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## UCR Honors Capstones 2022-2023

### Title

POSSIBLE LINKS OF NEGATIVE GOSSIP AND SELF-ESTEEM

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9mv1h4pc>

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### Publication Date

2023-03-10

### Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are not available for this reason: N/A

POSSIBLE LINKS OF NEGATIVE GOSSIP AND SELF-ESTEEM

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

March 10, 2023

University Honors  
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## **Abstract**

Although many individuals are unaware, gossiping is a common social practice that a significant majority of the population engages in on a regular basis. Gossiping is defined as a person conversing or conversing about another person who is not physically present at the time. Because of its pervasiveness, it is critical to explore the various aspects of gossip and its possible effects on people's lives. The data analyzed in this study are audio files collected by the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR) device which recorded parts of a participants' day. This was in order to have a look into the way they communicated; specifically gossiped with those they encountered. There are 4 specific valances that gossip and be categorized as and they are positive, negative, neutral and mixed. This study focuses on negative gossip. Although this study collected data in romantic relationship settings, this specific study will look at each participant as an individual; not dyadically. Throughout the duration of sound file collection, the participants were also asked to fill out questionnaires and surveys. The Single-Item Self-Esteem Scale asked participants to rate whether they had high or low self-esteem. Previous research has shown that social norms and social bonding through gossip are often seen positively reinforcing self-esteem. There was no evidence of a correlation between participants who negatively gossiped and their levels of self-esteem. Limitations and future research directions are addressed in this paper.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to first and foremost thank my mentor Dr. Megan Robbins who I have worked with to make this project possible. I previously worked with her and my graduate student Chandler Spahr in the Observe Lab coding audio files and data that was used in this research paper. I would like to acknowledge the patience they displayed towards me throughout this whole process. I would not have been able to finish this project without them pushing me out of my comfort zone. This project builds on the work that my mentor and other research assistants have done, so I extend my gratitude towards them.

I would like to thank my Honors advisors throughout the years who have been a great source of encouragement through the ups and downs of my undergraduate career. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Cardullo who was compassionate and a lifeline for me and the completion of this project.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and specifically my mother who has supported me through the toughest season of her life as she was going through surgery and chemotherapy. Although I cannot list them all, I am grateful for my friends and family members who have prayed for me and pushed me to never give up.

## **The Possible Links of Negative Gossip and Self-Esteem**

“If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.” Gossip has long been viewed in a negative light, misunderstood, and under-researched. According to Foster (2004), gossip is defined as an exchange of personal information about absent third parties. Previous research has shown that gossip is a common activity in daily life. Robbins and Karan (2020) found in their research that on average, people spend 52 minutes of the time that they are awake engaging in gossip. Additionally, at least 60% of adult conversations are about people who are not present (Levin & Arluke, 1985). These findings indicate that gossip is a widespread and integral part of social interaction. People frequently associate gossip negatively, yet this is a limiting and oversimplified perspective of this action.

Although certain types of gossip may have unpleasant connotations or intentions, it may have adverse effects to say gossip should be avoided at all costs (Giardini & Conte, 2012; Feinberg et al., 2012; Radzik, 2016). It is understandable that gossip can be viewed negatively because it can shape the way people view and perceive you. When gossip is spread, it can be difficult to control and correct any false information that is being passed around. This can lead to misunderstandings and false accusations being pinned on you or others, damaging your and their reputation and credibility. However it should not be completely avoided yet done with the right intentions because gossip has shown to increase social bonding, spread social norms and prosocial behaviors, and overall increase self-esteem of the gossiper. Gossip is a complex social behavior that can also have benefits and should not be simply labeled as negative.

Some research has shown that individuals who frequently engage in negative gossip tend to be less likable (Farley, 2011). This study asked participants of the University of Baltimore who were ethnically diverse and a wide range of ages to think of a person “who possessed the

attributes according to the condition” (of gossiper) and rate that individual. Despite the participants indicating the gossiper/target as having many friends, high-frequency negative gossipers have been shown to not be especially well-liked or warm (Farley, 2011). The results of this research emphasize the importance of being mindful of the way in which we engage in gossip and the potential impact it may have on our relationships with others. Other research has shown that engaging in gossip, whether positive or negative, can have negative effects on one's self-esteem (Cole & Scrivener, 2013). This particular study asked participants to tell a story about a person they knew and the researchers found that regardless of the valence of the gossip (positive or negative), the participants' self-esteem was significantly lower after the task (Cole & Scrivener, 2013). This suggests that engaging in gossip, even when it is positive, can have negative impacts on one's sense of self-worth. Despite the adverse effects that gossiping has been shown to have on self-esteem and image, it remains a prevalent behavior in our lives.

### **Social Bonding**

Contrary to prior research, recent studies have demonstrated that negative gossip may not always be harmful. In fact, the act of sharing information through gossip can bring people closer together and strengthen their bonds (Baumeister et al., 2004; Dunbar, 2004). This suggests that gossip may play an important role in building and maintaining social relationships, which can have positive effects on well-being and overall happiness. These findings highlight the need to move beyond oversimplified views of gossip and to further explore its various forms and effects. Rather than seeing the effects of gossip as black-and-white or good and bad, it is important to understand what types of gossip and scenarios bring about positive experiences such as social bonding. This study aims to bring clarification on previous views of gossip and present a new

lens on how negative gossip can positively affect many areas of one's life in regards to an overall positive self-esteem.

When people gossip, they can feel bonded by those shared knowledge and experiences. Gossip can serve as a form of social bonding and can also be a way for people to express their thoughts and emotions, helping to build relationships and foster a sense of community. A study done by Baumeister (2004) illuminates this idea by showing that the relationship between the person who gossips and the individual or group can be strengthened by the exchange of information, especially when they engage in conversation and discuss topics of mutual concern. Gossip frequently results from concerns about the behaviors or actions of others (Baumeister et al., 2004). By sharing information with others, individuals can gauge the opinions of those around them and determine whether their own views align with the larger social norms and expectations. This can provide a sense of reassurance and validation for people if they feel that their opinions are being confirmed by others. Another study provided evidence that shared participants who learned that they shared a mutual dislike with a stranger for a target person, felt closer in the end (Wert & Salovey, 2004). These findings suggest that, even though negative gossip may have a reputation for being harmful, it can also have positive effects by bringing people closer together and strengthening their bonds.

### **Social Norms**

Negative gossip can promote social norms in several ways. Firstly, by hearing about the misadventures of others, individuals may learn from their mistakes without having to experience the costs themselves (Baumeister et al., 2004). Secondly, the act of relaying stories that confirm an understanding of relevant rules and moral principles can elevate the social status of the gossiper (Baumeister et al., 2004). This further reinforces social norms by indicating that certain

behaviors are unacceptable, and those who violate these norms may face negative consequences. Negative gossip can also be seen as prosocial when it involves the sharing of evaluative information about a target in a way that protects others from antisocial or exploitative behavior (Feinberg et al., (2012). This type of information sharing is considered prosocial because it promotes cooperation and group benefit (Wert & Salovey, 2004). In addition, research suggests that negative social information grabs attention, making the gossip more interesting and people more willing to listen (Pratto & John, 1991). This implies that people may engage in gossip for the sake of gossip itself, and the more interesting the talk, the more attention it attracts. Jolly and Chang's (2021) research demonstrates that situational conditions have a direct impact on the final shape of gossip and that gossip can be a beneficial source of information for navigating social situations. As a result, negative gossip can serve as a tool to reinforce social norms and promote cooperation within a group.

### **Self-esteem**

All the studies above contribute to the idea that the positive effects of negative gossip, such as its role in promoting social bonds and norms, can also contribute to a boost in self-esteem (Brenner& DeLamater, 2016; Baumeister et al., 2004). One of the ways this is manifested is through downward comparisons. When individuals hear about the misadventures of others through negative gossip, they may feel better about themselves as they have successfully avoided making the same mistakes (Wills, 1981; Baumeister et. al, 2004). This enhances their self-esteem by emphasizing the distinctions between in-groups and out-groups. (Wert & Salovey, 2004). Furthermore, negative gossip that generates an atmosphere of in-group solidarity might satisfy people's need for connection and belonging, which may also increase self-esteem (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When people gossip about a mutual dislike of a 3rd



party with a person, they are expressing to them that they consider them to be part of their in-group which boosts self-esteem and enhances their closeness (Baumeister et al., 2004). When people compare themselves to others and believe they are in a better position than others, they are more likely to experience pride and self-esteem if they believe their advantage is due to their own internal strengths (Wills, 1981).

### **Current study**

This current study aims to examine the relationship between negative gossip and self-esteem and if a correlational analysis contributes to the idea that negatively gossiping leads to high self-esteem. To assess if this hypothesis is supported, data from the EAR study of how often participants negatively gossiped and a Single-Item Self-Scale survey will be used to determine if there is a significant correlation.

The data used in this study was collected by the Observe Lab and the participants were grouped into romantic couples but will be analyzed as individuals not dyadically. The other portion of this data will be a self evaluation on their self-esteem through the administered Single-Item Self-Esteem survey. The results of this current study have the potential to provide insight into the impact of negative gossip on an individual's self-esteem and the importance of addressing negative gossip in social interactions.

## Methods

### Participants

Participants were sought out across Southern California utilizing fliers dispersed in public locations wherever permitted, including newsletters from the LGBT Community Center of the Desert in Palm Springs (Robbins et al., 2020). There were requirements that had to be met to be eligible by those being recruited including: 1) married or in a marriage-like relationship, 2) living together for at least 1 year, and 3) exhibiting no signs of physical or mental health issues that interfere with their daily functioning. These criteria guaranteed that participants were in committed romantic relationships and not dealing with health issues that would interfere with their routine activities (Robbins et al., 2020). The participants were also required to have possession of a smartphone and an email account to be able to complete surveys throughout their day.

From the original 170 interested couples, only 78 couples were eligible to participate in the end. Seventeen couples (10%) did not fit the criteria of a marriage-like relationship, another seventeen couples (10%) were not living together, seven couples (4%) had medical conditions that impeded their daily functioning, and fifty one couples (30%) ended up not wanting to participate or were not able to continue. Out of the 78 couples who were eligible, 74 couples (95%) completed the whole study. The 2 couples (2.5%) dropped out of the study due to an ending of their relationship and the other 2 couples dropped out due to unknown reasons after completing the first weekend (Robbins et al. 2020). Finally, the Lab was not able to use data from one couple because there was an error in entering participant ID numbers.

In the end the final sample came out to be 77 couples that had one completely monitored weekend and usable data. The data was dyadically gathered but in this particular study will be

looking at the participants as individuals. In light of this information, this study had participants who self identified as women ( $n = 58$ ) and participants who self identified as men ( $n = 52$ ). All participants were compensated \$25 per completed weekend, up to \$50 per individual for being a part of this study. Demographics are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic Descriptives**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
<b>Age</b>	33	14	19-80
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	
<b>Gender</b>			
Men	52	47.4%	
Women	58	52.7%	
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
Asian	10	8.8%	
Black	4	3.5%	
Hispanic/Latin X	34	29.8%	
White	56	49.1%	
Middle Eastern	4	3.5%	
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0.9%	
Other	5	4.4%	

Note. For age and gender ( $N = 110$ ). For Race/Ethnicity, participants could select more than one option ( $N= 101$ ).

## **Procedure**

Participants were given thorough and verbal details of the research before completing a written form indicating their intent to participate. Participants met with the experimenter on two separate Fridays (separated by one month) where they were briefed on the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR) procedures that would be utilized through that weekend. The EAR

device is a portable electronic device that records sound from the participants immediate environment throughout the hours where the participant is awake at specific and programmed intervals. The EAR device was set to record 50 seconds of sound every 6 minutes. The reason for this intensive type of data collection was to see how the amount of files sampled affected “coded estimates of behavior and social settings (Karan & Robbins, 2012; Spahr, 2022). Due to the huge influx in files to be coded, every third file was taken out in order to have a more realistic amount to analyze (Spahr, 2022). As a result, the sampling rate was varied, with half of the data collected every 6 minutes and the other half sampled every 12 minutes and 50 seconds.

### ***Ear device***

The EAR device was able to gather on average 14% of the 16 hours the participants were awake. Participants wear the EAR device in a protective case around their waist and are required to wear a button that alerts anyone around them that their conversation may be recorded. Before researchers may access the data, participants are given the chance to discreetly check the recorded audio files and delete as many as they like at the end of the specified recording period. Despite being offered the option to remove any files at their discretion, less than 1% of participants did so (Mehl et al., 2012; Spahr, 2022). Previous research has shown that the EAR has good perception and compliance in a range of demographics and is only mildly bothersome to participants (Mehl, 2017). Participants returned their device when the study was completed and the sound recordings were uploaded to a secure storage site where qualified research coders could access them. Ultimately, the EAR is a naturalistic observational measure that provides an unbiased and impartial assessment of real-world social interactions.

### ***Ear Coding Procedure***

A cohort of undergraduate research assistants were selected, educated in the EAR coding procedure, and given a coding scheme based on the components of interest in gossip. Coders were directed to listen to all sound files where the participant spoke. For each of these sound files, a unique Qualtrics survey link was created so that research assistants could answer the questions based on the sound file they were coding for. This can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2. Coder Questions and Response Options**

Prompt	Question	Response Options
	Did the participant gossip in this sound file?	Yes/No
	What was the valence of the gossip?	Positive/Negative/ Neutral/Mixed
For the next 3 questions, you can answer "yes" to more than one question if the participant is gossiping <i>with</i> multiple types of people.	Was the participant gossiping with their romantic partner?	Yes/No
	Was the participant gossiping with an acquaintance, friend, family member, or coworker? (does not include romantic partner)	Yes/No
	Was the participant gossiping with a stranger?	Yes/No
For the next 4 questions, you can answer "yes" to more than one question if the participant is gossiping <i>about</i> multiple types of people.	Was the participant gossiping about their romantic partner?	Yes/No
	Was the participant gossiping about an acquaintance, friend, family member, or coworker? (does not include romantic partner)	Yes/No
	Was the participant gossiping about a celebrity? (includes any real person on TV or being talked about on TV)	Yes/No
	Was the participant gossiping about somebody else (for example, a person whom they have not personally met, but is not a celebrity OR a researcher associated with this study)?	Yes/No

This Qualtrics survey had the intention of streamlining this process having the research assistants first identify whether or not the participant gossiped in that sound file. If they did not, the survey would end there. If the sound file was flagged for gossip, there would be subsequent questions asked about the valence of gossip, who they were gossiping to/with, and to identify the subject(s) of gossip. Before coding the EAR files, each of the 12 research assistants were trained and then asked to code a set of weekend files to “establish intercoder reliability” (Spahr, 2022). Through multiple weeks of training and discussion between the assistants and the graduate student, the level of intercoder reliability increased and showed to be more stable (Spahr, 2022).

Other than the cases where the valence of the sound files were not clear and needed a second opinion from the graduate student, the other files were independently coded by a single research assistant.

Each audio file's coding was retrieved and recoded into numeric values. For questions with yes or no response selections, if the coder chose "Yes" that data cell was marked as "1" and if the coder chose "No" that data cell was labeled as "0". The data were reformatted for the gossip valence question such that each valence category had its own column. Within those columns, data was coded so that if a participant was labeled as gossiping with a family member in sound file, there would be a "1" in the valence category column that indicates that they were speaking to a family member, and all other valence columns for that audio file would be labeled as "0".

Total gossip frequency was computed by averaging each participant's data across all accessible sound files with conversation (from both weekends). As a result each participant's total gossip frequency was represented as the proportion of files that included gossip out of the total number of files in which the participant spoke.

### ***Single-Item Self-Esteem Survey***

Throughout the study's duration, participants were asked to take part in Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) which helps study people's thoughts and behaviors in their daily lives by collecting data frequently in an individual's environment, at or around the time they carry out that behavior ("Guidance: Ecological momentary assessment," 2020). Participants were informed that they would be notified via text message or email if they did not have access to a smartphone once on Friday during the meeting with the researcher. Then after that, they were

sent 5 more on Saturday and Sunday within the hours 10 am and 9 pm, within 2.5 hour blocks, unless they received two prompts within one hour of each other (Robbins et al. 2020).

On the Monday after each weekend, participants were sent follow-up surveys and questionnaires to fill out to see how the overall experience and to fill information that would help the researchers with demographics and other supplemental information (Table 1). The study was then replicated in the exact same way as before but a month after the original weekend. The reason the weekend was used in the study rather than *during* the week was due to the higher chance for social interactions with their romantic partner, friends, family, without having to worry about recording people who wouldn't be comfortable with it during the week (Robbins, 2017).

For this specific study, the Single-Item Self-Esteem scale was used to ask participants to report their perceived level of self-esteem. Just like the other EMAs, this assessment was given once during the duration of both weekends. It was administered in the form of a survey asking: “Please rate the following statement on a scale of 1 (not very true of me) to 5 (very true of me): “I have high self-esteem”.

### ***EMA response rate***

EMA measures were completed at a high rate during both weekends. During the first weekend, 1,270 EMA replies were received out of a potential 1,694, resulting in a 75% completion rate. Similarly, 1,182 out of 1,606 EMAs were recorded in weekend two at a completion rate of 74% (Robbins et al., 2020). The average amount of EMAs submitted per participant was 8.21 (SD=2.74) during the first weekend and 7.64 (SD=3.22) and for the second weekend (out of 11 possible), reflecting relatively great response levels.

## Measures

### *Demographics*

Self-reported age, gender, partner's gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, work position, and greatest level of education were among the demographic information gathered. The present study's major demographic variables of interest are the amount of negative gossip and self-esteem. Participants were classified as either a woman in a relationship with a woman, a man in a relationship with a man, a woman in a relationship with a man, or a man in a relationship with a woman based on their self-reported gender information.

### *Gossip frequency*

For the purposes of this study, gossip is defined as talk about people who are not physically present in the conversation. When the sound files were coded, the participants needed to be gossiping, not just listening to another person gossiping. If the participant was discussing an incident that happened to them, talking about a brand or corporation (which does not qualify as a person), or describing an occurrence that involved a non-specific individual (e.g., "someone took that person's money," the conversation was not categorized as gossip (Spahr, 2022). As previously stated, the frequency or lack of gossip within a sound file was dichotomously coded (1 or 0), and gossip frequency was defined as the proportion of files in which gossiping occurred divided by the total number of sound files in which the participant talked throughout the two-weekend period.

### *Valences of Gossip*

The valence of the bulk of gossip spoken in the sound file was used to classify gossip. They were categorized as positive (e.g., flattering), negative (i.e., hostile comments), neutral (i.e. no evaluation about the subject or the scenario, informative), or mixed gossip (i.e. both positive



and negative gossip). It is crucial to remember that the valence of gossip is determined not only by the words spoken, but also by the suggested tone (e.g., impatient, serious) and non-verbal auditory reactions (e.g., sighing, laughing, scoffing) (Spahr, 2022). While the transcripts only include what the participant said, the coder was in charge of determining the valence of what the gossip was talking about. In this specific study, negative gossip is the main focus so there is an example of a transcript containing negative gossip in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

Gossip Valence	Transcript Example
Negative gossip	<p data-bbox="464 800 1414 873">“ What. Did um she want him to buy her a condominium or something? Oh. Oh boy. Who does that remind you of?”</p> <p data-bbox="464 905 1414 1020">“ Please. I really hope that your mom doesn't bring up any kind of conversation that with us, because I think you might lose it on her. What do you think? I'm so irritated about it.”</p> <p data-bbox="464 1052 1414 1167">“ But he was talking about his weapon. He knows he was wrong. Well he knew he was wrong. He should've said that anyway. That never would've happened. So it was his fault that that happened to you.”</p>

**Data analysis**

The original coded data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. For the hypothesis for this study, the frequency of negative gossip was viewed as the proportion of files in which gossiping negatively (regardless of who they were sharing this information with) out of the total number of sound files in which the participant spoke over the two-weekend period.

A Pearson’s correlation was used to identify if there was a significant impact of negative gossip on self-esteem. Furthermore, all correlations have utilized  $p < .05$  as a threshold to clarify those findings.

## **Results**

### **Possible links between the valences of gossip and self-esteem.**

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between negative gossip and self-esteem. The same statistical analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between negative, positive and neutral gossip and its differences when correlated with self-esteem. The relationship between negative gossip and self-esteem was found to be negatively correlated and insignificant (see Figure 1 & Table 4 ). When taking a look at the possible relationship between positive gossip and self-esteem and neutral gossip and self-esteem, a similar result was shown as the previous negative gossip showing a negative and insignificant correlation (see Figure 2 & 3 & Table 4). The average amount of negative gossip the participants engaged in during their day were found to be on average more frequent than positive gossip but less frequent than neutral gossip (see Table 3).

**Table 3.**

	Positive gossip	Negative gossip	Neutral gossip
N	110	110	110
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	0.0184	0.0415	0.0686
Median	0.0100	0.0400	0.0600
Standard deviation	0.0158	0.0280	0.0446
Variance	2.49e-4	7.85e-4	0.00199
Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00
Maximum	0.06	0.120	0.210

**Table 4.**

		Self esteem	Positive gossip	Negative gossip	Neutral gossip
Self esteem	Pearson' s r	—			
	p-value	—			
	N	—			
Positive gossip	Pearson' s r	-0.01	—		
	p-value	.950	—		
	N	110	—		
Negative gossip	Pearson' s r	-0.002	0.43	—	
	p-value	.983	< .001	—	
	N	110	110	—	
Neutral gossip	Pearson' s r	-0.01	0.04	-0.09	—
	p-value	.909	0.679	0.345	—
	N	110	110	110	—

Figure 1.

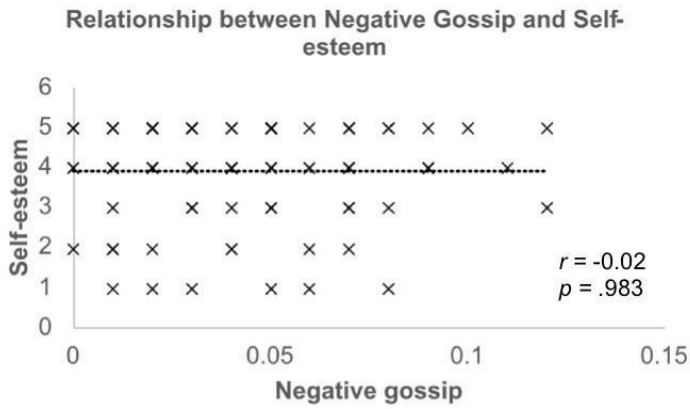


Figure 2.

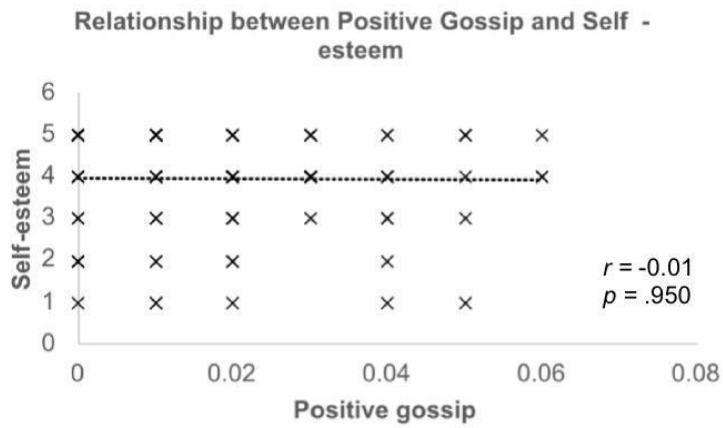
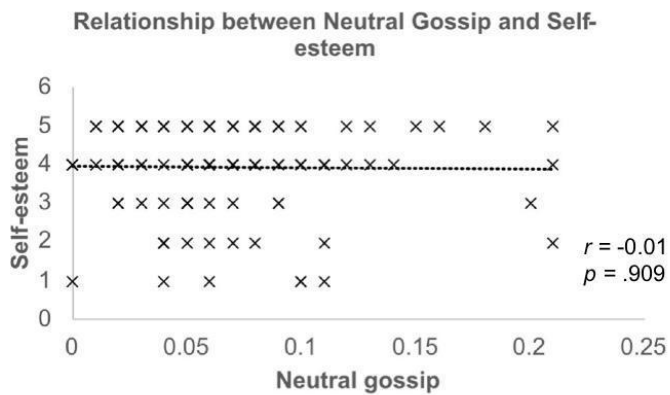


Figure 3.



## Discussion

The main goal of this research was to explore the potential impact of negative gossip on self-esteem. Previous findings have pointed to the idea that negatively gossiping can be detrimental to one's self-esteem. Understanding the impact of negative gossip on self-esteem is crucial because it may impact an individuals' well-being and their interpersonal relationships. A Pearson's correlation analysis suggested that there is no significant relationship between negative gossip and self-esteem. These findings however, do not support the original hypothesis which proposes that negative gossiping may impact self-esteem. Thus, it can be inferred that negatively gossiping may not necessarily affect one's self-esteem, and that other factors may have a more significant influence on individuals' self-perceptions and self-worth.

The findings from this current research neither confirms nor disproves previous studies claims. For example, Cole and Scrivener's (2013) study required participants to narrate a story about someone they knew, and the researchers discovered that regardless of whether the gossip was positive or negative, participants' self-esteem significantly decreased after the task. While this study had surveys and other measures in place throughout the duration of the weekends, it was not able to shed light on the immediate effects on self-esteem after each time the participant took part in negative gossip.

When it comes to self-esteem, social bonds and social norms are important factors. In a study done by Bausmeister (2004), the results show that the relationship between the gossiper and who they are gossiping with can be strengthened especially when they engage in conversation of mutual concern. The findings from this study was not able to further support Bausmeister's results. It is important to note that the absence of an effect in a single study does

not necessarily prove that the effect does not exist, as many factors can influence study outcomes, such as methodology and the way the study was designed.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

One limitation of this study is the use of a Single-Item Self-Esteem Scale, which was administered once during the duration of the study. A potential limitation of this study may be because a single-item measure might not offer an accurate evaluation of the participant's self-esteem. Since participants only answered this item once throughout the study, it may not have provided the proper insight into the varying changes in self-esteem. I would suggest that the measure be restructured and administered over a longer period of time. Some ways to reinvent the measure would be to add more questions that take into account how the participants feel at the time it is being administered. An example would be having the participant go through the audio for the day and choosing a particular moment of negative gossip and answering a survey about their self-esteem (whether it made them feel better or worse) retrospectively. It would be very important to note that self-esteem can be influenced by various factors such as their daily experiences and relationships, and simple questions asked a single time may not accurately represent their overall self-esteem.

An additional limitation of this study is that the coded audio snippets were only recorded on weekends, which limited the opportunity for participants to be recorded during work or school-related events currently happening at that moment. While participants were able to recap events to family members, close friends, or partners, this may not have provided a complete picture of the interactions that took place within their work or school environments. This limitation may have compromised the study's ability to capture a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences with gossip in different contexts.

Future research could consider recording audio snippets on weekdays and during work or school hours to provide a more complete picture of participants' experiences with gossip in these settings.

Future research can build on the results of this study by taking a deeper dive into understanding self-esteem. While surveys over a longer period of time can be beneficial, it may be helpful to include additional techniques in order to evaluate self-esteem beyond self-reports. It would be interesting to see how a participants' close friends and family would rate the participant's self-esteem and see if it aligns with their own self report. An outside perspective can help remove any biases that can often result from self reports. Effects from a self report of a participant's self-esteem could result in one of two biases. On one hand, the participant could have a crippling low self-esteem where they are not able to see their accomplishments or positive attributes. Whereas another participant may have an unreasonably high self-esteem and pride in their accomplishments that friends, family, and others would disagree with from an outside perspective. Researchers can utilize behavioral measures to see how participants perform on tasks that require them to display confidence or assertiveness to assess self-esteem. Incorporating alternative methods to gather data can help provide a better understanding of self-esteem and how it relates to gossip in different contexts.

Lastly, researchers should explore the potential differences in generation, valence, and frequency of gossip that individuals engage in. Moreover, with the rise of social media and its pervasive presence in modern society, it would be interesting to examine how social media use and self-esteem relate to gossip participation across different generations. For example, younger generations may use social media as an outlet to gossip more frequently whereas older generations may not have the access or the knowledge to these outlets limiting their social circles

to those they talk to everyday. This may have an impact on how they talk about others (valence) and how often they are likely to engage in gossip through social media. Researchers may be able to have a better understanding on the intricate relationship between personal attributes, technological advancements, and social behaviors by examining the effects of self-esteem, social media, and age differences on gossip involvement.

## **Conclusion**

Gossip, particularly negative gossip, has long been misconstrued as a solely harmful activity, affecting not only the subject of gossip but also the gossiper. While the main hypothesis was to see if negative gossip positively impacted self-esteem, it is important to note that this study was not able to provide definitive conclusions regarding correlations or the true impacts. A more comprehensive measure of self-esteem may be needed to detect this effect. With this current study, it is now possible to consider the potential benefits of gossip and reframe the narrative surrounding it. This study's findings provide a foundation for continued exploration into the subject and open up opportunities for researchers to identify areas where improvements can be made to better understand the impact of negative gossip on self-esteem. Ultimately, this research will be crucial in developing a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play in interpersonal communication and social relationships.



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