

# Codes on Gossip for Societies in the Standard Sample

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents codings on 24 Gossip topics. We use a simple dictionary definition of gossip as “idle talk or rumor, especially about the private affairs of others” (Stein 1980:389). Gossip is a difficult concept to measure from the ethnographic literature, so our approach was to measure individual gossip topics, which lends itself to more objective analysis. We have isolated 24 different gossip topics that occur with some frequency. We then performed a factor analysis on these 24 topics to develop a multidimensional Gossip Scale. The data are presented in both World Cultures ST83.dat and STDS83.cod format and as SPSS for Windows ST83.sav files.

## 2. SAMPLE

The sample used in this study is the overlap among the 186 societies in the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (SCCS) (Murdock & White 1969) and the 360 societies in the Human Relations Area Files [HRAF] (Ember and Ember 1988). We choose this sample because it has the benefits of both the SCCS and the HRAF. The SCCS is one of the most widely used samples in cross-cultural research; over eighteen hundred variables are measured and published for this sample. HRAF is also ideal for cross-cultural research in that ethnographic observations and reports are easily retrievable, foreign sources are translated into English, multiple authors cover each society, and historical depth is available to observe culture change. There are 136 societies found in both samples and these form the sample used here (Ember and Ember 1988). The Appendix contains a listing of SCCS societies and their Human Relations Area Files.

## 3. GOSSIP TOPICS

We consider “gossip” to be a high inference variable requiring significant anthropological training and ethnographic knowledge to make reliable judgments from the ethnographic literature, and even then we doubt reliable judgments could be consistently made. We used an approach to measurement that stressed low inference and direct measurement as discussed by Ember, Ross, Burton, and Bradley (1991). Rather than have the raters make an overall inference about gossip, we thought it better for the raters to search for the presence of

specific gossip topics, which limited the amount of rater judgment required.

Initial research indicated that most of the information on gossip would be found in HRAF subject categories 521: *Conversation* and in 626: *Social Control* (Murdock et al. 1982). Fifteen cultures were examined for quotes relating to conversations, comments about gossip, or examples of it. We studied these quotes and isolated several topics that kept reappearing, for example, adultery, dowry payments, farming practices, inheritance, politics, scandal, etc. From this we developed a preliminary coding sheet, which we then attempted to apply to a second group of fifteen societies. Further modifications were made to the code sheet, and we reapplied the second form of the gossip coding sheet to the first group of fifteen societies we had previously looked at. Through this process we arrived at the final gossip coding sheet which contained 28 gossip topics, each to be rated on a present/absent basis. Room was also made on the coding sheet for the raters to add any additional topics that were not mentioned in the first 30 societies. We also made provision to record the sex of the individuals gossiping, and coded on the basis of gossip being discussed by men, women, or by both sexes. Finally, we created a five-point scale for the rater to assess how important the rater thought gossip was for each particular culture. Measurement was made in two stages. First almost one hundred raters collected ethnographic references about the 28 gossip topics, then the authors applied specific coding rules for making the final measurements from the references collected.

Our raters were undergraduates in a large introductory anthropology class. We have been experimenting with lower classmen as raters and believe we have established sufficient controls and procedures to achieve accurate and reliable ratings. Students were instructed on how to use the Human Relations Area Files and how to read OCM categories 521 and 626. They were first given practice assignments and a section of several classes was set aside for questions and problems that arose while learning to use the HRAF and with practice coding. Then each student was assigned eleven cultures and given a code book with instructions and examples of different conversation or gossip topics. When they came upon an instance of gossip conversation they were to cite the author, year, page number, and field dates. Raters were also to report the sex of the individuals engaging in the gossip if that was possible.

When all the data were collected we had approximately seven to ten raters for each society in the sample (not all students completed the assignment), which amounted to 1045 rating sheets. We used seven to ten raters for each society to check the reliability of the initial data gatherers. Since each student would code no more than eleven societies we thought systematic error from coders would be nonexistent. We established this by recoding a random selection of twenty societies and checking our data with that collected by the students.

For the final phase of measurement, we made judgments based on the amount of agreement among the individual raters for each culture. The rules for the final ratings were: (1) for each society at least two raters had to report a topic present for it to be accepted (although they could disagree as to the sex of the gossips). The first topic on the list was adultery. A majority of the raters for any given society (and the minimum had to be at least two individuals) had to have reported that adultery was a gossip topic for it to be counted. For most of the topics many more than two raters report it as present. It went like this for each of the topics on our

list. Four topics were dropped due to a lack of data, and the final measurement contained 24 different gossip topics. While we measured the sex of the gossips as male, female, or both, data were mostly available for male or both male and female speakers. There were fewer reports of female gossips. The data for the 24 gossip topics are presented in files ST83.dat with the code book STDS83.cod, and in SPSS for Windows format as ST83.sav.

#### 4. RELIABILITY OF RATERS

In Table 1 are listed the coders' ratings for two societies: the Tiv and the Tikopia. The bottom row contains the final ratings made by the authors based on the data gathered by the student coders. The eight coders for the Tiv show little gossip activity. We found gossip present in only four of the 24 possible topics. Columns A "Adultery" and B "Boasting" were both marked absent by all eight raters for the Tiv. However, three raters found column C "Bride Price" to be a gossip topic by males only. For columns D "Cattle/Livestock" and F "Drinking" only Coder 8 mentions them as present. We rated both items as absent since coder 8 was not supported by at least one other coder. If one studies the matrix it is apparent that Coder 8 consistently rated gossip topics as present. On the other hand, Coders 2 and 5 report all items as absent. Student coders have different levels of skill and interest, which probably accounts for some of the differences, and hence the need to use multiple coders for each society. Column S "Sex and Sexual Joking" is reported as *present for males only* by Coder 4, *present for both sexes* by Coder 7, and *present for females only* by Coder 8. Our final rating is 2, which is *present for both sexes*. Since two coders reported the item present for males and two for females, we rated it as *present for both sexes*. We used this procedure throughout to establish sex of the gossip.

For the Tikopia the eleven coders indicate much more gossip activity. Seventeen of the 24 gossip topics are rated as present. Column Y shows the coders' ratings of gossip importance. The mode for the Tiv is 3 and for the Tikopia it is 5 (e.g., *very important*). We think a rating of 3 for the Tiv is perhaps too high while the rating of 5 for the Tikopia is more reflective of the gossip scores for them.

Column Z is the number of gossip topics reported present by each of the coders. For the Tiv, only Coder 8 is markedly out of line with the other coders. For the Tikopia, the coders as a group report much more gossip activity. We selected the Tiv and the Tikopia for Table 1 because they were typical of low and high gossip activity societies in the sample. Just casual viewing of the matrixes shows the correspondence between the individual raters as a group and the final ratings, and this gives us confidence as to measurement reliability.

#### Table 1: Sample of Data Collected from Two Societies by Multiple Coders

Culture: Tiv (SCCR No. 016 HRAF No. FF57)

GOSSIP TOPICS / Divale and Seda

| Variables: | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z  |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Coder 1    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1  |
| Coder 2    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0  |
| Coder 3    | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1  |
| Coder 4    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2  |
| Coder 5    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0  |
| Coder 6    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1  |
| Coder 7    | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5  |
| Coder 8    | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 |
| Final      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |    |

Culture: **Tikopia** (SCCR No. 100 HRAF No. OT11)

| Variables: | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z  |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Coder 1    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4  |
| Coder 2    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2  |
| Coder 3    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 6  |
| Coder 4    | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5  |
| Coder 5    | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0  |
| Coder 6    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3  |
| Coder 7    | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7  |
| Coder 8    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7  |
| Coder 9    | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7  |
| Coder 10   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 10 |
| Coder 11   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Final      | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 |    |

Variable (Columns) Key:

A=Adultery, B=Boasting, C=Bride Price, D=Cattle/Livestock, E=Dowry Payments, F=Drinking, G=Family, H=Farming, I=Gov't./Colonial Affairs, J=Hunting, K=Inheritance, L=Laziness, M=Men, N=Murder/Assault, O=Neighbors, P=Politics, Q=Scandal, R=Sex & Sexual Joking, S=Social Control, T=Socializing/News, U=Wife Beating, V=Women, W=Marriage, X=Religion, Y=Rater's Code on Importance of Gossip, Z=No. of Gossip Topics Coder Reported as Present

Variable Values Key:

Gossip Topics (Cols. A - X): 0=Absent, 1=Present/ Males Only, 2=Present Both Males &

Females, 3=Present/Females Only

Raters Opinion of Gossip Importance (Col. Y): 1=Not Important to 5=Very Important

## 5. DISTRIBUTION OF GOSSIP TOPICS

The following charts display the frequency distribution of the 24 gossip topics and the raters' codes on the Importance of Gossip. If a gossip topic was not mentioned by at least two raters it was considered absent. The distributions indicate that present ratings were most common for "Males only" or for "both sexes" and less often for "Females only."

### 1781. Gossip on Adultery

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 96 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 13 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 24 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 2  | 3    | Present for females only |

### 1782. Gossip on Boasting

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 102 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 25  | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 7   | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 1   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1783. Gossip on Bride Price**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 115 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 9   | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 11  | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 0   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1784. Gossip on Cattle/Livestock**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 116 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 11  | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 8   | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 0   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1785. Gossip on Dowry Payments**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 131 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 2   | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 0   | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 2   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1786. Gossip on Drinking**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 107 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 17  | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 8   | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 3   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1787. Gossip on Family**

## GOSSIP TOPICS / Divale and Seda

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 49 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 25 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 53 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 8  | 3    | Present for females only |

**1788. Gossip on Farming**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 113 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 11  | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 11  | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 0   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1789. Gossip on Government/Colonial Affairs**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 85 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 27 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 21 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 2  | 3    | Present for females only |

**1790. Gossip on Hunting**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 100 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 29  | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 5   | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 1   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1791. Gossip on Inheritance**

## GOSSIP TOPICS / Divale and Seda

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 122 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 7   | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 6   | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 0   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1792. Gossip on Laziness**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 106 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 12  | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 13  | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 4   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1793. Gossip on Men**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 50 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 48 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 27 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 10 | 3    | Present for females only |

**1794. Gossip on Murder/Assault**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 87 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 27 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 20 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 1  | 3    | Present for females only |

**1795. Gossip on Neighbors**

| N | CODE | DESCRIPTION |
|---|------|-------------|
|   |      |             |



## GOSSIP TOPICS / Divale and Seda

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 86 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 12 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 35 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 2  | 3    | Present for females only |

**1796. Gossip on Politics**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 84 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 26 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 25 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 0  | 3    | Present for females only |

**1797. Gossip on Scandal**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 73 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 18 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 41 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 3  | 3    | Present for females only |

**1798. Gossip on Sex/Sexual Joking**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 83 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 17 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 28 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 7  | 3    | Present for females only |

**1799. Gossip on Social Control**

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|

## GOSSIP TOPICS / Divale and Seda

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 23 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 45 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 59 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 8  | 3    | Present for females only |

**1800. Gossip on Socializing/News**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 40 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 26 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 59 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 10 | 3    | Present for females only |

**1801. Gossip on Wife Beating**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 117 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 6   | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 10  | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 2   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1802. Gossip on Women**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|----|------|--------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data             |
| 61 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 18 | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 31 | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 25 | 3    | Present for females only |

**1803. Gossip on Marriage**

| N | CODE | DESCRIPTION |
|---|------|-------------|
|---|------|-------------|

GOSSIP TOPICS / Divale and Seda

|     |   |                          |
|-----|---|--------------------------|
| 51  | . | Missing data             |
| 126 | 0 | Absent                   |
| 2   | 1 | Present for males only   |
| 5   | 2 | Present for both sexes   |
| 2   | 3 | Present for females only |

**1804. Gossip on Religion**

| N   | CODE | DESCRIPTION              |
|-----|------|--------------------------|
| 51  | .    | Missing data             |
| 131 | 0    | Absent                   |
| 2   | 1    | Present for males only   |
| 2   | 2    | Present for both sexes   |
| 0   | 3    | Present for females only |

**1805. Importance of Gossip**

| N  | CODE | DESCRIPTION                  |
|----|------|------------------------------|
| 51 | .    | Missing data                 |
| 17 | 1    | Scale Step 1: Not Important  |
| 18 | 2    | Scale Step 2                 |
| 47 | 3    | Scale Step 3                 |
| 37 | 4    | Scale Step 4                 |
| 16 | 5    | Scale Step 5: Very Important |

**6. GOSSIP MEASUREMENT VALIDITY**

Validity refers to the accuracy of a variable in terms of actually measuring the concept it is supposed to represent. In the case of indirect measurements as we have here, validity presents an ongoing problem. Often the only test of validity is post hoc, e.g., if the hypothesis it is a part of is supported. Part of our purpose was to develop a Gossip Scale and reduce the 24 gossip topics to a few sub-scales. To do this we conducted a factor analysis and the way similar variables clustered on the same factors suggests that we have concept validity.

Table 2 contains the results of a principal component factor analysis. The data were reconfigured to present/absent regardless of the sex of the gossip. There were eight factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and these were rotated using the varimax technique. The

eight rotated factors are shown in Table 2. They account for 60 percent of the variance in the 24 gossip variables. Only factor loadings greater than 0.50 are shown.

Two of the 24 gossip variables just missed having loadings greater than 0.50 on any of the eight factors: Inheritance had a loading of 0.48 on Factor 5 and Sex and Sexual Joking had a loading of 0.49 on Factor 1. Each of the factors represents gossip topics that cluster together. The first three factors appear to be primary factors in that they reflect some underlying concept which several different variables load on, while others appear to be secondary factors representing a single or narrowly defined topic.

Factor 1 appears to be a primary factor reflecting General Gossip with high loading on the topics of Men (0.66), Neighbors (0.59), Socializing and News (0.67), and Women (0.68). On the basis of this we can sum the scores of these variables to form a General Gossip Index (Spector 1992; Kruskal and Wish 1978).

Factor 2 we call a Political Gossip Factor since the topics of Family (0.52), Government and Colonial Affairs (0.82), and Politics (0.71) load high on this factor.

Factor 3 appears to represent Machismo Gossip. Topics that load on it are: Boasting (0.62), Hunting (0.56), Laziness (0.52), and Wife Beating (0.72).

The remaining five factors only have high loadings with two variables each and appear to be secondary factors containing narrow concepts. Factor 4 has high loadings of Adultery (0.76) and Scandal (0.67). Factor 5 has high loadings of Drinking (0.71) and Murder and Assault (0.56). Factor 6 loads high with Bride Price (0.79) and Dowry (0.69). Factor 7 has loadings with Farming (0.71) and Religion (0.60), and Factor 8 has loadings with Cattle (0.71) and Marriage (.71). The relationship between Farming and Religion can be understood as many farming activities occur as part of religious rituals. An association between Cattle and Marriage is also understandable given the relationship between cattle as bride price for marriage.

One thing apparent with all eight factors is that gossip topics that cluster around a factor make logical sense, e.g., for the secondary factors adultery and scandal, drinking, murder and assaults would be expected to go together, as would bride price and dowry, and cattle and marriage. The first three primary factors also make logical sense. Loadings of topics such as men, women, neighbors, and socializing and news make sense as general gossip. The loadings on the Political Gossip factor also make inherent sense (family, government, and politics). We think this supports the concept validity of our measurements.

**Table 2: Rotated Factor Matrix of Gossip Variables**

| Topics                | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    | 8    |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Adultery              |      |      |      | 0.76 |      |      |      |      |
| Boasting              |      |      | 0.62 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Bride Price           |      |      |      |      |      | 0.79 |      |      |
| Cattle                |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.71 |
| Dowry                 |      |      |      |      |      | 0.69 |      |      |
| Drinking              |      |      |      |      | 0.71 |      |      |      |
| Family                |      | 0.52 |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Farming               |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.71 |      |
| Government            |      | 0.82 |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Hunting               |      |      | 0.56 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Inheritance           |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Laziness              |      |      | 0.52 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Marriage              |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.71 |
| Men                   | 0.66 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Murder/<br>Assault    |      |      |      |      | 0.56 |      |      |      |
| Neighbors             | 0.59 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Politics              |      | 0.71 |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Religion              |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0.60 |      |
| Scandal               |      |      |      | 0.69 |      |      |      |      |
| Sex/ Sexual<br>Joking |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Social<br>Control     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Socializing<br>News   | 0.67 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Wife Beating          |      |      | 0.72 |      |      |      |      |      |
| Women                 | 0.68 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |

Only factors with eigenvalues higher than 1.0 were extracted. The eight factors account for 60% of the variance, and the varimax rotation technique was used. Only variables with factor loading of 0.50 or higher are shown.

## 6. GOSSIP SCALES

On the basis of the factor analysis it is appropriate to combine the gossip topic into sub-scales (Spector 1992; Kruskal and Wish 1978). We think this is especially reliable for the first three primary factors: General Gossip, Political Gossip, and Machismo Gossip. The remaining five secondary factors can also be combined, but they represent more narrowly defined concepts.

Thus the 24 gossip topics are reduced to eight gossip variables. The reader should remember that these scales do not distinguish the sex of the gossip, and we recommend that only the three scales based on primary factors are perhaps true "scales". The data was transformed to Absent/Present regardless of the gender of the gossip. They are reported in SPSS format in the file totgoss.sav.

## 8. NOTES

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**APPENDIX A: SOCIETIES IN THE SCCS AND HRAF**

| No.SCCS Name (HRAF Name) | HRAF No. | No.SCCS Name (HRAF Name)      | HRAF No.  |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 Nama (Hottentot)       | FX13     | 48 Gheg (Albanians)           | EG09      |
| 2 Kung (Bushmen)         | FX10     | 49 Romans                     | EI09      |
| 3 Thonga                 | FT06     | 50 Basques                    | EX08      |
| 4 Lozi                   | FQ09     | 51 Irish                      | ER06      |
| 5 Mbundu                 | FP13     | 52 Lapps                      | EP04      |
| 6 Suku                   |          | 53 Yurak (Samoyed)            | RU04      |
| 7 Bemba                  | FQ05     | 54 Russians                   | RF01      |
| 8 Nyakyusa (Ngonde)      | FN17     | 55 Abkhaz                     | RI03      |
| 9 Hadza                  |          | 56 Armenians                  |           |
| 10 Luguru                |          | 57 Kurd                       | MA11      |
| 11 Kikuyu                | FL10     | 58 Basseri                    |           |
| 12 Ganda                 | FX07     | 59 West Punjabi               |           |
| 13 Mbuti (Pygmies)       | FO04     | 60 Gond                       | AW32      |
| 14 Nkundo (Mongo)        | FO32     | 61 Toda                       | AW60      |
| 15 Banen                 |          | 62 Santal                     | AW42      |
| 16 Tiv                   | FF57     | 63 Uttar Pradesh              | AW19      |
| 17 Ibo (Igbo)            | FF26     | 64 Burusho                    | AV07      |
| 18 Fon                   |          | 65 Kazak                      | RQ02      |
| 19 Ashanti (Twi)         | FE12     | 66 Khalka Mongols             | AH07      |
| 20 Mende                 | FC07     | 67 Lolo                       | AE04      |
| 21 Wolof                 | MS30     | 68 Lepcha                     | AK05      |
| 22 Bambara               | FA08     | 69 Garo                       | AR05      |
| 23 Tallensi              | FE11     | 70 Lakher                     |           |
| 24 Songhai               |          | 71 Burmese                    | AP01      |
| 25 Wodaabe Fulani        |          | 72 Lamet                      |           |
| 26 Hausa                 | MS12     | 73 Vietnamese (Indochina)     | AM01/AM11 |
| 27 Massa                 |          | 74 Rhade                      |           |
| 28 Azande                | FO07     | 75 Khmer (Indochina/Cambodia) | AM01/AM04 |
| 29 Fur                   |          | 76 Siamese (Central Thai)     | AO07      |
| 30 Otoro Nuba            |          | 77 Semang                     | AN07      |
| 31 Shilluk               | FJ23     | 78 Nicobarese                 |           |
| 32 Mao                   |          | 79 Andamanese                 | AZ02      |
| 33 Kaffa                 |          | 80 Vedda                      | AX05      |
| 34 Masai                 | FL12     | 81 Tanala                     | FY08      |
| 35 Konso                 |          | 82 Negri Sembilan (Malaya)    | AN01      |
| 36 Somali                | MO04     | 83 Javanese                   | OE05      |
| 37 Amhara                | MP05     | 84 Balinese                   | OF07      |
| 38 Bogo                  |          | 85 Iban                       | OC06      |
| 39 Kenuzi Nubian         |          | 86 Badjau                     |           |
| 40 Teda                  | MS22     | 87 Toradja                    | OG11      |
| 41 Tuareg                | MS25     | 88 Tobelorese                 |           |
| 42 Riffians              | MX03     | 89 Alorese                    | OF05      |
| 43 Egyptians (Fellahin)  | MR13     | 90 Tiwi                       | OI20      |
| 44 Hebrews               |          | 91 Aranda                     | OI08      |
| 45 Babylonians           |          | 92 Orokaiva                   | OJ23      |
| 46 Rwala Bedouin         | MD04     | 93 Kimam                      |           |
| 47 Turks                 | MB01     | 94 Kapauku                    | OJ29      |

|     |                             |           |     |                            |      |
|-----|-----------------------------|-----------|-----|----------------------------|------|
| 95  | Kwoma                       | OJ13      | 145 | Creek                      | NN11 |
| 96  | Manus                       | OM06      | 146 | Natchez                    |      |
| 97  | New Ireland                 | OM10      | 147 | Comanche                   | NO06 |
| 98  | Trobrianders                | OL06      | 148 | Chiricahua (Eastern)       | NT08 |
| 99  | Siuai                       |           | 149 | Zuni                       | NT23 |
| 100 | Tikopia                     | OT11      | 150 | Havasupai (Plateau Yumans) | NT14 |
| 101 | Pentecost                   |           | 151 | Papago                     | NU28 |
| 102 | Mbau Fijians                |           | 152 | Huichol                    |      |
| 103 | Ajie                        |           | 153 | Aztec                      | NU07 |
| 104 | Maori                       | OZ04      | 154 | Populca                    |      |
| 105 | Marquesans                  | OX06      | 155 | Quiche                     |      |
| 106 | Western Samoans             | OU08      | 156 | Miskito (Mosquito)         | SA15 |
| 107 | Gilbertese                  |           | 157 | Bribi (Talamanca)          | SA19 |
| 108 | Marshallese                 | OR11      | 158 | Cuna                       | SB05 |
| 109 | Trukese                     | OR19      | 159 | Goajiro                    | SC13 |
| 110 | Yapese                      | OR22      | 160 | Haitians                   | SV03 |
| 111 | Palauans                    |           | 161 | Callinago                  | ST13 |
| 112 | Ifugao                      | OA19      | 162 | Warrau (Warao)             | SS18 |
| 113 | Atayal (Formosa Aborigines) | AD01/AD04 | 163 | Yanomamo (Yanoama)         | SQ18 |
| 114 | Chinese                     | AF01      | 164 | Carib                      | SR09 |
| 115 | Manchu (Manchuria)          | AG01      | 165 | Saramacca (Bush Negroes)   | SR08 |
| 116 | Koreans                     | AA01      | 166 | Mundurucu                  | SQ13 |
| 117 | Japanese (Okayama)          | AB43      | 167 | Cubeo (Tucano)             | SQ19 |
| 118 | Ainu                        | AB06      | 168 | Cayapa                     | SD06 |
| 119 | Gilyak                      | RX02      | 169 | Jivaro                     | SD09 |
| 120 | Yukaghir                    |           | 170 | Amahuaca                   |      |
| 121 | Chukchee                    | RY02      | 171 | Inca                       | SE13 |
| 122 | Ingalik                     |           | 172 | Aymara                     | SF05 |
| 123 | Aleut                       | NA06      | 173 | Siriono                    | SF21 |
| 124 | Copper Eskimo               | ND08      | 174 | Nambicuara                 | SP17 |
| 125 | Montagnais                  | NH06      | 175 | Trumai                     | SP23 |
| 126 | Micmac                      | NJ05      | 176 | Timbira                    | SO08 |
| 127 | Saulteaux (Ojibwa)          | NG06      | 177 | Tupinamba                  | SO09 |
| 128 | Slave                       |           | 178 | Botocudo                   |      |
| 129 | Kaska (Nahane)              | ND12      | 179 | Shavante                   |      |
| 130 | Eyak                        |           | 180 | Aweikoma (Caingang)        | SM03 |
| 131 | Haida                       |           | 181 | Cayua (Guarani)            | SM04 |
| 132 | Bellacoola                  | NE06      | 182 | Lengua                     |      |
| 133 | Twana                       |           | 183 | Abipon                     | SI04 |
| 134 | Yurok                       | NS31      | 184 | Mapuche (Araucanians)      | SG04 |
| 135 | Pomo                        | NS18      | 185 | Tehuelche                  | SH05 |
| 136 | Yokuts                      | NS29      | 186 | Yahgan                     | SH06 |
| 137 | Paiute (Northern)           | NR13      |     |                            |      |
| 138 | Klamath                     | NR10      |     |                            |      |
| 139 | Kutenai                     |           |     |                            |      |
| 140 | Gros Ventre                 | NQ13      |     |                            |      |
| 141 | Hidatsa                     |           |     |                            |      |
| 142 | Pawnee                      | NQ18      |     |                            |      |
| 143 | Omaha (Dhegiha)             | NQ12      |     |                            |      |
| 144 | Huron                       |           |     |                            |      |



