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Conflict Management, Gossip, and Affective Meaning on Nukulaelae

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THIS IS A study of the structure and content of talk about interpersonal conflict and its management on Nukulaelae, a Polynesian atoll of the Tuvalu group in the Central Pacific. The main goal of this paper is to outline an ethnography of Nukulaelae conflict and conflict management at the interpersonal level based on analysis of talk about conflict and conflict management. The following questions underlie this enterprise: What type of situation is recognized as an interpersonal conflict? Are interpersonal conflicts on Nukulaelae resolved or managed? How is this achieved? How do the ways in which conflicts are perceived and managed relate to ethnopsychological assumptions (Kirkpatrick and White 1985) according to which Nukulaelae Islanders interpret and evaluate each other's behavior?

The method adopted here relies heavily on the microanalysis of talk about two conflict situations and their management. Through a detailed study of the strategies used to communicate *affective meaning* in talk about conflict, I attempt to discover the nature of the *norms* and *cultural processes* that come into play in conflict and its management on Nukulaelae.

This study develops as follows. The first section is a discussion of three sets of methodological assumptions that background this paper. Following this is a brief description of the setting of the situations under study. The next section situates the two conflict cases in a general description of conflict management on Nukulaelae from a broad ethnographic perspective. This is followed by the presentation of the conversational data, their analysis, and a discussion of the relationship of the macroethnographic analysis of conflict to the microanalysis of the conversational data.

Conflict, Gossip, and Affect: Some Preliminary Remarks

This study is grounded in a set of basic theoretical and methodological assumptions about three areas of inquiry: the relationship of conflict situations to other types of cultural situation; the communication of normative notions in everyday talk; and the role of affect in language.

Much of the current anthropological literature on conflict (from interpersonal frictions to large-scale social disputes) emphasizes that conflict be seen as integral to social order (Beals and Siegel 1966 and Comaroff and Roberts 1981, for example). Geertz (1973) summarizes this approach: "Social conflict is not something that happens when, out of weakness, indefiniteness, obsolescence, or neglect, cultural forms cease to operate, but rather something which happens when . . . such forms are pressed by unusual situations or unusual intentions to operate in unusual ways" (1973:28). Conflict is thus most fruitfully studied as an integral part of the social system of the culture in which it occurs.

In his insightful analysis of social conflict and crisis in a Samoan village, Shore (1982) goes one step further in integrating conflict with the ambient social order: "Social conflict," he points out, "may be understood as possessing its own degree of order and interpretability" (1982:181). An important corollary to this view is the fact that conflict situations are valuable heuristic situations to gain insights into emic notions of norm and of social order as construed by the individuals involved in the conflict situation.

A second assumption underlying this study is that, through talk, interactants constantly "negotiate" (define, alter, manipulate) the norms, attitudes, and perceptions they share as members of the same society.[1] In Garfinkel's (1967) words, "interacting individuals' efforts to account for their actions—that is, to represent them verbally to others—are the primary method by which the world is constructed." (cf. McKellin's discussion of Mills's 1984 argument for the social construction of motive, this volume.)

This assumption is particularly appropriate to the study of gossip, a verbal genre that focuses on breaches of convention and on

questions of propriety and norm. Gossip, then, is a special case of the politics of language use in general (Myers and Brenneis 1984, Brenneis 1984). Haviland proposes that gossip is "a primary metacultural tool" (1977:170) through which cultural rules are manipulated:[2]

> Through gossip people not only interpret the behavior of others, but also discover other people's interpretations; they can thus learn cultural rules at a distance. Through dialogue, gossip allows rules to change: it redefines the conditions of application for rules, thus keeping them up to date.

Thus gossip, "at once text and native commentary on texts" (Keesing 1974:93), is an invaluable context in which to study the ways in which individuals construct their cultural world. Gossip, furthermore, falls into the category of "ethnopsychological discourse" (Kirkpatrick and White 1985). As such, it is a primary source of data on folk theories which are the basis for *explanations* of, and *inferences* from, the behavior of others.[3] It is worth mentioning here that this paper is one of the first attempts to analyze the microscopic structure of naturally occurring gossip data. Unlike most analyses of gossip in the literature, which are either based on nonlinguistic data or on elicited linguistic data, this paper is based on gossip data *as it occurs* in the culture in focus.

My third assumption concerns the role of affective meaning in language. Irvine (1982), with others before her, recognizes three distinct, but mutually interactive, functional components to meaning: a referential (propositional) component, a social component, and an affective component (Lyons 1977:50 uses the terms "descriptive," "social," and "expressive"). The affective level is that through which speakers communicate feelings, moods, dispositions, and attitudes toward the propositional content of the message, the situation, the social context of the interaction, and so on. As pointed out by Ochs (1986), affective meaning pervades discourse, even where the general tone of the discourse is one of emotional detachment, as in, say, academic writing.

The three levels of meaning are of course intimately interrelated. Affect may be lexicalized (i.e., communicated through lexical devices whose sole purpose is to encode affect); but it may also be encoded in the syntactic structure of an utterance alongside the referential functions of syntax. Affect communication, thus, is a multichannel phenomenon (Irvine 1982:38–39) intimately (often inextricably) intertwined with referential and social meaning.

Clearly, the different channels through which affect may be communicated have different characteristics. An affective interjection such as "alas!" or "hurray!" communicates affect more clearly, less opaquely, or, to borrow a term from functional grammar (Haiman 1980, 1983), more *iconically* than syntactic devices with equivalent meanings. This fact appears to hold for all languages and cultures. Thus, the choice of "strategies," "tactics" (Bailey 1983), "channels" (Irvine 1982), or "keys" (Goffman 1974) that speakers of a language are constantly faced with in communicating affective meaning is a loaded factor in and of itself (cf. Bakhtin 1980 on the importance of "the speaker's choice of a language"). For further discussion of language and affect in a Nukulaelae context, see Besnier (1989a).

I have presented in this introduction three sets of assumptions about seemingly disparate questions, namely, the nature of conflict in the context of social order, the "meaning" of gossip, and the significance of affective meaning in verbal communication. These three notions will be interwoven in this discussion, in which correlations will be established between the speaker's choice of strategy in communicating affect in gossip about conflict and Nukulaelae ethnotheories of interpersonal conflict and conflict management.

The Setting

Nukulaelae is a small, isolated atoll of the Tuvalu group (formerly the Ellice Islands). Its population of 310 is predominantly Polynesian in origin, culture, and social organization, although it has received some influence from neighboring Micronesian Kiribati (formerly the Gilbert Islands).

The population of Nukulaelae is concentrated on the islet of Fagaua, which bounds a circular lagoon to the west. The very small size of the islet (three-fourths of a mile long and 800 feet

wide) makes for crowded living conditions. The main reason for the concentration of the population on a small islet is the fact that Fagaua has the most propitious land for the cultivation of swamp taro, the staple cultigen that thrives in large artificial muddy pits.

The decision-making powers on Nukulaelae are shared between an Island Council (*fono pule*) and a council of elders (*fono o toeaina*). In addition, the Congregational pastor (*faifeau*) holds a great deal of prestige on the atoll. He is the heir of the highly mystical and respected position created by a succession of Samoan missionary teachers who dismantled the traditional chiefly system and established a virtual theocracy, based on their interpretation of the Scriptures, that lasted almost ninety years after the coming of Christianity to the island in the 1860s (Brady 1975; Munro 1982; Goldsmith 1988). The pastor's political influence is mostly covert, and depends largely on the individual pastor's charisma and personal ambition.

The economy is based on the severely limited land resource typical of atoll environments: swamp taro, breadfruit, coconuts, and bananas. Land, as on most of the other atolls of the Tuvalu group, is owned either individually (nominally by the head of each household) or through a complex system of relatively strong and relatively weak "claims" to corporate land shared by related households (who are said to *kai tasi* 'eat together'). A claim to a piece of land gives a particular household access to the resources it produces (essentially coconuts and byproducts). Briefly, the strength of a claim is proportional to the genealogical closeness to the direct senior male descendant branch of the kin group (the land tenure system, highly oversimplified here for want of space, has been thoroughly described for Tuvalu in general by Brady 1970, 1974 and for the northern island of Nanumea by Chambers 1975, 1983).

In contrast to the severe land shortages on the other atolls of the group that give rise to what Brady (1970) calls "land hunger," Nukulaelae's land problems are minor. Nevertheless, access to land resources is an important underlying element of many interpersonal conflicts, like one of the situations discussed here, and is the topic of many everyday interactions.

Conflict and Conflict Management on Nukulaelae

Daily life on Nukulaelae is characterized by a great deal of verbal interaction about other people's behavior, which I shall refer to as gossip (see Besnier 1989b for further discussion). These interactions usually include statements on specific normative notions, such as what constitutes appropriate reactions to particular situations or appropriate conduct in particular settings. In these gossip events (the term "event" is used here as a particular case of Hymes's 1974 notion of "speech event"), Nukulaelae Islanders betray a very strong prescriptive attitude toward other individuals' behavior and an acute sense of ridicule.

The environment in which these interactions take place is carefully controlled. They may only occur between close relatives or within a circle of close "friends," individuals who perform work and spend leisurely hours together. It is inappropriate to initiate gossip activities in the presence of individuals who do not fit this description. Gossip activities are thus marked as *private events*. Whether gossip may take place or not thus defines a *private arena* (to borrow Turner's 1974 term), clearly distinguishable from a *public arena*.[4] This public-private distinction is salient in Nukulaelae daily life. In the public arena, interpersonal interactions tend to be precoded and behavior essentially formulaic; spontaneity is associated principally with the private arena.

Attitudes toward gossip activities are ambivalent. While gossip is often condemned publicly as antisocial behavior, the same individuals who condemn it in the public arena often engage in gossip activities in appropriate circumstances. Gossip is a socially accepted activity as long as it is confined to the private arena. Individuals who are in the habit of engaging in gossip activities indiscriminately are strongly stigmatized (*pona*) as having "talking mouths" (*gutu faipati*).[5]

Cultural explanations for the inappropriateness of gossip activities in the public arena typically involve the fact that gossip often leads to interpersonal confrontations. Public confrontations and, more generally, the display of private (personal) identities in the public arena are seen as threats to the established social order. Responsible adults must maintain a state of mutual acceptance

and general harmony (*feaalofani* 'to feel empathy for each other', a term borrowed from Samoan) when interacting with each other and must avoid directly confrontative behavior as much as possible. Responsible adults should not let their emotions and internal states interfere with their social relationships and affect others. A responsible person is calm, unemotional, unaffected by the environment, and noninterfering. In contrast, a child or a mentally deviant individual (*fakavalevale*) is erratic and unpredictable, is driven by emotional reaction to the environment, and by attempts to interfere with social order so as to meet individual needs. Variants of the same ideology are found in other Polynesian societies, such as Samoa (Duranti 1984, this volume; Shore 1982), Tahiti (Levy 1973), and, in slightly different terms, the Marquesas (Kirkpatrick 1983).

A consequence of the avoidance of interpersonal disharmonies is the fact that the Nukulaelae social system is not well equipped to handle the interpersonal conflicts that do arise. In contrast to A'ara (White, this volume), Kwara'ae (Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo, this volume), and contemporary Hawaiian cultures (Boggs and Chun, this volume), all of which exhibit well-defined and highly specialized disentangling situations (*graurutha*, *fa'amanata'anga*, and *ho'oponopono* respectively), Nukulaelae culture does not recognize a "disentangling" context to deal with interpersonal conflicts. There is no clearly recognized event exclusively associated with the *resolution* of interpersonal conflicts. These are *managed* rather than solved (cf. Lindstrom, this volume).

Feelings of anger, antagonism, and displeasure directed to another individual as a result of nonmanaged interpersonal conflict are viewed as potentially disruptive, particularly when the individuals involved belong to the same household (*kaaiga*) or broader kin group. The "bad heart" (*loto maasei*, a term used in line 06 of transcript B) that arises between relatives as the result of an intrafamilial conflict is likely to affect the outcome of a fishing expedition, for example.[6] Both the display and the harboring of antagonistic feelings are seen as negative and potentially harmful elements on Nukulaelae, as among the A'ara, Kwara'ae, and Hawaiians discussed elsewhere in this volume.

When the conflict is seen as serious, as in the case of theft or of physical wrong, and the interactants do not belong to the same kin group, they usually refer the situation to a Western-style court (*fono fakamasino*). The court is presided over by the island judge (*faamasino*), whose function is similar to that of a justice of the peace in American society. One person takes the other to the monthly court meeting (*ave ki te fono*), where both parties usually end up being lectured by the judge, quite severely at times, and ordered to pay fines and retributions. This type of conflict management will not be discussed in this paper.

Intrafamilial conflicts like the two conflict situations discussed below are kept as much as possible within the private arena. Chambers (1975) reports similar patterns from the northernmost island of Tuvalu, Nanumea. Her discussion stresses the importance of the public-private dimension in the management of conflict on Nanumea:

> Relatives are expected not to quarrel with each other, though of course they do from time to time. Quarrels which do occur within an extended family are kept as quiet as possible, as most Nanumeans are reluctant to take a relative to court, even to secure right to land they believe should be theirs. Most of the public quarrels that do occur, however, involve relatives, and both relatives and non-relatives rush to the scene, the former to stop the fighting or to take sides, the latter to enjoy the show. There is little privacy, of course, and extended family groups do all they can to 'avoid publicity' in regard to their affairs (1975:43).

An intrafamilial conflict *must* be managed if it begins to affect other individuals or events not directly related to the conflict situation. Such is the case when individuals from outside the kin group become involved in the conflict or when a cause-and-effect relationship is established between the "bad heart" (*loto maasei*) harbored by an individual and an unfortunate event. Thus, a conflict is recognized as such only when it affects someone or something in the public arena. Only then will an attempt to manage the conflict be made. Thus, as on Santa Isabel (White, this volume), a conflict situation will be disentangled only if there is a *specific* reason to do so.

Conflict managements of this type usually take place as the individuals involved *faipati fakallei* 'talk thoroughly' (see transcript A, line 22). This type of interaction is not exclusively associated

with conflict management; *faipati* 'to make word(s)' is the general term for any talk or conversation focused on a specific topic. This term contrasts with *sauttala* 'to chat', which refers to interactions not focused on a specific topic. The two transcripts on which this paper is based are of *sauttala* about *faipati fakallei* interactions.

The emphasis of conflict management through *faipati fakallei* is on the reestablishment of a harmonious front between the individuals involved (*feaalofani* 'to feel empathy for each other') and on the fact that the conflict has not succeeded in affecting their reciprocal social identity in the public arena (this fact is stressed at several points in the transcribed narratives in transcripts A and B below). During the management talk, the conflict is typically declared to be *off record* as far as the relationship of the public identities of the interactants is concerned.

Conversational Transcripts

This section presents the two interpersonal conflict situations on which this discussion is based. Here I introduce the information necessary to contextualize the conversational transcripts on which the analysis is based.

The transcripts are of two spontaneous conversations about unrelated interpersonal conflict situations. These conversations take place between Kelisiano and Feue (Kelisiano's name will be abbreviated to K hereafter, and Feue's to F; all names are pseudonyms). Each of the situations had taken place a few days before. Both had involved K, a man in his forties. Unlike many men of his generation on Nukulaelae, he is not a *matai* (head of a kin group), because his father, a man of great influence on the island, still holds the position as the senior member of the kin group. K's interlocutor, F, is a matai in his early fifties and a distant cousin of K. F and K spend most of their leisurely hours (*taafao*) together and are fishing partners. Their relationship is one of close friendship, in a pattern characteristic of the rather exclusive interpersonal bonds that Tuvaluans of all ages establish with each other.

Both conversations take place in the storage hut behind F's kin group's kitchen hut. In both situations, F, K, and I had just returned from our daily fishing expedition. The setting is private

and very relaxed. The conversation touched on a wide variety of topics, from the most trivial to the most scandalous. The transcripts presented in transcripts A and B are part of a much longer conversation. Topic shifts are usually marked by long pauses (up to twenty minutes of silence) or may be forced by a third party's arrival within earshot. These two interactions are prototypical examples of the casual conversations (*sauttala*) that occupy an important part of every Nukulaelae Islander's everyday life.

The interactors in the gossip sessions were not aware that their conversation was tape-recorded, but subsequently gave me permission to use the recordings for my research. The two interactions were recorded in the general framework of a sociolinguistic study of conversational discourse on Nukulaelae. The story line of the first interaction (transcript A) reads as follows: Luisa, a young woman married to an important member of the community,[7] finds out that several of her banana trees have been chopped down. She knows that K had worked in the vicinity of those trees on the same day and accuses him of having chopped them down, which he has no right to do since he does not belong to same kin group.[8] In fact, the culprits are Maataio and Tito, who belong to Luisa's *kai tasi* (group of land-owning households) and thus have the right to destroy the trees. Fearing a direct confrontation with K, Luisa goes to an influential member of the community, Saamasone, with the request that K be punished by being barred from taking communion the following Sunday. Timooteo mentions the request to K, who then seeks Luisa. In the meantime, Luisa had learned that her original accusation was false. When she finally meets K at Olataga, a small settlement on an islet across the lagoon from Fagaua, she apologizes to him for her rash conduct.

The second interaction (transcript B) concerns a conflict involving K and a close female relative of his, Saavave. The conflict takes place in the wake of K's daughter's wedding, which was to involve, like all weddings on Nukulaelae, many days of feasting and entertainment, in which the entire island community participates, and considerable labor (fishing, gardening) and money to purchase rice, kerosene, and other imported goods from the island store. To help with the expenses, relatives of K working on Nauru (a phosphate-producing island in the Central Pacific, on

which small contingents of Tuvaluans are employed as temporary workers) had wired a $150 money order. The money was clearly intended for the *fakalavelave* 'family event', but was addressed to three people who are closely related to the four senders. One of them is K's father's classificatory sister Saavave, who took it upon herself to pick the money up from the telegraph office and to divide it up among the three recipients, including $50 for her own use. She is confronted by her own relatives and is made to return half of the money to K. This forces her to confront K, who subtly ridicules her; she then blames the senders for not having made clear that the money was communal.

Analysis

In this section, the gossip narratives transcribed in the appendix are analyzed with respect to five affective strategies. Patterns are sought in the ways affect is communicated in the gossip session about the two conflict situations. As will be seen, the gossiper uses specific channels to communicate his attitudes and emotions, all of which are characteristically low in iconicity.

Informational Structure of the Narratives

Two analytic components to the narratives can be distinguished, as is traditionally done in the literature on discourse structure (Labov and Fanshel 1977, for example): a main story line, what Grimes (1975) calls the "event"; and background materials, comments, and details (or "collateral information"). These two components are interwoven in the conversation, with the hinges easily identifiable. Among other things, the linguistic devices used in marking these hinges change the "footing" (Goffman 1981) of the interaction.

Prosody is the linguistic level at which these changes are most commonly marked. Several examples from the first transcript will serve to illustrate. For instance, an increase in voice intensity (italicized in the free English translation) marks a shift from main story line to background material:[9]

(TRANSCRIPT A)

15	*Aku muna ttaa, ((laughs)) (2.0)* my words hey! *A ko au nei e- (0.6) e(i)* and Foc I this Nps *he tino fakavalevale? (0.* a person crazy	I said, "come on, am I crazy or what?"
16	*E TONU laa i* Nps true then that *au ne sseu i koo. [. . .]* I Pst hoe at there	It is true that I gardened in that area. [. . .]

Similarly, a change in both tempo and pitch accompanies a return from a set of collateral remarks to the main event line in the following excerpt:

20	*[. . .] ko Timooteo e::* Foc Timooteo Nps *nofo ki luga.* stay to top	[. . .] while Timooteo's [banana trees] are up above [on the edge of the garden pit].
21	*((high pitch, fast)) (Ak)u muna i:o!* my words yes	I said, "all right!"

Nonprosodic devices include changes from direct to reported speech and vice versa, as in lines 36–37 and 39–40.

36	*Au ne toe logo fakamuli aka fua* I pst just hear recently then just	"I heard [the truth] just recently."
37	*((louder)) Peelaa ko te o-* like Foc the *tena osotiiga [. . .]* her attack	So that when she got upset, [. . .]
39	*Logo au kaiaa mo ko:: (0.3) ko* hear I why? that Foc *Tito eiloa mo Maataio* Tito indeed and Maataio	But more recently, what do I hear? that Tito and Maataio were the ones that [chopped down those trees] . . .

kolaa ne hai nee laaua a:: (3.0)
those Pst do Erg they-2 Cnt

40 *Muna mai. Koo hee:ai- hee:ai he* (She) says to me, "there is
words Dxs Inc Neg Neg a nothing, no rancor between
mea e: (0.7) onosai e:i-. us any more"
thing Nps rancor Anp

Shifts from and to reported speech often interact with turn changes in the gossip session itself; in the following examples, K ends his turn with a reported string, and F begins a new turn with a nonreported string which initiates a clarification (side-comment) sequence:

(TRANSCRIPT A)

41 *K: (M)una: au, (0.7) fakatau* K: I say, "let us forgive each
say I exchange other now."
fakamaagalo nei taaua.
forgive now we-2
((laughter, 1.8))

42 *F: (Tee)laa heeai he (t)- koe e:* F: So that there is no- . . .
thus Neg a you Nps You should have said that
hai mo: (ko) ttoo [you were leaving] the
say that Foc the+garden banana plantation for
futi o: ttoeaina. ((laughter)) [her] old man!
banana of the+old-man

(TRANSCRIPT B)

11 *K: Aku muna, ka: ne aa* K: I said: "what are we doing
my words but some what? [standing here and] talking
laa ttou pati e hai, about this, the money has
then our-3 words Nps say already been split up
((falsetto)) mo koo oti laa ne between us by Saavave [of
because Prf then her own accord] . . ."
vae vae nee: (0.3) Saavave:,
divide divide Erg Saavave

12 *F: ((mid-high pitch, falling)) Te* F: That thing [the money]
the is not hers to take [. . .]
mea teelaa seeai sena mea
thing that Neg her thing
a ia [. . .]
of her

Note that most of the main story line is in the form of directly reported speech. The story, in essence, is told in the form of a dialog. What K is performing is what Bakhtin (1978) and others have called "dialoging." I shall return presently to the significance of this strategy.

Having established the distinction between main and collateral information, I shall now turn to the distribution of affective meaning among these two components. More specifically, I shall focus on where and how K communicates *negative* affect (condemnation, ridicule, annoyance, and the like) in his account of the conflict and its management.

The first significant fact to be noted is that K *avoids* issuing any overt value judgments on, or condemnations of, his opponents in the two conflict situations he describes. This is particularly true of the collateral part of his narrative. At no stage in the course of the long search of collateral discourse quoted in lines 16–18 of transcript A does he state an opinion on the situation described:

16 *E TONU laa i au ne sseu* It is true that I gardened
Nps true then that I Pst hoe in that area
i koo (1.5)
at there

17 *a ko futi kolaa ne hai* But those banana trees were
but Foc banana those Pst do [cut down] by Maataio and
eiloa n(ee) Maataio mo:: (0.9) Tito.
indeed Erg Maataio and
mo Tito (2.3)
and Tito

18 *I au hoki eiloa maafaufau* I also thought [as I was
because I also indeed think gardening] about– that

	peenaa ki:: (0.7) me io thus about that belong-to *laatou a: futi nee?* hey Cnt banana Tag	those banana trees were theirs, right?
19	*He:ki ai eiloa heaku futi* Neg Anp indeed my banana *ne:: (1.0)* Pst	So I didn't [chop down] any banana tree–
20	*ne mea i- a ko:* Pst thing at and Foc *futi kolaa ne:: (0.8) ne: laga* banana those Pst Pst drag *eiloa nee au keaate:(a) e* indeed Erg I away Nps *io t- Timooteo, (1.1) mo* belong-to Timooteo because *ko olotou futi e tai* Foc their-3 banana Nps almost *ttuu ki lalo ko Timooteo e::* stand to bottom Foc Timooteo *e:: nofo ki luga.* Nps stay to above	The [chopped-down] banana trees that I dragged to the side are Timooteo's; theirs [Luisa's] are down below [in the garden pit], while Timooteo's are up above [on the edge of the garden pit].

In contrast, F intersperses K's narrative with short turns (essentially, verbal "engagement displays"—Goodwin 1981) whose affective meaning is negative in regard to evaluation of the reported events. In line 23 of transcript A, for instance, F punctuates the end of part of K's narrative with a heavily affect-laden interjection:

23	*F: Ttaahh! =* Exc	[Scandalized] That's outrageous!

In the examples below from transcript B, F is more explicit in his evaluative judgment of K's opponent and makes a highly normative set of remarks, after which K expresses agreement:

12	*F: ((mid-high pitch, falling)) Te* the *mea teelaa seeai sena mea* thing that Neg her thing *a ia me se mea //* of her because a thing *(i te) fakalave = // = lave ne* for the family-event Pst *aumai // loa // kiaa koe.* send indeed to you	F: That thing [the money] is not hers to take, it is something [that was sent] on account of the family event [the wedding], it was primarily sent to you.
13	*K: // Peelaa nee? // // mm! //* thus Tag Exc	K: That's it, right? Hmm!
42	*F: [. . .] Te tonuga lo: laa* the truth indeed then *te mea laa teenaa see* the thing then that Neg *tuku fua kiaa Saavave ka:e::* give just to Saavave but *ttau eiloa o peeofu Kelisiano* must indeed Cmp pay Kelisiano *me::- ne aumai ki te* because Pst send for the *fakalavelave nee? =* family-event Tag	F: The truth of the matter is that it [the money] should not have been given to Saavave but it should have been handed over to Kelisiano because it was sent on account of the family event [the wedding], right?
43	*F: = Mm.* Exc.	K: Hmm.

In several instances, K appears to be about to issue an abstract evaluative judgment on his opponent, an explicit indication of how F is to evaluate matters. In each instance, however, he stops short and replaces the evaluative remark with a conversational device that I have elsewhere called the "three-dot phenomenon" (Besnier 1982); that is, information whose sharedness among the participants in a conversation is assumed and thus need not be stated overtly (see Cicourel 1972 for a discussion of the "unspoken elements" of a social interaction). In line 36 of transcript B, the "three-dot phenomenon" is realized as a chuckle and the

noncompletion of a turn, both at the phonological and syntactic levels:

36 *Aku muna koo atuli eiloa a* I figured she got chased out
my words Inc chase indeed Cnt by her ((chuckles)) [i.e., by
ia n(ee) thenahhh ((chuckles)) her family, for having done
she Erg her something wrong].

The only overtly prescriptive pronouncements that K utters are statements through which he establishes his own credibility. Significantly, these are part of the narrative itself, not side comments addressed to F, and they are clearly framed as reported-speech strings; observe, for example, the following two excerpts from transcript A:

15 *Aku muna ttaa, ((laughs)) (2.0)* I said, "come on,
my words hey! am I crazy or what?"
A ko au nei e- (0.6) ei(i)
and Foc I this Nps
he tino fakavalevale? (0.7)
a person crazy

31 *Kiloko, (2.2) au he tino eiloa-* "You see, I am a man who
you-see I a person indeed always knows, like, given
E ILOA LLEI faeloa nee au my social position, [who
Nps know well constantly Erg I always knows] whether
peelaa te:: (2.0) i luga i oku what I do is [right or]
thus the from my wrong.
tofi, (1.1) i te mea kaa
social-position on the thing Irr
hai nee au peelaa hee llei. (0.8)
do Erg I like Neg good

32 *Kae ilo nee au a futi a* And I [also] know which
and know Erg I Cnt banana Cnt banana trees are yours."
koutou.
you-3

Furthermore, the credibility-establishing sequence of line 15 is worded as a rhetorical question ("Am I crazy?"), and that of lines

31–32 includes a phrase (*i luga i oku tofi* 'from the perspective of my social duties/position') which, inserted at the beginning of the quoted turn, stresses the *socially recognized* and nonnegotiable nature of K's credibility.

The rhetorical strategy of K's discourse is clear: had credibility-establishing statements been included in the collateral part of the narrative and hence directly addressed to F, his audience might have inferred that K *needed* to establish credibility in this context. As part of the quoted narrative line, and with the support of the two rhetorical devices noted in the previous paragraph, the only possible inference is that K needs to establish his credibility only for the sake of faithfully reporting his verbal interaction with his two opponents. K's "assertive rhetoric" (Bailey 1983) is devastatingly powerful.

Prosodic Structure

When K reports his own portion of dialogs, his soft and unexcited prosodic patterns are geared to convey the impression of calm, thoughtfulness, and level-headedness, as in his response to the initial accusation in transcript A:

13 *((mid-high pitch, whisper)) Io? (0.4)* "Oh? And why?"
yes
I te aa?
why?

21 *((high pitch, fast)) (Ak)u muna* I said, "all right!"
my words
i:o!
yes

K's own reported discourse is characterized by relatively long conversational turns and complex sentence structures uninterrupted by pauses. This is particularly clear in the straightening-out sequence with Luisa.

27 *Aku muna Luisa, lle:i, (0.3)* I said, "Luisa, good [I am
my speech Luisa good glad we are running into

i au ne m- manako kee: because I Pst want Sbj
fetaui taaua i Fagaua kae:- meet we-2 at Fagaua but
mea aka laa koe koo tele thing then then you Inc run
mai ki Olataga. (1.2) Dxs to Olataga

each other], because I very much wanted to meet you on Fagaua but- the thing is that you had come over here to Olataga.

28 *Ko au fua e: faipati atu kiaa* Foc I just Nps speak Dxs to
koe ki luga i te: (0.3) peelaa mo you about the like
tau: fekau ne avatu nee your message Pst transmit Erg
Samasone. Samasone

I just wanted to talk to you about, like, your complaint that [I heard about] through Samasone."

K's self-reported discourse thus has many features characteristic of planned discourse (Ochs 1979). The production of spontaneous discourse with planned characteristics is a skill associated with public speaking, which is performed exclusively by senior male members of the community. K's use of planned features in his self-reported turns associates his role in the reported conversation with the social attributes of the most responsible and powerful members of the community.

In contrast, when reporting his opponent's turns, K conveys the impression of an erratic, emotional, unpredictable individual through the use of short stretches of repetitive, choppy discourse, as in lines 29–30 and 40 of transcript A and line 29, transcript B:

29 [continuation from 28 above]
(2.2) ((high pitch)) Muna mai io-, say Dxs yes
((fast)) io- io-! ((laughter)) yes yes

She says, "Yes, oh, yes- yes-!"

30 *(Muna)hh a tou fafi(ne)!* say Cnt your woman

That's what she said, the woman!

40 *Muna mai. Koo hee:ai- HEE:ai he:* say Dxs Inc Neg Neg a
mea e: (0.7) onosai e:i- thing Nps harbor-feelings Anp

[She] says to me, "There is nothing- no harbored feeling between us any more."

(TRANSCRIPT B)

29 *((high pitch)) Muna mai heeai laa* say Dxs Neg then
hoku ssee i ei, (0.5) my wrong in Anp
((mid-high pitch)) e ssee eiloa Nps wrong indeed
ko: ko laatou. Foc Foc they-3

She says, "I did nothing wrong, they were the ones that did something wrong."

K's communicative intent may be analyzed in the light of the Davitz's (1964) model of affective meaning. Focusing on the subjective perception of affect in discourse, Davitz notes a strong correlation between what is perceived as passive feelings and low pitch, soft voice, and a slow rate of speech; in contrast, subjectively active feelings are associated with high pitch, flaring timbre, and a fast rate of speech.

K exploits these correlations in conjunction with one of the most salient characteristics of dialoging: the fact that, through reported speech, "I can appropriate meaning *to my purpose* [. . .] by ventriloquing others" (Holquist 1983:4; emphasis added). K presents himself as emotionally self-controlled, a characteristic equated with maturity on Nukulaelae, as pointed out above. In contrast, K presents Luisa and Saavave, his two opponents, as erratic speakers, lacking self-control, and, hence, immature.

Word Choice and Syntactic Structure

Two of the most covert and most effective channels for encoding affect are word choice and syntactic structure. The affective component of these two channels is covert because the primary function of words and syntax is the communication of referential meaning. Affect is always present in description, whether of a high or low degree of iconicity. The overlaying of affective mean-

ing in the lexical and syntactic structure of discourse is a tactic that involves what Bateson terms "camouflage" (1972:414).

Next, I shall investigate the affective use of three classes of lexical and syntactic strategies: the marking of syntactic and pragmatic role within the clause; nominal reference; and emphatic and moderating adverbs. (This list by no means exhausts the affective exploitations of lexical and syntactic choice in the two transcripts.)

As described in Besnier (1986), much pragmatic information is encoded in the syntactic structure of a Tuvaluan sentence. The many possible word-order variations, for example, are distinguished from each other by the relative pragmatic salience of the nominal constituents of the sentence and by the semantics of the different case-marking patterns associated with each word-order combination.

One of the main features of this system is the fact that fine distinctions can be made in the degree of agentivity of the subject of the clause (i.e., the degree of responsibility of the agent in the action or state described by the verb). In lines 30–31 of transcript A, quoted above, for example, the ergative case-marker *nee* denotes high agentivity (Besnier 1986). Its use stresses the high degree of involvement of the agent in the action described. Note that this case-marker is used three times in the same short stretch of reported speech; in each case, the subject is a first-person singular pronoun. The case-marking strategy used in this stretch of discourse stresses the high degree of responsibility of the narrator in the situation described.

Similarly, in Nukulaelae Tuvaluan, the recipient nature of an indirect object may be emphasized through the use of the deictic adverb *atu* 'toward the recipient'. This contrasts with the marking of indirect objecthood through overt expression of the noun phrase without the adverb and through presence of the adverb without an indirect object. K uses the "emphatic" syntactic strategy in line 28 of transcript A, where both the adverb *atu* and the indirect object *kiaa koe* are present:

28	*Ko au fua e: faipati atu* Foc I just Nps speak Dxs *kiaa koe ki luga i te: (0.3)* to you about the	"Let me just talk to you about the:, like, the complaint that Samasone told me about."
	peelaa mo tau: fekau ne avatu like your message Pst transmit *nee Samasone.* Erg Samasone	

Not surprisingly, the subject of this clause refers to K, and the indirect object to Luisa, K's opponent. This strategy emphasizes the recipient (and, thus, powerless) position in which Luisa finds herself in the reported interaction.

Nominal reference in Tuvaluan may be expressed in a variety of ways, including zero-anaphora, the least "informational" (i.e., the least definite, the most opaque, and potentially the most ambiguous) referential strategy available (Besnier 1985). K makes frequent use of this referential strategy when talking about his opponents, as in the examples below from transcripts A and B:

(TRANSCRIPT A)

25	*((high pitch)) au naa e vau* I then Nps come *i te:: (0.3) fale o: Elekana* at the house of Elekana *mo Manatu- ((high pitch)) e nofo* and Manatu Nps stay *atu i ei!* Dxs at Anp	I was [walking along and] came to [the level of] Elekana and Manatu's house, and there she [Luisa] was!

(TRANSCRIPT B)

33	*Tuku mai te:: ((high pitch)) mea,* hand Dxs the thing *mea, ffuli mai (eiloa) ttua:* thing turn Dxs indeed the+back *koo hano* Inc go	(She) then gives me the thing [the money], turns her heels, and leaves.

In several instances, the same individuals are referred to by full noun phrases, but K chooses a descriptive noun phrase, *tou fafine* 'your woman', instead of a proper name. This is illustrated in lines 29–30 of transcript A and in lines 16–18 of transcript B below. This expression, which is often used in Nukulaelae gossip along

with its equivalent *tou tagata* 'your man', has clearly sarcastic undertones.

16 *Fakalogo au nei ((chuckling)) ki* I overheard what Ioopu told Saavave,
hear I here to
te mea a Ioopu e fai mai
the thing of Ioopua Nps say Dxs
kiaa Saavave, (2.0) galo aka
to Saavave disappear then

17 *(2.0) galo aka tou fafine,* then the woman [Saavave] disappeared.
disappear then your woman

18 *maaua laa mo Lusi e llaga* [Later, while] Lusi and I were weaving coconut-frond baskets near his chicken coop, the woman [Saavave] came by.
we-2 the with Lusi Nps weave
pola i tena paa, koo vau
baskets at his coop Inc come
tou- tou fafine.
your your woman

Note also the reference made by F to Luisa's husband as *te toeaina* 'the old man' in line 42 of the first transcript. This term, which usually has a neutral connotation, is used sarcastically here, in that Luisa's husband is neither of an age nor of a social position to be called a *toeaina* 'elder, old man'.

The connotation of K's consistent use of referential expressions low in informationality when talking about his opponents is that, for him, these can be described, like nonhuman entities, with nonproper noun phrases. The general affective perlocution is thus unmistakenly negative.

K's use of adverbials is also striking. When reporting his own turns, he uses in several instances emphatic adverbs: *eiloa, loa* 'indeed [etc.]', *faeloa* 'always, constantly', and *llei* 'well, very much'. An example of this occurs in transcript A at the beginning of his report of his straightening-out conversation with Luisa:

27 *Aku muna Luisa, (2.0) lle:i, [. . .]* I said, "Luisa, good, [. . .]."
my words Luisa good

Other examples occur a little later in the same conversation:

31 *Au he tino eiloa- E ILOA* "I am a man who always knows, like, given my social position, [who always knows] whether what I do is is [right or] wrong."
I a person indeed Nps know
LLEI faeloa nee au peelaa te::
well always Erg I like the
(2.0) i luga i oku tofi, (1.1)
from my social-position
i te mea kaa hai nee au
on the thing Irr do Erg I
peelaa hee llei. (0.8)
like Neg good

33 *Tee(l)aa laa ((mid-high pitch))* "So, I did not [chop down] a single banana tree of yours."
thus
HEEai eiloa he futi o: koutou
Neg indeed a banana of you-3
ne:: n-
Pst Pst

Besides their referential function as markers of emphasis, these adverbs convey the impression of a determined and self-assured speaker, precisely the presentation of self (Goffman 1959) K strives for through his narrative.

In the same manner, K reports Samasone's original overture by including the moderating adverb *hua* 'just, only', which serves as a dampener on the initial secondhand accusation. This accusation, incidentally, is worded more as a piece of transmitted information than an accusation, thus already putting into question Luisa's credibility as the initiator of the accusation:

12 *((whisper)) au e ssili atu hua* "I just want to ask you about Luisa's request [. . .]"
I Nps ask Dxs just
kia koe i te:: (1.8) fekau
to you about the message
nei a: Luisa ne hai mai [. . .]
this of Luisa Pst say Dxs

K presents himself as being on the same footing as Samasone,

who is, as stated earlier, an influential member of the community.

The picture is clear: through subtle lexical and syntactic choices that *appear* to be dictated by referential considerations, K manages to present himself as having characteristics of a mature and responsible personality. In contrast, the lexical and syntactic descriptions of his opponents' actions and speech are charged with negative affect.[10]

Conversational Structure of the Reported Interactions

Conversation analysts have shown that interactors organize their conversations to reflect the relative social power between them (much of the research on this topic is based on data from intergender conversation: West and Zimmerman 1983, Leet-Pellegrini 1980, for example). Conversation opening, topic changes, and pair-part initiation, for instance, are predominantly controlled by the interactant with greater power or greater access to interpersonal control. This fact appears to be universal.

Significantly, the reported dialogs that form part of K's narrative have many of the features of an interaction between unequals. K attributes to his own reported turns a number of features of the speech of dominant conversationalists and presents his interactors' turns as those of subordinate interactors.[11] In the first transcript, he is the one who opens the reported interactions with his opponents, as in lines 26–27, which is the beginning of the straightening-out dialog with Luisa:

26	*Maatou mo Uili mo Paka. (0.3)* we-3 with Uili and Paka	I was with Uili and Paka.
27	*Aku muna Luisa, lle:i, [. . .]* my words Luisa good	I said, "Luisa, good, [. . .]."

Similarly, his last interaction with Saavave in the second transcript begins with a question-answer "adjacency pair" (Schegloff and Sacks 1973), whose first part, again, K utters:

19	*Ia! (1.6) Aku muna, he aah? (1.0)* Exc my words a what?	"Yes," I said "what is it?"

20	*Konaa te:: tau:: te luafulu* there the your the twenty *lima taalaa.* five dollar	[she says] "Here are the::, you::r, the twenty-five dollars."

Lastly, in transcript A, it is K who initiates the "forgiveness" sequence. He uses a reciprocal clause, indicating that forgiveness is to be "exchanged" rather than addressed to him alone. This is an illustration of what Bailey calls a "rhetoric of compromise" tactic (1983:144–77):

41	*(M)una: au, (0.7) fakatau* say I exchange *fakamaagalo nei taaua.* forgive now we-2 ((laughter, 1.8))	I said: "let us forgive each other now."

This short analysis of the structure of the verbal interactions between K and his two opponents as K reports them shows again that, through the covert communication of affect, K presents himself in the narratives as a powerful, self-controlled, and, generally speaking, empathy-worthy individual.

Laughter

Finally, K punctuates his narratives with laughter and chuckles in what appears to be a highly systematic fashion, the purpose of which is the communication of an affective meaning congruent with that conveyed by the other factors reviewed in this section.

Many authors have stressed the extreme polysemy of laughter (Apte 1985; Chapman and Foot 1976, for example), a fact that cultural actors are well aware of (as witnessed by the rich conceptions of laughter types found in many cultures). While it is often difficult (if not impossible) to attribute a specific meaning to laughter where it occurs, the very *presence* of laughter may be interpreted as a significant factor (Besnier 1983a). In particular, affect communication is recognized as the most salient function of laughter.

K both laughs and *invites* laughter (Jefferson 1979) in two

types of contexts. In one, laughter punctuates a self-reported turn in which he is forced by the conflict situation to issue a face-threatening statement. In line 41 above, for example, K is placed in the face-threatening position (both for him and, in particular, for his opponent) of having to initiate a forgiveness sequence. In the example below (first transcript), he is forced to save his own face in the reported dialog by asking a rhetorical question bearing on his sanity and social behavior:

15	*Aku muna ttaa, ((laughter)) (2.0)*	I said, "come on, am I crazy
	my words hey!	or what?"
	A ko au nei e- (0.6) e(i)	
	and Foc I this Nps	
	he tino fakavalevale? (0.7)	
	a person	

In both examples, laughter appears to invite an appreciation of the ridiculous nature of the whole situation Luisa created between them.

The second context type is more transparent. K laughs and invites laughter when reporting an opponent's turns or when describing an opponent's actions as illustrated in examples from both transcripts:

(TRANSCRIPT A)

29	*((high pitch)) Muna mai io-,*	She says, "yes, oh, yes- yes-!"
	say Dxs yes	
30	*((laughter)) (Muna)hh a tou*	That's what she said,
	say Cnt your	the woman!
	fafi(ne)!	
	woman	

(TRANSCRIPT B)

36	*Aku muna koo atuli eiloa a*	I figured she got chased out
	my words Inc chase indeed Cnt	by her [family, for having
	ia n(ee) thenahhh ((chuckles))	done something wrong].
	she Erg her	

In both contextual types, laughter is used as a channel to communicate negative affect. The target is either the conflict situation in general, which, in both cases, was initiated by the other party, or K's opponent.

Discussion

In this analysis I have examined types of affective meaning filtered through five different channels in conversations about two conflict situations. In the following discussion, I bring together the patterns observed in the conversational data with the more general ethnographic description given previously.

How does the channeling of affective meaning reflect the cultural ideologies that come into play in interpersonal conflicts and their management? In this enterprise is rooted the notion that a gossiper is "a complex filtering mechanism" (Haviland 1977:61). In other words, how the gossiper exploits rhetoric (in the broadest sense of the term) for "the conscious manipulation in a covert way of the feelings and sentiments of others" (Bailey 1983:24) is intrinsically interdependent with what a conflict situation *represents* in the culture in question.

It is important to note, first of all, that the gossiper's rhetorical manipulations are not limited to his audience in the two situations under study. In addition to K's obvious intent to have F believe him and side with him in the two gossip sessions, K also manipulates the presentation of self of his two opponents. Thus, as is the case in dialoging in general (Bakhtin 1978, 1980), K juggles between two contexts of reference: that of the ongoing conversation and that of the reported conversation. Through talk about his two opponents' actions, K modifies at will the nature of their positional identities (or social selves). He is also more or less in control of his audience's affective relationship toward the reported events and its protagonist. The two gossip situations under study are thus prime illustrations of the ways in which reality may be actively negotiated through talk.

The main conclusion that transpires through the analysis of the conversational data is the fact that K carefully avoids issuing any overt judgment on his opponent in the two conflict situations or on the conflicts themselves. Instead, from the beginning of the

gossip sessions, he appears to take for granted the fact that his opponents have presented themselves in a clearly negative light. He then further reinforces this fact through covert affective devices or subtly manipulates his audience (which is only too willing to cooperate) to voice the judgments and articulate the norms at play. Bailey's (1983:223–24) remark that the effects of rhetoric are neutralized once detected as rhetoric is pertinent here. K's rhetorical strategy is to communicate his own feelings and attitudes through covert communicative channels that are low in iconicity. These covert communicative channels are also minimally marked for evidentiality, in that the author of the discourse may not readily be held accountable for the affect communicated in his discourse (Besnier 1983b).

Through the use of these covert affective channels, the presentation of self for the different protagonists of the two incidents is, on the one hand, one of poise, calm, and controlled demeanor for K himself and, on the other hand, one characterized by irrationality, unpredictability, and lack of self-control for his two opponents. As pointed out in the ethnographic characterization of conflict and conflict resolution developed earlier, a responsible adult (i.e., an individual in control of his emotions) does not, by definition, allow interpersonal strifes to reach a level at which they must be managed. Such an individual keeps his private self in the private arena and places above all other concerns the maintenance of harmony (*feaalofani*) in interpersonal relationships in the public arena. In contrast, an irrational, irresponsible, and unpredictable (*fakavalevale*) individual will let emotions surface and affect events and other individuals. Such an individual fails to recognize the boundary between the private and the public as a fundamental cultural fact.

This is precisely one of the recurrent themes in the two gossip sessions. By initiating the two conflict situations, K's opponents fail to exhibit the interpersonal decorum necessary for the maintenance of *feaalofani* in the public arena. What the disentangling conversations must achieve is the reestablishment of this decorum, which is achieved by declaring the conflict situations as being *off record* in the public arena.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the common grounds among three areas of inquiry: cultural notions of interpersonal conflicts and their management on Nukulaelae; the role of gossip as data and as a tool for the manipulation of norms; and the communication of affect in verbal interactions. The starting point for this analysis was a characterization of conflict and of the ways in which conflict is managed on Nukulaelae. Relevant to this endeavor is the question of what can be learned about conflict and conflict management from the ways in which they are represented verbally by one Nukulaelae Islander to another. More specifically, I have addressed the role of affect in such a representation.

It was found that attitudes toward interpersonal conflict situations and the cultural processes that come into play in conflict management can be identified through a detailed analysis of conversational interactions *about* conflict and conflict management. The choice of affective strategies used in such interactions "betrays" the norms and processes associated with conflict and conflict management in Nukulaelae. These findings stress the potential importance as ethnographic data of cultural actors' narrative efforts to represent events. Indeed, as shown in this study, the cultural perception and evaluation of a situation, of an individual's behavior, and of the characterization of a cultural event such as conflict are intimately dependent on the ways in which these are verbally represented.

Finally, this study is a contribution to our understanding of the potential disjunction (cf. Ervin-Tripp 1972) of affective and referential meanings. Affective meaning is often opaque and low in iconicity in discourse (compared to referential meaning). This study identifies why and how Nukulaelae Tuvaluans *exploit* this characteristic of affect to "hide" the gossiper's covert rhetorical manipulation of an audience.

Notes

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1. In the context of this view, the notion of norm sharedness is problematic. Wallace's (1961) theory that norms are "owned" by the individual and not defined by the group is more in harmony with the hypotheses expressed above.

2. The functional account of gossip as a device that defines and maintains group membership, originally proposed by Gluckman (1963), is not at variance with the views expressed here.

3. This view underlies Firth's (1967) functional study of what he terms "rumour" on Tikopia.

4. Irvine (1979) cautions against taking the public-private dimension as a unified and dichotomous descriptive tool in the characterization of communicative events. The terms *public* and *private* are used here as labels for two types of communicative event that appear to be socially real for Nukulaelae Islanders. They are primarily defined in terms of setting (home vs. *maneapa* 'meeting house') and participation (within and without the kin group). The distinction is not claimed to be a valid comparative tool.

5. The same expression is used to refer to individuals who are in the habit of committing blunders, such as cracking risque jokes in the presence of individuals who are in an avoidance relationship to each other *(fakammalu)*.

6. Local theories on the exact nature of the cause-and-effect relationship between the conflict and such unfortunate events are, however, never clearly articulated.

7. Some of the background details will be kept as vague as possible, as more detailed descriptions would betray the identity of the concerned individuals. A rather large number of individuals are named in the two transcripts; only the individuals with major roles in the two conflict situations are introduced here.

8. Chopping down banana trees has interesting connotations. It is a serious crime on Nukulaelae, not only because bananas, which grow slowly and painfully on coral atolls, are a prized food, but also because chopping them down is an activity that individuals perform in amok-like fits of rage, which are classified under the rubric of *fakavalevale* 'demented, inappropriate' behavior on Nukulaelae (see Noricks 1981 for a discussion of *fakavalevale* on Niutao, an island of Northern Tuvalu). While the situation reported by K does not involve an accusation of such behavior, this important connotation is worth noting.

9. Transcriptions quoted as examples combine the Tuvaluan orthography devised in Besnier (1981) and the ethnomethodological transcription conventions summarized in the appendix, which also lists the abbreviations used in interlinear glosses. The translation attempts to recreate the general flavor of the conversation and at times deviates from the literal meaning of the Tuvaluan original. To ease the comprehension of certain passages, additional information in the translation is provided in single brackets (such as, for example, at turn transitions in reported dialogs, which are signaled in the Tuvaluan dialog solely by intonation). The two transcripts in the appendix are less detailed than the passages quoted in the paper. Pauses, intonation contours, and voice quality are not marked in these two transcripts. The marking of overlaps and latching, however, has been kept.

10. Other lexical strategies confirm this evaluation, such as, for example, the sarcastic use of the two verbs of motion *tele* 'to run' in line A:27 and *ffuli ttuaa* 'to turn one's heels [lit.: one's back]' in line B:33 to refer to Luisa's and Saavave's movements respectively.

11. It is of course the case that both reported interactions are cross-gender interactions. Other reported conversations in my corpus of gossip data, however, confirm that Nukulaelae gossipers often use the same dominant–subordinate features in the reporting of conversations between same-gender interactors.

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Appendix

Abbreviations

1. Transcription Conventions

(1.2)	length of significant pause in seconds
word-	abrupt cut-off
<u>word</u>	forte volume
WORD	fortissimo volume
hhh	exhalation
.hhh	inhalation
wo::rd	non-phonemic segment gemination
?	rising pitch (not necessarily in a question)
,	slightly rising pitch
.	falling pitch (not always at the end of a sentence)
!	animated tempo
=	turn latching
//	beginning and end of turn overlap
((text))	information for which a symbol is not available
((high))	dominant pitch level of utterance string
((creaky))	voice quality
( )	incoherent string
(word)	conjectured string

2. Interlinear Morphological Glosses

Art	article	Nps	non-past
Ben	benefactive conjunction	Prc	precautionary
Cmp	complementizer	Prf	perfective
Cnt	contrastive marker	Pst	past
Dxs	deictic adverb	Sbj	subjunctive conjunction
Erg	ergative case	Spc	specific

Exc	exclamation	Tag	tag question marker
Foc	focus marker	Trn	transitivizing suffix
Inc	inchoative	2	dual
Neg	negative verb	3	plural
+	morpheme boundary		

Transcript A

KELISIANO

01 *Annafi eiloa nei faatoaa fetaui eiloa maaua mo Luisa.*
Luisa and I finally met just yesterday.

FEUE

02 *I hee? =*
Where?

KELISIANO

03 *I:-. Teelaa // loa i Olataga. // =*
A:t- over there, on Olataga.

FEUE

04 *// I:: Olataga? //*
O::n Olataga?

KELISIANO

05 *A ko te mea laa ne: fet- e: hai mai a Samasone, kia aku, koo oti ne hano- koo oti ne fano ki Olataga.*
The thing is that we met- . . . Samasone had told me that she had gone to Olataga.

FEUE

06 *I te aa: laa?*
What for?

KELISIANO

07 *I au naa e tipa atu i suaa taeao- te as(o)saa, au e hano o koukou i tua, nei fua!*
(not answering directly) I was walking along the other morning- on Sunday, I was going to take a bath in the ocean, just recently!

08 *Te assaa teelaa ne hai ei te mataaupu kiaa Timooteo mo: Teake?*
(remember) that Sunday on we talked about which Timooteo and Teake?

09 *A ko te suaa assaa.*
Well, the following Sunday.

10 *Io oo! teenei te assaa eiloa teenaa!*
Yes, that was it! that very Sunday!

11 *Hanatu naa au-, i au e sae atu i te fale o: Timooteo i te feituu ki tua, a koo fakafetaui ifo Samasone au.*
I was going along-, and then came behind Timooteo's house, and (that's where) Samasone came down to meet me.

12 *sss! Au e ssili atu hua kia koe i te:: fekau nei a: Luisa ne hai mai kee taaofi kow i te:: te faamanatuga.*
Hey! (he said:) I just want to ask you about Luisa's request that you should be prevented from (taking) communion.

13 *Io? I te aa?*
(I said:) Oh? And why?

14 *Me i te tala teelaa ne hai i: i: i futi kolaa o: laatou ne taa nee au.*
(He said that) it was about a story to the effect tha:t tha:t tha:t I chopped down some banana trees of theirs.

15 *Aku muna ttaa, a ko au nei e-e(i) he tino fakavalevale?*
I said: come on, am I crazy or what?

16 *E TONU LAA i au ne sseu i koo.*
It is true that I gardened in that area.

17 *A ko futi kolaa ne hai eiloa n(ee) Maataio mo:: mo Tito.*
But those banana trees were (cut down) by Maataio a::nd Tito.

18 *I au hoki eiloa maafaufau peenaa ki:: me io laatou a: futi nee?*
I also thought (as I was gardening) about- that those banana trees were theirs, right?

19 *He:ki ai eiloa heaku futi ne:: Ne mea i-*
So I didn't (chop down) any banana tree-

20 *A KO: FUTI KOLAA NE:: NE: LAGA EILOA NEE AU KEAATE:(A) e io e io Timooteo, mo ko olotou futi e tai ttuu ki lalo, ko Timooteo e:: nofo ki luga.*
THE (CHOPPED DOWN) BANANA TREES THAT I DRAGGED TO THE SIDE are Timooteo's' their (Luisa's) banana trees are down below (in the garden pit), while Timooteo's are up above (on the edge of the garden pit).

21 *(Ak)u muna i:o!*
I said: all right!

22 *(Tee)naa laa au ne: hai kee hano au kee faipati fakallei aka i ei, ae logo aka a:u ne ttagi- i te tagi a: Luisa teenaa maa- fooliki-, koo:: oti eiloa ne oko ki::*
Then I thought that I should go and have a good talk with her (Luisa), but then I heard that Luisa senior- (I mean) junior had

already sent a complaint (and that the complaint) had reached the ears of. . . .

FEUE

23 *Ttaahh!* =
(Scandalized) That's outrageous!

KELISIANO

24 = *kiaa Tito. Ki:- kee hano ki te faka:-*
(reached) Tito's ears, that he should go to the:- . . .

25 *Teenaa laa i te- annafi, kkai aka maatou, au naa e vau i te:: fale o: Elekana mo Manatu- e nofo atu i ei!*
So, on- (I mean) yesterday, after eating, I was (walking along and) came to (the level of) Elekana and Manatu's house, there she (Luisa) was!

26 *Maatou mo Uili mo Paka.*
I was with Uili and Paka.

27 *Aku muna Luisa, lle:i, i au ne m- manako loa kee: fetaui taaua i Fagaua kae:- mea aka laa koe koo tele mai ki Olataga.*
I said: Luisa, good, I wanted to meet you on Fagaua, bu:t then you ran over here to Olataga.

28 *Ko au fua e: faipati atu kiaa koe ki luga i te: peelaa mo tau: fekau ne avatu nee Samasone.*
I just (want to) talk to you about the: like, the complaint that Samasone told me about.

29 *Muna mai io-, io- io!*
She says, yes- oh, yes- yes-!

30 *(Muna) hh a tou fafi(ne)!*
That's what she said, the woman!

31 *Kiloko, au he tino eiloa- E ILOA LLEI faeloa nee au peelaa te:: i luga i oku tofi, i te mea kaa ha nee au peelaa hee llei.*
You see, (I said,) I am a man who always knows, like, given my social position, (who always knows) whether what I do is (right or) wrong.

32 *Kae iloa nee au a futi o koutou.*
And I (also) know which banana trees are yours.

33 *Tee(1)aa laa HEEai eiloa he futi o: koutou ne:: ne: n-*
So, I did not (chop down) a single banana tree of yours,

34 *Futi konaa ne hai eiloa nee Maataio mo:: mo Tito.*
Those banana trees were (chopped down) by Maataio a:nd, and Tito.

35 *Muna mai, kiloko, koe e: fakamolemole eiloa.*
She says, look, please do forgive me.

36 *Au ne toe logo fakamui aka fua.*
I heard (the truth) just recently.

37 *Peela ko te o- tena osotiiga i te ttaimi muamua, me e taku mai mo ko au.*
So that when she got upset the first time, she said that I was the one who chopped (the banana trees down).

38 *Teelaa eiloa ne ave loa tena:: fekau kiaa Samasone kee taaofi aka laa au e- Ae fakamuli aka:,*
And then she just sent over a request to Samasone that I be prevented (from taking communion) because I- . . . But more recently,

39 *Logo au kaiaa mo ko:: ko Tito eiloa mo Maataio kolaa ne hai nee laaua a::*
what do I hear? that Tito and Maataio were the ones that . . .

40 *Muna mai. Koo hee:ai- HEE:ai he: mea e: onosai e:i-?*
She says to me: There is nothing- no harbored feelings between us any more.

41 *(M)una au, fakatau fakamaagalo nei taaua.*
I say: let us forgive each other now.

FEUE

42 *(tee)laa heeai he (t)- koe e: hai mo: (ko) ttoo futi o: ttoeaina.*
So that there is no- . . . You should've said that (you were leaving) the banana plantation for (her) old man!

Transcript B

KELISIANO

01 *A temotou kaaiga i ttaeao hh, a te mea a Isala, ne tuku i ei kee hano o sukesuke nee ia te:- ttupe a maaua mo Saavave teelaa ne*
(In) our family this morning, Isala (was angry) because she had gone to look into that money of mine and of Saavave (the money) that . . .

FEUE

02 *// (? teelaa ne) hanatu kiaa Paulo!* =
That's why she went to Paulo?

KELISIANO

03 = *Teelaa! Teelaa: e ha-* =
That's it, that's it, she s-

FEUE

04 = *Saavave Timooteo mo Tema mo:: // Ioopu. //*

(It said that the money was for) Saavave, Timooteo, Tema and Ioopu.

KELISIANO

05 *// Ioopu. //*
(And) Ioopu.

06 *Kai laa, muna mai a ia ko ia e maasei tena loto ia Elekana kaati laa hee: hee loto malie ki te mea: (a) Kelisiano teelaa loa hee:-*
We ate, and then she (Isala) she says she feels angry at Elekana because she probably wouldn't agree to do what Kelisiano said to- . . .

07 *Teenaa laa e hano a ia o sili me e isi eiloa te mea a: Ioopu i:- hai atu laa kiaa Paulo, muna a: Paulo, m(o) ko Timooteo eiloa m( ). Ko Timooteo, ko Tema, ko-*
So she went over to ask whether loopu's (money) had (arrived), and Paulo said to her, Paulo said that it was for Timooteo and . . . Timooteo, Tema, and- . . .

08 *Hanaifo laa ki gaatai- ka ne vau mua Sina.*
She went down toward the lagoon, and then Sina came over.

09 *Vau, fai mai kia aku, a ko au laa ne toe logo hoki ia Elekana i ttaeao,*
She came, and said to me, but I heard again about it this morning from Elekana . . .

10 *Hai mai me iaa ia ne logo iaa Isala.*
He had heard about it through Isala.

11 *Aku muna, ka: ne a laa ttou pati e hai, mo koo oti laa ne vae nee: Saavave:,*
I said, what are we doing (standing here and) talking about this, the money has already been split up between us by Saavave (of her own accord). . . .

FEUE

12 *Te mea teelaa seeai sena mea a ia me se mea // (i te) fakalave = // = lave ne aumai // loa // kiaa koe.*
That thing (the money) is not hers, to take, it is something (that was sent) on account of the family event (the wedding), it was primarily sent to you.

KELISIANO

13 *// Peelaa nee? //*
That's it, right?

14 *// mm!*
// hmm!

15 *Teelaa laa ko Ioopu k(oo) kalaga mai telotou me(a).*

Then Ioopu started scolding (Saavave).

16 *Fakalogo au nei ki te mea a Ioopu e fai mai kiaa Saavave,*
I overheard what Ioopu told Saavave,

17 *galo aka tou fafine,*
then the woman (Saavave) disappeared.

18 *Maaua laa mo Lusi e llaga pola i tena paa, koo vau tou- tou fafine.*
(Later, while) Lusi and I were weaving coconut-frond baskets near his chicken coop, the woman (Saavave) came by.

19 *Ia! Aku muna, he aah?*
Yes, I said, what is it?

20 *Konaa te:: tau:: te luafulu lima taalaa.*
(She says,) Here are the: your twenty-five dollars.

21 *Aku muna ttee:-*
I said, come on!

22 *A tino naa kaa llogo mai eiloa i tauhh mhheahh (nahh)*
You wait, when people start hearing about what you've been up to . . .

23 au e (fai) fakaloiloi,
I was just kidding her.

24 *Muna mai te ssee laa*
She says, they were the ones that did something wrong- . . .

25 *hee: uaeelesi mai laa peelaa::-*
they didn't cable to (tell us who the money was for) . . .

FEUE

26 *(Ei!) te mea laa // e hai ki te // aavaga, ka ne aa ana-*
Come on! The money was for the wedding, what else does she want . . .

KELISIANO

27 *// Aku muna*
// I said,

28 *A ko: ia Paulo e hai mai mo ko laa- koo: toko tolu eiloa.*
And Paulo told me that there were three people (on the telegram).

29 *Muna mai heeai laa hoku ssee i ei, e ssee eiloa ko: ko laatou.*
She says, I did nothing wrong, they were the ones who did something wrong.

30 *Uaeelesi ma-.*
They should've cabled.

31 *a ko aku muna- a ko tau pati e (taulagi) mai*