been accomplished within this paradigm, I think that ultimately it will prove inadequate to the needs of the field.

In a recent paper D'Andrade (1984) has discussed what he calls "cultural meaning systems." He convincingly argues that any given meaning system has three functions, which he calls the "representational," the "directive," and the "evocative." By representational is meant the role of the meaning

system in mapping reality. By directive is meant the normative aspect of the meaning system, or its role in shaping human action. The evocative function refers to the capacity of meaning systems to stimulate affective response. Clearly these three functions are complexly interrelated and are also closely related to the constitutive character of culture in general and discourse in particular (Searle 1969). For example, it seems to me that, as well as stimulating affect, a cultural meaning system serves to organize it (see Gerber, chap. 4). It is important to recognize that while these three functions are part of the processes by which every system of meaning works, a given function may be more or less important in any particular meaning system. Further, since a system of meaning is itself complexly organized, its various functions may be unequally distributed across its elements.

Most of the domains analyzed by early ethnoscience were largely representational. Native taxonomies for plants, animals, and colors all dealt with domains in which the affective and normative functions were generally trivial. Therefore, the use of techniques for the elicitation and analysis of their representational features (classic ethnoscience) did not run the risk of omitting significant functions. When we turn, however, to meaning systems that have the person as their central focus (folk psychologies), we are faced with a very different and much more complex situation.[3]

Folk psychologies are not simply descriptions of the class of phenomena "people." They are also both evocative and directive; that is, they concern phenomena about which people feel deeply and which people also use to organize their feelings. Furthermore, folk psychologies are systems that guide and perhaps even compel behavior. To fully understand them, all three functions need to be investigated.

Broadly speaking, each of the three functions of folk psychology calls for methods from a particular research tradition. Naturally, the investigation of any one function will shed some light on the other two, but the point remains that each calls for distinct but complementary modes of investigation. Lexical techniques, with their roots in ethnoscience, are best suited, I think, for the investigation of representational functions.

The pioneering studies by White (1980), Gerber (1976), and Lutz (1982b) indicate that lexical and cognitive techniques can yield interesting and provocative descriptions of culturally structured representations of emotions, personal traits, and other elements of folk psychology. It could even be argued that such investigations should be done prior to any other, since a clear notion of the contents and boundaries of a system of meaning is required to investigate its evocative and directive functions. I think, however, that it will be more fruitful in the long run to investigate all three simultaneously to allow for feedback among findings. Furthermore, while

it is an advantage to have available an agreed upon set of relatively sophis-
ticated methods to investigate the cognitive aspect of folk psychologies, we
should not, therefore, refrain from studying the other two functions simply
because we lack similarly elegant techniques. After all, the evocative and
directional functions are what make folk psychologies important in people's
lives. It would be a serious mistake to leave them unexamined just because
we do not have a well worked out set of methods for getting at them. The
question then arises: How can these two functions best be studied? In this
chapter I attempt to illustrate the utility of two complementary approaches
(briefly, empathy and the case study) to the task of studying these two
closely related functions. While either of these approaches can be expected
to illuminate both functions (and the representational as well), the first
(empathy) seems more appropriate to an investigation of the evocative
function while the second (case study) is most useful in getting at the
directiveness of folk psychology.

THE USES OF EMPATHY

It is no small irony that while we possess a variety of techniques for getting
at how people think about feelings, we currently lack any agreed upon way
of describing either how people *feel* about thinking and any of the other
elements of their folk psychology, or how they use those elements to
organize their emotional life. Yet, as ethnographers, we are heirs to a long
tradition of fieldwork in which the ability to comprehend (intuit may be a
better word) the emotional life of people is virtually taken for granted. I
am referring here to the notion of "empathy" which is widely regarded as
a prerequisite for successful participant observation.[4] Whatever else is meant
by this very slippery term, it always connotes an identification between
ethnographer and "native." This identification is built on past learnings at
the same time that it is used to develop further learnings. And most if not
all of these learnings have to do with feelings. Perhaps, therefore, a concen-
tration of the emotional and affective substrata of the sustained dialogue
between ethnographer and informant can be made to yield otherwise inac-
cessible data on the evocative functions of folk psychologies. An example
from my fieldwork will serve to illustrate this point.

One of the central features of Tobian folk psychology is the use of
"ghost" as a powerful metaphor for people who demonstrate a lack of
concern for important social norms.[5] In a later section of this chapter I
present an analysis of this metaphor. My understanding of ghosts arises
from a number of sources, mostly conversations and actual ghost sightings
to which I was a party. One imporant element in my understanding grew

out of precisely the kind of interaction I referred to above—one in which empathy played a crucial role.

Very early in my first visit to Tobi I was incorporated into a large and complex family whose de facto head is a sensitive and intelligent elderly woman. This woman, who called me "son" and whom I called "mother," has been my main avenue into the world of Tobian women, and it is to her that I owe most of the insights into that world I have managed to achieve. It is also to her (or rather to our relationship) that I owe an important insight into the evocative function of the ghost metaphor, and how it might be undergoing a process of modification.

During my first stay on the island it was a matter of great pleasure to this woman that her favorite adopted son and I had become fast friends, fishing together to provide food for the household, making copra together, and, in general, spending much time with each other. She was especially pleased when her son and I began referring to each other as "brother." After I left the island, my "brother" died under very tragic circumstances. When I returned, my relationship with his adopted mother deepened and grew as a result of our mutual grief. During this time she engaged in a practice that her fellow islanders found unusual and disturbing, as did I until she finally "explained" it to me.

Every once in a while she would withdraw to the outskirts of the village. There she would sit for an hour or more with the black cloth of mourning over her head. Such behavior was not at all customary and it gave rise to much speculation and gossip. As the months passed she slowly let slip to me that during these occasions she was visited by her son's spirit, who was prevented from leaving for heaven because of his outstanding commercial debts. She told no one else this, largely, I think, because she did not want to gain the reputation of one who trafficked with ghosts. Out of the complexity of our relationship slowly emerged the joint understanding that for both of us I was in many ways the symbolic equivalent of her (almost) departed son, and that the debts that were tying him to us were not all monetary, nor were they all ones that he owed—some were owed to him.[6] Most impressive of all was the way in which she built on and transformed cultural understandings of ghosts to shape and structure her profound mourning. These insights, which taught me much about the connections between people and ghosts, especially one way of feeling about them and of using them to organize feelings, only became available to me because the relationship between my "mother" and I had developed a subtlety of communication unavailable in a mere subject–investigator relationship.

The most revealing interaction occurred one evening as she passed me on her way back to her house after having once more engaged in that

curious behavior. I greeted her, as is customary on Tobi, with a stereotypic inquiry: "Mother, where are you coming from?" Instead of giving the formulaic reply called for by that question ("I am coming from over there"), she gave me a long, steady look and said, "You know, his money to the company is not yet finished." "Oh . . . I see," I replied.[7] And she walked on by.

There is nothing particularly mysterious about my immediate understanding that she was in communication with her son's spirit. It arose from my (inevitably only partially successful) socialization into Tobian culture combined with our personal involvement with each other as well as my understandings of the mourning process both in America and on Tobi. These factors allowed the look she gave me to convey as least as much as her spoken words. That moment of insight sprang from and added to emotional as well as cognitive understandings. It was confirmed and amplified in the months that followed on both of those levels in equally indirect ways. That is, the spoken and semi-spoken but mostly nonverbal conversation that occurred during that brief interchange was characteristic of much that had transpired between us in the past and continued until I left the island.[8]

As an ethnographer, it would have been helpful if I could have directly explored these matters with her. If I could have explicitly confirmed or diconfirmed my understandings as they developed I would be much more confident today that they are accurate and complete. It would have been especially useful to formally "interview" her about the nature of the debts my "brother" owed as well as the nature of the debts owed to him. It was equally important to determine the exact shape of her communication with his spirit. Yet I never openly asked her about these matters. I do not think I was being overly delicate here; it was simply that I was very sure that if I did confront her directly she would be hurt and would withdraw. She is a very devout adherent of the Tobian version of Roman Catholicism, and her orthodoxy made her interaction with a dead man a matter of embarrassment and secrecy. She chose to leave much of our communication unspoken and I was forced to respect her wishes or lose the trust that had led her to reveal what was going on in the first place.[9] As with any of the methods used in anthropological fieldwork, a reliance on empathy has its drawbacks. In my opinion, its ability to generate important and otherwise unavailable insights into such things as the evocative dimension of folk psychology more than offset its weaknesses.

One is not forced to leave empathy as a methodologically primitive technique. Although it is not my intent here to offer a full-scale justification for its use, grounded in developed theory, I do want to indicate two schools of thought that can both rather easily serve to make of empathy a theoret-

ically based method for the study of the evocative functions of folk psychology. I am referring here to the Freudian tradition on the one hand and hermeneutics on the other.

Both LeVine (1973) and Devereux (1978) convincingly argue that Freudian clinical techniques are uniquely suited (with some modifications) for use in ethnographic research. Indeed, LeVine's description of the method by which the psychoanalyst proceeds—continually presenting the analysand with tentative interpretations of his or her behavior, the response to which becomes the basis for further interpretations—well describes an important feature of my long-term relationship with my Tobian "mother." This technique also answers D'Andrade's (1984) call for the use of "small experiments" in the study of meaning systems—the Freudian process of continual interpretation and reinterpretation is, in essence, a process of continual hypothesis construction and testing.

Of course the Freudian justification for this technique is not available to ethnopsychologists who adopt a more cautious position vis-à-vis assumptions about internal psychic organization than do psychoanalytically oriented investigators. For a Freudian, the clinical technique works (and this is Devereux's point) because the analyst's unconscious *resonates* with that of the analysand. And for that transference-countertransference to occur in a cross-cultural context there must be an essential identity in the psychological processes of the two parties to the interaction. For those researchers who reject this assumption, hermeneutics offers, I think, an alternative foundation for empathy as an important technique in the investigation of folk psychologies.

In a thoughtful review of hermeneutical anthropology, Agar (1980) provides a useful summary of the work of a number of scholars in this field. It is apparent that in its focus on both parts of "the hermeneutic circle"—the investigator and the investigated (or perhaps the explainer and the explained) as well as the relations between them—hermeneutics offers ethnopsychologists a coherent way of grounding empathy in a reasonably developed theoretical structure. Indeed, much of what Rabinow has to say about reflexivity in his hermeneutically oriented *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* is predicated on the achievement of a powerful mutual empathy with the various people he encountered in North Africa. He defines the hermeneutically crucial process of reflexivity as "a process of intersubjective construction of liminal modes of communication" (1977:153), a phrase that aptly describes what happened between that elderly Tobian woman and me.

Ricoeur's famous epigrammatic definition of hermeneutics as "the comprehension of the self by the detour of the comprehension of the other" (which Rabinow quotes approvingly) is well suited as a motto for research in ethnopsychology. And since, as Rabinow points out, the self referred to

is not the "deep" self of Freud, but a "perfecly public" self, "culturally constituted and historically situated . . . which finds itself in a continually changing world of meaning" (1977:5), ethnopsychologists unwilling to accept the assumption of psychic universality which underlies Freudian-based fieldwork, may be able to rely on hermeneutics in their use of empathy to get at the evocative functions of folk psychology.[10] Whatever techniques are chosen, however, the larger point remains: to get at those functions, the investigator needs affect-sensitive methods. And, as I hope the example from my fieldwork demonstrates, we will do well as ethno-psychologists to pay them more attention.

We also need a language and an analytic style that can serve to make those methods, and the characteristic interactions in which they are appro-priate, intelligible. It is here that I think hermeneutics offers, *for our purposes,* clear advantages over a Freudian approach. Ethnopsychology takes the culturally constituted self as its topic and a hermeneutic approach makes that self more available than does the Freudian approach with its elaborate system of postulated internal processes, structures, and functions. Further-more, an empathy-based, hermeneutic approach is well suited to the in-terpretation of cases, which, in turn, is a productive way to investigate the second neglected function of folk psychologies, the directive.[11]

THE CASE STUDY IN FOLK PSYCHOLOGY

Just as with the use of empathy, the case study method rests on the obser-vation that spontaneously occurring statements and behaviors may provide rich insights into folk psychological material, even though contextual pre-cision is difficult to achieve. This is because concepts emerge in a form organized by the people themselves along lines that are meaningful to them.

The most ethnographically productive events are those which involve people in public attempts to generate explicit explanations. Since social explanations are nearly always negotiated, observations of their interactive construction can provide insight into their social and cultural principles of organization. When it is social reality itself—the behavior of individuals and groups—that is being explained, then ideas about what people are like become salient and more accessible. Furthermore, those events which are likely to call for some behavioral response by those doing the explaining are likely to bring into view the directive component of the underlying folk psychological system.

If one views social life as an ongoing stream segmented into meaningful chunks (commonly called "social events") by complex social processes, then the question arises: Which social events should we attend to? For the

purposes of ethnopsychological research, especially research into the direc-
tive functions of folk psychology, I suggest we study *important* and *enigmatic*
social events. By important events I simply mean those events which the
people involved regard as nontrivial. They are events that engage people's
attention, forcing them to come to grips with what is going on. Such
events, which, by definition, people find difficult to ignore, are likely to
lead to both commentary and action that can teach us much. This is espe-
cially true when those events are also enigmatic. By enigmatic events I
mean those for which no widely shared indigenous explanations are im-
mediately available. That is, either the culture contains no "prepackaged"
widely known explanations of the meaning of such an event, or else
competing explanations are available and people have to make choices in
constructing their understanding and thus their action. As they negotiate
these choices, much interesting cultural material is likely to be made avail-
able for study.[12]

The process of negotiating an explanation goes on both during and
after an important, enigmatic social event (White 1985). Predictions about
behavior very often need to be made during the event so that choices about
behavior can be taken: "What is X going to do next? How should I (we,
you, they) respond?" After the event, that which has transpired is converted
into story and historical narrative: "Here is what happened when X did Y."
Such stories often become guidelines for future behavior. Both operations
involve people making sense out of people's behavior so that they can act.
In the process of coming to a "sensible" explanation, the explainers draw
on folk psychological concepts. As such events unfold, anyone interested
in understanding what is going on is led to draw on the set of ideas about
human behavior which are salient in that society. It is important to note
that the ethnographer is no exception. For example, as the reader will learn,
during Alfredo's case both the Tobians and I were preoccupied with trying
to figure out the meaning of his behavior.

I have found that one of the benefits of attending to such social events
is that to do so forces me as an ethnographer to confront behavior in great
detail. And for me to understand that behavior, both while it is occurring
and after, I must, like my hosts, draw on their ideas about human behavior.
That is, since one of the factors that shape behavior is the set of understand-
ings which the actors have about people, a knowledge of those understand-
ings is essential for any kind of fine-grained analysis. At the same time, if
the event meets the criteria of being enigmatic and important, it will be a
good source of new information about folk psychology. Events of this
type, then, are important to the ethnographer in three ways. First, they
force him or her to utilize his or her understanding of the psychological
concepts held by the actors in order to interpret what is going on. In doing

this the ethnographer is led to systematize and make explicit much that may have been learned in other contexts. Second, the episodes themselves are prime sources for new insights into concepts held by the actors. And, third, important and enigmatic events often involve new ways of acting. Therefore, if one is interested in how folk psychologies change over time, such events are likely to prove particularly productive. In thinking about such events in this way one asks two questions: "What does this situation say about how the participants understand people?" and "How does organizing the material in this fashion help make sense out of these events?" Such situations, therefore, become *cases* for analysis.

The case study method has long been regarded as a valuable tool for preserving some of the immediacy and vitality of social life in ethnographic description. Max Gluckman called this the "method of apt illustration" (1961:7–10). However, some scholars, such as Van Velsen (1967), Gluckman (1965), Turner (1968), and Garfinkel (1967), among others, have for their own separate purposes gone beyond this merely stylistic use of cases. I think ethnopsychologists can as well (Black 1978a).

Those scholars who use case material for analytic ends commonly see them as useful for revealing underlying reality. In Garfinkel's words, the case is taken as "pointing to" or "standing on behalf of" some social or cultural structure, pattern, or process of interest to the analyst (1967:116–185). Each of those who have used the case study method for more than illustrative purposes has sought to search out in his cases a reality appropriate to his own theoretical or ethnographic interests—ritual, conflict, law, and so forth. For ethnopsychologists, interested in networks of assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes about people, the relevant underlying phenomena pertain to indigenous understandings about persons. That interest dictates both the kind of case selected and the use that is made of it.

Two rather stringent conditions have been suggested to govern the case study method in social analysis. These have been put most clearly, perhaps, by Schwartz and Jacobs in their textbook *Qualitative Sociology:* "As long as this method is being used one must make assumptions about the underlying pattern in order to know what to make of the indicators. The assumptions will come from social context and common sense knowledge. . . . Second, one must know a great deal about something before he can find and competently interpret indicators of it" (1979:79).[13]

These are both reasonable conditions, and an attempt to deal with them returns us to the observation that the understanding of enigmatic, important cases both draws on and generates ethnopsychological knowledge, which in turn brings us back to hermeneutics. Agar (1980:270–276), for example, has a good deal to say about cases, especially what he calls problem cases and neglected situations. The discussions by Schwartz and Jacobs and by

Agar both hinge on the observation that what is most important to the actors in a situation is often left implicit by them. This may be especially true of folk psychological knowledge (Lutz, chap. 2; Tyler 1978; Hutchins 1980). In order for one to know what is going on, one must have at least the general outlines of this implicit material available. For example, "ghost-liness," a major construct used by the Tobians to make sense of Alfredo's behavior, was never made explicit by them during the case. It guided interpretation and action, both mine and theirs, but it never surfaced directly. It was available to me from previous learning. My comprehension of this aspect of Tobian common sense was amplified during the case, but if I had come into those events a stranger, I would have been much more puzzled by what was going on than I was. To put it another way: while it is true that the kind of case I am interested in is what Frake has called a "query-rich setting" (1981), considerable knowledge of the relevant folk psychology on the part of the investigator is necessary for those queries to be intelligently posed, let alone answered.[14] Clearly, empathy plays a very important role in the acquisition and interpretation of implicit material. I should also point out that my treatment of this particular case does not in any way exhaust its possibilities for developing insights into Tobian folk psychology. Much more could be done with it, but limitations of space prevent me from exploring its full richness. One of my programmatic intentions in this chapter is to demonstrate the utility of the case study method in ethnopsychological research. For tactical reasons I have chosen to make that point by focusing on the roles of the ghost metaphor and gossip in the organization of Tobian understanding and action.

At this point I turn to the full case. To do so without first providing "background" information no doubt violates standard practice in these matters. However, those features of the case's background which are relevant to my interpretation shade so imperceptibly into the analysis that to separate the two would be even more awkward. Perhaps this is inevitable in the use of cases for ethnopsychological research, since the knowledge of persons which the case is supposed to exemplify is the very knowledge upon which people's statements and actions during the case rests. In any event, for now it is enough to know that on the evening before he ran off into the bush, Alfredo had been severely and publicly reprimanded by his girl friend's mother. This was a kind of confrontation that Tobians think can lead to the shamed person acting in a ghostly, frightening fashion.

ALFREDO'S ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

Early on the morning after his scolding, already wounded in his social persona by his girl friend's mother, Alfredo wounded his body by cutting

his right arm with his toddy knife. He called together all his children then resident on the island, and kissed each of them good-bye. Then he knelt beside the sick old woman he had been tending during what everyone feared was her final illness. She stood in the "mother" relation to him, and was his closest senior kin (actually, she was his maternal grandmother's sister's daughter).

"Mother, good-bye, I am going ahead of you. I shall be the first to die," he whispered, loud enough for at least some of his children to hear. Comatose and emaciated, she gave no sign that she had heard. Alfredo must have known that the gossip about him was sure to intensify as a result of last night's scolding and that the old woman was too sick to protect him (as a mother is supposed to) by circulating his defense in the gossip network. His social isolation was such that there was no one else he could count on for this service. He had no siblings on the island and no other close adult kin.

I am unable to say whether "I am going ahead of you" refers to an afterlife or merely to the act of dying. It is safe to assume that, as a Roman Catholic, Alfredo was well aware of his church's doctrine about suicide. In any event, since death is a necessary precondition to full ghosthood, this statement can be taken as an indirect reference to ghostliness. (I shall take up the ghost metaphor in a later section.) With rope and adze in hand, and dressed in his finest clothes, Alfredo then headed for the dense bush north of the village. As he left he is reported to have said: "Maybe I will climb to the top of my toddy tree and jump to the ground holding my coconut flower in my hand."

These words seem designed to create a powerful visual image, using symbols that have to do with masculinity and beauty. The production of coconut toddy is strongly evocative of male-linked traits of responsibility and generosity. It is the product of a dangerous twice-daily climb to the top of a coconut tree, and is either given to people whose health is thought to require it (the aged, pregnant, newly born, or ill) or is allowed to ferment into an intoxicating drink to be consumed by drinking parties. Both uses (as a kind of health food or as an excuse for a party) make it a highly valued substance, which reflects credit on its maker. Men covertly compete in its production, and the quality and quantity of a man's toddy is an important component of his social reputation. By calling attention to his standing as one of the premier toddy makers on the island, Alfredo called into play that aspect of his reputation of which he was perhaps most proud.

Flowers, however, are valued by both sexes for their beauty, their sweet smell, and their fragility. The image of Alfredo dressed in his finest clothes, leaping from his toddy tree, holding onto a flower is an idealization of masculine suicide. Whatever his intentions in making this statement, it did arouse a certain amount of sympathy, especially among the adolescents—but not much. For while they relish a skillful manipulation of such

romantic and sentimental images, Tobians also seem to me to be a remark-
ably tough-minded people who strongly resist acting on the basis of such
images. That is, although they can and do appreciate stylistic skill in the
construction of what can be called "sweet images" (especially in song),
neither their actions nor their understanding of action often grow out of
such images. There is a contrast here, I think, with the Ifaluk people who
seem more willing to be swayed by such images (Lutz, chap. 2).

Even in this public announcement, the most direct expression of sui-
cidal intent which he made, Alfredo left room for others to doubt his
intention. By prefacing his declaration with "maybe," he gave those prone
to other attributions a peg on which to hang their alternative understand-
ings. The ambiguity may also have been intended to give himself room to
maneuver. Perhaps this statement can be taken as a threat that if appropriate
actions are not taken by (unspecified) others, he would dramatically kill
himself, dying tragically like a beautiful flower. Taken together with his
farewells to his children and mother and the self-wounding, this statement
set the stage for all that followed.

Shortly thereafter, alerted by his terrified children to the fact of his
impending death, I went to the magistrate's house. One of the island's few
English speakers, this vigorous and forceful man seemed the appropriate
person to turn to. I found him sitting over his food, unaware of the news.
Near him sat is wife, and, as I told them what I had just learned, I heard
her say, referring to Alfredo, "*Yar idea ichou*" ('That's just his idea'). This
was the first formulation of one of the two competing interpretations of
Alfredo's behavior which were to surface as people tried to come to grips
with what was going on. The magistrate's wife's interpretation hinged on
the Tobian category 'idea', which can best be glossed as "scheme." *Idea* is
a loanword from English which all Tobian speakers now use in this sense.
The *idea*-based interpretation is, in certain respects, the mirror image of the
other interpretation, which hinged on the ghost metaphor. It implies that
Alfredo was somehow *using* for his own selfish ends the beliefs that led
people to respond to his behavior as though it was a genuine suicide
attempt. Readers familiar with the ethnopsychological literature from
Micronesia will recognize elements of the Trukese concept of "strong
thought" in the Tobian concept "idea" (Caughey 1977, 1980).

The magistrate responded by asking, "What can we do?" With this
statement he summed up the dilemma in which people found themselves.
Until they figured out what Alfredo was doing, they could not decide how
to act. The use of the pronoun "we" indicates that collective action is called
for. It also (in good Tobian style) broadens the locus of responsibility from
the individual to a group. Since he spoke in English he did not have to
decide whether to use the inclusive or exclusive 'we', characteristic of his

native language. The magistrate's statement also reveals that he was already thinking in terms of some sort of behavioral response. Given that his wife had just suggested that no action was necessary, perhaps the unspoken qualification of his sentence was: "if anything." In any event, he did act. He immediately went to Alfredo's house to speak with his children.

After speaking with Alfredo's children, the magistrate decided to attempt to find Alfredo and prevent his suicide. He and I went to join several small parties consisting of two and three men each which were combing the island for Alfredo. As we left the village he said to me: "I don't have a knife to take with us. . . . We need a knife to cut him down." There was a long pause between these utterances. The magistrate was making an implied reference to Alfredo's dangling corpse, and he was beginning to focus on weapons, although I did not know it at the time. Clearly, at this point he was speaking as though the suicide attempt might be genuine.

As we picked our way through the brush he showed me the wooden coconut husking stake he was carrying. It was about thirty inches long and two inches in diameter and sharpened at both ends. "I have the husking stick," he said in Tobian, "and I will use it to hit his arm if he attacks us with his knife." This statement surprised me. The fact that we might be in danger had not occurred to me until he said this. As an American, I was predisposed to think of suicidal people as being so inwardly focused that they posed no danger to anyone but themselves. The magistrate's words point to the second interpretation of Alfredo's behavior, and only make sense when considered in light of the set of unspoken assumptions organized around the ghost metaphor. A few minutes later he said: "Alfredo will throw his adze away." Here, the magistrate was adding to the sweet image constructed by Alfredo in his parting remark.

A man's adze is even more an indication of his masculine identity than his toddy knife. Reflecting its great utility as an all-purpose tool for everything from opening coconuts to building canoes, an adze is a very powerful symbol of masculinity. Long hours are spent sharpening it, and a work-bound Tobian man would no more think of leaving his house without his adze on his shoulder than an American executive would set off without a briefcase (see Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981 for a discussion of the relations between possessions and the self).

Many stories that recount a man's death include just the bit of behavior the magistrate was foretelling in this statement. Before a man drops, one of the last things he does, according to these stories, is to throw away his adze. For Tobians it is a powerful metaphor. By adding it to the set of symbols assembled by Alfredo, the magistrate considerably strengthened that sweet image. It is interesting that one of the most frequently told ghost stories relates the encounter between a man and the ghost of his father who

had died in the bush. With eerie and mysterious gestures, the ghost led his son to the adze he had thrown away just before he died.

After we began to search, I asked my companion what we should do if we found Alfredo. "If we find him we should apologize [sic] him and tell him about his kids who are big enough now to be ashamed." To understand this statement, it is necessary to understand that in the magistrate's version of English the word "apologize" was equivalent to *parimarau* 'formal, respectful talk'. I did not think that the magistrate wanted us all to tell Alfredo that we were sorry he had been shamed. After all, we weren't the ones who had scolded him. Instead, I assumed he was indicating that an appropriate response (for which we had no precedent) would be for us to begin reenfolding Alfredo into the normal social world. By offering him the stereotyped formalities of respect we would indicate his importance to us and remind him of his place in Tobian society. To remind him of his children, and the shame they would feel if he killed himself, would accomplish the same thing and also engage his pity. Lutz presents a discussion of love/pity on Ifaluk which fits well with the Tobian material (1982*b*; chap. 2). The magistrate was formulating an approach that he hoped would bring Alfredo back from his ghostly state. He was hoping, I think, that in this way he could accomplish what either the island's chief or Alfredo's mother could have accomplished by their mere presence. Unfortunately the former was not on the island and the latter was too ill to act. He wanted to bring to Alfredo's attention his relations with his children and with the rest of society, relations in which respect and pity play fundamental roles. The idea that his children would be shamed by his suicide derives from the general notion that close kin can be shamed by each others' actions.

As we pushed our way through the bush in the remotest part of the island, the magistrate said in Tobian: "If I were to kill myself I would go far in the bush to a secret place where no one would find me until I swelled up and became unrecognizable and started to stink." The image he drew here contrasted strongly with the one created by Alfredo. It was typically Tobian that the magistrate should refer to bad smells. Odors, both good and bad, are very important in Tobian culture. They appear very often in stories and songs. The odor of rotting flesh is particularly offensive. There were no flowers and no beauty in this image, only death and decay. Also implied here, I think, was an indirect censure of Alfredo's 'pridefulness' (*tahiyatatep*). After all, he had publicly announced his intention and had managed to mobilize most of the population to stop him. Maybe the magistrate was criticizing him for not being serious. Certainly he implied that suicide is ugly, and that if he were to attempt to kill himself he would do a thorough job of it, not interrupted by anyone. Switching to English, he then made the following statement: "It is bad to threaten suicide. You

say you are going to hang your neck and you don't and then someone get mad on you [sic] and you tell him that you are the really brave guy and he says you tried to hang your neck and you didn't and then you become very ashamed and go and hang your neck." This indicated a Tobian way of thinking about fearlessness and shame which I had not previously encountered. It was a statement of a general rule, drawn from understandings about feelings, behavior, and relationships. It indicated that the threat to commit suicide is a kind of holstered gun that can never be drawn except in earnest. The statement linked bravery, shame, aggression, and anger and demonstrated quite clearly why it is frightening to act in a disgraceful manner. If such behavior becomes public, the story can be used as a deadly weapon. This is one reason that interpretations of extraordinary behavior are a matter of interest to everyone, and may be a subject of negotiation and rhetorical maneuver. In the days that followed, the same sentiment was expressed by other people in a variety of ways. For those who held this view, if Alfredo's behavior was an *idea* it was not a very good one, for it left him vulnerable to the very understandings he was manipulating.

Not long after the magistrate referred to his own hypothetical suicide, we heard a whoop off to our right. We hurried toward the sound, not knowing what we would find. We discovered Alfredo sitting high above the ground on the branch of a big hardwood tree. Next to him could be seen his rope, which now had a hangman's noose tied to it.[15] Juan (an older brother of Alfredo's lover) and a couple of other young men were below him looking up. Juan quickly told us the conversation so far. Alfredo had greeted Juan by asking, "Why have you come here?" This was clearly a rhetorical question. Juan told us he had answered by saying, "Don't mind things." The absence of normal greetings in this interchange indicates the gravity and unusual nature of the situation. Juan's statement was quite vague. He simply encouraged Alfredo not to be distressed, leaving the cause of that distress undefined. Alfredo responded by asking, "How come every time two or three people sit together, they talk about me and say bad things?" Alfredo had singled out the gossip about his affair and not his public scolding as the "thing" he "minded." Juan responded with an admonition based on ideas of masculinity and social control. "Only little children mind what people say about them but you [Alfredo] are a man and should not let it stop you."

Shortly after we arrived, and without any further conversation, Alfredo climbed down out of the tree. After a brief, routine greeting he went with the group to the house of one of its members where we were soon joined by several others. Following a short period of casual conversation in which suicide was not mentioned, Alfredo left to join some people at one of the other houses.

The magistrate, Juan, and I moved to another house to talk with a group of old people who had not joined the search. Among them was the chief's wife. As we began recounting the events of the morning, she glanced over at two of Alfredo's young children who were sitting on the outskirts of the group and interjected: "It is bad to talk like this in front of his [Alfredo's] children." To some extent this woman shares in her husband's aura and she was acting as he would have done, calling our attention to the shame we would inflict on Alfredo's children by talking about his behavior.

Undaunted by this injunction the conversation continued. A young woman said: "It's too bad we didn't know where Nania [Alfredo's mistress] was this morning when he sent his son to find her because maybe he was trying to say good-bye." Everyone ignored this statement. I had not previously heard that Alfredo had tried to contact his lover before he set out. Later, after the events had become a known story, this part was always included, perhaps for the same reasons that the young woman brought it up. It directed attention to Alfredo's affair and raised the issue of "romantic love." And, it also made the events a better narrative, lending them dramatic structure. At the time, though, people were too preoccupied by the ongoing events to attend to aesthetics.

The magistrate continued the narrative. When he reached the point at which Alfredo had left us to go to that other house, he quoted him: "I am going to sit with Pedro now." The magistrate spoke these words in a grotesquely high falsetto, accompanied by a hideous grin. I did not take this remarkable exaggeration to be mockery, but rather to be an indication of Alfredo's liminal ghostliness. Next the magistrate turned to some general comments, one of which served to clarify things for me considerably: "I did not take a knife when I went looking for Alfredo. I only took a husking stick because I did not want him to think we had come to fight." In essence, when he said this the magistrate was testing to see if his behavior had been correct. The response "That is the right way to do things" was given by several of the old people (including the chief's wife). It indicated that he had chosen the appropriate behavior.

Suddenly someone from Pedro's house hurried over to tell us that Alfredo had again run off into the bush—knife, rope, and all. Again people (fewer in number this time) set out to search for him. By now I was with the group which had found him the first time and the magistrate had left, to finish his morning chores. As we walked through the bush, expecting at any moment to encounter Alfredo, one of the teenage boys with us said: "I have never seen any one kill himself before. This is my first time. I don't know what I will say to that guy." Despite all the detailed recountings of the morning's events which we had just sat through, and despite his membership in the group which had found Alfredo the first time, this person

was still uncomfortable because he did not know how to interact with a ghostly person. Given Tobian understandings about ghostly behavior, he might very well have been frightened.

This time we found Alfredo on the beach. He had come across an empty oil drum that had drifted in overnight (a very unusual happenstance). As we sat down with him we saw that he was making a crude raft by using beach vines to lash driftwood logs around the drum. Again the conversation drifted along without mentioning suicide or any other intimate topic. Instead we talked about the drum and its properties. When his raft was done, Juan told the other young man to help launch it. Alfredo then climbed aboard and with a driftwood paddle began working his way out to sea. As he slowly disappeared around a bend in the beach, the people I was with showed no inclination of going after him. When I asked if they thought that Alfredo was trying to drown himself, Juan answered: "I don't know, and I don't care."

I think Juan's leading role in searching for Alfredo can be attributed to that fact that it was his mother who had done the scolding. No matter what the provocation, she had violated a very important prohibition on direct confrontation. So, if Alfredo attacked someone, Juan's mother would bear part of the responsibility. His participation also conveyed the message that Alfredo was still a valued member of society and that his relations with other Tobians (even the family of his lover) were still relatively intact. Now, however, if Alfredo genuinely meant to kill himself by sailing out to sea (an act reminiscent of pre-Christian burial practices), he was no immediate danger to anyone around him. Out of Alfredo's hearing Juan felt free to express disinterest in his behavior. By this time he and a number of other people were quite disenchanted with Alfredo's antics. Yet later, when it had become dark, it was Juan who tried to follow him. Juan's brief foray into the night was probably the most courageous act of the day: had Alfredo wanted to kill someone, that was his best chance and everyone knew it.

By this point, it was late afternoon. We walked slowly back to the village where we learned that Alfredo had come ashore at one of the houses and was sitting with people there. He remained sitting at that house until about eight o'clock that evening, when he appropriated his son's canoe and, in the growing darkness, paddled out into the channel. By this time many of the searchers were sitting together in a house, singing along with the island's one guitar. When we learned of Alfredo's behavior, only one person, Juan, left to see what was going on. He soon returned, announcing that it was too dark to see anything.

Everyone continued their activities, making no comments on Alfredo's behavior and showing no appearance of concern. Finally, it was learned

that Alfredo had sung a song out in the channel and returned. He had then gone to sit with several of the old men who were gathered in the communal copra shed, smoking, telling stories, and singing songs. One of these old men asked him why he was doing what he was doing. He replied that there was too much gossip about him on the island. "Everyone is talking about me," he said, to which one of the old men replied, "Don't mind people talking." Once again gossip and the appropriate reaction of its subject were discussed by Alfredo and those around him. Alfredo was then told about a man long ago who, finding himself the subject of malicious gossip, made up a song attacking his accusers. The old men taught Alfredo that song and he sang it with them.

As the village began to go to sleep Alfredo finally returned home and began to do the chores that, along with his children, awaited him there. Later on the magistrate visited him. People in the vicinity of the house could hear the two of them talking about the ill-fated love affair and the intervention of the girl's mother. The one statement that was overheard was about gossip. Alfredo's complaint was loudly voiced. All the people in the area heard him say, "Whenever two or three people are gathered they talk about me."

After the magistrate left, we all heard a loud crash. Alfredo's eldest son then appeared in the door and announced that his father had cut himself in the stomach; the crash had been the noise of Alfredo's falling to the floor. We all rushed in (some muttering curses). The cut proved very shallow and no more life-threatening than the self-inflicted gash on the arm with which he had begun the day. "The cut is just a little one like the one on his arm because that guy is not brave," Juan said to me as we left Alfredo's house. He was indicating that he did not think Alfredo had ever become fearless enough to really do himself damage. In other words, he had never been shamed into ghostliness. This statement, if generally accepted, would free Juan's mother from any responsibility for either of those two cuts and from anything else Alfredo had done that day. Alfredo's stomach wound, which he cleaned and bandaged himself, was the last bit of "self-destructive" behavior in the sequence. For the next few days he kept himself hidden away, out of sight of most people most of the time.

That evening and the next day there were many intense discussions of these events. These discussions took place privately and never, so far as I know, included Alfredo. Among the more interesting of the statements I heard during this time was the following, made immediately after we had all left Alfredo's house. A teenage girl announced to the dispersing crowd, "Two big branches of Alfredo's mother's [the sick old lady] plumeria tree have fallen." Even though it turned out to be false, this item entered the story of the day's events as a minor feature. If Alfredo had indeed died that

day, I am sure that it would have played a much larger role in the story. Plumeria trees are valued for their beautiful sweet-smelling blossoms, from which people make garlands. This is an example of a Tobian pathetic fallacy—drawing as it does a connection between the imminent deaths of Alfredo and his mother and the falling of branches from her special tree. I think the young girl created it on the spot.

This, then, is the account of Alfredo's behavior and the response it generated. My analysis of it begins with a discussion of the ethnographic setting, then moves to a consideration of previous suicide cases, next to relevant aspects of Tobian folk psychology, and finally to Alfredo and the interpretation of his behavior.

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Tobi is one of the smallest and most isolated of all the inhabited islands of Micronesia. It lies in the extreme southwest corner of the old Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, 380 miles southwest of Palau.

Tobian society, language, and culture betray close affinities to (and probable historical origins in) the array of low islands which lie between Truk and Yap to the east. Such Carolinian or Trukic atolls as Puluwat, Ifaluk, Woleai, and especially Ulithi share sociocultural systems whose broad outlines are also characteristic of Tobi (Alkire 1977; Black 1977). Politically, Tobi has been incorporated into Palau throughout most of its colonial history, even though Palauan society is markedly different from Tobi in language, social organization, and culture. It is from Koror, the capital of Palau, that the government ship that forms Tobi's main link to the outside world departs three or four times a year. This ship is the only way to get on or off the island. At the time of the case discussed here it was not due for a month or more—Alfredo could not leave and people were on their own in dealing with him. Tobi's economy is still largely a subsistence system, although there is a small but growing cash component. Copra is made, sold to merchants who come down on the field trip ship, and the proceeds are used to buy store goods from those same merchants. However, little if any cash is ever involved in transactions within Tobian society, whose main system of economic distribution involves a generalized reciprocity in which foodstuffs produced by men (mostly from the sea) are exchanged for foodstuffs produced by women (mostly garden grown taro and sweet potatoes). This system, which both reflects and organizes the relations between the sexes, underlies much of Tobian sociocultural organization (Black 1981). Alfredo, as a man with neither wife, sister, nor mother,

had no one on whom he could count to provide him with woman's food. His girl friend was too young to have her own garden.

There are at the present time about 120 Tobians, approximately half of whom can be found on Tobi and the rest in Palau. Early in this century there were nearly one thousand people on the island, but a series of epidemics before and during the First World War drastically reduced their numbers (Eilers 1936). This meant Alfredo had no hope of finding someone to replace his wife.

A severe shortage of marriageable women exists on Tobi. It results from a number of factors. The demographic decline has brought the population to a level where random differences in the sex ratio of offspring no longer balance themselves out. Many more boys have been born over the last two generations than girls. Also, men remain in the pool of mate seekers to a much older age than do women. Thus, while widows tend to drop out of the search for a new mate, widowers do not. Finally, the combination of indigenous rules of clan exogamy (there are six exogamous matriclans) and the Catholic rules of incest (since the 1930s the entire population has been devoutly Roman Catholic) narrows down considerably the pool of possible mates for any one person. Thus, the fact that Alfredo had a love affair with a young single girl was a matter of great interest. Although premarital chastity is not seriously expected of anyone, and although the difference in age between the two lovers was neither unusual nor shocking, the affair did stir up substantial opposition.

Given the place of gender relations in the structuring of the Tobian sociocultural system, especially the fundamental importance of being married if one wishes to play an active political role, a proposed marriage is never the concern solely of would-be husbands and wives. Their families, and the families of any other people seeking mates, also have a stake in its outcome. And since one of the things men look for in a wife is sexual fidelity, everyone who was interested in the future marriage of Alfredo's lover was doubly interested in that affair.

Since religious doctrine rules out divorce for Tobians, the affair also angered people because it seemed to them that someone with a wife should not involve himself with a young girl when there were so many other men who could marry her. The public nature of their affair was a slap in the face for all these men and their families.

The other area of Tobian sociocultural organization which entered into the case has to do with political offices and morality. There are no police, judges, lawyers, or jails on Tobi. A traditional chief and an elected magistrate share leadership responsibility and have worked out a very subtle and complex system for dividing this task (Black 1983). The chief, a quasi-sacred figure, has primary responsibility for ensuring public morality, while the

magistrate deals with administrative chores. On the day of the attempted suicide, however, the chief was not on the island. He was staying in the Tobi village in Palau and was unavailable. Had he been on the island, I am sure that the task of formulating a public response would have fallen on his shoulders. As it was, the magistrate took the lead (or maybe I thrust it upon him) by default. He had neither the experience nor the standing to bring the episode to a halt by his mere presence, as it is likely the chief would have done. Thus, Alfredo was left to act out his drama without the kind of intervention that the chief could have provided.

PREVIOUS SUICIDES

As Alfredo ran off into the bush that morning, one of the first things that happened was the activation and dissemination of knowledge about previous cases of suicide. For on Tobi, as elsewhere, when enigmatic important events occur people turn to the past for guidance. Stories of similar occurrences are activated and people begin referring to them as they construct their response(s). Therefore, to understand the things people did and said as the attempted suicide unfolded, it is necessary to understand what they knew about previous suicides.

All Tobians share a vast amount of knowledge about past events in their society's history. Much of this knowledge is contained in widely known narratives. There are, in addition, many stories that are not generally known, but are stored away in discrete segments of the social system. Most stories of this type date from the 1930s and are known only to older people. When current events make them salient they are told and retold, becoming part of the general corpus of knowledge and thus available as precedent for behavior. Folk psychological as well as other sociocultural variables clearly play an important role in shaping these remembered events.[16]

At the time that word spread that someone was apparently going to kill himself, two earlier suicide cases were known to everyone (with the possible exception of some of the small children). In addition, two other, much earlier cases were known only to the older people. All four cases were recounted again and again over the next few hours until everyone was familiar with them.

These four cases were all that were available to the Tobians for use as precedent. Each of the two previously undiffused cases involved old men who received an official document—a court summons in one instance and a bill from a store in the other (see also Berndt [1962] who describes suicides in New Guinea resulting from the receipt of official papers). Both cases took place during the Japanese mandate.[17] In one case the old man killed

himself by hanging and in the other by drowning. The cases that were widely known happened much more recently. In one a man could not obtain his lover's parents' permission for a marriage, in the other a man feared he was losing his fiancée to a rival.

The first modern story has it that the frustrated young man wanted to commit dual suicide with his lover but that she convinced him otherwise, saying, "If we hang ourselves we will certainly die, but if we try to sail to the Philippines there is a chance we might be able to live. And if we drown that's o.k. too." Although neither of them knew how to navigate, they decided to try this plan. After secretly provisioning his sailing canoe, they slipped away one morning while everyone else was in church. The odds against a successful conclusion of this 400-mile voyage across open sea in a twenty-foot canoe were very high, which is why Tobians talk about it when they are talking about suicide. However, there is a rumor that they actually reached the Philippines, where they now can be found living in Davao City with their twelve children. The other recent case is equally ambiguous, even though there is no doubt that the central actor died by his own hand. He died of poison, consumed during a drinking party. It is possible that he meant the poison for a rival for his lover's hand. It might be that when the rival refused his invitation to the drinking party, he took the poison himself in drunken despair. Another possibility (and the "official" version of his death) is that he drank the poison by accident, unaware of its lethal qualities. Finally, I should note that I witnessed one case that in my mind was a suicide although Tobians never called it that.

A much-loved old man fell ill and died after starving himself. He had depended on his sister to provide him with taro because his wife had an allergic reaction to that very highly regarded staple. If she so much as touched it her hands would break out in a violent rash. Unfortunately for him, his sister fell ill and was unable to continue gardening for him. Rather than turn to rice as a replacement for taro, he simply stopped eating. His wife told no one of this until he died. She gave as the reason for his refusal to eat the fact that he had always eaten taro. That is, he had always been connected to some woman who had productive gardens (a prerequisite for any man who wished to play a full political and social role). He apparently simply refused to accept his demotion to the rank of those men, like Alfredo, who for one reason or another were forced to eat rice because they were not so connected.

Yet no one ever called his death a suicide.[18] Instead, they pointed to it as an example of how unreasonable pride could lead to disastrous consequences. When discussing this death, people commonly referred to several other old men. These men lived alone, but through careful management of their copra production were able to be self-sufficient, purchasing enough

rice from the ship to feed themselves. People said that the old man who died was foolish not to have imitated these people, but they did not classify his death as a suicide.

There was very little in Alfredo's case which replicated details from any of these earlier cases. Although the full version of the story of the two lovers contains a description of a search of the island, there was overall very little in those four stories which people could use to directly guide their behavior. Several people found it particularly disturbing that there were no explicit guidelines available on how one should interact with a suicidal person. A number of the statements which I heard had to do with this issue. In one a young man indicated his uncertainty; in another the magistrate tested his theory of how a suicidal person should be approached on some of the island's elders. The lack of detailed precedent is one of the things that rendered Alfredo's suicide attempt enigmatic. It meant that people were forced to extrapolate from their understandings of what people are like in order to decide how to act. However, certain of the more general features of one or more of those earlier episodes were also characteristic of Alfredo's case.

Shame, which entered very deeply into the interpretations of Alfredo's behavior, did emerge as a minor theme in discussions about the two old men from Japanese times. There was some speculation that perhaps they were ashamed to have gotten themselves into trouble with the authorities, ashamed, that is, to have been proven incompetent to deal with new social structures. However, fear of the consequences of the paper they received was given far greater causal weight.

Thwarted love, another crucial component of Alfredo's case, was central to the two more recent cases. Both of these cases were also fundamentally ambiguous; it was just not certain if they were actual suicide cases. This, of course, is also true of Alfredo's attempt. Enough precedent existed so that suicide was a sensible reading to put on his behavior. Yet, in crucial respects that behavior was unique; people found it enigmatic. One reason for this was that it was highly public. He *announced* that he was about to kill himself. All the earlier cases had much more in common with the magistrate's hypothetical suicide—they were secret and hidden away. Indeed, the full story of the double suicide (if it was suicide) tells how the two lovers secretly made provision for their voyage over a period of weeks, only telling a single trusted confidant what they were about. Thus, Alfredo was trying something new that day. Like all innovators, he used preexisting material, perhaps changing it in the process. And some of the most important materials for him that day were folk psychological in nature. Thus, before I can consider Alfredo's behavior further, I need to discuss aspects of Tobian folk psychology.

TOBIAN FOLK PSYCHOLOGY

It is important to note that the following summary of the islanders' beliefs about persons is my model of their representation of their own psychology. This is the usual procedure for an ethnopsychological investigation (see Fajans, chap. 10; Lutz, chap. 2; White, chap. 9). At certain points, however, I augment this with an analysis of Tobian psychology (cf. Gerber, chap. 4). I do this because my understanding of Tobian psychology differs on specific points from the Tobians' understanding of these matters. In other words, since some of the things they believe about themselves seem to me to be inaccurate (although perhaps highly functional), I do not find it possible to grant them perfect insight into their own psychology. For example, as the reader will see, Tobians tend to say that the focus of the fear they think is necessary for social order is an extra-island authority figure; they severely minimize or even deny the fear of gossip as a motive for conformity. I think the actual situation is quite the reverse.

To attribute false self-consciousness to the Tobians is not, of course, to demean them; it is simply to refuse to idealize them as "primitive psychologists." The same critical eye with which we look at the statements of clinicians and academic psychologists should be used to examine folk psychologies for inaccuracies, distortions, and deliberate manipulations. It only remains to be said that, taken as a whole, Tobians do seem to have developed a remarkably hardheaded and astute folk psychology that, on most points, seems quite accurate, if perhaps appearing simplistic and unsystematic to an outsider.[19]

In Tobian folk psychology 'fear' (metah), 'shame' (mah), and 'anger' (song) are often mentioned together. Briefly, people are thought to be 'afraid' of 'shame' and 'anger' both within the self and within others. Shame is said to be feared for its unpleasant connotations of exposure and vulnerability and also because it is thought to have at least the potential of leading to dangerous behavior. Anger is said to be feared because it can lead to actions that are either shame-producing or dangerous or both. Fear and shame seem to be different in that the former is thought to be a permanent feature of a good person (see Lutz, chap. 2, for a similar conception on Ifaluk) while the latter is more situational, episodic, and avoidable.

"Fear is good," I was told, and "shame is bad." By "bad," this person did not mean evil, for shame is thought to be socially necessary. However, it is thought that fear (which is socially necessary) can be overwhelmed by intense shame. In such situations people are thought likely to directly express forbidden rage. Thus, for Tobians, fear, shame, and anger form a "functional cluster," that is, a set of constructs which ethnotheory holds to be closely interrelated on the basis of mutual behavioral implications. This

notion is similar to Poole's discussion of the relations between shame and anger among the Bimin-Kuskusmin (chap. 6). In Tobian explanations of situations of deviance and/or conflict, fear, anger, and shame often appear together. As a functional cluster these notions serve to interpret and guide behavior, and thus assume special importance in the analysis of the directive function of Tobian folk psychology.

In her work, analyzing a set of Ifaluk emotion terms, many of which are cognate with Tobian terms (including the three discussed here), Lutz (1982*b*; chap. 2) presents five clusters. These clusters were generated by informants' judgments about semantic similarity. She calls the results of her research a "kind of average cognitive map" of Ifaluk emotion terms (1982*b*:118). The kind of operation the Ifaluk people were asked to perform involved judging which emotions were most similar in meaning. In contrast, the kind of data I am presenting concerns people's understandings of which emotions go together in interpretations of behavioral processes.[20] One important place in which notions of fear, shame, and anger cluster together is in understandings about suicide, a topic I shall return to in a later section of this chapter.

An important point to be made in an analysis of Alfredo's behavior, and the response to it, is that his motives in undertaking that extended, convoluted and finally irksome set of actions are a mystery (for us, as well as for his fellow Tobians). In a number of statements he offered hints about why he was doing what he was doing, but whether or not these statements should be taken at face value is another question. It is also a question that lies at the heart of the disagreement over what he was doing. However, it is not the kind of question often addressed by Tobians.

Ordinarily, Tobians do not hinge their public explanation of actions, problematic or otherwise, on motivations. Even in private conversation people are unlikely to speculate about such matters. They are much more likely to attend to the situation out of which behavior emerges, as well as its outcomes, both for interpersonal relationships and for possible goals of the actor. Therefore, it is difficult to speak of the Tobian attitude toward questions of motivation in any but negative terms. Tobians seem to believe that people are at any time capable of acting in any fashion, no matter how wrong, bad, or socially disvalued [*(e) tab*] it may be. From this it follows that any attention to the precipitating events or proximate causes of such behavior is fruitless, since virtually anything, no matter how small, can serve such a purpose. Instead, Tobian understandings of their own behavior, like many other elements of their folk psychology, are largely organized around their notions of 'anger', 'shame', and 'fear'. These are emotional states that receive the most social attention; and it is their organization, control, and expression that largely structure Tobian folk psychology.

Tobian everyday social life is pleasant in the extreme. People are highly skilled at constructing pleasant and rewarding interactions out of which can come the cooperative behavior on which life on the island, as it is presently constituted, depends. This pleasant tone is the product of strict adherence to the social norm that demands it while prohibiting direct expressions of hostility. It also depends, in this extremely small-scale society, on the intimate knowledge available to each person about the biography and personal attributes (especially those which are best called "foibles") of every other person. The first of these factors (adherence to norms of solidarity) involves the use of something very like "will" as well as various culturally constituted defense mechanisms. The second factor (knowledge of persons) is directly linked to the reservation of characterological assessments for those who move beyond the bounds of socially acceptable behavior. It is important to point out that the gentle and sweet tenor of everyday life which the Tobians value so highly, and which makes their island such an extremely attractive place for the visitor, is (as the Tobians recognize themselves) a cultural artifact, generated at least in part by conscious effort. It requires conscious effort because many of the people with whom a Tobian so pleasantly interacts during the course of his or her day are opponents, and some are even bitter enemies.

There exists on Tobi a large corpus of conflicts and disputes which divides and subdivides the population so finely that ultimately almost every person is opposed to almost everyone else. At the same time, cutting across all these divisions is an equally dense network of alliances which serves ultimately to tie almost every person to almost everyone else. Thus, each person is either directly or indirectly involved in so many crosscutting disputes that almost everyone on the island is simultaneously ally and opponent. These disputes, many of which have already spanned several generations and show no signs of dissipating, are generally organized around disputed resources, typically land, political offices, and marriages. The disputes and divisions are associated with a good deal of interpersonal hostility and other negative feelings, many of which arise from the inevitable frictions of a life lived in constant and inescapable intimacy. These feelings are crucial in Tobian folk psychology, and, in the Tobian view of things, their management is the main issue of social life. A number of mechanisms have been worked out to prevent these negative feelings from disrupting social life (see Black 1983 for a discussion of some of the more important of these). Most of the mechanisms for managing negative emotions are formal strategies of talk and interaction which combine with normative rules, such as those prohibiting public shaming and public confrontation, to produce a pleasant everyday atmosphere. Tobi contrasts markedly with both Hawaii (Ito, chap. 8) and Santa Isabel (White, chap. 9)

in that there are no highly elaborated formal procedures such as the *ho'oponopono* of the former or the "disentangling" meetings of the latter for dealing with interpersonal hostility and conflict.[21] Yet the lack of formal procedures does not seem to prevent Tobians from minimizing overt conflict. Notwithstanding the success with which they live up to their ideals of interaction, however, Tobians perceive in themselves and in others a powerful hostility. Associated with this hostility is fear, which is both felt and used by the Tobians to explain why it is that people do not express that hostility directly.

Briefly put, Tobian wisdom has it that only fear keeps people from acting on their hostile impulses. This should not be taken as indicating that Tobians are an especially timid people, for they are not. It is just that they make fear the central element in their explanation of what social science has come to call social control. In this case it means the achievement of conformity to that basic norm of their society which prohibits the direct expression of hostility and which is, as I have said, the obverse of pleasant and cooperative interactions. The jokes, smiles, and mutual cooperation so characteristic of Tobian interactions are directly related to the ban on aggressive behavior. And when people disrupt the smooth, pleasant tone of everyday life, as Alfredo did with his suicide attempt, questions of fear and hostility (never very far removed) come to the fore.

Since it is fear, Tobians say, that prevents them from violating the prohibition on aggression, when someone acts aggressively or is thought to be likely to act aggressively in the near future, the focus of public discussion, and occasional public action, is the re-creation of fear in that person. The assumption seems to be that the reason a person has become fearless (what English speakers call "brave") is quite irrelevant and, given the widespread hostility assumed to exist, quite unknowable. Instead, attention is directed to the social relations endangered by the fearless one and to the task of protecting them from disruption—a task that involves the reimposition of a fear-based self-control.

Tobian common sense has it that the disputes that divide them from one another are inextricably linked one to another. A direct confrontation between two or more people is feared and sharply sanctioned precisely because people think that when such confrontations take place the whole fabric of social life is threatened by an eruption of all the disputes. Furthermore, during such a confrontation someone is likely to be badly shamed. Everyone commands everyone else's biography, and it is during the heat of public confrontation that a person is likely to shout out some extremely damaging bit of information about someone else, thus driving them beyond fear into a kind of liminal state in which anger might be directly, even physically, expressed. The Tobians think of this state as one in which a person has become a ghost.

GHOSTS AND GHOSTLINESS

'Ghosts' (*yarus*) are very important social actors on Tobi. As a cultural construct these malevolent supernatural beings are probably a post-Christian remnant of a much larger class of beings which once included such benevolent supernatural figures as ancestral spirits, lineage and clan ghosts, localized nature spirits, anthropomorphized and spiritually powerful birds, turtles, whales, and sharks, as well as a host of remote creator beings. Variants of such a religious system were widespread within the Western Carolines before the coming of Christianity and I have no doubt that Tobian religion fell well within that pattern.[22]

Since the conversion of the Tobians from their ancestral religion to Roman Catholicism, ghosts have maintained an uneasy coexistence with the Christian pantheon of saints, the Blessed Virgin and the Trinity. Like the humans on the island, they have lost much of their autonomy to powerful aliens. It was pointed out to me more than a few times that "now that we are Christian, the ghosts are not so powerful anymore." Tobians believe (perhaps "hope" is a more accurate verb) that Christian ritual protects their island and their society from the depredations of ghosts.

The impression of their home one gets from Tobians is that of an island infested by potentially highly dangerous evil ghosts. These beings are thought to have corporeal reality (eerie and horrible though it is) and to live in the sea off the reef edge. From there they come up onto the island, mostly at night and mostly to the cemetery. Occasionally they roam the entire length of the island and even can be encountered within the village. Most of them are unnamed and only vaguely defined. However, several of them are thought to be deceased islanders whose personal histories are known to everyone. The appearance of these "familiar" ghosts can be described in some detail. There is one, for example, whose presence is announced by the horrible smell of his decaying flesh. Another can be detected by the glowing tips of the three or more cigarettes that hang down from his mouth, ten feet above the ground (see Black n.d. for an analysis of this ghost). An encounter with either of these two beings, or with any other ghost, is extraordinarily terrifying for a Tobian. Although people are quite vague about the actual harm that may result from such an encounter, there is no doubt that it is one of the most frightening experiences of a lifetime.

I have seen self-confident, skillful people, ordinarily quite fearless in the face of physical dangers, cowering behind barred doors, reduced to a panicked and trembling state by a ghost encounter. And, as word of an encounter spread, I have watched the village transformed from a place of laughter and incessant talk to one of silent fear: an abrupt and dismal pall

descends, children are scooped up, and everyone retreats indoors. There they sit transfixed and whispering until the manifestation ends.

The image of the ghost, a bizarre and terrifying figure which threatens anyone it encounters, well describes Alfredo on the day he ran away to the bush. The difference was that he could be dealt with, while ghosts must simply be endured. Also, the threat he represented was very specific, coded as it was in a script about shame and suicide which I shall take up shortly. Those who chose to act did so on the basis of that script, and shaped their interactions with Alfredo accordingly. In doing so, they acted to bring him back from ghostliness, to make him more ordinary.

From an ethnopsychological perspective, Tobian ghost beliefs are quite interesting. In common with many people who live in small, close-knit communities, Tobians label actions much more than they label persons (see, e.g., Shweder and Bourne 1982; Selby 1974). Perhaps because they understand one another well enough to know what complex, contradictory, and situationally dependent people their fellow islanders are, or perhaps for some other reason, Tobians do not talk extensively about "personality" or "character." Some Tobians have the reputation of being more or less intelligent (i.e., skilled at one of the various styles of learning or cognition which Tobians recognize), while others are thought to be perhaps more or less hardworking or good-humored, but the main focus of the folk psychology is on the analysis and labeling of behavior. This gives Tobian discussion of persons a concrete and highly specific character that fits neatly with the disinclination to engage in motivational analysis discussed earlier. Ordinarily, the closest Tobians come to such statements as "He or she is a lazy (stingy, good-natured, etc.) person" is to say that someone's behavioral pattern is 'just his or her way' (*fisirirah*). By this they mean some personal habit or custom or trait or idiosyncracy—in short, what I have called a "foible." For example, one man always insisted on speaking as pure a Tobian language as he could manage. He purged his speech of everything he could identify as a borrowing and even went so far as to coin neologisms for foreign words for which there were no Tobian equivalents. Another man made it his habit to rehearse arguments aloud, alone in the bush. Yet another introduced a great deal of Japanese into his speech and even strode about at what he and others imagined to be a brisk Japanese pace, a pace that contrasted markedly with the ordinary Tobian saunter. People would say about these and other foibles: "that is just his way." These foibles were neither morally evaluated nor taken as a reflection of some deeper, truer inner self. They were simply accepted as interesting attributes of the behavior of certain people. The same formulation was given and the same stance taken toward almost all other enduring behavioral tendencies—what are known in academic psychology as personality traits.

The only Tobian social actors whose reputations rest on beliefs about their essential natures are the supernaturals—the ghosts, the missionary who converted them, God, Jesus Christ, Mary. The ghosts are evil, the rest are good. It is important to note that much less social attention is given to the good supernaturals than to the evil ones. People are familiar (to various degrees) with Roman Catholic dogma, and can, if necessary, explain a good deal of it, including those parts about the beneficence of the Creator and His Son. Yet they do not ordinarily give these beings much attention. Ghosts, however, form an extremely important topic of attention. Of course, ghosts can also be encountered in daily life, while the benevolent supernaturals remain aloof from the island and its people.

Lutz (chap. 2) has noted that in the language of Ifaluk there is a much richer vocabulary for describing negative emotions than there is for describing positive ones. These findings indicate that Tobians are not alone in finding evil more compelling to think about than goodness. I think it is fitting to speculate here that, for the Tobians at any rate, this may be because the negative emotions felt in the self and attributed to others are highly problematic because of the threat they pose to social harmony and to individual survival. It is something in the nature of an existential tragedy for the Tobians that the social cooperation and good humor which are by far the normal state of social relations in their community are seen by them to be threatened by evil. The exigencies of their situation force them to be conscious of, and extremely sensitive toward, what their common sense tells them to be the very real possibility of evil, calamity, and disaster. Here lies the framework for their view of ghosts and 'ghostly' behavior.

Tobian ghosts are symbols of evil. Onto them is loaded the weight of all those features of their situation which people feel threaten them. As a symbolic and cognitive construct, the Tobian concept *yarus* can best be approached as organized along the lines of "prototypes" described by Rosch (1975). At the center of the web of meaning coded by the concept *yarus* are those supernatural, corporeal beings, who are regarded as hostile and ill-intentioned actors, embodying some of the most negative emotions in Tobian folk psychology. In psychodynamic language, then, ghosts represent projections of just those aspects of Tobian affective experience which are most threatening (cf. Spiro 1952).

As we move away from the center we encounter other beings, such as angels, fairies, and dwarfs, who have entered the Tobian religious world from such diverse sources as Catholic sermons and American comic book renditions of European folktales. Unlike the prototypical ghosts, these 'ghosts' are not the subject of intense emotional and intellectual concern. Instead they appear in stories and legends (some borrowed and some invented) as minor characters, able to engage in feats of supernatural ability

such as size changing and flight. Finally, as we move out from the core meaning, we reach the point where the use of the term *yarus* becomes more completely a metaphor. As a metaphor it is a member of a small class of related items, all used to negatively label action and, in extreme cases, persons. All the items within this class constitute "moral benchmarks" (following Edelman 1977:29), which are used to establish and measure the degree to which behaviors (and in extreme cases, personhood) fall within socially acceptable boundaries. Ghosts are the most important benchmarks. The use of this metaphor evokes their mindless evil, unconstrained by the moral code that binds ordinary Tobians (just as their physical appearance and powers are unbound by the rules of ordinary existence). Other negative benchmarks include 'person of the jungle' (*manni fariworuwor*), 'Papuan' (*manni Papua*), 'Palauan' (*manni Panou*), and 'person of the remote past' (*manni mosuwe*).[23]

To call someone a 'person of the jungle' is to draw attention to their refusal to take part in communal activities, such as dances and cooperative work. To call someone a Papuan is to invoke Tobian conceptions of the cannibalistic habits and magical powers of the people who live in Papua New Guinea and its offshore islands, with whom the Tobians apparently have had some minimal contact over the years. A person who is said to be acting like a Papuan is usually someone whose behavior indicates incomplete socialization. On the few occasions when I witnessed violence (drunken and ineffectual as it was), the person engaging in it was uniformly said to be acting "like a Papuan." In addition to the prohibition on violence, stinginess and hoarding are also strongly condemned and their appearance avoided. A slanderous accusation of such behavior can be made by saying that someone is acting like a Palauan. Such an accusation builds on the notion of Palauans as a money-hungry and stingy people. Finally there is the phrase 'person of the remote past'. This is used if someone demonstrates less than complete competence in any of the new, borrowed social or technological processes that make Tobian culture a neo-Micronesian way of life rather than a completely traditional mode of existence.

These terms form a corpus of derogatory comments which can be made about someone's behavior. They are only rarely, if ever, used in face-to-face encounters, but they do appear in third party discussions (gossip) with some frequency. I need to restate here that it is not the case that these are used as fixed and enduring labels for what are seen to be personality traits. Rather, they are used to characterize particular behaviors: stingy, violent, antisocial, or ignorant, as the case may be. Even when they are used to refer to the person instead of to his or her behavior (as in "He is a Papuan," rather than "He is acting like a Papuan"), this is only a kind of shorthand for the longer form and must be understood as such. Only such

an understanding can encompass the fact that a person referred to as a Papuan, or Palauan, or man of the jungle on one day, will be called something quite different on the next. Such examples are easy to find because the use of such terms is a mechanism of social control, and as a person learns that his behavior has been so criticized, he or she will act to rectify it, thus eliciting another and more positive evaluation from his or her audience (which in most cases is the entire population of the island).

The most profound of all such metaphors is that of the ghost. It may represent all the negative traits encoded in the others as well as several that are not. To apply it to someone implies that they have put themselves outside the ordinary moral system that makes life not only possible but orderly and meaningful as well. And in a vague and ill-defined way, it is more than a metaphor, for there comes a point when a person can be said to be a ghost in more than just a metaphorical sense. This occurs when, under the pressure of intense shame or for some other reason, a person is thought to have become fearless enough to be capable of violating any of the fundamental norms that structure and give meaning to life. They are then said to have become a ghost. This is a statement about the inner nature of such a person, and it is a statement that that inner nature is evil, danger-ous, powerful, and malignant. The public scolding given to Alfredo was precisely the kind of event which in many a story of past disasters led "human ghosts" (the term is mine) to become so fearless that they were a threat to everyone. And it was for that reason—the fear that Alfredo had become a ghost—that people acted to intervene in his suicide. Those who did not so act, but kept themselves aloof from the drama, did so not because they rejected that set of ideas about shame, fear, rage, and ghostliness but because they did not think Alfredo had really entered that state: they did not think of him as a ghost. However, this latter group of people had no equivalent metaphor to use in formulating their opinion.

Following Fajans (chap. 10) and Kirkpatrick (chap. 3), and using a linguistic model, we can say that ordinary behavior is unmarked in Tobian culture. The fearful, moral, cooperative, sharing (in short, 'good') behavior that is expected of everyone, and achieved most of the time, is not generally marked off from other kinds of behavior by a linguistic coding. Instead it is bounded and defined largely through contrast with the negative traits that are coded in the terms and metaphors standing for negative behaviors.

No one was of the opinion that Alfredo's actions were ordinary and usual ways of behaving. Those who rejected ghostliness as an explanation or at least a description for what was going on turned to the other major way of describing extraordinary, unusual, and cryptic behavior. They at-tributed it to what Tobians call an "idea." The cultural construct "idea" or 'scheme' plays an important role in Tobian understanding of behavior

and social life. This English-derived word is used to describe what might be better called 'plans' or 'schemes'. The Tobian notion "idea" is used by one and all to describe the way people can go about achieving desired ends. I shall leave the interpretation of Alfredo's suicide attempt as *idea* behavior unexamined except to note that the major differences between it and the 'ghost' interpretation involved the degree of self-control which each attributed to Alfredo as well as the degree of goal directedness in his behavior.

Certain behaviors and statements that occurred during the suicide attempt made it evident that the ghost metaphor served a directive function in the interpretation of Alfredo's behavior. The implied use of the ghost metaphor drew on a number of clues in his actions and words for its formulation in this case. There were several initial features of the case which made the fear, shame, anger cluster salient for interpretation and brought the ghost metaphor into play. In the discussion after the episode, the magistrate at one point said: "When he [Alfredo] was scolded by Nania's mother he was really ashamed." This was just the kind of confrontation around which many stories of previous ghostly behavior are organized. Then there was that self-inflicted cut in the arm.

Self-mutilation, or indeed the intentional wounding of anyone, self or not, never occurs on Tobi. They have given up their ancient customs of tattooing and ear piercing, which were the sole previous contexts in which the cutting of the skin's surface was acceptable. Today, except for the occasional medicinal injection, people simply do not do such things. There is a very strict prohibition on using a sharp instrument in fighting. Spears, knives, axes, and adzes are all supposed to be reversed if they are used in either attack or defense. In the one such incident I witnessed, this did indeed happen. Therefore, when Alfredo turned his knife on himself he was acting in a highly unusual fashion. It was frightening because, given the beliefs about shame, no one knew if he would turn his knife on someone else.

The fact that Alfredo wore his finest clothes also lent credence to the ghost interpretation. They were the clothes he wore on Sundays to the regular church services. Such clothes are never worn during "regular time" and they could be taken as evidence that he had gone into a liminal, ghostly state. Finally, there was Alfredo's farewell to his children.

That evening one of the men who had been most active in the day's searches said to me: "I never believed Alfredo was fearless enough to kill himself, but after his son told me that this was the first time his father had called all his children together, told them good-bye and kissed them, I thought there might be a chance." Apparently this person thought that only a truly ghostly person would do such a thing. Farewells from dying persons to their close kin are an important cultural pattern on Tobi, for it is during these last moments that people dispose of their property. People speak of

these times as extremely painful occasions and the speaker seemed to be saying that only someone so shamed as to be beyond either fear or pity would inflict such pain on his children. Those who held to the notion that he was simply engaged in some devious scheme thought that the farewell to his children was an extraordinarily callous act. At any rate, the scolding, the self-wounding, the fine clothes, and farewell were, taken together, enough to force at least some people to act as though they thought he was suicidal. That is, they acted as though they thought he had been so badly shamed he was no longer afraid and had become fearless enough to do any ghostly act. This meant they had to act. They were led to certain actions by the directive force of that element of their folk psychology which I have labeled the ghost metaphor. The next question is, in what ways were their actions shaped by that metaphor?

An examination of statements and actions that occurred during the searches for Alfredo indicates that the dread possibility of violence was never far from the searchers' minds. The magistrate's comment about using his husking stick to defend us is a direct expression of this fear. Later on he checked his reaction with the local experts—the old people. They agreed that, since a person in Alfredo's ghostly state is potentially very dangerous, one should approach him in a nonthreatening manner but prepared for self-defense. Thus, the magistrate carried no knife (even though one might be needed for cutting down the suicide), but instead carried a husking stick. Like the magistrate, all the searchers were caught in the frightening position of having to act—one cannot simply let a ghostly person run about in the bush, for you never know when he might spring out and attack. The beliefs about shame ensured that it could not be assumed that Alfredo would either kill himself or calm down. Instead he had to be brought out of that liminal, fearless ghostly state to which intense shame had driven him. To do that he was reminded of his position within society as a father with numerous dependents. It seems that for Tobians, as for the people of New Caledonia described by Leenhardt (1979), one's ordinary personhood is embedded within a set of relations with important others, and the recalling of an individual from liminal otherness (on Tobi, 'ghostliness') back to ordinary personhood is accomplished by making those relations explicit. Specifically, he was reminded that his suicide would cause his children shame. Thus, even though he may have reached his limit of excessive shame, his children (with whom he was assumed to share a sense of personhood) had not. Alfredo was also encouraged to feel that his relations with other people in his society, even the family of his lover, were still intact. Finally, he was reminded a number of times that gossip is not something which bothers people, especially men. Every time he "explained" himself after that initial dramatic flight into the bush, he talked about gossip, and each time he did

he was told to ignore it. This is an interesting point and brings us to what I think is one of the major weaknesses in Tobian folk psychology.

GOSSIP AND FEAR

Culturally received wisdom has it that gossip (*hamangungu:* lit., whispering) is of no importance to adults; it is not something to be concerned about and certainly nothing to be afraid of. In this it contrasts strongly with public shaming. The hidden talk of people with nothing better to do than to comment on other people's behavior should simply be ignored. This holds especially true for men. Their stance as autonomous, responsible people, strong and independent, requires them to claim that gossip is of no importance to them. In my view (and Alfredo's case is one of the things that has led me to take it) that claim involves a certain amount of denial.

Tobians assert that fear is important in keeping people from engaging in prohibited behaviors. When asked what it is that people are afraid of, they mention extra-island authority figures with the power to punish them. They talk about Palauan policemen, the American and Palauan priests, and the Palauan district administrator. They also mention the long-dead missionary who converted them and who they believe will be their judge after death. However, the odds against any of these mortals actually intervening in Tobian affairs are very slim. In fact, a highly efficient set of mechanisms has been worked out to prevent even those who are most intimately involved in Tobian affairs (the priests) from learning that which people do not want them to know. So the threat that these authority figures pose to anyone violating norms is not very great, and the fear of their punishment is quite unrealistic. As far as I can judge, though, for some people at least it is quite real. I once saw an elderly woman hiding in the bush on ship day while a bored-looking Palauan policeman fruitlessly investigated a complaint, which she had made in anger and then been unable to retract, that someone had stolen her cooking pot. She was hiding because she was terrified that she would actually have to speak to this awesome personage. She was genuinely afraid, I think, but the reality of the situation was that she did not have any "objective" reason to fear that external figure of authority.

Fear is a complex issue in Tobian psychology, both in the islanders' understandings of themselves and in my understanding of them. A list of that which the Tobians regard as reasonable to fear would include extra-island authority figures, ghosts, anger (both in one's self and in others), and shame. There are interesting connections between the items on this list. When shame becomes too intense it can lead people to directly express their

anger. Such people are then said to be acting like ghosts. Ghosts, in turn, straddle the boundary between extra-island authority figures and sources of fear which are endogenous to the island. They are of the island and not of it at the same time.

For a Tobian, it is both reasonable and moral to fear all these things. Gossip, however, is regarded as trivial. The ethos demands this. Yet, regardless of this stance, I do not think it can be denied that gossip is, in fact, one of the major loci of fear. It is for this reason that it can play such an important role in social conformity.

"How come every time two or three people sit together, they talk about me and say bad things?" Alfredo's plaintive question points toward the pain that a person feels when his reputation is continually being degraded by gossip. It is not difficult to understand why, in such a tightly bound society, gossip should be feared. After all, "whispering" is, in effect, the continual monitoring and reappraisal of persons. And, in a society like Tobi, in which so much of the self is located in relationships, negative gossip may be especially threatening.[24]

"Only little children mind what people say about them, but you are a man and should not let it stop you." When Juan responded to Alfredo's complaint with this admonition he was giving expression to an important component of the island's ethos. Gossip, in this view of things, is not an appropriate subject of adult fear. It should simply be ignored; one should refuse to allow oneself to be bothered by it. Yet Alfredo continued to mention gossip throughout the day. Even after the old men in the copra house taught him an appropriate response to gossip, he returned to it again while speaking with the magistrate.

By continually indicating that it was gossip which had driven him to act in such a bizarre and potentially self-destructive way, Alfredo was doing two things. He was pointing to a fact of life which other adults preferred to ignore, and he was ignoring what many assumed to be the "real" reason for this behavior. That is, by addressing himself to gossip whenever he was questioned about what was going on, he chose not to talk about his public scolding. This is important because the public scolding fit much better into Tobian ideas about suicide than did gossip.

SUICIDE AND TOBIAN FOLK PSYCHOLOGY

Suicide has proven to be one of the most interesting yet recalcitrant issues confronting social analysis, and one particularly relevant to contemporary Micronesia (Rubinstein 1983). One approach after another has cut (and

sometimes broken) its teeth on this topic, beginning in the modern era with Durkheim's (1950) classic study and continuing right up through recent work in ethnomethodology and sociobiology.[25] What, then, can ethnopsychology bring to the study of suicide? Conversely, what benefits can the study of suicide offer ethnopsychology?

The outlines of answers to these questions emerge from the realization that in a suicide the actor acts upon his or her person in a particularly direct and often brutal fashion. Since the person acted upon is at least in part a cultural construct, the indigenous understanding of the person which is at the center of the local folk psychology must play an important role in the suicide. Ethnopsychological investigations can help to define (more precisely than other orientations perhaps) just what is being destroyed (or at least transformed) in an act of self-destruction. And by focusing on suicide, an act in which concepts of the person are inevitably highly salient, the ethnopsychologist is focusing on an act that necessarily involves crucial components of folk psychology. If dreams are the royal road to the unconscious, then suicide is a high road to folk psychology. Turning now to Tobian understandings about suicide, let us see how they help to make sense of the case.

Tobian understandings about suicide form a kind of social "script" (similar to, but much more complicated than, those described by Schank and Abelson 1977).[26] In this script, the fear, anger, shame cluster is linked to violence, withdrawal, and suicide. The episodic structure of these understandings has an important influence on how Tobians interpret and react to disorder and deviance, including Alfredo's suicide attempt.

Tobians say that it is vitally important to avoid any confrontation in which one or more persons will be badly shamed. Were this to happen, the shamed person would be likely to act in a ghostly fashion. He or she might (1) withdraw from the village and live in the bush, (2) take up a knife and run through the village killing everyone in the way, or (3) commit suicide. Any one of these outcomes—withdrawal, murder, or suicide—would be a social disaster.

The Tobian demographic situation is so extreme that the subtraction of the labor of any of the adults (a category that already includes people who in more populous times would be classified as either too young or too old to be productive) would make life very difficult, if not impossible, for the remainder. Therefore, even the most benign of the three outcomes, flight to the bush, could be a death blow to Tobian society. And since everyone knows that in the past badly shamed people have not simply retreated to the bush but instead have gone to Palau with their families, where they take no more part in Tobian affairs, the threat of losing a

relatively large number of people is, perhaps, what is really meant when people talk about flight to the bush. There is more to it than that, however, for the bush is where ghosts are encountered.

The commonsense understanding that an intensely shamed individual might go on a rampage, stabbing whomever they come in contact with, is also related to the ghost metaphor. Like withdrawal, it is based, to some extent at least, on experience. In the early 1960s a man stabbed and killed the man who had refused to allow him to marry his daughter. The narrative of this event tells of an afternoon of terror when the killer stalked back and forth through the village, screaming curses and threats until he was finally talked into giving up the toddy knife with which he had done the killing. He was kept isolated from the rest of the population until the next field trip. He was then taken to Palau by the policeman on that ship, tried, convicted, and sentenced to Palau's rather relaxed jail, from which he was recently released. In addition to the searing memory of the horror of that afternoon, this killing also left an important imprint on daily life. It eliminated two of the most productive and cooperative adult men from the Tobian social system. And, although there is no way to be sure about this, a number of other case narratives indicate that people have been even more careful not to publicly shame one another since that incident.

Finally, there is the third alternative to intense shame: suicide. It seems clear that Alfredo's behavior was viewed by the Tobians, *and must be viewed by us,* as being importantly related to shame, and thus to the social script described above. This is because on the prior evening Alfredo had been publicly and severely scolded by his lover's mother. She had berated him in front of a large number of people and had forbidden her daughter to see him again.

"I am the mother of that girl and you cannot treat her like a chicken or a pig that just belongs to you. I am her mother. Why do you act this way?" This statement was widely seen as the precipitating event that led to Alfredo's disturbing behavior. He was publicly accused by a respected older woman of violating the fundamental norm that demands that people respect one another's personhood. Such respect is not required for such stereotyped nonhumans as chickens and pigs. By referring to them, she was drawing on the distinction between nature and society which structures Tobian (and perhaps all) culture. (See Seeger 1981 for a clear statement of why it makes sense to conceptualize the contrast as between nature and society rather than the more commonly used nature/culture opposition.)

A very important dimension of personhood on Tobi is the place of the individual in the network of hierarchical, dyadic, and interconnected social relations which I call the "in-charge complex" (Black 1982).[27] The girl's mother accused Alfredo of acting in a very antisocial fashion by treating

his lover as though she was not embedded in this system, of acting as though the mother-daughter tie was of no importance. In fact, the phrase "that just belongs to you" could also be translated as "your ward and yours alone." Such an interpretation stresses the insult to the mother whose relation with the girl he has ignored. To publicly accuse someone of acting in this fashion, to call everyone's attention to this insult, is to do a number of things. It places the dispute within the public arena—a major escalation. It accuses Alfredo of social incompetence or worse—bringing into play the whole shame, anger, fear cluster. And of course it insults him, wounding his personhood by pointing out a flaw in his social persona. It should be noted that prior to this confrontation everyone knew of the affair, but this was the first time it had entered public discourse.

Each of the two competing interpretations of Alfredo's actions drew on the shame script. Those who 'believed' him and accepted the suicide attempt as genuine, felt they had to act even though they were badly frightened. This was because (a) they did not want him to die, and (b) they were convinced that he had become a 'ghost'. That is, they believed that under the impetus of the intense shame of having been publicly scolded he had become so fearless that suicide was only one of his alternatives, the others being withdrawal or lethal violence. The others, those who did not 'believe' him, assumed that he was trying to achieve selfish ends by manipulating society through the use of the beliefs about shame, anger, and fear coded in that bit of conventional wisdom which holds that an intensely shamed person will act in a ghostly fashion.

Part of the reason for the inability to reach consensus about what was going on and thus on how to act arose from widespread previous knowledge about Alfredo. There are two important points to make here. First, Alfredo had been known to act in a rather erratic fashion at times. Given to fainting and known to be quite excitable, he was also one of the island's most frequent ghost sighters. Very significantly for Tobians, he had rather strange eating habits. Second, he had also been known to attempt a leading role in almost every exciting event that occurred. No matter what the occasion—a marital argument, a turtle chase, the sighting of a ship, the approach of a bad storm, a public meeting—one could count on Alfredo not only to be there but to be highly visible as well. The self which Alfredo tried to establish was one of a competent, powerful adult man. He tried too hard, I think, and the Alfredo who emerged in the gossip about him even before his affair was a bit of a fool. Therefore, on that morning in 1972, when word spread that he had cut himself, kissed his children goodbye, and run off into the bush, it was easy for some of his fellows to denigrate the whole thing as "just his (rather foolish) scheme."

If it had not been Alfredo, but someone without his history of erratic

and foolish behavior, I do not think people would have been so ready to discount the seriousness of the situation and there would have been much more unanimity about what was going on. Yet knowledge of Alfredo's past was not the only, or even the major, reason for the confused social reaction to Alfredo's behavior. More important by far was the fact that in certain crucial respects Alfredo was acting in a new way. I think it fair to speculate that this was a major element in the calculations of those people who decided that he had not become "brave enough" to kill himself.

In the discussion so far I have refrained from imposing my interpretation of Alfredo's behavior on the case. This chapter has now reached the point at which this is necessary in order to understand his behavior as an attempt at cultural innovation.

THE MEANING OF ALFREDO'S BEHAVIOR

The method I have adopted here (the search for directive functions of folk psychology through an empathy-based case analysis) has led to a more thorough understanding of the relations between Tobian knowledge of persons and Tobian action. This, in turn, has forced me to attend to the ways in which Alfredo's behavior was unique. By focusing on the directive functions of Tobian folk psychology as revealed in that enigmatic and important series of events which was Alfredo's case, I (like the Tobians) was led to a consideration of both previous suicide cases and the shame script. And it is in the ways in which Alfredo's behavior differed from both of these that we can see, I think, a new way of suicide (or at least suicide attempt) and, perhaps, a new way of thinking about ghosts.

I believe that (whether he consciously intended it or not) Alfredo was offering a new script to his society. When compared to the shame script, it is a script that has to do with gossip rather than shame, love rather than anger, and the reintegration of the person into society rather than personal destruction. As I have already demonstrated, gossip is a fact of social life rather inadequately dealt with in Tobian folk psychology. Alfredo brought this inadequacy to everyone's attention. The two most recent suicides in the corpus of culturally coded cases both revolved around thwarted love relationships. Alfredo expanded on that precedent. And instead of privately doing away with himself, as was true of all previous suicides, he acted in such a public fashion that he coerced the entire community into thinking about him and his problems, and a significant proportion of that community into spending the entire day revalidating his worth, bringing him back from ghostliness.

Like all cultural innovators, Alfredo drew upon preexisting ideas and understandings to construct his new behavior. The shame script, with its highly directive functions, and the two most recent suicides, especially the flight of the two lovers, were probably most important here. His attempt to create a sweet image and his two abortive trips out to sea make most sense when seen in the light of those two "romantic" cases. At least some of his fellow Tobians responded in kind. The two young women who talked about his attempt to bid his lover farewell and the falling branches of his mother's tree seemed caught up in this way of construing his behavior.

The shame script enabled Alfredo to mobilize people. They were afraid he had become ghostly; they needed to retrieve him from that dread condition. His failure to act out that script led to a steady decline in the intensity of the social response. People became convinced that he was not "brave" enough, that he was still under the influence of socially necessary fear. But by continuing to behave in a bizarre fashion, Alfredo acted to demonstrate that something other than shame was at issue. Romantic love was one of the things he addressed in his behavior, alienation was another.

Alfredo's lack of an effective senior relative to defend his reputation in the gossip network, his separation from his wife, and his lack of siblings all left him exposed and alone. It is true that he was the father of numerous children, but his relations with them were insufficient to firmly integrate him into society. This is rather poignantly illustrated in the episode of the case in which the chief's wife tried to prevent us from discussing Alfredo in front of his children.

The way that everyone ignored her admonition indicated not only the difference in moral authority between the chief and his wife but also the difference between children and parents and/or siblings in this respect. For, had one of the people in that group been Alfredo's close senior relative or his sibling, the chief's wife would not even have needed to make that admonition—no one would have spoken as they did.

While the shame script drew people's attention to the scolding Alfredo had received, he continually forced society's attention to the gossip about him and, by implication, the defenseless state in which he found himself by virtue of his social isolation. Seen in this light, the climax of the episode was his conversation with the old men in the copra house. Finally he found people who would take his complaint about gossip seriously. These old men, repositories of much of their culture's wisdom, even taught him a culturally appropriate answer, one of which younger people were unaware. The old men asked him what the trouble was. Up to this time no one had done that. Instead of exhorting him to ignore the gossip that he complained of, they offered him a historically valid response. In doing so, they acted

to validate his complaint, if not his actions. If this interpretation is correct, then the self-wounding that followed was a kind of coda, which gave the day's events symmetry and underlined the seriousness of his concerns.[28]

Alienated and alone, perhaps aware of the negative light in which much of his behavior (and not just his affair) was viewed by the rest of society, he acted to force people to attend to him. In this respect his behavior is functionally similar to what has been described as "wild man" behavior in New Guinea Highland societies (Newman 1960; Salisbury 1964; Averill 1980), and to possession and illness in many parts of the world. For example, referring to a Burmese patient who was possessed, Spiro (1967:195) comments: "He can mobilize all the resources of his community to assist him in dealing with his problems."

Alfredo, caught up in a maelstrom of gossip, cut off and isolated, was like the person at the center of Ernest Becker's (1973) somber description of man's tragic destiny. And, like that person, he acted to "desperately justify himself as an object of primary value in the universe. . . . to stand out and show that he count[ed] for more than anything or anyone else" (p. 4).

An orientation such as Becker's is likely to make ethnopsychologists a little uneasy, for it attributes to others the alienation and existential crisis of industrial man. However, for Alfredo at least, I think it is appropriate to think in these terms. And as Tobian society continues to change, it is likely that more and more people will find themselves in his situation. Demographic and economic changes will increasingly make the interpersonally oriented Tobian self, validated through intensely meaningful traditional productive and exchange relations, more and more exposed. Perhaps people will build on Alfredo's precedent and use dramatic, public gestures to reveal hidden aspects of their selves and trigger integrative social responses.

The dramatic revelation of the self (or at least aspects of it) is nothing new on Tobi. The shame script, with its outcome of ghostly behavior, is a traditional statement about inner states. Rather than an evil aspect of the self, however, Alfredo revealed (or at least attempted to reveal) a beautiful, tragic aspect.[29]

CONCLUSION

The strategic value of the case method in the study of ethnopsychology lies in its ability to focus ethnographic attention on events that are themselves the focus of local interest and action. In the analysis of a case, the ethnographer may ask the related questions: Why are these events seen as socially

significant? and How, in the local view, do they cohere as happenings that impinge on one another?

When people turn the ongoing flow of interaction into remembered events they draw on folk psychological assumptions that tie them together in webs of implication and relatedness. I argue, through the above analysis of Alfredo's attempted suicide, that cultural assumptions about persons are not only used in the interpretation of events but also provide a basis for evaluation and action. Crapanzano (1977:10) makes this point well in his discussion of the indigenous "articulation" of events, by which he means

> the act of construing, or better still constructing, an event to render it meaning-
> ful. The act of articulation is more than a passive representation of the event;
> it is in essence the creation of the event. . . . It gives the event structure, thus
> precipitating its context, relates it to other similarly constructed events, and
> evaluates the event along both idiosyncratic and (culturally) standardized lines.
> Once the experience is articulated, once it is rendered an event, it is cast within
> the world of meaning and may then provide a basis for action.

Stated in this way, the process of "articulation" clearly points to the multiple functions of folk psychology as representational, evocative, and directive (to use D'Andrade's [1984] terms discussed earlier).

The case method is well suited to the analysis of commonsense representations of events that frequently take the form of "scripts" or stereotyped sequences of emotion and action. In the case of Alfredo, I have argued that Tobian interpretations of his behavior were extensively structured by a 'shame' script that linked his suicide attempt with previous events in the community (specifically, a public scolding and gossip) and carried specific implications for emotion and possible future courses of action.

However, as this case makes clear, people's interest in Alfredo's behavior was not simply a matter of representation or comprehension. Rather, attempts at interpretation created an emotional experience that further became the basis for active responses to Alfredo. The evocative functions of the shame scenario can be seen in the intense fear that came to surround these events, based on the perceived resemblance of Alfredo's actions to ghostly behavior. The ethnographic usefulness of empathy in such a case is evident in the fact that I did not know how afraid people were until about halfway through the episode. As in my interaction with my Tobian 'mother', empathy involves close attention to subtle communications and analysis of one's own reactions to such communication. This reflexivity goes beyond what are commonly called "emic" techniques, and, in the end, comes down to the constant striving for openness to the experience of others. It is related to but not, I think, the same as empathy discussed by Kohut and other psychoanalysts of the self (Kohut 1971).

My discussion of this case also makes clear the directive functions of folk psychological interpretation. All through the case, people were positing their own explanations of what was happening, with distinct implications for inner experience and the appropriate actions to be taken in response. The process of posing and counterposing alternative interpretations, then, became a process of negotiating both meaning and action. If Alfredo's bizarre behavior was 'just his idea', it would be acceptable to ignore his actions. If, however, his actions signaled intense shame, they could be seen to resemble ghostly behavior, calling for preventive measures. As people sought to link Alfredo's behavior to prior events in the community, and to find analogous scenarios in the realm of Tobian psychology and action, they were at the same time negotiating their own responses and actions. The alternative interpretations that emerged in people's talk about Alfredo not only served to make his behavior comprehensible but ultimately created people's emotional and social experience during the episode.

The case study approach is likely to prove productive as ethnopsychology moves beyond the description and comparison of folk psychologies considered in vacuo to the development of a more contextual or ecological perspective. It should provide a rewarding avenue into fundamental questions about the relationships between human experience, knowledge, and action. And, for me at least, the hope for insight into those relationships provides the ultimate justification for attempting to understand folk psychological materials.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

1. I am unaware of any systematic, exhaustive review of the field of ethno-psychology. Interested readers should see the introduction to this volume as well as Shweder and Bourne (1982) for an overview. A preliminary sorting of the various theoretical traditions represented in the field reveals two major (and complementary) orientations. One, which can be tentatively named the "cognitive," has its roots in ethnoscience and could probably be traced back to E. B. Tylor. The other, which I provisionally call the "social," grows out of the insights of (among others) Mauss (1938) and so reaches back to Durkheim. In this connection it is possible to note a historical irony. As is well known, Durkheim was at considerable pains to establish the autonomy of the social from the psychological and to exclude the latter from explanations of the former. "The determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it and not among the states of individual conscious-ness" (1950:110). The irony lies in the fact that it is becoming more and more apparent that one social fact that plays an important role in sociological processes consists of the relevant folk psychology. While it may be possible to rule out our theories of individual consciousness as we attempt to explain sociological processes, even those working within the Durkheimian tradition increasingly recognize that we cannot exclude indigenous theories of such states.

2. Theodore Schwartz, personal communication, calls this the method of "trans-emicization." See Caughey (1980) and Lutz (chap. 2; 1982a) on the difficulties of translating Micronesian folk psychologies. For ideas on American folk psychology and its relation to academic psychology, see LeVine (1980) and Gaines (1982). The latter paper is particularly interesting, dealing as it does with the folk psychological notions of psychiatric residents. That Gaines found two competing folk psychologies at work should alert us to the fact that it would be a mistake to conceptualize American folk psychology as a unitary or monolithic structure. Both sides of the (in)famous "West vs. The Rest" formula are far too simplified to be useful.

3. In addition to D'Andrade (1984), see also Frake (1981) and Keesing (1979) for recent statements about the utility of cognitive approaches to the study of complex social processes.

4. An extended discussion of empathy would move beyond the usual treatment it receives in textbooks on field methods in anthropology and would take into account· Weber (1964) on *verstehen,* Mead (1932) on the self and the other, and Cooley (1964) on the looking glass self, as well as other early social scientists who addressed themselves to the question of how one self knows another. In addition to the two approaches to empathy mentioned in the text, one would also need to address issues raised by Geertz (1976) and Lévi-Strauss (1978).

5. "Ghost" is the way that Tobian English speakers translate the term *yarus.* Both Lutz (chap. 2) and Spiro (1952) translate its Ifaluk cognate *alus* as "spirit." When (as in the present instance) no crucial dimensions of meaning seem to be involved, I tend to follow Tobians in the way they translate their native tongue.

6. The fourteenth-century French peasants of Montaillou also believed that a dead person's debts could prevent final departure from the world of the living

(Ladurie 1979:349). Apparently it is not only in American country and western music that one can say "I owe my soul to the company store."

7. The verbal part of our exchange occurred in Tobian.

8. Since my departure from the island this woman and I have attempted to continue our relationship by mail. She seems to have learned to live with her grief and continues to play the role of an active and vigorous adult. In a recent letter her daughter wrote (in a phrase that dates back to the visit of some American Seabees to the island) "Our mother STILL CAN DO."

9. It was not just tactical considerations that prevented me from confronting her. Mutual empathy binds both parties in a relationship to sensitivity to each other's feelings.

10. Perhaps this statement begs the question. It is unclear how "liminal" communication can be conceptualized except in a Freudian-based framework. Crapanzano (1981) has developed a partial reconciliation of the Freudian and hermeneutic systems, if "reconciliation" can be used for a process by which one theory (hermeneutics) is used to subsume another (Freudianism).

11. There is also a long history of the use of cases in the Freudian tradition. See Obeyesekere (1977) for a very thoughtful attempt to adapt that tradition to anthropological analysis.

12. See Frake (1981) for a provocative discussion of many of these issues.

13. This quotation ignores the question of *whose* common sense is salient in this process. In ethnopsychological research considerable self-consciousness is necessary on the part of the investigator about the commonsense notions both of his culture and the culture under study. The danger exists that without sufficient self-awareness, the investigator will at this point introduce unexamined biases into the research.

14. But see also Frake's (1981) critique of hermeneutics.

15. To my dismay I noticed that the rope ended in a classic hangman's noose. I had taught Alfredo and several of the other men how to tie that knot a month or so before. It should also be noted that Alfredo's use of this knot was an instance of his pride in his mastery of modern ways.

16. In an analysis of Tobian Catholicism (1978b) I describe changes that have taken place in the remembered teachings of the missionary who converted the island. It would be interesting to develop an analysis of the processes of remembering and storing folk psychological cases and the distortions that are introduced. The ideas of D'Andrade (1974) on the role of semantic structures in memory and of Keesing (1982) on the political economy of knowledge would be especially relevant here.

17. The Japanese epoch in Micronesian history lasted from the beginning of World War I to the end of World War II. It was followed by the American epoch, which has yet to end. The Japanese were preceded by the Germans, who in 1898 had replaced the Spanish who had ineffectually "owned" Micronesia since the time of Magellan and his fellow explorers.

18. Don Rubinstein, who has carried out a pioneering study of suicide in Micronesia (1983), has told me of a number of such cases among the Tobians in Palau. Perhaps there is an unspoken pattern here. If so, this raises important issues for both

ethnopsychology and the study of suicide. See Baechler (1981) for recent work toward a cross-culturally valid typology of suicide.

19. There is a danger in going to the opposite extreme and constructing an overly systematic representation of folk psychology. See Brunton (1980) for a cautionary account of how some ethnographers have fallen into this trap in the study of Melanesian religion.

20. It is possible to see hints of similar functional clusters in the material presented by Lutz (1982; and especially chap. 2 and 1983). Many of the items in her clusters are dyadic in nature and in some instances the item that is at the other end of the dyad is in another cluster. That is, emotion 'x' in cluster 'a' is said to elicit emotion 'y' in cluster 'b' so that if I feel 'x', he feels 'y'. It would be interesting to pursue this point using some of Bateson's (1958) ideas about schizmogenesis.

21. Formal institutions of conflict resolution may have existed in the past. I have four things in mind here: (1) In the past, a person who was *teuahi* (obligated by having caused illegitimate pain) to another would visit that person's house to exchange stereotyped gifts, thus normalizing relations; (2) at funerals different sections of the island (between whom hostility and competition is said to have existed) would engage in song contests in which each side would attempt to arouse anger in the other; (3) complex divination procedure used to be practiced to enlist supernatural assistance in identifying unknown culprits (Black 1978a); and (4) the disputing parties in a land fight used to walk the boundaries of the parcel of land in question, and, in the presence of large numbers of people, a spokesman for each contender would detail all the landmarks and their history. None of these practices are carried out today; nothing has replaced them. Tobians avoid the newly intro-duced institutions of conflict resolution, especially the courthouse in Palau, whenever possible.

22. See Alkire (1965, 1977), Lessa (1966), Goodenough (1974), and Spiro (1952) for discussions of Carolinian religion.

23. There are also a number of other ways of speaking negatively about people. Several English and Japanese terms have been borrowed. These are mainly used in situations of momentary irritation. A special case is the word *bush* 'crazy' (see Lutz, chap. 2). This term can be used to disvalue another's behavior but ordinarily it carries no negative evaluation along moral lines. It simply means, in most cases, that the person concerned seems to be acting in a very confused fashion. It was not used by the Tobians in discussions of Alfredo's case. And in the one instance in which I so used it, my listeners corrected me.

24. Gossip can be seen in a much more positive light. It is highly important, for example, in preventing direct confrontation between people. This is because it can be used to indirectly send messages between disputing parties. This use requires a good deal of skill in picking the right ear into which to drop an opinion and a high degree of knowledge of the gossip network—attributes that almost all adult Tobians possess.

25. See Douglas (1967) for ethnomethodological insights into suicide. For a sociobiological perspective, see de Catanzaro (1981).

26. For an application of Schank and Abelson's ideas to a Micronesian folk

psychology see Lutz (1983). See also Black (1977) for an application of Schieffelin's (1976) notion of "scenario" to Tobian materials.

27. Kirkpatrick's account of "extended agency" in the Marquesas (chap. 3) seems to bear a family relation to the Tobian in-charge concept.

28. It could also be that he was distressed by the answer the old men had given him. The ability to create a song is a highly valued trait, yet the songs are extremely complex forms and most people, including Alfredo, find them almost impossible to compose. Also, wounding himself in the stomach was perhaps analogous to using the hangman's noose; that is, it was a use of a "modern" form of suicide, in this case Japanese *seppuku* (see Lifton 1979).

29. Alfredo's behavior can be taken as an indication that not only shame but also thwarted love, isolation, and gossip can lead to ghostliness. But those who used the ghost metaphor to label his behavior after the case (and there were many who did so) were talking about a different kind of ghost than the traditional one predicted by the shame script. The ghostliness that Alfredo demonstrated had little in common with generally accepted notions of that frightening state. It was a thing of flowers and fine clothes, not of horrible smells and ghastly apparitions. Taken together with the extended and valued relations my 'mother' managed to retain with her dead son, this indicates that a change in Tobian ghost conceptions may be emerging. The metaphor may be in a process of extension so that it will increasingly summarize a variety of commonly hidden aspects of the person, not just forbidden rage. If this is correct, then Tobian suicide may also change from being solely a shame-based, hidden act, to a behavior with a variety of forms and a wide range of meanings. The fact that one of the ghosts which Alfredo reported he had encountered was in the form of a beautiful young woman probably should also be mentioned in this connection. His reaction was no different than the reactions of anyone who encounters a ghost (he was terrified), but the beauty of the ghost may indicate change in the direction I have indicated.

GLOSSARY

bush	insane, confused, crazy
(e)risamaruh	suicide; (he or she) kills himself or herself
(e)tab	(it is) forbidden, wrong
fisirirah	it is just his or her way; refers to idiosyncracy, personal habit, trait, or custom
hamangungu	whispering; gossip
idea	scheme or plan (loanword from English)
mah	shame
manni fariworuwor	person of the bush; social isolate
manni mosuwe	person of the remote past; old-fashioned person

manni Panou	Palauan; greedy and materialistic person
manni Papua	Papuan; incompletely socialized person
metah	fear
parimarau	formal, respectable talk (translated by English speaker as apology)
song	anger
tahiyatatep	pride, haughtiness, arrogance
teuahi	obligation owed to another who one has illegitimately harmed
yarus	ghost, spirit; supernatural being

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