



# ‘I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE’

Case study: The evolution of ‘Gossip Culture’;

*How society’s understanding of ‘Gossip Culture’ has changed across generations, driven by the introduction of communication technologies.*

*(A generational comparison of Generation X and Z perspectives)*

# CONTENTS

<b>CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	3
LOG.....	5
CHAPTER 1: Whispers of unity .....	7
CHAPTER 2: Enticement and aversion .....	11
CHAPTER 3: The power of perception .....	16
CONCLUSION.....	21
ANNOTATED RESOURCE LIST.....	23

## INTRODUCTION

‘Gossip Culture’ is a socially constructed practice, prevalent in all aspects of society, whether that’s in a school environment or in the workplace, making it a critical topic of discussion. The evolution of ‘Gossip Culture’ unveils a complex interplay between societal norms, technology and ethical decision making and behaviour. Over time, gossip has transitioned from being something that is passed around by word of mouth in closely-knit environments, to digital platforms, ultimately altering its reach and impact.

Through my personal interest project, I aim to delve into the social, psychological and technological factors behind the driving transformation of ‘Gossip Culture’. In doing so, I hope to investigate the agents which have contributed to the enduring relevance and tendencies of this culture, as well as seeking insight into its implications throughout the evolution of the Modern era. From ancient civilisations to the digital age, gossip has remained a potent force in the creation and the destruction of relationships. By analysing a various number of perspectives and experiences of ‘Gossip Culture’ through the use of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, I aim to grasp a deeper, and more socially and culturally literate understanding of its role in society, and its influence on relationships, reputations and social dynamics both in positive and negative ways, to obtain the necessary information required to create the foundation of my research for my personal interest project. Through the use of questionnaires, personal reflection and content analysis, I will be able to establish existing stereotypes and prejudices present within the culture, which I believe represent the broader beliefs and worldviews of society.<sup>1 23</sup>

Interpreting responses from my questionnaire will greatly help my understanding of why ‘Gossip Culture’ is so commonly seen as a negative practice, and what contributed to the development of this understanding, as well as its believed purpose within society and culture. However, to assess whether ‘Gossip Culture’ truly can make a positive difference in the way of interacting and connecting with others, I aim to participate in the culture myself in order to discover the potentially positive impacts when harnessed with good intent.

---

<sup>1</sup> Primary research method: Personal Reflection.

<sup>2</sup> Primary research method: Content Analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire.

My secondary research consisting of website articles, magazine articles, scientific studies, books and other findings, will add a rich qualitative component to my PIP. Social continuity and change will also be addressed through the changing interpretations of ‘Gossip Culture’ over time and throughout history, as well as the progression of communication technologies in changing existing trends.

My chapters will include deep research into the evolution of ‘Gossip Culture’, what caused it to develop throughout different generations, and how this change occurred, as well as the way in which different generations view the concept of ‘Gossip Culture’ and its effects. I will also research the role ‘Gossip Culture’ plays in forming relationships, and the negative and positive ways it can be harnessed to foster connections with others, as well as what compels individuals to want or not want to participate in it. In my final chapter, I will uncover how gossip can be used as a tool for social learning and personal growth and development, as well as the ethical considerations involved, and in turn the potential downsides of ‘Gossip Culture’.

Through this research project, I have greatly enhanced my social and cultural literacy. I have learnt about the implications of disregarding the ethical dilemmas that exist within ‘Gossip Culture’. Finally, I have become much more aware of the positive aspects of ‘Gossip Culture’ that contribute to promoting a more empathetic and equitable society.

## LOG

Throughout my schooling life, I have always been interested in the topic of ‘Gossip Culture’ and its role in society. Participating in sharing and receiving gossip was a common practice throughout my highschool years, and in many cases, a key to popularity and inclusion. This practice became even more prevalent to me as I began to reach my senior years of school, in which everyone around me seemed to be participating in this culture one way or another, especially through the increasing introduction of technology. Through my interest in this topic, and my experiences with it, I was able to write a personal reflection in order to further support my hypothesis helping to incorporate personal voice.

When asked by the teacher to consider some possible topics for our PIPs, my friend and I ironically decided to gossip instead of completing this task. When my teacher came around to ask about our ideas, being the thing we were currently doing instead, we both instinctively said “gossip”. What began as a disguise for distraction, quickly became a topic of interest to me as I began to realise how fundamental ‘Gossip Culture’ truly is as an aspect of society, and was interested to learn more about its impact on identity and group formation, and its role in society.

Initially from observation and personal experience I hypothesised that ‘Gossip Culture’ was purely a negative activity with likely no positive aspects, that its effects were due to individuals with malicious intent. Specifically I put it down to the common perspective, that ‘Gossip culture’ cannot harbour positive change and is a detrimental practice within society. However, to my surprise, after further research I discovered that ‘Gossip Culture’ can in fact have numerous positive effects, especially in terms of building connections if harnessed in the right way with good intent. Following this research, my focus question then became “How society’s understanding of ‘Gossip Culture’ has changed across generations, driven by the introduction of communication technologies.”

In order to understand this new evolving perspective a little more, I formally began my primary research, and decided to conduct a questionnaire to gather a range of perspectives on the topic from both Gen X and Gen Z, as both generations experiences of gossip are very

different due to the recent introduction of technology, which has completely transformed the practice of gossip for current and future generations. <sup>4</sup> This questionnaire was very useful in developing my cross-cultural component.

After collecting further primary research through the use of content analysis, I was able to begin developing a cohesive report on the characteristics and role of 'Gossip Culture' in numerous social structures, by analysing various films and shows set in highschools and workplaces where gossip plays a key role in social interactions.

In conducting my personal interest project, I feel that I have become a more socially and culturally literate person, as I have undergone a journey of understanding and appreciating various perspectives on the dual nature of 'Gossip Culture' that differ from my own initial understanding, giving me the ability to interact more effectively with individuals in my community.

---

<sup>4</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire.

## CHAPTER 1

**Whispers of unity:** The western world's evolving perspective of gossip as a positive force in shaping group identity

'Gossip Culture' has always been a fundamental aspect of society, guiding the values and behaviours present in social groups, ultimately impacting identity formation and social bonding; however, the Western world's perspective of 'Gossip Culture' has completely changed over time as seen in the comparison between Gen X and Gen Z.<sup>5</sup> Through the introduction of communication technology, 'Gossip Cultures' reach and access has been completely transformed, as well as its characteristics and how and where it occurs.<sup>6</sup>

Although words have the power to harm, they also have the power to heal; to resonate deeply and shapeshift.<sup>7</sup> Thus, words have the power to impact and transform the building of connections and relationships among individuals in a positive way at micro, meso and macro levels. This is illustrated in the Western world's most recent perspective of 'Gossip Culture', a global phenomenon that has always been essential in human groups, that serves numerous benefits in society. According to British evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar (1998) in his book *'Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language'*, gossip is one of the most important mechanisms for bonding social groups and there is abundant evidence to support the theory that when it is controlled, gossip can indeed be a positive force in socialisation and identity development.<sup>8</sup>

Dunbar believes it *"plays a role analogous to grooming in other primate groups."*

He says that

*"Sharing gossip with another person is a sign of deep trust because you are signalling that you believe that this person will not use this sensitive information in a way that will have negative consequences for you. Shared secrets have a way of bonding people together."*<sup>9</sup>

This is further agreed upon by participants in my questionnaire,

<sup>5</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire.

<sup>6</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire.

<sup>7</sup> Primary research method: Content analysis Mean Girls film [2004]

<sup>8</sup> Frank T. McAndrew, 'Why gossip feels so good' (01 March 2023),

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/out-of-the-ooze/202303/why-gossip-feels-so-good>, accessed 12 November 2023

<sup>9</sup> Frank T. McAndrew, 'Why gossip feels so good' (01 March 2023),

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/out-of-the-ooze/202303/why-gossip-feels-so-good>, accessed 12 November 2023

*“gossip is a key factor in the development of human society, as it can make people aware of undesirable traits in others and help negotiate social and work situations. It can also provide you with information on who can and can’t be trusted and relied upon.”*<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, gossip can function as a form of social control, discouraging behaviour deemed unacceptable by the community.<sup>11</sup> When individuals are aware that their actions may become the subject of gossip, they are incentivized to adhere to societal norms and expectations. In this way, gossip acts as a mechanism for reinforcing moral standards and promoting conformity within a group.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, new scientific studies have cast light on the changes in the Western world’s views and perspectives of ‘Gossip Culture’ over time. According to many scientists and psychologists in recent years, such as Frank T. McAndrew, Robin Dunbar and Dr Natascia Brondino, it has been discovered that there are in fact positive aspects of ‘Gossip Culture’.<sup>13</sup>  
<sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup> This is proven by indications that there may be a scientific basis for the bonding benefits of gossip, as a result of the chemical changes that have been observed occurring in the brain of individuals whilst participating in this activity.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, it appears that engaging in gossip triggers a spike in oxytocin, the so-called love hormone, that is intimately bound up with good feelings and positive human experiences.<sup>17</sup> These positive experiences include things such as empathy, mother-infant bonding, and cooperation with others. For Dr Natascia Brondino, the lead author in one of these studies about the biochemical effects of gossip, she was interested in studying the effects of gossiping on the brain, because she noticed she felt

<sup>10</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire, Q5.

<sup>11</sup> T.Well, ‘Finding the Truth in Gossip: How to use gossip to your advantage and avoid the pitfalls’ (20 December 2023), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/the-clarity/202312/finding-the-truth-in-gossip#:~:text=Gossip%20can%20be%20a%20tool,as%20deviating%20from%20accepted%20norms>, accessed 15 November 2023

<sup>12</sup> T.Well, ‘Finding the Truth in Gossip: How to use gossip to your advantage and avoid the pitfalls’ (20 December 2023), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/the-clarity/202312/finding-the-truth-in-gossip#:~:text=Gossip%20can%20be%20a%20tool,as%20deviating%20from%20accepted%20norms>, accessed 15 November 2023

<sup>13</sup> Frank T. McAndrew, ‘Why gossip feels so good’ (01 March 2023), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/out-of-the-ooze/202303/why-gossip-feels-so-good>, accessed 12 November 2023

<sup>14</sup> R. I. M. Dunbar, ‘Gossip in Evolutionary Perspective’, (June 2004), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1037/1089-2680.8.2.100>, accessed 04 June 2024

<sup>15</sup> A.Beall, ‘Why psychologists say gossiping is good for your brain’ (18 Jan 2017), <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/why-psychologists-say-gossiping-is-good-for-your-brain/DT22J2NWIHSEACZZTXMQA2QVQ4/>, accessed 12 November 2023

<sup>16</sup> Frank T. McAndrew, ‘Why gossip feels so good’ (01 March 2023), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/out-of-the-ooze/202303/why-gossip-feels-so-good>, accessed 12 November 2023

<sup>17</sup> A.Beall, ‘Why psychologists say gossiping is good for your brain’ (18 Jan 2017), <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/why-psychologists-say-gossiping-is-good-for-your-brain/DT22J2NWIHSEACZZTXMQA2QVQ4/>, accessed 12 November 2023



closer to her female colleagues after gossiping with them, which is an important factor in group and identity formation as well as forming bonds in order to create a socially cohesive and harmonious community. Her group, like many other research study groups, found that the release of hormones helps bring people together, more specifically, the release of the oxytocin hormone. Oxytocin can also be triggered by doing things such as petting a dog, or hugging a teddy bear; demonstrating that it is in fact a hormone associated with various positive experiences and activities.<sup>18</sup> Overall, as a result of these studies there is abundant evidence to support the notion that ‘Gossip Culture’ can have its positive aspects, therefore demonstrating its fundamental role in society, and the reasons behind its enduring tendencies.

However, despite its perceived benefits, ‘Gossip Culture’ was once characterised by its detrimental impacts that warranted deep consideration. For example, in the 1500s, ‘Gossip Culture’ was seen as a practice only performed by weak-minded individuals with no personal integrity. If individuals were found participating in gossip, they faced consequences such as the Scold’s Bridle.<sup>19</sup> The use of this bridle was first recorded in Scotland (part of the Western World), in 1567, and was used on women who spoke too freely, or whose conversation was considered to be either inappropriate or impolite.<sup>20</sup> This mask consisted of a large iron framework placed on the head of the offender, forming a type of cage, which integrated a metal strip, which, like a horse’s bridle, fit into the mouth to constrain the tongue, and therefore used to prevent people, and most commonly women, from speaking as it was impossible to do so made to wear this mask.<sup>21</sup> The mask sometimes also incorporated a spiked plate, so that any movement of the tongue was certain to cause severe injuries to the mouth. There are also records to indicate that part of the punishment for this involved the ‘bridled’ person being symbolically paraded through or exhibited in their local community as a form of public humiliation<sup>22</sup> - something that ‘Gossip Culture’ nowadays creates for itself and its victims. .<sup>23</sup> In the contemporary world, modern equivalents to a scold's bridle could be the removal of an account on social media for example, therefore the removal or silencing

---

<sup>18</sup> A.Beall, ‘Why psychologists say gossiping is good for your brain’ (18 Jan 2017), <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/why-psychologists-say-gossiping-is-good-for-your-brain/DT22J2NWIHSEACZZTXMQA2QVQ4/>, accessed 12 November 2023

<sup>19</sup> Tastes of History, ‘About History: the Scold’s Bridle’ (07 November 2022), <https://www.tastesofhistory.co.uk/post/about-history-the-scold-s-bridle>, accessed 11 June 2024

<sup>20</sup> The British Museum, ‘A History of the World - Object : Scold's Bridle’ (2014), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/MUbkWlRsRZ6YP-4QuviCdA>, accessed 11 June 2024

<sup>21</sup> Tastes of History, ‘About History: the Scold’s Bridle’ (07 November 2022), <https://www.tastesofhistory.co.uk/post/about-history-the-scold-s-bridle>, accessed 11 June 2024

<sup>22</sup> Tastes of History, ‘About History: the Scold’s Bridle’ (07 November 2022), <https://www.tastesofhistory.co.uk/post/about-history-the-scold-s-bridle>, accessed 11 June 2024

<sup>23</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire, Q5.

of a particular voice in an online space (X, Instagram or even facebook). The Bridle's use both silenced individuals and signalled their misdemeanour by invoking personal shame. Furthermore, the name of the 'Scold's Bridle', perfectly encapsulates the device's role in controlling women whose speech was thought to be aggressive or disruptive, particularly towards their husbands, which is significant as it raises the issue of female punishment throughout time and into present day <sup>24</sup> Why the torture was mainly reserved for women is unclear, however punishments of the Scold's Bridle, applied at a husband's request, addresses contemporary fears that outspokenness could possibly upset and disrupt the prevailing gender power structures that have persisted throughout time within society, demonstrating the changes in social norms and family expectations of a mother's role.

In summary, 'Gossip Culture' has, and always will remain a fundamental aspect in society in the forming of social groups, however its characteristics and impacts will continue to change throughout future generations. Therefore, does all the information above possibly suggest that the reason for the changes within 'Gossip Culture' are because of the fact it reflects macro level social change? This may also include westernisation, which brought individualism to the world. Ultimately, in chapter 1 the historical development of 'Gossip Culture' and its role in creating negative connotations was explored. However, in chapter 2 the extent to which technology has been the dominant driver of positive 'Gossip Culture' will be discussed.

---

<sup>24</sup> The British Museum, 'A History of the World - Object : Scold's Bridle' (2014), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/MUbkWlRsRZ6YP-4QuviCdA>, accessed 11 June 2024

## CHAPTER 2

### Enticement and aversion: Unpacking the duality of ‘Gossip Culture’

‘Gossip culture’, a universally pervasive phenomenon, prompts deep inquiry into what draws individuals to it, and conversely what repels them from it. Through contrasting Western individualistic views that often emphasise freedom of speech, with collectivist societies such as Japan and Islam where gossip is morally condemned, the complex social dynamics that drive or deter an individual’s involvement in ‘Gossip Culture’ can be explored. Thus, allowing a more complex understanding of exclusive or inclusive behaviours that take place within different cultures at micro, meso and macro levels, which is important in understanding the variances between these cultural perspectives.

Within ‘Gossip Cultures’, individuals are able to find satisfaction in the shared feeling of excitement when sharing information, as well as the power dynamics that come in hand with this.<sup>25</sup> Participating in gossip often provides a profound sense of control over others, enabling individuals to corner victims both physically and emotionally, by exposing their personal information or targeting their most vulnerable points.<sup>26</sup> The consensus among writers who document ‘Gossip Culture’, suggest that control can be exhilarating, provoking a sense of adrenaline, which thereby promotes a feeling of superiority and influentiaity among others within an individual's social circle.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the act of sharing or receiving gossip often brings about a sense of validation and acceptance, as it connects individuals with their peers through participating in a similarly shared interest.<sup>28</sup> This validation stems from the implicit trust and interest shown by others, reinforcing an individual's place in society and the level at which they stand within the particular social construct they exist within. As discussed in chapter 1, another reason for individuals want to participate in this culture comes as a result of the release of oxytocin and endorphins that are triggered when gossiping.<sup>29</sup> This neurological response not only makes the act of gossiping feel inherently rewarding, but also

<sup>25</sup> Primary research method: Content analysis Mean Girls film [2004]

<sup>26</sup> Primary research method: Content analysis Mean Girls film [2004]

<sup>27</sup> Primary research method: Personal reflection

<sup>28</sup> F. M. Hartung, ‘Better Than Its Reputation? Gossip and the Reasons Why We and Individuals With “Dark” Personalities Talk About Others’, (29 May 2019), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6549470/>, accessed 15 November 2023

<sup>29</sup> A.Beall, ‘Why psychologists say gossiping is good for your brain’ (18 Jan 2017), <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/why-psychologists-say-gossiping-is-good-for-your-brain/DT22J2NWIHSEACZZTXMQA2QVQ4/>, accessed 12 November 2023

strengthens the bonds among participants by creating a shared emotional experience.<sup>30 31 32</sup> Additionally, this strengthening of bonds among others, fosters a profound sense of inclusivity and belonging. The individuals involved in gossip tend to form tight knit groups with one another, bound by the privilege of acquiring inside knowledge and information about others around them, creating an ‘us versus them’ dynamic that enhances group cohesion.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, this sense of exclusivity appeals to the fundamental human desire for social belonging and status; making the act of gossiping a powerful form of ‘social glue’.<sup>34</sup> The alluring nature of gossip lies in its inherent drama and intrigue, as people are naturally drawn to stories of other’s lives, particularly when these stories involve conflict or immoral decisions and situations. Ultimately ‘Gossip Culture’ taps into the universal curiosity of the personal lives of others, providing a form of ongoing entertainment that is both fascinating and relatable.<sup>35</sup> This fascination with others’ affairs satisfies basic human interests, constructing gossip to be an enduring and compelling aspect in the evolution of socialisation.

36

In contrast, the profound and damaging effects that often characterise the culture of gossip, may also be what strongly repels individuals from actively participating in it. Personal experiences of being the subject, or victim of gossip can leave lasting impacts, prompting empathy towards individuals who have experienced similar situations, by making a conscious choice not to associate with ‘Gossip Culture’.<sup>37</sup> Through a questionnaire exploring generational differences in understanding ‘Gossip Culture’, respondents provided poignant insights into how gossip has negatively affected them.<sup>38</sup> In response to one of the questions ‘Have you ever been a subject of gossip, and how did it make you feel?’ One respondent very bluntly expressed, “Yes I wanted to die,” highlighting the extreme emotional distress caused

<sup>30</sup> J. Schafer, ‘Why People Like to Gossip’ (24 June 2021), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/let-their-words-do-the-talking/202106/why-people-gossip>, accessed 15 January 2024

<sup>31</sup> B. Yao, ‘Cognitive psychology of gossip processing’ (5 December 2014),

<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/clippings/cognitive-psychology-of-gossip-processing>, accessed 15 January 2024

<sup>32</sup> AUTHOR, ‘Why Do We Gossip?’ (18 September 2023), <https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2023.772328>, accessed 18 January 2024

<sup>33</sup> R. Wiseman, ‘The Power of Gossip’ (01 December 2015), <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/power-gossip>, accessed 15 Jan 2024

<sup>34</sup> R. Wiseman, ‘The Power of Gossip’ (01 December 2015), <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/power-gossip>, accessed 15 Jan 2024

<sup>35</sup> AUTHOR, ‘Why Do We Gossip?’ (18 September 2023), <https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2023.772328>, accessed 18 January 2024

<sup>36</sup> AUTHOR, ‘Why Do We Gossip?’ (18 September 2023), <https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2023.772328>, accessed 18 January 2024

<sup>37</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire, Q7.

<sup>38</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire.

by gossip. Others described feelings of judgement and discomfort with one respondent noting “it made me feel helpless. It's horrible, and there really is no comeback”, and another sharing that gossip made them feel “tragically” affected.<sup>39</sup> These negative experiences also resonate with high-profile individuals at macro levels, such as celebrities who have spoken out against the toxic effects of gossip. For instance, singer song-writer Taylor Swift has publicly shared her experiences with gossip, and how rumours in the media have caused her significant stress and anxiety in the past. As a result, she has kept her personal life covert, to avoid further scrutiny. Furthermore, another factor in the broader decision of individuals not to participate in ‘Gossip Culture’, is the possibility of eroding trust within relationships, both personal and professional as a result.<sup>40</sup> Many survey participants agreed upon this fact, that talking behind one's back can cause deeply rooted mistrust within relationships. One respondent noted clearly “I personally don't trust any people that participate in gossip,” indicating this individual chooses to keep a deliberate distance from gossipers to protect themselves and their integrity.<sup>41</sup> This is critical because it demonstrates that gossip creates both a physical and mental barrier to building group identities. Alternatively in professional contexts, gossip can undermine teamwork and communication. This aligns with workplace research studies that have been conducted, showing how gossip can lead to a toxic, hostile environment, decreasing overall morale and productivity, which is why many individuals choose not to participate in this activity in a workplace environment.<sup>42</sup> The consequences of engaging in gossip are severe, ranging from damaged reputations to deteriorating mental health. Thus, those who have been deeply wounded by the sting of gossip often choose to make a conscious decision to distance themselves from it, embracing a path of empathy and respect when interacting with others, ultimately behaving in a rather socially and culturally literate way. This transformative way of behaving, striving for compassion, kindness and emotional awareness, allows them to cultivate more sincere, meaningful relationships, as they resolutely choose to reject harmful gossip, instead, nurturing an environment of kindness and empathy.

Additionally, as briefly discussed in chapter 1, the evolution of technology has been a prominent driver in the transformation of ‘Gossip Culture’ among Generation X, and Generation Z and has shown a linear rate of change in the occurrence of ‘Gossip Culture’ in social environments. Previously, during the peak period of Generation X in the 1980s-1990s,

---

<sup>39</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire, Q7.

<sup>40</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire

<sup>41</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire, Q8.

<sup>42</sup> S. J. Attiah and I. Alhassan, ‘Turning Workplace Gossip into a Springboard for Productive Behaviour’ (September 2022), <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=120007>, accessed 06 June 2024

gossip was often confined to personal interactions, phone calls, and printed media like magazines and tabloids, such as ‘People’ and ‘National Enquirer’, in which there has been a continuous rise and fall of gossip columns in popular magazines, making the topic seem exciting and ‘off-limits’ within the anonymous write in sections. This older method had a much more limited reach, as well as a slower dissemination process, allowing rumours to be shared within a more controlled environment, where the information could have a chance to be verified before being spread widely. In contrast, with the introduction of many social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, gossip’s reach and influence has been exponentially amplified, particularly for Generation Z, who are completely immersed in the digital world, where information spreads rapidly. This is further indicated by the broad consensus of survey participants, that all agreed technological advancements have in fact significantly heightened the prevalence of gossip within society. One respondent noted that “There is undoubtedly a correlation between the development of technology and how exposed we are now to ‘Gossip Culture’”, emphasising the role of social media in making gossip ubiquitous and instantaneous.<sup>43</sup> The ability to remain anonymous online has further fueled this trend, with respondents agreeing that social media allows for anonymous and widespread dissemination of rumours. Overall, whilst gossip existed during Gen X’s era, its characterisation in Gen Y’s world - ultimately driven by technology - has made it much more immediate and accessible, amplifying its societal impact, which is intrinsically linked to identity building and destruction, as well as fake news and other contemporary cyber security issues such as fake AI images of celebrities and data leaks.<sup>44</sup> This shift from a controlled dissemination of information through magazine articles and micro level interactions through to instant media, promotes the rapid and global sharing of information, underscoring how technology has created a more alluring and inescapable form of ‘Gossip Culture’, transforming it from a local, to a global phenomenon, ultimately altering its dynamics and influence.

In summary, ‘Gossip Culture’ remains a complex social phenomenon, deeply ingrained across different societies and generations. It attracts people due to the feelings of validation

---

<sup>43</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire, Q3.

<sup>44</sup> M. Gault and J. Pearson, ‘An AI-Generated Content Empire Is Spreading Fake Celebrity Images on Google’ (31 January 2024), <https://www.vice.com/en/article/k7z5gw/an-ai-generated-content-empire-is-spreading-fake-celebrity-images-on-google>, accessed 10 June 2024

and acceptance that comes with it, as well as having control over others, yet simultaneously repels many individuals who have experienced its damaging effects. Advances in technology have intensified this culture, particularly affecting Gen Z , by transforming the nature of gossip from a micro to macro level through rapid and instantaneous exchanges. Ultimately, this evolution underscores the dual nature of gossip; a source of social cohesion and belonging, and a potentially significant cause of harm, and break down of relationships.

## CHAPTER 3

### The power of perception: Navigating gossip's influence on relationships and self-Image

In contemporary society, 'Gossip Culture' as a multifaceted phenomenon, both fascinates and shapes our social interactions; serving as an informal mechanism for social learning and self-reflection. By exploring the intricate dynamics of 'Gossip Culture', it becomes apparent that its role goes far beyond merely spreading information or creating social bonds. Instead, it functions as a way for individuals to learn about social norms, values, and acceptable behaviours within a given group or social environment; revealing its significant impact on shaping society and individuals' behaviours within particular constructs.<sup>45</sup> This form of learning functions as a tool that can profoundly influence personal development, ethical decision-making, and behavioural adjustments, allowing individuals to navigate complex social situations and hierarchies, promoting self-reflection and development.<sup>46</sup> Conversely, gossip can also unveil darker facets, demonstrating its potential to perpetuate stereotypes and undermine trust, as agreed upon by questionnaire participants.<sup>47</sup> By delving into these various aspects, this chapter aims to unravel the complexities of 'Gossip Culture', shedding light on the profound implications this practice has on a macro level, directly impacting the values and behaviours of micro level constructs such as your own home environment, and meso level constructs such as school, work and other hobby groups such as sport teams.

As seen in chapter 1, in exploring the dual nature of 'Gossip Culture', it becomes evident that its impact rests on how it is managed and conducted within a community. When used constructively, gossip can be a positive force, fostering a sense of belonging and connectivity among individuals, serving as a social adhesive, binding individuals through shared experiences, and reinforcing societal norms.<sup>48</sup> This notion is supported by anthropologist Robin Dunbar, as he suggests that gossip has evolved as a mechanism which strengthens social bonds, aiding in group cohesion and cooperation. By exchanging stories and experiences with others, individuals are able to build a collective understanding of their

<sup>45</sup> Association for Psychological Science, 'Gossip May Create Community' (18 December 2017), <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/observer/obsonline/gossip-may-create-community.html>, accessed 14 June 2024

<sup>46</sup> S. Mcleod, 'Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory', (01 February 2024), <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>, accessed 12 June 2024

<sup>47</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire, Q5.

<sup>48</sup> S. J. Attiah and I. Alhassan, 'Turning Workplace Gossip into a Springboard for Productive Behaviour' (September 2022), <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=120007>, accessed 14 June 2024



surrounding environment, thereby enhancing group solidarity and mutual trust. Furthermore, in communities where gossip is moderated and guided by ethical considerations, gossip can promote accountability and encourage positive behaviours, thereby contributing to a harmonious society.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the negative repercussions of unchecked gossip can lead to a toxic, hostile environment, characterised by dishonesty and pervading conflict.<sup>50</sup> When gossip becomes a tool for manipulation and exclusion, it corrodes relationships, and undermines social constructs. According to psychologists, malicious gossip can breed resentment, and escalate social tensions, ultimately shattering communities. In such contexts, gossip can cause social exclusion and isolation, by fostering the formation of cliques or factions within a group.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the rapid spread of misinformation through social media specifically, can lead to misunderstandings and erode the foundation of trust which is an essential factor for maintaining collective well-being and cohesion.<sup>52</sup> Thus, while ‘Gossip Culture’ has the potential to cultivate strong community bonds when harnessed in a positive way, its misuse can create a hostile environment, fraught with conflict. Understanding both aspects of this culture is crucial in terms of being able to navigate complex social dynamics, and foster a healthy, resilient community. By promoting transparency, empathy and ethical conduct in situations involving gossip, communities can harness its positive potential whilst mitigating its negative impacts, thereby nurturing a supportive, well-bounded society.

Although it is stereotypically negative, ‘Gossip Culture’ when harnessed positively, can also be used to a remarkable effect as a tool for social learning, intricately woven into the interactions within schoolyards and corporate offices alike.<sup>53</sup> In these environments, gossip functions as a way of forming crucial social norms and expectations.<sup>54</sup> These narratives are what help to shape the perceptions of what behaviours may be rewarded, and which may be condemned within various social constructs. For example in a workplace environment, gossip about colleagues’ successes or failures offers valuable insights into the unwritten codes of

<sup>49</sup> J. Schafer, ‘Why People Like to Gossip’ (24 June 2021),

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/let-their-words-do-the-talking/202106/why-people-gossip>, accessed 15 January 2024

<sup>50</sup> S. J. Attiah and I. Alhassan, ‘Turning Workplace Gossip into a Springboard for Productive Behaviour’ (September 2022), <https://www.scrip.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=120007>, accessed 14 June 2024

<sup>51</sup> R. Wiseman, ‘The Power of Gossip’ (01 December 2015),

<https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/power-gossip>, accessed 15 Jan 2024

<sup>52</sup> Primary research method: Questionnaire, Q8.

<sup>53</sup> Association for Psychological Science, ‘Gossip May Create Community’ (18 December 2017),

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/observer/obsonline/gossip-may-create-community.html>, accessed 14 June 2024

<sup>54</sup> Association for Psychological Science, ‘Gossip May Create Community’ (18 December 2017),

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/observer/obsonline/gossip-may-create-community.html>, accessed 14 June 2024

conduct and expectations in a professional context.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, beyond its role in establishing education, gossip has a profound influence on personal growth and development, by prompting deep introspection and personal analysis.<sup>56</sup> By hearing stories of others' triumphs or times of suffering, gossip can serve as a mirror through which individuals can assess their own actions and beliefs.<sup>57</sup> This introspective process is fundamental in being able to adapt behaviours to align with social expectations, or to avoid unexpected consequences that could lead to social isolation or professional setbacks. In essence, 'Gossip Culture' challenges the popular misconception that it is simply negative chatter. In reality, it can become an essential aspect of social and cultural literacy. Ultimately, 'Gossip Culture's' contribution to helping form societal norms and personal conduct, shape communal identity. Whether shared in the schoolyard or across office cubicles, gossip wields a subtle yet profound influence, shaping individual behaviour and fostering collective cohesion. Thus, gossip acts as a potent force in driving social development and integration at micro, meso and macro levels, as well as in attaining personal growth and development. In line with Functionalist Theory, 'Gossip Culture' might involve that adaptive role that helps institutions shift and change due to external processes. In the realm of ethical decision-making, gossip often functions as a nuanced guide offering individuals insights into the widely held values and beliefs of their community. Through shared narratives, gossip can illuminate the consequences of various actions, serving as a cautionary tool that prompts virtuous behaviour.

However, gossip's potential drawbacks must be acknowledged. It can perpetuate harmful stereotypes or amplify preconceptions if driven by bias or malice.

*"In my many experiences with 'Gossip Culture' I had come to understand that gossip was only a negative driver of change or continuity in a social setting. However, through completing this PIP process I have come to see that gossip has many positive aspects, all of which are crucial parts of the socialisation process for humanity"*<sup>58</sup>

To counteract these negative effects, fostering a culture of constructive criticism and feedback, as well as open dialogue, proves essential. By encouraging discussions that instead focus on learning from experiences rather than passing judgement, the harmful impacts of

<sup>55</sup> Primary research method: Content analysis The Office television show (2005)

<sup>56</sup> S. Mcleod, 'Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory', (01 February 2024), <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>, accessed 12 June 2024

<sup>57</sup> Primary research method: Content analysis Mean Girls film [2004]

<sup>58</sup> Primary research method: Personal reflection

gossip can be mitigated. By promoting empathy and understanding when interacting with others, individuals can gain insights into the benefits of ethical decision making by growing their emotional intelligence, rather than succumbing to the potential dangers of engaging in and sharing rumours.<sup>59</sup> This exemplifies how gossip can steer individuals away from morally ambiguous paths, fostering an environment that values transparency and equity. Furthermore, organisations can implement formal methods for providing feedback to others, as well as mentorship programs that encourage guidance built upon commonly shared values, rather than speculative gossip. This proactive approach not only enhances ethical awareness, but also cultivates a supportive environment in which individuals feel empowered to make principled, yet sometimes difficult choices. By emphasising the positive aspects of gossip (such as its role in highlighting ethical dilemmas and fostering community norms), whilst mitigating its negative consequences through putting deliberate strategies in place, society can effectively harness the potential for ethical growth and collective learning. Thus, gossip, when handled conscientiously, can serve as a catalyst for ethical decision-making, enriching social and cultural understanding, and reinforcing ethical standards within diverse social contexts.

In summary, the complexity and duality of ‘Gossip Culture’ as a social phenomenon is revealed, illuminating its role as a significant mechanism for social learning and self-reflection, influencing personal growth and development. It provides individuals with a means to understand and navigate social expectations, facilitating the internalisation of communal values and behaviours. The positive facets of gossip highlight its role in enhancing group cohesion and accountability, reinforcing ethical conduct, and fostering a sense of belonging. When conducted ethically and constructively, it can be affirmed that gossip does in fact act as a social adhesive that helps to strengthen relationships and promote a harmonious society.<sup>60</sup> It serves as an informal tool for education, offering insights into acceptable behaviours, thus aiding individuals in their personal and professional growth.<sup>61</sup> However, it can be concluded that when gossip is misused as a means for manipulations or exclusion, it leads to social fragmentation, eroding the sense of community within particular groups and fracturing personal relationships. By understanding the intricate dynamics of ‘Gossip Culture’, individuals and communities can better navigate its complexities,

<sup>59</sup> Primary research method: Content analysis Mean Girls film [2004]

<sup>60</sup> R. Wiseman, ‘The Power of Gossip’ (01 December 2015), <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/power-gossip>, accessed 15 Jan 2024

<sup>61</sup> Frank T. McAndrew, ‘Why gossip feels so good’ (01 March 2023), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/out-of-the-ooze/202303/why-gossip-feels-so-good>, accessed 12 November 2023

harnessing its positive potential, whilst mitigating its adverse effects. By promoting transparency, empathy and ethical conduct, gossip can transform from a divisive force, into a constructive one, fostering a supportive, well-bounded society. Ultimately, 'Gossip Culture', when approached with conscientiousness and ethical awareness, is not just a form of social curiosity, but rather a profound influence on social development, ethical decision-making and personal growth.

## CONCLUSION

As a result of this investigation, I have learnt that ‘Gossip Culture’ as a multifaceted, multigenerational phenomenon, has been a fundamental aspect of all social constructs throughout evolution; playing a pivotal role in guiding the complex dynamics of social interactions and identity and group formation. In this sense, I have learnt that the transformative changes that have occurred within ‘Gossip Culture’ across time, driven by the introduction of communication technology, have had great influence on the agents of socialisation, directly impacting the positive and negative implications of this macro world practice, on micro world functionality and cohesiveness.

Although my research did prove my original hypothesis that across generations through the introduction of communication technologies, society’s understanding of ‘Gossip Culture’ has changed significantly, it also drew light on many more significant aspects of the topic that are important to consider in the case that I wish to further develop my research further on a much deeper level.

Nevertheless, my research methodologies proved to be very successful and greatly influential in constructing the final outcome of my PIP. The use of both questionnaires and content analysis allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of many different attitudes and perspectives, as well as seek insight into society’s most recent view of ‘Gossip Culture’. By conducting a questionnaire into the perspectives of both Gen X and Gen Z, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the different experiences of individuals from both generations which significantly contributed to my cross-cultural component as well as my understanding of different worldviews. Furthermore, I feel that in conducting my PIP I have developed a greater understanding of the nature of social research and the ethical considerations that coincide with this, which ultimately enhanced my social and cultural literacy, making me a more valuable member of society.

My PIP not only made me more aware of differing worldviews present within society, but allowed me to make better sense of the negative associations so many individuals connect to ‘Gossip Culture’. Through the construction of my PIP, I was essentially given the opportunity to deconstruct this multi-generational phenomenon, as well as address the complexities present within the four key social theories: Conflict, Interactionalist, Functionalist and

Evolutionist, all of which which helped to establish the broader macro level perspectives of society within my PIP through different concepts and ideas, as opposed to some of the much narrower micro level understandings presenting my questionnaire participants.

Ultimately, I set out to explore what prompted the significant changes in society's understanding of 'Gossip Culture' and whether or not the introduction of communication technologies did impact this, and by the end of my research I would say that I am much closer to understanding the answer to this question. In this sense, rather than forming a conclusion of sorts, my PIP has led me to question further the role of gossip within my own life and how this culture may continue to grow and evolve as I get older, and what may drive these future changes.

## ANNOTATED REFERENCE LIST

### **PRIMARY RESEARCH**

#### **CONTENT ANALYSIS - MEDIA SOURCES AND FILM (completed February 2024)**

Content analysis was an important research method for me as my project required me to intensively interrogate the media's role in driving 'Gossip Culture'. I designed a quantitative framework including prompts such as 'Content of the gossip' and 'environment where the gossip is taking place'. This research methodology was useful within my PIP, as it provided valuable insights into the benefits of ethical decision making, and how individuals can grow their emotional intelligence, rather than succumbing to the potential dangers of engaging in and sharing rumours. However, one limitation with this research method however, is that films and tv shows tend to over dramatise events for entertainment purposes, meaning this exaggeration might not always reflect real life situations, leading to distorted representations of how gossip functions in particular social environments such as schools and workplaces.

#### **PERSONAL REFLECTION (completed May 2024)**

A personal reflection gives an intensely micro level perspective on a given issue. In this case, as a generation Z student with extensive exposure to social and film media, I am uniquely placed because as a student I am able to explain the micro, meso and macro level impacts of 'Gossip Culture'. Within my chapters, I used this research methodology in order to provide an element of personal voice, and to provide detailed insights that might not otherwise be captured by more impersonal methods. However, a limitation with this research methodology is that it may be subject to potential bias as its only written from my perspective, and doesn't account for a broader majority of perspectives and personal experiences of gossip within my community and personal context.

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE (completed November 2024)**

Using a questionnaire helps me to demonstrate my understanding of social and cultural literacy. I chose to use open and closed questions because I wanted to be able to segment the data, whilst allowing for personal perspectives. One limitation with this research methodology was that the sample size was quite small as I sent it out later than I should have, meaning that I wasn't able to get as many respondents as I would have liked. However, this methodology was also very useful in terms of gathering a range of personal perspectives across Gen X and Gen Y, which was a crucial part in developing the cross-cultural component of my PIP, and meant that I could gather more personalised, specific insights of individuals within my community.

## **SECONDARY RESEARCH**

**Association for Psychological Science, ‘Gossip May Create Community’ (18 December 2017), <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/observer/obsonline/gossip-may-create-community.html>, accessed 14 June 2024**

This source discusses how gossip can enhance social bonds and clarify social norms. The research presented within this article shows that discussing deviant behaviours helps individuals to better understand social expectations, thus fostering community cohesion. This source was very valuable to me in constructing chapter 3 of my PIP, as it illustrates how gossip contributes to social learning and community cohesion.

**Attiah. S. J. and Alhassan. I., ‘Turning Workplace Gossip into a Springboard for Productive Behaviour’ (September 2022), <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=120007>, accessed 14 June 2024**

This source outlines how gossip acts as an informal communication network within organisations, aiding in the critical dissemination of information among employees. It also, like many other sources used in my PIP, identifies gossip as a tool for social bonding, as it helps individuals create and maintain social connections by sharing information about mutual acquaintances, which can lead to increased trust and solidarity within groups. The article also goes on to discuss the dual impact of ‘Gossip Culture’ on morale, stating that whilst it can positively reinforce group cohesion, and provide social support, it can also lead to negative outcomes such as stress, anxiety and mistrust within relationships if gossip becomes harmful or malicious. This source was very useful for my PIP as it strongly demonstrates the dual nature of ‘Gossip Culture’ in fostering relationships yet also potentially causing harm.

**Beall. A., ‘Why psychologists say gossiping is good for your brain’ (18 Jan 2017), <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/why-psychologists-say-gossiping-is-good-for-your-brain/DT22J2NWIHSEACZZTXMQA2QVQ4/>, accessed 12 November 2023**

This source outlined new scientific studies being conducted that have found that sharing gossip is good for you, no matter what kind of personality you have, which I used to support my hypothesis and demonstrate that there is in fact neurological evidence to support my thesis. It very clearly explained the reasoning behind this through the neurological changes that have been found to occur in the brain when sharing gossip, releasing a hormone called oxytocin (the so-called love hormone). The lead author of the study, a psychologist named Dr Natascia Brondino said she was interested in studying the effects of gossiping on the brain, as she noticed she felt closer to her female colleagues after gossiping with them, which is significant for my research as it supports the notion that gossiping can have positive effects in terms of bonding with others and fostering connections.



**British Museum, The, 'A History of the World - Object : Scold's Bridle' (2014),**  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/MUbKwIRsRZ6YP-4QuviCdA> , accessed 11 June 2024

This source discusses what is now seen as a bizarre form of punishment, exclusively reserved for women, resembling a muzzle or cage for the head. This source also goes on to talk about the historical context of the device, such as where it originated and how long ago. This particular form of punishment is also spoken about within the source in relation to contemporary issues, all of which were very interesting, and important information for me to include within my PIP as this element of history and evolution strongly demonstrate the changes that have occurred within the nature of 'Gossip Culture' across time, as well as how and why these changes occurred, and how they helped shape 'Gossip Culture' as we know it today. The only limitation of this source however was that it was lacking in information (short word count), meaning I needed to find another source to further understand this idea and expand my research by going into more detail about the topic.

**Dunbar. R. I. M., 'Gossip in Evolutionary Perspective', (June 2004),**  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1037/1089-2680.8.2.100>, accessed 04 June 2024

This article explores the origins of gossip as a mechanism for bonding social groups, tracing these origins back to social grooming among primates, a concept also discussed by Robin Dunbar in his book 'Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language' discussed within other sources in my PIP. The only limitation of this source was that it had a very little amount of information.

**Gault. M and Pearson. J., ' An AI-Generated Content Empire Is Spreading Fake Celebrity Images on Google' (31 January 2024),**  
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/k7z5gw/an-ai-generated-content-empire-is-spreading-fake-celebrity-images-on-google>, accessed 10 June 2024

This article discusses a newly created website that is churning out fake images of celebrities created by AI. It also talks about the fact human-made sources of information are at risk of being displaced, with potential revenue being vacuumed up as a result of this machine-generated content. This article was very useful for me during my research, as it broadened my perspective to a whole new way that technology and the media are creating gossip and fake news in order to create unnecessary drama. This source was also written very recently, meaning the information is likely more accurate and precise than some other sources.

**Hartung. F. M., 'Better Than Its Reputation? Gossip and the Reasons Why We and Individuals With "Dark" Personalities Talk About Others', (29 May 2019),**  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6549470/>, accessed 15 November 2023

This source discusses gossip as a ubiquitous phenomenon. It goes on to talk about how hearing information serves many important social functions such as learning and highlights how gossip reinforces group cohesion. The only limitation of this source is that its focus on specific social dynamics might not capture broader cultural

and technological shifts within ‘Gossip Culture’. However, the source provides evidence on gossip’s role in maintaining social order and cohesion, which is crucial in addressing the generational changes in ‘Gossip Culture’ in relation to my focus question.

**Mázala-de-Oliveira, T. et al, ‘Why Do We Gossip?’ (18 September 2023),  
<https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2023.772328>, accessed 18 January 2024**

This article explores the multifaceted role of ‘Gossip Culture’, discussing both its positive and negative implications. It goes on to explain what compels individuals to participate in this culture, supported by scientific evidence showing the different parts of the brain involved in gossiping. This source was quite useful in conducting my secondary research, as it provided a comprehensive overview of a wide range of aspects within ‘Gossip Culture’. The only limitation of the source was that there was a large focus on children's understanding of gossip, which doesn’t necessarily correlate to the generations I am looking at within my PIP.

**McAndrew. F. T., ‘Why gossip feels so good’ (01 March 2023),  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/out-of-the-ooze/202303/why-gossip-feels-so-good> , accessed 12 November 2023**

This source outlined research discovered and conducted by various psychologists such as Frank. T. McAndrew who has a PhD, making the source more reliable. The author suggests the idea that gossip is one of the most important mechanisms for bonding social groups, and further supports the evidence from other sources that talk about the chemical basis for the bonding benefits of gossip. This source also involves research and ideas talked about and presented in Robin Dunbar’s (1998) book ‘*Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*’. In his book, Robin Dunbar speaks of his belief in the fact that gossip plays an analogous role to grooming in other primate groups, which is important for my PIP (in chapter 1) in helping to support the idea that gossip always has and always will play an essential role in the evolution of humanity. This source also goes on to discuss how harmless gossip with colleagues builds group cohesiveness, and boosts morale, leading to greater job satisfaction, which I found very helpful in supporting and further exploring my hypothesis as it strongly demonstrates how gossip is now seen to have positive effects in the workplace and other social environments such as schools, which in turn affects the overall cohesiveness of these communities and the individuals abilities within them to connect and create relationships.

**McLeod. S., ‘Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory’, (01 February 2024),  
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>, accessed 12 June 2024**

This source was extremely useful in the ideas discussed in chapter 3 of my PIP as it emphasises ‘Gossip Culture’s’ connection to the ‘Social Learning Theory’ and its significance as a tool for personal growth and

development. This source goes on to discuss in great detail all the features and different parts that make up the 'Social Learning Theory'.

**Schafer. J, 'Why People Like to Gossip' (24 June 2021),**  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/let-their-words-do-the-talking/202106/why-people-gossip>,  
 accessed 15 January 2024

This article explores the reasons behind why people engage in gossip, which was very useful in constructing chapter 2 of my PIP, as it highlighted gossip's role in forming social bonds, helping to guide the values, behaviours and attitudes present within various social constructs. The source goes on to discuss how gossip can help reinforce social norms particularly within groups, provide social support, and help individuals navigate the complexities inherent in socialisation processes. This article was particularly useful within my PIP, as it provided great insight into the social functionalities of gossip, emphasising its pivotal role throughout generations in building a cohesive, well bounded society. The only limitation of this source in terms of answering my focus question, was that although it focused on the psychological aspects of gossip (a crucial point of interest in my PIP), it did not address any of the technological changes that have impacted the evolution of 'Gossip Culture'.

**Tastes of History, 'About History: the Scold's Bridle' (07 November 2022),**  
<https://www.tastesofhistory.co.uk/post/about-history-the-scold-s-bridle> , accessed 11 June 2024

This article opened my eyes to historical connections to 'Gossip Culture' and the harsh consequences that have been used in the past to prevent the occurrence of 'Gossip Culture', and just what these consequences entailed. The source went on to discuss why the Scold's Bridle was used as a form of punishment, where it was predominantly used, and who it was most used on. The article outlines the device's role in controlling women whose speech was thought to be aggressive or disruptive, particularly towards their husbands, which helped to develop my understanding of the prevailing gender power structures within society and the changing social norms and family expectations of a mother's role in society, and important element in my PIP to demonstrate the continuities and changes within 'Gossip Culture'. This source, when viewed in complement with 'A History of the World - Object : Scold's Bridle', increased the depth of my understanding about the origins of the device, its role in society, where and when it was made, and what it was made of as well as many other crucial details about its historical impact on the present day.

**Well. T., 'Finding the Truth in Gossip: How to use gossip to your advantage and avoid the pitfalls' (20 December 2023),**  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/the-clarity/202312/finding-the-truth-in-gossip#:~:text=Gossip%20can%20be%20a%20tool,as%20deviating%20from%20accepted%20norms.> , accessed 15 november 2023

This source outlines how gossip can aid in strengthening social bonds by creating a sense of shared knowledge and understanding within a group, and that sharing personal and sensitive information with others in a gossip-like manner can help to establish trust between individuals as it shows openness and transparency, an important idea that I used within my PIP to discuss the compelling aspects of gossip and some of the ways it can draw us in. This notion is further supported within this source, as the author goes on to discuss how gossip can act as a form of entertainment which is another way individuals are accidentally reeled in by this culture, as it can be very enjoyable and engaging to participate in, providing amusement within everyday conversations, making them more captivating and exciting, yet often at another's expense. This source also discusses the way in which gossip can act as a tool enforcing societal norms and expectations, which was very helpful for me in developing my research and understanding of how we can harness gossip in a positive way and use it to our advantage. In this way, gossip acts as a form of social control, which helps to discourage behaviour seen to challenge accepted norms.

**Wiseman, R, 'The Power of Gossip' (01 December 2015),**  
<https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/power-gossip>, accessed 15 Jan 2024

This source outlines how individuals involved in gossip tend to form tight knit groups with one another, bound by the privilege of acquiring inside knowledge and information about others around them, creating an 'us versus them' dynamic that enhances group cohesion, demonstrating the power of gossip in identity and group formation. This source was quite useful as it provided a balanced view of gossip's impacts on society, and helped to contextualise my understanding of how gossip functions as both a form of 'social glue', and a divisive force. A limitation of this source however, is that it didn't go into great detail about the topic, instead discussing it in a more general sense, meaning additional sources were required to address these aspects more comprehensively. However, in terms of my focus question, this source aids in providing information on the evolution of gossip culture, which is a critical part of my PIP in order to properly discuss and demonstrate the changes that have occurred within 'Gossip Culture' across time.

**Yao, B, 'Cognitive psychology of gossip processing' (5 December 2014),**  
<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/clippings/cognitive-psychology-of-gossip-processing>, accessed 15 January 2024

This source discusses the cognitive psychological aspects of gossip, by exploring how it serves as a tool for social learning as well as self-awareness and reflection, which was very useful in constructing chapter 3 of my PIP. The source goes into great detail about the neurological processes involved in both sharing and receiving gossip, highlighting its role in shaping social interactions and complex group dynamics. One limitation of this source however, is that it does not directly address the main areas of my focus question.