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WHAT IS HOPI GOSSIP ABOUT? INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND HOPI FACTIONS

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Robert Paine (1967) has recently stated that most gossip is 'information management'. Although this term is not defined, it seems to refer to a process in which people withhold or circulate information about others, as dictated by their self-interest (1967: 280-1). Paine (1968: 307) further urges that students of gossip should direct their attention to the implications that divisiveness (and group unity) may have for 'the circulation and repression of information'. I attempt to take up both these suggestions in this article. I shall, of course, deal with only a small part of Hopi gossip.

The term 'information management' seems analogous to, and evidently was suggested by, Erving Goffman's concept of 'impression-management'. Impression-management refers to the fact that 'when an individual appears before others his actions will influence the definition of the situation that they come to have' (Goffman 1959: 6). Impression-management depends, as Barth explains, on selective communication: 'over-communicating that which confirms the relevant (social identities) and relationships, and under-communicating that which is discrepant' (Barth 1966: 3). Further, as Barth points out, impression-management is the means by which social identities are generated from statuses (cf. Goodenough 1965). The process by which an individual over-communicates some aspects of his status in order to define to some extent his identity, is by now familiar through the works of Goffman. What is less familiar is the means by which individuals attempt to affect the impression-management of others, thus partly redefining the identity and status of the latter. True, Goffman speaks of 'profanation' (1956: 495) and later of 'communication out of character' (1959), referring by the latter to the momentary lapses which occur in an individual's presentation of his role. What of the case, then, in which a person directly interferes in another's impression-management, hence forcing the audience to redefine his victim's role? In everyday language, I would call this last-mentioned process gossip.

As Gluckman (1963) has shown, gossip is not only a serious business but, at times, a high art. The object of gossiping is to change the impression which another actor tries to communicate. (Gossip, in this sense, is a special case of Garfinkel's (1956) 'status degradation ceremony'.) There may be many reasons for doing this: the change in impression may act as a kind of social control, a token of group solidarity, and so on (e.g. Gluckman 1963). In other cases, however, the aim may not be to reform a sinner, but to stigmatise him. Here the objective may be personal gain (cf. Paine 1967). Since we may suppose that an increase in one person's obligations means an increase in someone else's privileges, and vice versa, the point in forcing redefinition of another's status is clear enough

(see Goodenough 1965). But we can go a step further: we may say that political gossip, gossip concerning others' fitness to have access to power, has the particularly salient point of permitting an increase in one's own party's access to power. It is gossip between two political factions which will be considered here.

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The Hopi reservation, in northeastern Arizona, contains eleven villages or pueblos, and two more are situated on the western Navajo reservation near Tuba City, Arizona. I lived with my family in Polacca, near First Mesa in the eastern part of the reserve from July, 1965 to August, 1966. Most of the data presented here were collected during that period. As I noted earlier, this article examines, not gossip between individuals as such, but between Hopi factions. As with many other Pueblo peoples, the Hopi are divided into factions—'groups or sections of a society in relations of opposition to one another' (Firth 1957: 292). Factions are 'loosely ordered', with 'structurally diverse' bases for recruitment; they are relatively impermanent (Siegel & Beals 1960b: 108). Hopi factions approach Siegel & Beals's (1960a: 399) ideal type of 'conflict between unorganised and transient groups': this is 'pervasive factionalism'.

Carl Whitman, a Mandan Indian from north Dakota, was struck by Hopi factionalism. Here are his comments, written about a month after he arrived on the Hopi reserve to work in community development:

Last week, I wrote about the division of the Hopi into the Progressives and the Traditionalists (the English words are used, though they cannot be taken literally) . . . The real issue appears to be, one party is against the Tribal Council and the other party is against the village governments. One party thinks the Council is usurping the powers of the village governments while the Progressives think that this other party is a hindrance to progress (Whitman 1966).

In the passage cited, Whitman presents the Traditionalist and pro-Council positions as polar types. I believe that this is the best way to regard them. Like Nagata (1968a), I see support of the Council, and support of the village leaders, as alternatives between which every Hopi political leader must choose. It is not possible to enter reservation politics without taking a position on this issue. Thus it is that the 'Traditionalist' (*aiyave*) leaders at times have included former Chairmen of the Tribal Council. This is not to say that the choice between the two factions is an inescapable one for everyone. There are 'neutrals' in Hopi villages. I have no precise data on their number (which may vary), but Nagata (1968b) estimates that over ten per cent. of Moencopi's households were neutral with respect to the Council and *aiyave* factions during his fieldwork. I believe that the proportion of neutrals may be higher in other villages. What seems to be the case is that Hopi leaders recruit followers on the basis of local and kinship relations, friendship, sodality membership and patronage (Nagata 1968b). Some Hopi do not develop strong ties with leaders of either faction, and these are the 'neutrals'.

Having considered the structure of the factions, let us now examine their political positions. It should be noted first, however, that Hopi politics are more complicated than the pro-Council, anti-Council dimension presented here suggests (Richard Clemmer, personal communication). As I stated earlier, many Hopi religious leaders fear that the Council's reservation development policies

may interfere with their sacred relations with the land. To change these relations may bring misfortune down on all, as a Hotevilla leader explained:

... (Councilmen) doubt these teachings and instructions and warnings from the Great Spirit. We can see many things happening around us, signs by which the Great Spirit tells us we are doing wrong things. We see, for example, droughts—grass drying up here and there (Yamada 1957: 48).

Traditionalist gossip, then, blames the droughts and other misfortunes on the Council's inappropriate use of the Hopi environment, contrary to 'teachings from the Great Spirit'. Examples of such misuse of the environment are: the drilling of oil and gas wells, building permanent roads, filing federal land claim suits, and installing electric power lines (cf. Spicer 1962: 416–17). As may be imagined, the extent of opposition to any of these activities, even among religious leaders, varies from village to village (cf. Nagata 1968*a*). Nevertheless, a substantial number of Hopi priests, particularly in Old Oraibi, Hotevilla, Shimopovi and Mishongnovi, oppose all the activities listed. An example of their position is given in the following statement:

Today our people have lost their sheep, horses, and land. Sacred shrines have been destroyed. Roads go through sacred shrines with the claim that they will bring better living conditions to the Hopi people. Our land dried up in spite of all the money that has been appropriated. Money cannot bring the grass! Only the Great Spirit can make the grass grow (Yamada 1957: 50).

One of Richard Clemmer's Hotevilla informants makes a similar point with less rhetoric:

The government will give us lights, water, bring us all those things, make us just like all other Americans. 'And for these things', they will say, 'you will have to pay' (1969: 16).

(Elsewhere, religious and other minorities on reserves have complained of the actions of their tribal councils; in April, 1968, federal legislation was enacted to 'protect individual Indians from arbitrary and unjust actions of tribal governments' (Ervin 1967: 6).)

The ideological position of the Council supporters has already been indicated. As Whitman (1966) states, they believe that 'this other party (Traditionalist) is a hindrance to progress'. Some Councilmen even feel that if their sincere desire to help the tribe could be explained to the Traditionalists, the latter's opposition would vanish. A chairman of the Tribal Council put this view a few years ago as follows:

Some of them (Traditionalists) do not understand English, and are being wrongfully guided (by whom?) as to the motives of the Tribal Council that is trying to make our people progress (Nixon 1964).

What the Progressives stand for, then, is generally what the Traditionalists oppose: oil exploration, roads, land claim suits, and installation of utility lines in the villages. It often appears, however, that they oppose these signs of material 'progress', not for their intrinsic harm, but because the Council supports them. Thus to allow electric power lines into the villages that lack them would be to give in to the Tribal Council (cf. *Hopi Action News*, 1968). As I will show later, many Traditionalists have the accoutrements of material 'progress' in their

own homes. Hence, the assumption of some Council supporters that, if the Traditionalists would only accept 'progress', their tribe's troubles would end is mistaken. For, as the passage below maintains¹, Traditionalists do *not* absolutely oppose the economic development of the reservation:

... Oil and gas developments will come when the Hopi chiefs feel that the time is here. Let me assure your readers that the chiefs do not oppose these recent modern innovations (as such). It is only when they violate their religious traditions and religious lands, that they are rejected. ...

Progress is only relative, and meaningless unless it be progress of the whole people. Certainly destruction of the basic religious traditions and religious lands is not progress, but evil ... (Johnson 1964).

Several informants echoed these sentiments. Traditionalist leaders will accept oil exploration and the like 'when the time is right'. If it is unclear when the time will be right for these changes, it will certainly never be under the regime of the Tribal Council.

It is clear, then, that Councilmen see Traditionalists as obstacles to tribal prosperity. Council-supporters' gossip also makes other complaints about the Traditionalists. Not only are they seen as 'commies' (the English word is used), but some Christian Progressives claim that Hopi priests in Traditionalist-dominated villages use malevolent magic in their rituals (see below). In part, this fear may be based on the Winter Solstice ceremony, in which a number of macabre elements are utilised (e.g. see Titiev 1944: 135-6).

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Having briefly outlined the political and ideological positions of Hopi factional leaders, let us consider examples of gossip between the factions. As Paine (1967: 282) reminds us, rivalry between factions or other 'quasi-groups' (Mayer 1966) is commonly expressed in gossip. Note also that gossip is conducted not only in Hopi but in 'expanded Hopi'—a language with Hopi grammar and considerable English vocabulary (Voegelin & Voegelin 1967: 435-6). Hence some of the gossipers' vocabulary consists of English (or expanded Hopi) words.

Though each faction doubtless has members in every village, some villages come to have a reputation as centres of either Council or Traditionalist support (Nagata 1968*a*). Hence an entire village may come to be stigmatised by factional epithets. Thus New Oraibi, an early centre of Council support, with perhaps five resident whites, is described as a 'Whiteman's town' by the Traditionalists of Third Mesa (e.g. Hotevilla in particular). The epithet *como*, 'braggart', may also come to attach itself to a whole village or group of villages. The people of First Mesa, a centre of Council support (see Dozier 1954: 342), have a reputation among other Hopi for boastfulness. Comic performances in other villages often play on this reputation. During the masked sacred dances which are an almost universal feature of Pueblo religion, groups of clowns also perform. Clowns often entertain while the *katchina* impersonators rest between dances. These buffoons show that gossip may be acted out as well as delivered verbally. Their performances express inter-village and factional rivalries, as in the account that follows, told by a Third Mesa Traditionalist:

The people from First Mesa are known as being proud. If you ask him where he's been, a man from First Mesa will say, 'I've been to my field. I've been working hard all day.' When

really, he's probably been sitting in front of the store all day. Or, if you ask him how his corn is doing, he'll say, 'Good, it's this high' (indicates height with his hand) . . . But if you ask a man from Oraibi or Second Mesa, he'll say, 'My corn's not doing so good. It's just barely growing' (from field notes).

The clowns from other villages sometimes imitate the people of First Mesa. As this informant told me:

One time at Hotevilla (on Third Mesa) they imitated the Walpis. The Walpis were trying to put a water line to their village, at that time. But they kept running out of money. The Hotevilla clown had a water gourd, and he was carrying it, but he got tired out. They asked him what was the matter, and he said he was trying to get water up on the roof-top (i.e., mesa top). But he got tired. He asked the other clowns for money, and they put in a penny or a nickel in the gourd. Every time they'd put in some money, he'd take another step. Finally, he went to the leaders of Hotevilla, and asked them for money. They went away, and came back with several dollars. They put that in the gourd, and he was able to travel along. So the other clowns said: 'See, you Walpi. You make fun of us, but whenever you want peaches, or wedding robes, or advice, you come here to Hotevilla. That will teach you to make fun of us.'

Here we see information management at work: the Hotevilla clowns created an impression of the materialism and venal pride of First Mesa's 'Progressive' leaders. They drew an invidious comparison between the two areas: First Mesa (and Walpi) lacks orchards and, with a few exceptions, weavers, while Hotevilla has both in plenty. Hotevilla, on the other hand, lacks a village water supply, unlike most of First Mesa. This lack, however, could be treated as a virtue in the clowns' performance. The implication is that First Mesa has lost its independence by cooperating with the Tribal Council and government agencies to install a water supply, while Hotevilla remains independent.

Thus, in the traditional view, Progressives are sell-outs, since they seek alliance with White governmental power. Many Traditionalists believe that the Tribal Council and its supporters, in actively seeking social change, may lose the title to Hopi lands. This view is reflected in the following passage, in which a supporter of the Council defends it against Traditionalist charges:

The Traditionalist leaders claim that if the Arizona Public Service Company ever puts electricity in the village of Hotevilla, the State of Arizona will rely on this fact in taking the reservation away from the Hopis. The Traditionalist leaders have told their followers that the Hopi Tribal Council has actually sold some of the reservation to oil companies and the Council members are getting rich from these negotiations (Honahni 1965).

This passage indicates the bitterness of Hopi political gossip. Hopi who have concluded agreements for oil exploration are thought to profit personally from the negotiations; those who wish to live 'Progressively' may lose all Hopi land to the Whites. Traditionalists, in this connexion, refer to the tribal government as the 'so-called Hopi Tribal Council'. They refuse to admit, even verbally, that the Council represents the tribe.

As Garfinkel (1956: 423; cf. Paine 1968: 307) argues, a successful denunciation requires that the denouncer should identify himself as speaking in the name of the group and its values. This is what each party attempts, and each party denies the rights of the other to do so. Just as Traditionalists deny the legitimacy of the Tribal Council, their factional opponents question the legitimacy of village leaders, particularly when the latter claim to represent Traditionalists in other villages.

(Formerly, Hopi villages were autonomous.) In February, 1966, a letter appeared in a reservation newspaper which opened with the phrase, 'We, the Hopi traditional and religious leaders'. It was signed by Chiefs from Hotevilla, Mishongnovi, and Shimopovi. It drew the following reply in the same newspaper, addressed to the 'So-called Traditionalist leaders':

Has your leaders' position ever been recognized by the majority of the Hopi people, other than the so-called Traditionalist villages of Hotevilla, Mishongnovi, and Shimopovi? . . . Do you claim these three Hopi villages to be the majority of the twelve villages of the Hopi Reservation? (Anonymous 1966).

'The battle of Scandal has its own rules', as Gluckman (1963: 313) reminds us. One such rule, Gluckman notes, is that gossip is rarely face-to-face with the person gossiped about (cf. Paine 1967: 280; Gluckman 1968: 32). What better way, then, to make one's point with 'concealed malice' (Gluckman 1963) than through an anonymous letter to the reservation newspaper? The anonymous letter cited questions the Traditionalist Chiefs' claim to be *tribal* leaders, rather than merely leaders of their own villages. A Council Chairman had earlier made the same point in similar circumstances. A journalist asked the Chairman about Traditionalist complaints in the press that the Council could not speak for the Hopi tribe. He turned the Traditionalists' criticism back on themselves, with the retort that *they* could not speak for the tribe, and perhaps not even for their villages. (Disputes over succession are common in Hopi villages.)

Leaders of the Hopi villages are recognized by their blood (descent), not by their claims in the newspapers. The Hopi people know who the rightful chiefs are . . . (quoted in Nixon 1964).

As is clear, Council supporters object to Traditionalists who claim to speak for the tribe, particularly where non-Hopi are involved. Yet the Traditionalists commonly seek allies outside their reservation. They may send delegations to Phoenix or Washington, bypassing the local Indian agency (cf. Nagata 1968a). In 1968, for example, Hopi Traditionalists took part in the Reverend Ralph Abernathy's 'Poor People's March' in Albuquerque, New Mexico. During their stay there, a delegation of Hopi and other Indian leaders visited with officials of the Indian Service. As might be expected, Tribal Councilmen maintain that the tribe should be represented off reservation by themselves. An 'editorial' in the tribal community development newsletter criticises Traditionalist participation in the 'Poor People's March'. Not surprisingly, the piece is unsigned, but evidently was written by the editor of the newsletter who is a Council supporter:

Active involvement of (Traditionalist) factional leaders within the tribe in national demonstrations and activities designed to embarrass the (federal) government now bring forth from the people serious doubts and uncertainty about the sincerity of these factional leaders and the true nature of their activities. Perhaps this might not be so if problems of the Hopi people and issues involving the Hopis were discussed locally by the people in a peaceful manner, without undue outside influences. Certainly the very name *Hopi* leaves us no room to excuse our (their) extreme conduct and violent behavior.

By looking to the outside and exposing ourselves to the ways of strangers, we must then also accept the challenges that the leaders on the outside must face. Every day we read in the newspapers that one or another leader has fallen because his people have lost all confidence in his sincerity and the true nature of his activities (*Hopi Action News*, 1968).

The above passage maintains that delegations off the reservation (unless made by Councilmen) may expose the Hopi to the exigencies of politics of the world outside the reserve. And as the Hopi well know, they are unable to control or much affect the frightening events of that world.

To the Council supporters, Traditionalists are not only 'a hindrance to progress' and upstarts, as above, but ritually dangerous as well. Extravagant rumours are spread about the religious rituals of Hotevilla and other Traditionalist-dominated villages (Shuichi Nagata confirms this in a personal communication). A Christian, pro-Council informant related one of these rumours to me when I asked, 'Why did Oraibi split up?'

Well, the real reason was, the ones who wanted to practice human sacrifice went to Hotevilla (founded after Oraibi's schism). Those who stayed here (Oraibi) just kept things in the old Hopi religion that were beneficial . . . (Cox 1968; cf. Titiev 1944).

Stronger epithets than 'so-called Traditionalist' may attach themselves to the *aiyave*. The people of First Mesa use the English word 'commie' to stigmatise opponents of the Council. It is used in a more general sense to deride people from other villages, particularly Second Mesa and Hotevilla. The origin of this term is easily discovered. Opponents of the tribal government are equated with opponents of the federal government, among whom communists presumably figure prominently. Since opposition to the Council comes primarily from outside First Mesa, the general and the specific senses of the term do not differ greatly. The attitude of mind from which this epithet springs is clearly shown in the following letter, parts of which I cited above:

I do hope that the Federal Government will investigate each Area, Agency (i.e. reservation) and subagency and weed out all those who are against the policies of the government. . . . It is about time the traditionalist fraction (*sic*) shows some respect to themselves, community, Tribal Government, U.S. Government, and progress, instead of fighting it (Honahni 1965).

In the writer's view, opposition to the Indian Service is equated with subversion.

Just as many Traditionalists are seen as subversive by Council supporters, so in many cases are White allies of the *aiyave*. A principal subversive type among Whites is the anthropologist. Ethnographers are often regarded as publicists for the Traditionalists (however, cf. Clemmer (1969) for another perspective on this issue). It is likely that social anthropologists have served to make the views of Traditionalists more widely known (e.g. Eggan 1950: 108; Spicer 1962: 416-17). In addition, a number of journalists have lived among the Hopi. Often they have identified themselves as anthropologists, or have been so identified by the Hopi. The accounts of these men, which emphasise traditional lore, tend to be quite sympathetic to the Traditionalists. Suspicion of ethnographers and other strangers has apparently obtained for some time. In fact, the English verbs 'to spy' and 'to investigate' are glossed by the same term in Hopi, *potama* (Voegelin & Voegelin 1957: 33). Don Talayesva speaks of a period, apparently in 1939, when he worked with Leo Simmons and other students of the Hopi:

The head man in the Hopi (Tribal) Council in New Oraibi ordered me to take no more White friends to the *katchina* dances, and one well-educated Hopi warned me that my brother at Yale (Simmons) was a German spy and that I might be arrested. This worried me until I got letters from the University which I could show as proof that Mr Simmons was a citizen and a safe man (Talayesva 1942: 362).

If one reads 'communist' for 'German', this passage would represent the current view of anthropologists among pro-Council Hopi. Prior to my arrival, accusations of subversion were levelled against an ethnographer in Moencopi and against a linguist at First Mesa. Although these charges were completely without foundation, both men were forced to interrupt their fieldwork (Jerrold Levy, personal communication).

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Paine (1968: 307) suggests that our analyses should consider when and how group unity is promoted through gossip. In the case of political gossip between Hopi factions there seems little contribution to tribal unity. Hopi factions compete, through their gossip, for public support (cf. Colson 1953). Each faction tries to affect the other's impression-management, so as to redefine an opponent's political role. The Council supporters, for example, wish to define their role as 'progressives' (there is no precise Hopi equivalent). To their opponents, however, they are materialistic and irreligious upstarts who are toadies to the Indian Service and to Whites. The Council supporters try to convey an equally unflattering view of the *aiyave*—hidebound 'Traditionalists' (the English word is often used) who may be 'commies' or ritually dangerous. By so stigmatising their opponents, each faction attempts to limit its rival's access to political power.

These attempts to alter the opposing faction's impression-management do not meet with equal success. Or rather, the success of the impression-management of each faction varies with its audience (cf. Goffman 1959). A critical difference in the 'audience' of the two factions is the greater access of the Council supporters to the Indian Service. The Council faction has defined its status in a manner readily comprehensible to the Indian Service and its emphasis on 'reservation development'. The very term 'progressive' implies this. Yet, in reality, as stated earlier, the labels 'Progressive' and 'Conservative' are not to be taken at face value; there is little difference between the factions in their members' willingness to accept education or technical improvements (e.g. Nagata 1968*a*).

Traditionalist homes commonly have propane-powered appliances, though they may reject electric and water lines as BIA infringements on village sovereignty (see Clemmer's account of Hotevilla's resistance to utility line construction). Whitman, a Mandan Indian community development worker among the Hopi, puts this well in his discussion of differences between factions:

Looking (further) at the problem, I find that the labels ('Progressive' and 'Traditionalist') are somewhat confusing, because I met a lot of Traditionalists who have modern conveniences, like gas stoves, refrigerators, cars, radios, and so on. Some of them are going to non-Indian churches. I found out that many Progressives are participating in Kachina dances and their thinking leans heavily towards (religious) traditionalism . . . (Whitman 1966).

Richard Clemmer (personal communication) adds that many Traditionalists want a good education for their children, though they are critical of Indian Service boarding schools. In view of the small apparent difference between Progressives and Traditionalists, one may credit the former with particularly successful impression-management. Traditionalist impression-management has not necessarily achieved less, but its audience is rather different. Generally, it has been able to make its case to the people of the villages, excepting perhaps First Mesa and New

Oraibi—and to a few sympathetic White allies (see above). It has not, generally, been able to affect the Indian Agency's decisions. A counter instance should perhaps be noted, however. In May, 1968, the reservation's acting superintendent ordered construction of utility lines into Hotevilla. Hotevilla Traditionalists not only stopped the construction, but successfully demanded the transfer of the acting superintendent (Clemmer 1969).

Some writers have viewed factional rivalry, especially as expressed in gossip, as pseudo-conflict. This possibility is implicit in Siegel & Beals's (1960b: 108) view of factionalism as 'disagreement over means . . . not over (group) goals'. It appears as well in Nicholas's (1966: 53) opinion that factions are 'functionally undifferentiated' as to the political interests they serve. It is explicit in Firth's (1957: 293-4) opinion that factional conflict provides 'a kind of "war-game" for the energies of those who might otherwise engage in the more responsible control of public affairs'. As Firth goes on to say, a 'war-game' is particularly likely to develop where full political participation is denied to the parties. Although this criterion seems to fit the case of Indian reservations as political bodies, including the Hopi reserve, I cannot accept Firth's statement as applying there. Instead, I would urge another view of factional opposition.

Obviously, the issues are real enough to the Hopi: whether to support the Tribal Council form of government, or some other. There seems no 'pseudo-conflict' here, and no lack of 'interest articulation' (Nicholas 1966). Let us look again at Firth's view that factionalism is particularly likely where full political participation is denied to the opposing parties. Here Firth seems to be on the right track, but I believe that his statement needs modification. I would say, instead, that factions are particularly likely to form where legitimate political authority is the monopoly of a particular group, be it the Indian Service, a theocracy (cf. Siegel & Beals 1960a), or some other organisation. In this case, those who are without access to established means of political power must establish their own special-purpose groups or 'quasi-groups'. These groups are factions. It is instructive to note in this connexion that in the strict Hopi view there is only one faction, the Traditionalists or *aiyave*. The Voegelins' (1957: 49) gloss for this term is, first, 'traditionalist party', but then simply 'faction, opposing faction'. The *aiyave* refer to their opponents by the English word 'Councilmen', or perhaps, as I have noted, as 'the so-called Tribal Council'. If we can take language as a guide here there is only one Hopi 'faction', the *aiyave*. Before the creation of the Tribal Council in the 1930's, the Village Chiefs had no need for tribal factional organisation; nowadays, the Councilmen have no need for it.

This is not to say that there were no factions *within* some villages; Talayesva (1942) states that there were in Oraibi, for example. The point here is that in each case we must ask, what are factions in conflict *about*? Oraibi literally split over the issue of sending its children to government schools (Talayesva 1942). Some of those who supported the village anti-school or 'Hostile' faction now support the tribal Traditionalist faction, as some of the pro-school group support the Tribal Council. Nothing, however, is explained by saying that the present-day Hopi factions are 'based on much older cleavages in reservation society' as Nicholas (1965: 58) does for the Six Nations Iroquois. The point is not that factions cannot be studied historically, but rather that they must be understood in terms of con-

crete historical situations (cf. Drever ms.). The confusion arises, I believe, when Nicholas and other students of factionalism tend to view factions in terms of their social relations—recruitment and leadership—rather than in terms of what they are striving for. This easily leads to a view of factional rivalry as ‘pseudo-conflict’ without ‘interest alignment’—in short, a ‘war-game’. In most reported cases of factionalism in the literature, however, the issues seem real enough: whether to permit Peyote ceremonies (Siegel & Beals 1960*a*), whether to adopt a band council (Nicholas 1965), whether to send children to a government school (Titiev 1944; Talayesva 1942). It is simply some authors’ preoccupation with what might be called the visible social relations of factions that makes them lose sight of what is at stake in the conflict. I believe that the advantage of the information management view of political conflict is that one cannot forget what is being fought over. Since, on this view, we must focus on the impression the parties wish to give of themselves (and of others), and the way they attempt to manage information in order to do so, we are bound to learn what each thinks important in the dispute. Thus we cannot, as I believe some have done, study factional conflict as a thing in itself, divorced from what is at stake in that conflict. We must ask, as I do here: what is gossip (really) about?

NOTES

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¹ The passage cited comes from a letter written to a Phoenix newspaper by a Christian Hopi sympathetic to Traditionalist leaders.

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