

The HEXACO Model of Personality: Factors related to Gossip & Friendship

David C. Watson
MacEwan University

In this study, the relationship between gossip, friendship, and the HEXACO model of personality was investigated in a sample of 419 undergraduate participants with three different gossip questionnaires. The results confirmed the hypothesis that emotionality mediates the relationship between friendship and gossip with intimate friendship. With personality and gossip, honesty-humility was the strongest correlate of gossip in a negative direction. The HEXACO facet of sentimentality was found to be a significant indirect mediator of the gossip-friendship relationship rather than the withdrawal facet. With regard to motivation and the tendency to gossip, the subscale-level predictors had a negative relationship with sincerity and fairness. With gossip functions, greed avoidance, sincerity, and modesty were the negatively related predictors. In addition, some sex differences were noted in the relationship between friendship and gossip. Overall gossip scale scores, and the social information and physical appearance gossip subscale scores were correlated with friendship intimacy with females. Achievement gossip was negatively related to friendship intimacy with males. The information function and social motive to gossip were associated with male friendship intimacy. The findings add to the understanding of the relationship between friendship and gossip in terms of personality factors, different elements of gossip, and aspects of friendship. These findings could be used to help individuals deepen the understanding of their friendships and enhance the quality and level of intimacy in these relationships. Particularly useful are the findings that sentimentality rather than withdrawal was related to friendship and gossip.

Keywords: gossip, friendship, HEXACO model of personality.

While the construct of gossip has been defined in a variety of ways, one definition is that gossip is a form of conversation between two people regarding a third person that is not present with an evaluative component (Foster, 2004). Dunbar (2004) argued that gossip is an important part of conversation as it concerns human relationships and is an integral part of the bond that holds us together as a society. While gossip is deemed a common portion of everyday conversation, estimates

Author info: Correspondence should be sent to: Dr. David Watson, Department of Psychology, MacEwan University 6-374, 10700 104 Avenue NW, Edmonton, Alberta Canada T5J 4S2 watson@macewan.ca
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of the frequency of gossip vary, ranging from the earlier work of Emler (1994) at 70%, to the findings of more recent research by Robins and Karan (2020) at 14%. These differences may be due to how broadly gossip is defined by investigators. Robins and Karan (2020) argued that past researchers considered all social topics as gossip rather than specifically conversation about a person not present. Despite this variability in estimating the frequency of gossip, this issue is an essential form of communication and requires further study as there are many aspects of gossip that are not fully understood.

Overall, gossip is a form of conversation with a limited amount of empirical research. One reason for this scarcity may be, as Wert and Salovey (2004a) suggest, research on gossip is difficult because it is private behavior, is embedded in the complexity of conversation, and is often very subtle (p.76). Another reason for this lack of research is that gossip is a paradoxical form of behavior; it is deemed socially inappropriate and necessary simultaneously, as Foster (2004) has suggested. There are several different perspectives on gossip as it is an area of interest across various disciplines. Nevo et al. (1994) pointed out that gossip is, according to the sociological-anthropological approach, about "...teaching and enforcing norms..." (p. 181). Baumeister et al. (2004) argued that gossip is a fundamental part of learning how to behave within a culture. Social psychologists emphasize the social comparison, power, and entertainment aspects of gossip (Hess & Hagen, 2006; Nevo et al., 1994; Wert & Salovey, 2004b). The individual-dispositional approach highlights the unconscious functions of gossip and that it is "...an adaptive defense mechanism..." (Nevo et al., 1994, p.182). As gossip is an important form of conversation, further study regarding the possibility that gossip has a dispositional basis would be theoretically informative.

Group versus Individual Motivations for Gossip.

According to Beersma and Van Kleef (2012), an important, understudied area in gossip research is the investigation regarding the motivation for individuals to engage in gossip for the sake of group cohesiveness. Gossip can have a group protection function by pointing out norm violators and those who don't contribute to the group. Therefore, it is essential to study gossip at both the group-level and individual-level of analysis. So, it would be useful to examine the relationship between gossip and friendship with both perspectives on gossip.

Gossip and Personality

The HEXACO model of personality consists of six personality factors: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (Ashton & Lee, 2007). According to Lee & Ashton (2018), the addition of honesty-humility is a more complete account of the major dimensions of personality and represents a trait that is unique and not simply described by the trait of agreeableness. According to Lee and Ashton (2018) "... Honesty-Humility represents a tendency to treat others fairly even when one could successfully exploit them, and Agreeableness represents a tendency to be patient with others even when one may be treated unfairly by them. In this way, Honesty-Humility and Agreeableness represent two forms of reciprocal-altruistic tendency..." (p. 544).

Multiple studies have found small relationships between gossip measures and specific personality traits. These relationships include a modest correlation with extraversion (Litman & Pezzo (2005). Nevo et al. (1993) also found a greater interest in people-oriented professions in those with a higher tendency to gossip, also related to the trait of extraversion. Robins and Caran (2020) found that gossip was related to extraversion and agreeableness with a naturalistic observation study. Despite the negative reputation of gossip, there was no evidence that gossip was associated with low agreeableness or that agreeableness was associated with more negative gossip (Robins & Caran, 2020).

Gossip may be related to neuroticism, as it has been associated with the expression of negative emotions (Waddington, 2005) and anxiety (Walker & Gibbons, 2006). Lai et al. (2020) found that extraversion and neuroticism were related to false rumor belief. However, while gossip and rumor can be confused in common parlance, these issues are conceptually distinct. Thus, further exploration with other adjutant gossip measures and a more complete measurement of personality would add to the sparse literature on dispositional factors related to gossip.

Gossip and Friendship

As gossip involves communication between two persons, one of the major functions of gossip is the development and maintenance of friendships (Foster, 2004). According to both the adult and developmental literature, gossip serves several functions. Friendship bonding and increasing the intimacy between two individuals is a major function along with other functions such as providing information about the norms of the group, providing entertainment, establishing the boundary between the particular social group and others, and providing a non-confrontational method of social aggression (Foster, 2004; Gottman & Mettetal, 1986; Macdonald et al. 2007). In the organizational behavior

literature, e.g., Grosser et al. (2010), workplace gossip is more likely to be spread by coworkers with friendship ties rather than work-related instrumental ties.

The relationship between gossip and friendship quality has been investigated by Watson (2012), who found no relationship with gossip in the case of females and with the males, there were several significant relationships between gossip and friendship. However, there may be a difference between friendship quality and the notion of friendship intimacy. Friendship quality was measured in the Watson (2012) study by the Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2003) *Friendship Questionnaire*, which may involve other aspects of friendship besides specifically, the intimacy component of friendship, which may have a different relationship with gossip compared to overall friendship quality. The *Friendship Questionnaire* measures aspects of friendships such as "...close, empathetic, supportive relationships: to like and be interested in people; to enjoy interaction with others for its own sake: and to consider friendships important..." (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2003, p. 511). For example, in other research, Wood et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of friendship security rather than intimacy in stabilizing the effects of anxiety in preadolescents. Therefore, other aspects of friendship are important factors that can be considered separately from specifically friendship intimacy.

According to Sharabany (2004), intimate friendship is "...a configuration of diverse but coherently related quantitatively commensurate elements..." (p. 451): 1. Frankness and spontaneity, 2. Sensitivity and knowing, 3. Attachment, 4. Exclusiveness, 5. Giving and sharing, 6. Imposition, 7. Common activities and 8. Trust and loyalty. According to Krahn (1994), intimacy is a major factor in determining friendship. Knapp and Harwood's (1977) factor analysis of 39 variables associated with same-sex intimate friendship had three primary factors: attitudinal agreement, intimate accessibility, and reciprocal candor. As there is limited research on the relationship between gossip and friendship, a specific examination of friendship intimacy rather than overall quality may increase our understanding of the relationship between friendship and gossip.

Intimacy and gossip

Krahn (1994) found that gossip was more likely when engaging in a personal conversation than in a casual conversation. The interpretation of these findings is that gossip and intimacy are related. According to Shaw et al. (2010), negative gossip weakens friendship networks that are not well connected but strengthens already densely connected networks. Grosser et al. (2010) found that negative gossip strengthens friendship

ties as it is more likely to occur when there is trust in the relationship. Trust is not as necessary with positive gossip. Also, Okazaki et al. (2013) found that individuals with a more extensive social network, but with lower closeness in the relationship, are more likely to engage in online gossip. Therefore, it is likely that friendship intimacy will mediate the relationship between friendship quality and gossip.

Emotionality and friendship.

Emotionality and neuroticism have some differences in terms of their facet structure, as emotionality is composed of four facets: sentimentality, anxiety, dependence, and fearfulness, whereas neuroticism has the facets of anxiety, angry hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability (Ashton & Lee, 2007; Costa & McCrae, 1992). As Gaughan et al. (2012) mention, emotionality is internally directed affect, and neuroticism is external and internally directed. Also, emotionality also has the facets of sensitivity and sentimentality.

Sentimentality was one of the significant factors in post-romantic friendship maintenance (Mogilski & Welling, 2017). Neuroticism has been negatively related to friendship satisfaction (Wilson et al., 2015). However, given the differences between the HEXACO emotionality and FFM neuroticism, friendship may positively affect emotionality. Agency-communion theory of friendship argues that one aspect of friendship is agentic. It involves friendship based upon achieving common goals as a group, and the second aspect of friendship is communal. Hence, the social and emotional bond between friends is emphasized in the relationship.

Given the above potential relationships between gossip, dispositional traits, emotionality and friendship, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1 Emotionality will mediate the relationship between gossip and friendship.

H2 The HEXACO facet of sentimentality will mediate the relationship between friendship and gossip, whereas the withdrawal facet will not be a significant mediator.

H3 Honesty-humility will be negatively correlated with gossip.

H4 Gender differences will be observed in the relationship between friendship and gossip.

METHOD

Undergraduate university participants, $n = 441$, received experimental credit for completing a set of questionnaires online at a Western Canadian University. Twenty-two participants were removed from the dataset due to incomplete data, leaving a final set of 419 participants. The

participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence, and participation was completely voluntary. The average age of the participants was $M = 20.72$, $SD = 4.00$, the age range was from 18-52 years, and 69.03% were female; 4 participants chose not to identify a gender.

Instruments

The *Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire* (TGQ) Nevo et al. 1993, 1994) has 20 items that measure gossip about (1) physical appearance, (2) achievement-related gossip, (3) social information, and (4) sublimated gossip. The authors reported an overall Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .87$. Construct validity was demonstrated in terms of moderate correlations with vocational interest in people-oriented professions. The TGQ was found to have a moderately strong relationship between TGQ score and peer ratings on the tendency to gossip (Nevo et al., 1993).

Gossip Functions Questionnaire (GFQ), Foster (2004) is a questionnaire with 24-items that measure four social functions of gossip: information, entertainment, friendship, and influence. The information scale is the "...gathering or dissemination ..." of social information (Foster, 2004, p. 84). Entertainment refers to the recreational value of gossip. The friendship scale is designed to measure the bonding that occurs when members of a group share information. With influence, the function of gossip is to enforce the norms of the social group. Foster (2004) reported Cronbach's alphas of $\alpha = .80$ for information, $\alpha = .81$ for friendship, $\alpha = .64$ for influence and $\alpha = .80$ for entertainment.

Motives to Gossip Scale (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012) is a 22-item scale designed to measure four motives to gossip: information and validation, social enjoyment, negative influence, group protection. The scale uses a 1 (completely disagree) to 7-point Likert type scale and has individual scale reliabilities ranging from $\alpha = .79$ for negative influence to $\alpha = .95$ for social enjoyment.

Intimate Friendship Scale (Sharabany, 1994) is a 32-item scale measuring eight dimensions of friendship: frankness and spontaneity, sensitivity and knowing, attachment, exclusiveness, giving and helping, imposing and taking, common activity, trust, and loyalty. The authors reported median alphas of $\alpha = .77$ to $.89$ for the eight dimensions. Seven-year test-retest reliability was $r = .34$ for males and $r = .48$ for females (Sharabany, 1994).

The HEXACO (Lee & Ashton, 2018) is a 100-item questionnaire that measures the six-factor personality model: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Lee and Ashton (2018) provide evidence for the adequacy with regard to reliability and validity of the measure.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. With gender differences, friendship intimacy for females was significantly higher with an effect size of $d = .33$. The subscales of attachment, exclusive, sharing, and trust were higher in the females, with effect sizes ranging from $d = .22$ for exclusivity to $d = .47$ for attachment. Emotionality was also higher in the case of females with $d = .90$.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for all measures.

	α	Males (127)	Females (292)	Total (419)	F	p
TGQ	.88	60.65(16.68)	64.12 (16.52)	63.07 (16.62)	3.68	.05
Physical	.78	16.16 (5.20)	17.47 (5.27)	17.47 (5.27)	11.62	.00
Achievement	.70	13.78 (5.11)	13.19 (5.07)	13.37(5.08)	1.19	.28
Social Info.	.78	18.75 (5.61)	19.50 (5.77)	19.27 (5.72)	1.5	.22
Sublim.	.54	11.95 (4.21)	13.37 (4.05)	12.93 (4.05)	10.57	.00
Foster	.76	73.37 (9.92)	74.25 (10.21)	73.98 (10.12)	.65	.42
Information	.51	20.19(2.98)	20.92 (3.34)	20.70 (3.11)	4.86	.028
Friendship	.65	18.84 (3.96)	19.14 (3.86)	19.05 (3.89)	.50	.48
Influence	.50	16.61 (3.09)	16.19 (3.60)	16.32 (3.46)	1.32	.25
Entertainment	.49	17.72(3.58)	17.99 (3.71)	17.91 (3.67)	.49	.48
GMQ	.89	59.67 (10.52)	59.16 (11.21)	59.32 (11.0)	.19	.66
Info Gather	.88	26.71 (5.73)	26.53 (5.8)	26.58 (5.77)	1.54	.22
Social	.85	15.92 (3.60)	15.41 (4.06)	15.56 (3.93)	.043	.84
Neg. Influence	.87	9.24 (3.38)	9.32 (3.58)	9.29 (3.51)	.088	.77
Protect	.74	7.78 (2.25)	7.90 (2.33)	7.86 (2.30)	.213	.64
Intimate Friendship	.94	107.17(15.15)	112.45(16.94)	110.85(16.58)	9.17	.00
Frank	.84	14.72(3.13)	15.32(2.93)	15.14 (3.00)	3.52	.06
Sensitive	.54	11.62 (2.12)	11.96 (2.14)	11.85 (2.14)	2.25	.13
Attach	.78	15.31 (2.91)	13.97 (2.77)	14.90 (2.93)	19.32	.00

Exclusive	.67	12.17 (2.54)	12.73 (2.66)	12.56 (2.64)	3.90	.05
Sharing	.81	14.90 (2.73)	15.69 (2.83)	15.45 (2.82)	6.95	.01
Imposition	.76	11.13 (2.21)	10.70 (2.34)	11.00 (2.26)	3.24	.07
Common A	.65	13.35 (2.77)	13.75 (2.62)	13.63 (2.53)	2.19	.14
Trust	.81	15.71 (3.05)	16.55 (3.05)	16.29 (3.07)	6.67	.01
Honesty	.79	50.33 (8.43)	52.99(8.14)	52.18 (8.31)	9.31	.00
Emotionality	.81	49.60 (8.00)	56.84 (8.03)	54.6 (8.67)	72.02	.00
Extraversion	.85	49.91 (9.75)	48.14 (9.25)	48.68 (9.42)	3.13	.08
Agreeableness	.81	49.40 (8.16)	47.56 (8.03)	48.11 (8.10)	4.60	.03
Conscientious.	.84	52.59 (8.06)	54.73 (8.76)	54.08 (8.60)	5.55	.02
Openness	.78	50.83 8.62)	50.25 (8.61)	50.43 (8.60)	0.40	.53
Altruism	.52	14.30 (2.38)	15.27 (2.37)	14.98 (2.41)	14.75	.00

Note: TGQ = Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire, Sublim. = sublimated gossip, GMQ = Motives to Gossip Questionnaire, Info. Gather. = Information gathering, Neg. Influence = negative influence.

Correlations

With gossip and personality, emotionality and honesty-humility were the major correlates as presented along with the facet scales in Tables 2 and 3. The correlations with openness to experience, extraversion and conscientiousness were close to zero, except for the MGQ and conscientiousness at $r = .11$. Agreeableness was negatively related to the TGQ at $r = -.137$. Emotionality was related to the GFQ at $r = .22$. However, there was a minimal relationship between the TGQ and MGQ and emotionality. All three gossip measures were negatively correlated with the honesty-humility facets. The largest correlations were with the sincerity and fairness facet of honesty-humility. The major difference between the three measures was that modesty had no relationship to the GFQ.

In addition, to determine which facets of honesty-humility were the best predictors of gossip, forward stepwise regression was performed with the honesty-humility facets as predictors and the gossip questionnaires as criteria. With the GFQ, sincerity, $std\ B = -.197$ and modesty $std\ B = .133$ and greed avoidance $std\ B = -.206$ were the major predictors of gossip $F(3, 415) = 20.0$, $R^2 = .088$. In the case of the TGQ, sincerity $std\ B = -.136$, modesty $std\ B = -.103$ and fairness $std\ B = -.203$. $R^2 = .110$, $F(3, 415) = 16.58$. With the MGQ, sincerity, $std\ B = -.278$ and fairness, $std\ B = -.084$, $R^2 = .101$, $F(2, 416) = 23.45$.

Sex differences in the relationship between friendship and gossip were examined with the three measures of gossip, and the intimate

friendship questionnaire see Table 4. Friendship intimacy was related to the information function of gossip in males, but was weakly related in females, and this difference approached to significance ($p = .06$). With intimate friendship and the TGQ, a different pattern emerged for males and females. TGQ scores were related to intimate friendship in females but not in males. Social gossip was related to intimacy in females, as well as physical appearance gossip. Achievement gossip was negatively associated with friendship intimacy in males but was not related in females.

Table 2 Correlations between Gossip Measures and Honesty Facets

	GFQ	TGQ	MGQ	Honesty	Sincerity	Fairness	Greed
GFQ							
TGQ	.56						
MGQ	.45	.41					
Honesty Tot.	-.23	-.32	-.28				
Sincerity	-.24	-.23	-.31	.65			
Fairness	-.16	-.28	-.19	.69	.36		
Greed Avoid	-.22	-.18	-.15	.71	.27	.22	
Modesty	.01	-.19	-.13	.66	.22	.26	.40

Note: Correlations above $r = .1525$ are significant with the Bonferroni correction .05/28=.0017. Honesty Tot. = total Honesty scale.

Table 3 Correlations between Gossip Measures and Emotionality Facets

	GFQ	TGQ	MGQ	Emotion	Fearful	Anxiety	Depend.
Foster							
TGQ	.58						
MGQ	.44	.40					
Emotion Tot.	.21	.12	.03				
Fearful	.10	.08	.04	.71			
Anxiety	.12	.01	-.02	.69	.34		
Depend.	.20	.12	.04	.72	.35	.27	
Sentiment.	.18	.13	.03	.74	.35	.34	.45

Note: Correlations above $r = .1525$ are significant with the Bonferroni correction .05/28=.0017. Emotion Tot. = total Emotionality scale.

Mediation analysis

Figure 1 shows the proposed model of the relationship between gossip, emotionality, and friendship intimacy. Bootstrapping with 10,000 samples was used as this is the recommended procedure of testing the indirect effects of interest (Hayes, 2018). As predicted in hypothesis 1, emotionality was found to mediate the relationship between gossip and

friendship intimacy (see Table 5). Emotionality was a significant mediator between the gossip and friendship intimacy with both the GFQ

Table 4 Correlations between Friendship Intimacy & gossip measures

	<u>Intimate Friendship</u>		<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
	Males	Females		
TGQ	-.073	.220*	-2.76	.002 _a
Social	.114	.322*	-2.04	.020 _a
Achievement	-.282*	.072	-3.37	.000 _a
Physical	-.049	.196*	-2.30	.001 _a
Sublimated	-.036	.097		
GFQ	.155	.226*		
Entertainment	.057	.134		
Influence	-.066	.141		
Information	.327*	.173	1.53	.062
Friendship	.107	.199*		
MGQ	.055	.046		
Group Protect	.077	.108		
Info Motive	.085	.126		
Social Motive	.212*	.119		
Neg Motive	-.251*	-.266*		

Note: Males, $n = 127$, Females $n = 292$. * = Significant correlation above $r = .195$ with the Bonferroni correction. a = Significant one-tailed, Z test for difference between two independent correlations. TGQ = Tendency to gossip questionnaire, GFQ = Gossip Functions Questionnaire, MGQ = Motives to Gossip Questionnaire

and TGQ. However, this was not the case with MGQ, although negative motive gossip and information motive were significant mediators between friendship intimacy and gossip. Friendship intimacy was a significant mediator in the relationship between gossip and friendship quality with the GFQ and the TGQ. With motives to gossip, social, negative, information and protection motive were significant mediators.

With sex differences in the mediation analyses, the GFQ emotionality subscale mediated the relationship between gossip and intimate friendship in females only. This is consistent with past research indicating lower emotional disclosure in male friendships (e.g., Sultan & Chaudry, 2008). There were no observed sex differences with the total TGQ and MGQ scores. With the information, friendship, and entertainment subscales of the GFQ, emotionality was a significant mediator. With the TGQ, the physical appearance gossip was a significant mediator. In the case of the MGQ subscales, the information

motive and negative motive were significant mediators between gossip and friendship intimacy in the females.

Figure 1. Proposed Model of the Relationship Between Gossip, Emotionality and Friendship Intimacy.

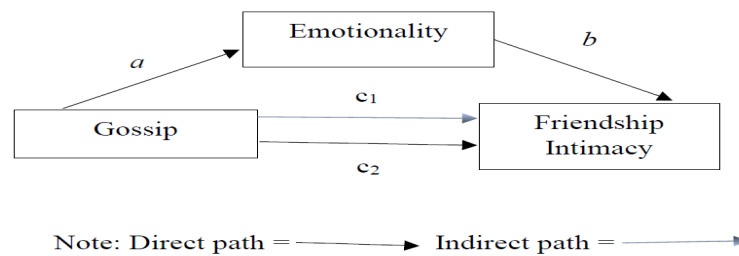
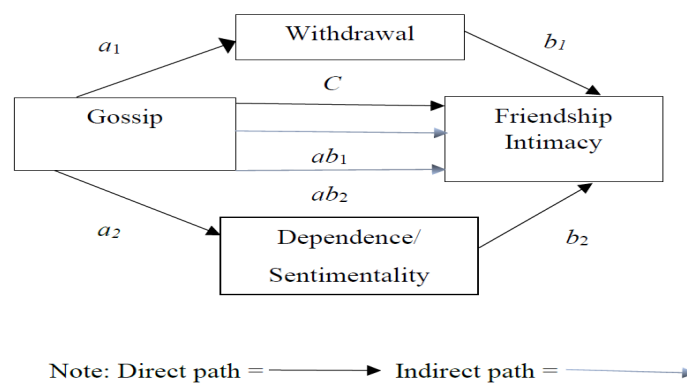


Figure 2. Proposed Model of the Relationship Between Gossip, Emotionality and Friendship Intimacy.



Facet-level mediation analyses.

Figure 2 shows the proposed model of the relationship between gossip, HEXACO emotionality facets and friendship intimacy. Again, bootstrapping with 10,000 samples was used to test the direct and indirect effects in the analyses. The relationship between gossip and friendship intimacy was also examined with the HEXACO emotionality facets of withdrawal (anxiety and fearfulness) versus sentimentality/dependence₁. As predicted in hypothesis 2, the withdrawal facets were not significant mediators of this relationship, whereas the sentimentality/dependence facets were significant mediators in several analyses. This finding was the case with the overall GFQ and TGQ. The sentimentality/dependence facets were significant mediators with the GFQ subscales, entertainment, information, and friendship. In addition, the sentimentality/dependence facets were significant mediators. In the case of the TGQ, dependence/sentimentality were significant mediators with physical appearance, social information, and sublimated gossip.

Table 5 Mediation Analysis

	Bootstrap Results for Indirect Effects (95% CI)						
	c' path	a-path	b-path	ab	Lower	Upper	Sobel Z
	(Direct Effect)	(Indirect Effect)					
GFQ, Emotion, Int.Friend	.28**	.19	.48	.09	.044	.153	3.3**
Entertainment	.45	.40	.52	.21	.066	.415f	2.6*
Information	.87**	.77	.46	.35	.192	.569f	3.7**
Friendship	.56**	.36	.50	.18	.074	.324f	2.9**
Influence	.35	.06	.54	.03	-.10	.169	0.5

	Bootstrap Results for Indirect Effects (95% CI)						
	c' path	a-path	b-path	ab	Lower	Upper	Sobel Z
	(Direct Effect)	(Indirect Effect)					
TGQ, Emotion, Int.Friend	.12*	.06	.52	.03	.008	.067	2.2*
Physical Appearance	.34*	.25	.51	.13	.049	.238 f	2.7**
Achievement	-.08	-.06	.54	-.03	-.12	.054	-0.7
Social Information	.69**	.19	.49	.09	.023	.182	2.3*
Sublimated	.14	.35	.53	.19	.075	.328	2.9**

	c' path (Direct Effect)	Bootstrap Results for Indirect Effects (95% CI)					
		a-path	b-path	ab	Lower	Upper	Sobel Z
MGQ, Emotion, Int. Friend.	.05	.02	.54	.013	-.03	.056	0.6
Information	.24	.15	.52	.08	.00	.173	1.9
Social	.49*	.13	.53	.07	-.04	.205	1.2
Negative	-1.0**	-.39	.49	-.19	-.32	-.086	2.7**
Protect	.66*	.13	.54	.067	-.13	.283	0.6

Note: * = <.05, ** = <.001, GFQ = gossip functions questions, TGQ = Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire, MGQ = Motives to Gossip, Negative M = Negative Influence, InfoM. = Information Motive, IntFriend = Intimate Friendship Scale.

Subscale-level Friendship Intimacy Analyses

An additional exploratory mediation analysis was conducted examining the relationship between the subscales of friendship intimacy, emotionality, and gossip with the three gossip questionnaires. While the relationships were weaker than with the full Friendship Intimacy scale, with the GFQ and TGQ, and the sub-scales of frankness, sensitivity, attachment, sharing, and trust, emotionality was a significant mediator between these aspects of friendship intimacy and gossip². Commonality also had emotionality as a significant mediator with the GFQ. The strongest relationships were with the attachment and trust scales with the GFQ. As was the case with the full *Friendship Intimacy* scale, emotionality was not a significant mediator with the MGQ.

DISCUSSION

As predicted emotionality was a consistent factor in the relationship between gossip and friendship intimacy. This result was found with gossip as a tendency or function, but not in terms regarding motives to gossip. This finding may represent the relationship between the communal aspect of friendship and the emotional bond that can be one of the functions of gossip. The difference between the three gossip measures in the relationship between gossip, emotionality, and friendship may have to do with the greater emphasis on individual motivation to gossip with the gossip functions and tendency to gossip questionnaires rather than the larger group function measured by the motives to gossip questionnaire.

When examining the emotionality at the facet level, sentimentality was found to be a significant mediator of the gossip-friendship

relationship, whereas withdrawal was not. This finding demonstrates the importance of the emotional bond in the gossip-friendship relationship. The withdrawal facets of anxiety and fearfulness were not mediators in the relationship between friendship and gossip. These facets were not related to any of the gossip measures. However, a significant relationship between intimate friendship and anxiety, particularly the sensitivity, attachment, sharing, and trust components of intimate friendship was found.

Honesty-humility was also an important personality correlate of gossip, whether it was conceptualized in terms of tendency, function, or motivation to gossip. This was true with the facets of honesty-humility except for the *Gossip Functions Questionnaire* and the modesty facet of honesty-humility. This result is different from past research that has found significant relationships between gossip and the traits of extraversion and agreeableness (Robins & Karan, 2020). Measurement with questionnaires versus the direct observational methodology of the Robins and Karan (2020) study may be a factor in producing these differences. The negative relationship between honesty and gossip has been related to the dark triad traits of Machiavellianism and narcissism (Hartung et al., 2019). The dark-triad traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy have all been related to low honesty-humility (Schreiber & Marcus, 2020). According to the developmental literature, (e.g., Kuttler et al., 2002; Menzer, 2012; Menzer, et al., 2012), negative gossip about peers gives the impression of untrustworthiness; this is consistent with the finding of a relationship between gossip and lower honesty-humility.

Regarding sex differences in friendship and gossip, there were several differences noted. There were contrasts between this research and previous research by Watson (2012), which found correlations between friendship quality and overall tendency to gossip, physical appearance, achievement, and social information gossip in males and no relationship between friendship and gossip with the females. In the current study, which examined friendship intimacy rather than overall friendship quality, there was a very different pattern for males and females. With females, the overall Tendency to Gossip scores, social information, physical appearance, and overall *Gossip Function Questionnaire* scores correlated with friendship intimacy. The friendship function correlated with friendship intimacy in females, but not with males. In the case of the males, achievement gossip was negatively associated with friendship intimacy, positively associated with the information function, and the social motive to gossip. Macoby (1998) and Macdonald et al. (2007) have argued that females are socialized to be more relationship-focused and avoid interpersonal conflict, whereas males are more socialized

towards competition and norm-setting. Therefore, the negative relationship between achievement gossip and friendship intimacy may indicate that males are more to engage in friendships with other males with whom they are more cooperative rather than competitive.

These differences contrast with the findings reported in the Watson (2012) study, which found a strong positive correlation between friendship quality and achievement gossip. These findings point to possible differences between quality and intimacy. Friendship quality in male friendships could represent the more agentic nature of male friendships, which may be more of a factor in the Friendship Questionnaire than in the Intimate Friendship Scale, which may be more oriented towards the communal aspects of friendship part of male friendships. Overall, the Intimate Friendship scale scores were lower with the males, specifically with the attachment, sharing, exclusivity, and trust subscales. Both males and females had a negative correlation between friendship intimacy and the negative motive to gossip, highlighting the overall similarity between males and females. In addition, of the 15 gossip-intimate correlations, only four correlations were significantly different. As Wright (1988) argues, sex differences in friendship should be interpreted with caution.

Limitations and future directions

The study is limited by the cross-sectional methodology, university student sample, and self-reported nature of the data collection. Future research could employ observational methodology and a more diverse sample in terms of population and age. According to Hayes and Rockwood (2017) and Hayes (2018), mediation analyses can be used with a cross-sectional research design. However, these findings would be further strengthened with longitudinal designs in future research. The cross-cultural implications of these findings would also be a valuable area for further research as well. Other aspects of the friendship and gossip relationship could be investigated. For example, Dores Cruz et al. (2019) extended the MGQ by adding an emotional venting subscale as an additional motive to gossip. In future research designs, it is possible that this could be a mediator in the gossip and friendship intimacy relationship that was not present in the original Motives to Gossip Questionnaire.

1. Table 6 outlining these results is available by request from the author.
2. Table 7 outlining these results is available upon request from the author.

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