

VALUES RELEVANT TO FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS
AMONG THE NAVAHOS, WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MARRIAGE

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Introduction

Anthropologists have tended, until recently, to overlook the problem of values. They have been somewhat concerned with how to establish their subject matter as a social and natural science, thus leaving the study of values to the philosophers and humanists. Even when they have studied values, the notion has not been reduced to any precise form. Some anthropologists have avoided the term as far as possible. Some use it in a restricted sense, variously equivalent to ideals, to social imperatives, to the basic assumptions of a society, to the dictates of moral obligations (Firth 1953:146). To some, values are virtually coextensive with all of culture if not all of human behavior; to study values is then to study everything. To others, the vagueness and the ambiguity of the notion show utter meaninglessness and to study value is then to study nonsense of an emotive kind.

A quick look at the way in which the notion of values has been defined by anthropologists reveals how notoriously divided they have been in this respect. To Malinowski and Evans Pritchard, values are sentiments: "that attitude which organizes drives, emotions and the impulse to possess other people and objects" (Malinowski 1944:129). To Kluckhohn and Murray values are conceptions (Kluckhohn 1951:395). Florence Kluckhohn sees values as generalized meanings. To Homans, they are unconscious assumptions: "The unconscious assumptions the members of any society make, or as some sociologists would say, the 'values' they hold" (Homans 1950:127). Radcliffe-Brown sees values as relations of interest: "The word 'value' as I am using it, always refers to a relation between a subject and object--either the object has a value for the subject or the subject has an interest in the object" (Radcliffe-Brown 1939:19). Bateson and Kroeber define values as ethos: "Through a series of complicated processes, the individual finally comes out with a statement of preference, such a statement of preference we shall term a value" (Bateson 1951:45). Wallace defines values as abstractions or logical types (Wallace 1961:102) and finally Wolf sees them as role-models (Wolf 1962:class lectures). From all these various usages and definitions, values are sometimes identified with things, sometimes with motives, and sometimes with ends.

Values, especially as used in this paper, involve a grading of things and actions in terms of their relative desirability. They imply systematic behavior, not simply random choice. They have both a cognitive aspect and an emotional charge which make them promote and guide action. They are what Kluckhohn has called "ideas formulating action commitments" in one context (Kluckhohn 1951:396), and what in another context he has defined as: "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection of available modes, means and ends of action" (Kluckhohn 1951:395). Hence values tend to have an obligatory character, i.e. an element of "ought" as well as of "want." All these could be succinctly summarized by what Wolf calls "role-models" at

different and specific situations in terms of the desired and the desirable (Wolf 1962:class lectures).

The Social Setting of Navaho Marriage

The social groups that determine the marriage relationship among the Navahos are of two types: (a) the family and extended family; (b) groups based on descent--clans. (a) The family and extended family: The basic kinship unit of Navaho society is the matrilocal and matrilineal biological family consisting of husband, wife, and unmarried children. From the standpoint of the Navahos, the husband is the head of the family, but this does not mean that the women play a subordinate role in a marriage relationship. Their ownership of property, the system of tracing lineage through the female, the prevailing pattern of residence with the wife's people, the fact that more women than men have a ready and continual source of extra income through their weaving, all give the Navaho women a strategic advantage.

If a husband has more than one wife, each wife occupies a separate dwelling with her children. In many cases, it so happens that joint wives are sisters or relatives whose dwellings are ordinarily side by side, or at any rate, within sight of one another. If the wives are not relatives, they usually maintain separate establishments some distance apart. Plural marriages are practiced, but these are associated with higher economic status.

The extended family consists of an older woman with her husband and unmarried children together with her married daughters and their husbands and unmarried children. It is a wider group of relatives than the simple biological family and some tasks, like animal husbandry and agriculture, are carried out more often by the extended family. It fosters economic cooperation through the pooling of labor in herding and other productive activities. Under the matrilocal system, the Navaho men often participate in the activities of two extended families, and this causes a deep source of strain in Navaho social organization whenever the demands of a man's family of orientation and family of procreation conflict.

(b) The descent groups: Besides the family and extended family units, there is another series of effective kinship groups in Navaho society based on descent. These are the clans. The clan is a much wider and non-local segment of the tribe; and all the Navahos belong to the clan of the mother but recognize relatives on a different basis in the clan of the father. There are, or have been, according to Kluckhohn, sixty or more Navaho clans (Kluckhohn 1947:63).

The main function of the Navaho clan is to regulate marriage, and in doing so indirectly to affiliate clans. By bringing clans into close relationship through encouraging marriages between them, the clan performs both social and economic functions.

One cannot marry within one's own clan or one's father's clan because such a practice would be incest, a most repulsive crime.

A clan is also important in establishing a larger circle of one's relatives, thus making possible the sentimental bond which gives rise to occa-

sional economic and other reciprocities. Clans are also an important agency of social control through which all clansmen are responsible for the crimes and debts of other members of the clan, and thus are able to regulate the conduct of all its members (Service 1958:168).

From the description given so far, it becomes clear that there are two forms of social groups that can be considered as a background of Navaho marriage--the biological family and extended family, and the clan. Neither of these types of relationship are based on a permanent link of joint ownership of property. The members of the first are united by the ties of common residence, the exchange of service and food, and ritual links; and of the second, by bonds of common sentiment, reciprocal rights and duties, a belief of common descent, and the continuity of succession of office. The first is, it seems, an impermanent unit and the second, a permanent one. Both form the basis of the social structure of the tribe since the matrilineal extended family is the nucleus of the Navaho village although many other elements may be added to it, and the succession to all offices is fixed by the rule of matrilineal descent.

The sources of conflict. There are two main possibilities of conflict within the Navaho kinship structure. First, the ties of loyalty that bind a man to his descent group clash, to a certain extent, with his obligations to the members of his local units. Second, within the household itself, the authority of the father as the head of the matrilineal family is bound to come in conflict with that of the mother's brother. Both types of conflict can be solved harmoniously by a system which allows for a good deal of variation regarding local grouping and domestic authority, but both can be accounted the cause of distinct maladjustment in marriage situations.

Matrilineal marriage of the Navaho type may have two main results from the point of view of the present writer: first, it may be the occasion of tension between the families united in marriage; second, it may result in an impermanent local group through the frequent change of residence by a man.

Navaho Mating Rules

The social behavior of husband and wife is based on the tribal attitude to sex and marriage, and shaped by the allegiance of each partner to a series of different social groups. It is also defined much more exactly by a body of formalized rules, some of which are based on the sanction of habit, some on the force of public opinion, and others on the couple's fear of supernatural punishment.

Prohibition on marriage. The prohibitions on marriage the Navaho observes are as follows: first of all, there is a strict clan exogamy (Kluckhohn 1947:63-64). A person who would marry a woman of his own clan or clan group would go crazy and jump into the fire (Reichard 1928:60). Parallel cousins may not marry since they are regarded as sisters and brothers.

Regarding marriage outside the tribe, different attitudes prevail (Reichard 1928:61). Some Navahos in this respect would say that those who marry outside are not the best Navaho. Others treat marriage between school

boys and girls in a different light, giving such a marriage a sanction, although without the approval of the old folk.

Preferential marriages. If the Navaho is debarred from marrying a large number of his close and distantly related kinswomen, he is positively enjoined to choose a wife from among some of his other female relatives. Some such unions are the result of prescriptive rights to some of the marriageable girls of the community, by virtue of the laws of kinship--the so-called "preferential" marriage--common among primitive peoples. .

Family preferences among the Navahos are of three types--the sororate, the mother-daughter marriage, and the type in which a man marries a woman and her sister's daughter. Of these types, the sororate is very frequent. Twins are considered lucky in this tribe, and a man usually marries both girls. These three types of family preferences serve to illustrate the method by which a single individual strengthens the affiliations between his clan and another. Other favorite styles of marriage show how clans may become associated by having several individuals of one clan marry individuals of another, often within the same family. Thus it is most usual to find two siblings of one clan marrying two siblings of another.

Many types of clan marriages are preferred and there are certain clans with whom affiliations are sought. The types of clan preferences are the following: marriages into the father's clan; marriages into the clan of the maternal or paternal grandfather (Reichard 1928:65). A marriage between individuals whose grandfathers were brothers is positively valued in as much as the relationship between the persons involved is not too close.

It might be said that although the Navaho generally seek to prevent marriage between close biological relations, social and biological relationships are so confused that sometimes the biological relationships are reckoned inconsistently, and frequently give way to the social.

There is, in general, a tendency for clan members to seek mates for their relatives in a few neighboring clans. In doing so, the first thing a man considers in choosing a wife for his son is the position of the woman's family in the community. Industry, cleanliness, hospitality, prosperity and the general character of the members are other considerations highly valued.

Avoidance and joking. Besides the rules governing marriage, intrigues and flirtations are prohibited within certain degrees of kinship; in fact, there is a regular pattern of avoidance between certain relatives expressed in the form of circumspect behavior. The most important tabooed degree is the observance of the mother-in-law avoidance, a custom which dies hard among the Navahos.

The taboo begins as soon as the proposal for marriage is accepted and lasts until the death of the individuals who observe it--the husband of a woman and his mother-in-law. Since avoidance begins with the engagement, a woman may not attend her daughter's wedding. She may sit within hearing distance but may not enter the hogan but merely peep into it through a crack in order to know her son-in-law and so avoid him (Stephen 1893:356). A woman believes she will go blind if she looks at her son-in-law.

The joking relationship which is the antithesis of avoidance is of two kinds among the Navahos. The most extreme permits teasing between cross cousins who are not potential mates. The other kind is teasing between maternal uncle and nephew. The difference between the two is that in the first kind of joking the teasing is obscene, whereas in the second type, this is not the case. From Reichard's account, the following individuals may also joke: "Maternal grandmother and maternal grandson may tease but not bad. Father-in-law and son-in-law may joke bad" (Reichard 1928:73).

The Marriage Relationship

The Navaho husband and wife accept certain obligations to each other from the time their marriage begins. They enter into an economic partnership, a sex partnership, and one designed for the procreation and rearing of children.

Besides these more clearly defined obligations between husband and wife, each is bound, by the pattern of his culture, to observe a certain type of behavior in dealing with the other--forms of courtesy, small services to be exchanged between the two, and a common acceptance of the relative social status of both partners. These conventions depend in part on the behavior pattern generally accepted in Navaho community as between man and woman; in part they consist specifically of rules of etiquette thought proper in the relation of husband and wife.

The "Directives" associated with a conjugal marriage. As used in this paper, "Directives" include the laws, commandments, rules of conduct, obligations, duties, rights and privileges and any other rules or standards which are intended to regulate conduct (Albert 1956:226).

The economic directives include an undertaking on the part of the husband to assume the responsibility for building dwellings, corrals, and fences.

The wife keeps the dwelling and cooking utensils clean and orderly. She cooks, butchers mutton, gathers consumable crops from the field, and cares for the children. Men do most of the field work, look after horses, wagons, and cattle, and haul wood and water. Many activities are sex-typed to such an extent that many adults would find it embarrassing to perform a task associated with the other sex (Kluckhohn 1947:50).

All these economic directives are enforced in a number of different ways. First of all, by the united action of the kinship group concerned, i.e. that of the woman. The young husband and wife live and work under the orders of the head of the matrilocal family group and hence receive economic training as members of a team. In the case of the man, the strongest sanction for his good conduct seems probably to be the power of his wife's family to refuse to hand her over to him.

In the sexual realm, the directives are such that in marriage, a husband and wife are both contracted to give each other sexual rights. Frequent intercourse is often desired by both (Bailey 1950:20). Further, the marriage puts each partner in the magic power of the other, so that each is legally contracted to take the necessary ritual precautions to protect the safety of

the other. There is frequent warning against excessive indulgence in sexual intercourse through Navaho mythology. Many drastic effects of such indulgence are cited, and cures for sexual indulgence are related in detail by Haile who says that a husband's "debility resulting from his weakened condition and inordinate sexual desires is restored by Flintway" (Haile 1943:16).

The prevalence of myths dealing with adulterous incidents and sexual excesses reflects, among The People, the emotional tension of Modern Navaho. Kluckhohn has in this connection stated that "one of the principal sources of friction among the Navahos is sexual jealousy" (Kluckhohn 1947:179, 234). He goes on to say that it is controlled by the institution of witchcraft for "fear of witches at night acts, to some slight extent, as a deterrent to extra-marital sex relations because night-time would otherwise provide favorable conditions for secret rendezvous." However, under certain circumstances or with certain persons the Navahos feel sexual activity is improper.

Intercourse between husband and wife continues during pregnancy but ceases shortly before her confinement. Intercourse, on the basis of the accepted value orientation of the Navahos, continues until one or two months before delivery (Bailey 1950:31).

A man stands bound to perform certain obligations during the wife's delivery. He is expected to assist in the delivery in whatever way he can. In terms of the husband's emotional reaction during the wife's labor, there is no evidence to show that the *couvade* is an institutionalized response among the Navahos. The husband is not expected to become distressed or nervous but rather expected to assume responsibilities for assisting his wife during this crisis.

Parenthood. The essential object of Navaho marriage is the production of children. For this reason, a man can divorce his wife if she is barren (Bailey 1950:20).

Once the child is born, the parents stand committed to certain obligations towards him or her, though these are not as well defined as in the case of patrilineal societies. The Navaho child gets a lot of affectionate attention, and every step he takes toward social participation is rewarded.

The positive side of child training is mainly a matter of constant encouragement in the acquisition of language and other skills. Training in Navaho modesty is also given the child very early in life. All these values are probably reasons why the Navaho children have exceptionally favorable opportunities for developing a secure and confident adult personality. There are almost no sudden and harsh attempts to compel him to control his eliminative activities.

Children who happen to be the last in the family undergo, during weaning, life experiences which are different from those of the average child. The Navaho children who are either actually or psychologically "last born" have a personality structure which differs consistently from that of other Navahos. They are more stable, more secure, less suspicious and generally happier (Leighton 1947:37).

In short, during weaning the Navaho parents teach effectively what the world around the child demands of him, in addition to imposing certain restrictions on, and giving certain assurances to him.

The Navaho family as a "focal value." A focal value as used in this paper is a limited number of cores around which the values of a people cluster (Albert 1956:225). Focal values have a dual status--they are inferable from groupings of values and recourse is usually had to them to explain and justify the less central values. Among the Navahos, the family is a focal value in that it is treated by the Navahos as self-evident, i.e. self-justifying in their value system. This focal value constitutes the channels through which the value premises and directives pass. Thus it is good to have a family, for then in the case of need, a sing will be provided to restore health; if one has a family and health, all can work together to acquire possessions. Negatively, a poor man cannot insure himself or his family against want or pay for the learning of ceremonials needed to preserve health. In terms of directives, young people are advised: "Work hard and don't be lazy so you will have something, then you can maintain a family" (Albert:236).

An important injunction is maintaining order, which means among the Navahos "get along with everyone." This primarily refers to fulfilling kinship obligations and maintaining certain familial relationships, which define the gradient of responsibility, authority, economic cooperation, and solidarity. These relationships define and determine the nature of avoidance, joking, and incest in familial interpersonal relations.

Within the community the directives associated with focal values build toward mutual nurturance and concern in the form of cheerful discharge of familial obligations. In the choice of a mate, the directive is: "Do what your family wants you to do so you will get along well and nobody will have to scold you." In the whole atmosphere surrounding the family, lying, stealing, cheating, trickery and deceit are unequivocally inappropriate.

Domestic precedence as between husband and wife. Among the Navahos, there are a number of different factors which make for the apparent contradiction between the different sets of rules which govern the behavior of husband and wife. The most important of these is probably the fact that the principle of matrilineal descent and matrilocal marriage must necessarily conflict, to some extent, with a social pattern of male dominance.

It is in the domestic life that there is a wide variation possible in the marriage relationship, and the seeming dominance of the man is largely tempered by the system of the kinship grouping--matrilineality and matrilocality. In the matrilocal stage of marriage, the woman may be backed by her relatives, often very strongly, while the man may stand alone.

All these are consistent with Strodbeck's findings about husband-wife interaction over revealed differences among the Navahos (Strodbeck 1951:468-473). The background of his finding was to determine the correlate of mate's differential ability to persuade each other in accordance with the desire of each. He gave the following facts: their matrilocal residence, affiliation of the child with the wife's group, ownership of sheep by both

husband and wife, the assumption of the role of family-head by the husband, economic independence of the wife and integration with her group, the women as major charismatic figures and as being active and demanding.

With all these background facts, Strodtbeck presents in a table the sum of the decisions won by husbands and wives among ten Navaho couples relative to couples in two other cultures as follows:

| <u>Culture</u> | <u>Number of Couples</u> | <u>Decisions won by:</u> | |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------|
| | | Husband | Wife |
| Navaho | 10 | 34 | 46 |
| Texan | 10 | 39 | 33 |
| Mormon | 10 | 42 | 29 |

With the comparative data gathered by Strodtbeck, the following conclusions were reached concerning husband-wife interaction among the Navahos: "The Navahos husband and wife gave opinion, evaluation and analysis acts during the solution of their differences only one-half as frequently as the other two groups" (Strodtbeck:473).

They did not emphasize the arguments that might bear upon the issue; they tended to repeat their choices and implore the other to go with them or simply consent.

From all this, it seems to the present writer that rather than male dominance which might be expected in husband-wife relations, the women have a favored position in terms of economy, religion and kinship considerations, all of which give the Navaho wife independence rather than subordination.

Conclusion

"Character" encouraged by socialization. "Character" as used here is a reference to the virtues and vices, the quality of personality which is approved or disapproved, encouraged or suppressed, rewarded or punished by the Navahos through socialization mechanisms. The characters referred to are those in the context of a marriage relationship, and the relevant sanctions either positive or negative, are for the most part social and psychological, external or internal.

The Navaho model of personal excellence is highly geared to socialization and social control mechanisms (Albert 1956) which are usually articulated to a marriage situation, i.e. in the context of parent-child relationship. These include a character that is knowledgeable, well-spoken, agreeable, industrious, with an appearance that is comely and attractive. These are ideals which embrace both moral virtues and enjoyment of pleasure and the condition for the attainment of which requires a natural physical endowment and intelligence, good parents and a good family, and a constant exercise of the virtues to establish these.

Through socialization mechanisms, the following are disapproved of: gossip, ridicule, meanness, ill-temper, cruelty, lack of self-control, laziness, irresponsibility, unfavorable discrimination in the disposition of gifts and advantages (Albert 1956:238-239). Shame, loneliness, anxiety, and

discomfort of family pressures to mend one's ways and embarrassment, reinforce external, social sanctions.

By the same method of socialization, the following are also given a premium: quiet inner strength, dignity and self-control, natural piety, mutual nurturance, and gratitude. Rewards are given to a conscientious preservation of physical strength to work, and mental strength to learn, by an assurance of the enjoyment of life's pleasure; inner satisfaction that comes with the capacity to serve others and prestige that goes to those who live right.

Valued and disvalued entities. These consist of the numerous and varied objects, feeling states, situations and activities in the Navaho Value System, especially as related to marriage. They depend upon focal values, directives and character, with respect to which they to a large extent instrumentalize. A valued or disvalued entity, in its concrete individuality, may be classified in a variety of ways which may satisfy many values simultaneously.

Outlined below are the valued and disvalued entities in relation to the following three types of relationship: husband and wife relationship; parent-child relationship; and other harmonious interpersonal relationships.

Husband and Wife Relationship

Valued

Helpfulness
Honesty
Individual respect
Dignity
Sociability
Generosity
Responsibility
Moderation

Disvalued

Withholding assistance
Lying, stealing, adultery
Irresponsibility
Lack of dignity
Non-sociability
Stinginess
Irresponsibility
Overindulgence in sex

Parent and Child Relationship--Parents' Expectations

Valued

Doing what one is asked to do
Politeness
Teaching one's children well
Honesty
Personal attractiveness
Sense of humor
Good memory
Learning things
Listening to good advice
Courage

Disvalued

Being unobliging
Meanness
Irresponsibility
Lying, stealing
Ugliness
Lack of sense of humor
Dullness
Unwilling to learn
Willfulness
Cowardliness

Parent and Child Relationship--Child's ExpectationsValued

Helpfulness
 Dependability
 Wisdom (in mature years)

Disvalued

Withholding assistance
 Undependability
 Senility

Other Harmonious Interpersonal RelationshipsValued

Nonaggressive attitude
 Courtesy
 Minding one's business
 Respect for individuals
 Hospitality
 Self-control
 Moderation
Sense of humor

Disvalued

Quarrelsomeness, violence
 Talking rough
 Gossip
 Authoritarian attitude
 Lack of hospitality
 Temper
 Drunkenness
 Lack of sense of humor

The contents of this model agree with those of Albert (Albert 1956: 239-241), but the present classification is wholly the writer's.

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