

DEEDS THAT HELP AND WORDS THAT HURT: HELPING AND GOSSIP AS MODERATORS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADER–MEMBER EXCHANGE AND ADVICE NETWORK CENTRALITY

BERRIN ERDOGAN

Portland State University & Koc University

TALYA N. BAUER

Portland State University

JORGE WALTER

The George Washington University

We examine the relationship between leader–member exchange (LMX) quality and advice network centrality using multisource data from a sample of 250 retail employees and their respective managers in Turkey to test our hypothesized model of value and costs of being sought out for advice. Drawing upon the tenets of network generation theory (Nebus, 2006), we predict that the tendency of focal actors to help others and their own tendency to gossip would be behavioral moderators of the relationship between LMX quality and their advice network centrality. Consistent with network generation theory, our results reveal that LMX quality is positively related to centrality only for those actors with a high tendency to help coworkers and a low tendency to gossip about coworkers, suggesting that behaviors indicating helpfulness and discretion are necessary for high LMX members to maintain a central position in their work group's advice network. Implications and future research directions are discussed.

In organizations, work often gets done through interpersonal relationships (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Such work relations are essential to goal achievement, effectiveness, and coordination (Ferris et al., 2009). A key relationship that can place organizational actors in an advantageous position is the one they form with their immediate manager, and leader–member exchange (LMX) theory contends that the unique, dyadic relationships between employees and managers are associated with organizationally

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Correspondence and requests for reprints should be addressed to Berrin Erdogan, School of Business, Portland State University, 631 SW Harrison Street, Portland, OR 97207; Koc University, Rumelifeneri Yolu 34450 Sariyer, Istanbul, Turkey; berrine@sba.pdx.edu.

desirable outcomes such as job performance and favorable job attitudes (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Gerstner & Day, 1997). Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), LMX theory has established that those actors in high-quality exchanges gain access to resources and other benefits, which they then reciprocate by behaving in ways that benefit the leader and the organization (e.g., Bauer & Green, 1996; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997).

Although relations with managers are important, how employees relate to their coworkers also matters for success and effectiveness in organizational life (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Specifically, those employees who occupy a central position in a work group's social network (i.e., those who become important sources of information and advice for their coworkers) have high levels of social standing and prominence among their coworkers (Salk & Brannen, 2000; Sparrowe & Liden, 2005), which results in advantages including higher power and influence (Brass, 1984, 1985; Sparrowe & Liden, 2005) and greater performance at work (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001; Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001). In other words, one's centrality in social networks and their exchange quality with their manager are two relational paths to effectiveness and well-being in organizational settings.

The advantages of LMX quality for member effectiveness and well-being are well established (Erdogan & Bauer, *in press*). What remain inconclusive are the implications of LMX quality on that person's standing among coworkers. As members develop a high-quality LMX, do they also become more sought after by coworkers, or are they avoided? In early theorizing, Sias and Jablin (1995) likened the position of high LMX members to that of a "teacher's pet," resulting in potentially being shunned by coworkers. In contrast, Kramer (1995) also recognized that high LMX members may be sought out by peers because they are liaisons to the manager. A look at past studies linking LMX quality to coworker satisfaction indicates correlations ranging from strongly positive (Green, Blank, & Liden, 1983) to strongly negative (Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2013). In sum, research linking LMX to one's standing among peers is sparse and inconclusive.

This gap is problematic for two primary reasons. First, the LMX literature tends to treat leader-member relations as a highly desirable relationship that affects most aspects of work life in a positive manner. Yet, even though early LMX researchers alluded to potential costs to high LMX members in the form of how coworkers react to these members (e.g., Sias & Jablin, 1995), such potential costs have not yet been empirically examined. Thus, investigating the nature of the relationship between LMX quality and network centrality is important to fully understand the implications of LMX quality as a relational resource for the focal member. Second, LMX

theory has long maintained that high LMX members are the leader's trusted assistants and that leaders rely on them to coordinate the work within the team (Liden, Erdogan, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2006) as well as to represent the leader in his or her absence (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Yet, it is unclear whether high LMX members may represent leaders in their absence, because we do not know how LMX status relates to standing among coworkers. Any potential costs to high LMX in the form of network standing are therefore important for researchers to delineate.

To explore the relationship between LMX quality and advice network centrality, we integrate LMX theory with network generation theory (Nebus, 2006). This theory posits that in order to understand how someone emerges as central in a network, we need to consider factors that deem that individual attractive to coworkers as a source of advice. In particular, the theory proposes that network centrality is a function of the expected value and cost of an advice source, each interacting with the likelihood that the expected value and cost will actually be received or incurred (Bamberger, 2009; Nebus, 2006). Applied to LMX theory, LMX quality may increase both the potential value and the potential cost of seeking advice from a particular person by, respectively, providing access to better quality information and resources and other benefits, and by being regarded with suspicion due to the possibility that vulnerabilities shared with them may be indirectly transmitted to the manager. We further expect that two specific behaviors members can engage in—showing concern for others in the form of helping others and passing on negative information about others (commonly referred to as gossip)—will moderate the relationship between LMX and advice network centrality by serving as factors that, respectively, increase the likelihood of coworkers' actually obtaining value and incurring costs from a high-LMX member. Our theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

By integrating LMX theory with network generation theory, our study contributes to both the LMX and the social network literatures. We extend the LMX literature by examining a novel benefit associated with LMX quality, that is, member's social standing in their work-related advice networks. Most effects of LMX on employee attitudes and behaviors have been investigated using a social exchange theory lens, with the suggestion that LMX quality is related to more favorable outcomes due to a desire on the part of members to reciprocate to the leader (see Erdogan & Bauer, in press, for a review). This mechanism is insufficient to explain why some employees emerge as central among coworkers. Instead, advice network centrality may best be understood by considering how characteristics and behaviors of the advice source entail costs and benefits to advice seekers (Bamberger, 2009; Nebus, 2006). Following this theoretical logic, we aim to examine behaviors through which high LMX members emerge as

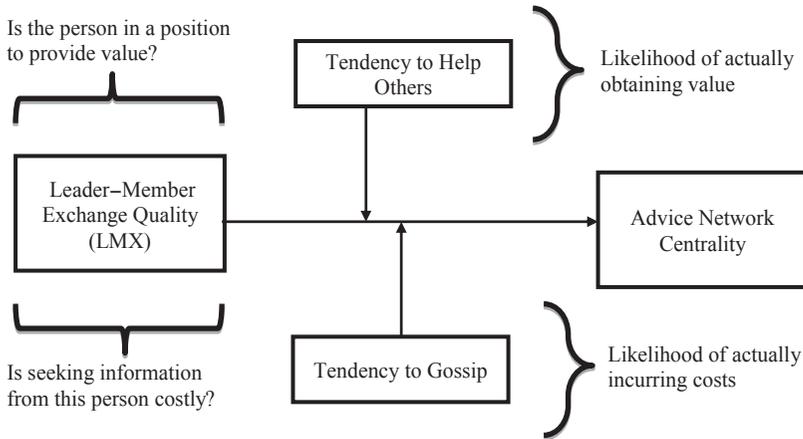


Figure 1: **Theoretical Model.**

someone sought after by peers as a liaison to the manager and behaviors through which they are potentially avoided for their proximity to the manager (Kramer, 1995; Sias & Jablin, 1995). By explicitly conceptualizing LMX quality as both potentially valuable and costly to one's network standing, our study represents one of the first systematic investigations into a potential downside of LMX.

We also make a contribution to the social network literature by introducing a novel predictor of advice network centrality. Past research has investigated personality traits (Klein, Lim, Saltz, & Mayer, 2004; Mehra et al., 2001) and demographic characteristics, such as education and age (Klein et al., 2004), as predictors of advice network centrality. Our study investigates a unique reason why some individuals may be chosen as advice sources: closeness to a manager. Controlling for indicators of task-relevant expertise (education, experience, and job performance), we examine the nature of the relationship between a person's relationship quality with one's manager and centrality in the advice network. Moreover, we incorporate two behaviors inspired by Nebus' model to represent behavioral signals that indicate that values and costs of such closeness will become accessible to advice seekers. Our study therefore adds to the social network literature by investigating the role of human agency, or the idea that an actor's behaviors, and not just the network structure, determine a focal actor's social capital (e.g., Ahuja, Soda, & Zaheer, 2012; Obstfeld, 2005). By focusing on behavioral correlates, we aim to identify behaviors that contribute to, or take away from, one's social standing and

illuminate what individuals can do in order to proactively manage their own network status.

Potential Value and Cost of Seeking Advice From High LMX Members

Relationships with immediate supervisors may make or break a person's career and affect organizational life, as evidenced by studies showing that LMX quality relates to intrinsic career success (Erdogan, Kraimer, & Liden, 2004), extrinsic career success (Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999), and likelihood of turnover (Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006). Yet, research has made contradictory predictions regarding how having a high-quality relationship with one's manager relates to interactions with coworkers. For example, several studies show positive links between LMX quality and employee-reported satisfaction with coworkers (e.g., Green et al., 1983; Seers, 1989). At the same time, several scholars have cautioned that having high LMX has the potential to hurt coworker relations. For example, it has been theorized (but not empirically tested) that employees may question the motives behind the positive behaviors of high LMX members (Bowler, Halbesleben, & Paul, 2010) and that coworkers may react to them with cynicism (Davis & Gardner, 2004), which could result in coworkers keeping their distance from high LMX members. In other words, despite being powerful in a team, being a high LMX member has the potential to affect how coworkers react to the focal person.

Among different types of social networks, such as workflow and information, advice networks affect a person's level of influence in the workplace (Brass, 1984) and are among the most frequently studied types of social networks. We know from past research that those members who are central in advice networks experience more positive working conditions (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993), have lower levels of turnover (Mossholder, Settoon, & Henagan, 2005), and are more effective (Sparrowe et al., 2001). In three studies with different foci but where raw correlations between LMX and advice network centrality were reported, the relationship ranges from significant ($r = .20$, Sparrowe & Liden, 2005) to nonsignificant ($r = .13$, Goodwin, Bowler, & Whittington, 2009; $r = .04$, Venkataramani, Green, & Schleicher, 2010), suggesting that the relationship is situational, and moderators of the relationship exist.

As noted earlier, to systematically approach the question of how the LMX quality of a member relates to the degree to which the focal member is sought after for advice, we draw from network generation theory (Nebus, 2006) as summarized in Figure 1. Based on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), Nebus (2006) contends that advice networks develop as a consequence of advice seekers deciding which information source will

be most effective in helping them achieve their objectives. Specifically, when individuals consider who to seek advice from, they weigh the value of the knowledge to be gained from a person and compare it to the cost of seeking knowledge from that person. Using expectancy theory terms, Nebus predicts that seeking advice from another person will have positive and negative consequences, or valence. Positive valence refers to the *value* of contacting a person and includes considerations such as the expertise of the person, whereas negative valence refers to the *cost* of contacting a particular person for knowledge and information, and includes considerations such as the social cost of obtaining information from that particular person. Moreover, as presented in the figure, the likelihood that a person will be sought out for advice, and therefore emerge as central in advice networks, will depend on *both* the potential value of a person, interacting with the likelihood of actually obtaining the potential value, *and* the potential cost of approaching someone, interacting with the likelihood of actually incurring the costs. In simpler terms, potentially valuable actors who are expected to actually be willing to pass on their valuable advice will become more central, whereas potentially costly actors with a high likelihood of actually imposing social as well as other costs on advice seekers will become less central.

Integrating Nebus' (2006) framework with LMX theory suggests that high LMX members are both valuable and costly sources of advice, representing positive *and* negative valence in Nebus' model. High LMX members are potentially valuable sources of advice for two reasons: First, high LMX members have greater access to information and resources, as evidenced by their more frequent communications with the leader (Sin, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2009) and greater access to organizational resources (Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011). Managers tend to funnel the resources they receive from the organization (Erdogan & Enders, 2007) and from their own managers (Tangirala, Green, & Ramanujam, 2007) to high LMX members. As a result, they are likely to be in possession of greater informational resources, making them potential targets for advice-seeking colleagues. Second, high LMX members have greater control over their managers (Schriesheim, Castro, Zhou, & Yammarino, 2001). They feel free to challenge and disagree with the leader, voice their concerns (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009; Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008), and report having greater impact on how work gets done (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). As a result, coworkers seeking advice from high LMX members will likely feel that these members may influence the leader in a way that will serve their own interests.

At the same time, high LMX members are potentially costly to seek information from. Advice seeking is inherently a costly act to begin with, as advice seekers run the risk of appearing inferior, incompetent, and dependent on others (Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Lee, 2002; Schulte, Cohen, & Klein, 2012). As a result, researchers in the information-seeking literature have observed that advice seekers prefer less costly information sources, such as one's romantic partners (Teboul, 1995) or coworkers, as opposed to supervisors (Miller & Jablin, 1991), and use more covert tactics of monitoring information rather than proactively seeking advice (Tidwell & Sias, 2005). Bamberger (2009, p. 68), in a review of the help-seeking literature, notes that "individuals may be hesitant to discuss a certain personal problem with coworkers for fear that, should these matters come to the attention of management, they could have significant, adverse career implications." Thus, seeking advice from a high LMX member of a work group is likely to be costly given their frequent communication and openness with the manager.

In summary, what makes high LMX members potentially valuable—their social proximity to the leader—also entails potential costs because any vulnerability shared with the member may be indirectly shared with the leader. Drawing on Nebus' (2006) model, we predict that LMX quality should interact with factors increasing the likelihood of actually obtaining value and with factors increasing the likelihood of actually incurring cost.

Likelihood of Actually Obtaining Value From High LMX Members: The Moderating Role of the Tendency to Help Others

If a person needs advice, and if they know that someone is likely to have the information and knowledge they need, what determines whether they actually seek advice from that person? Nebus (2006) theorizes that the degree to which a focal actor is willing to share the information they have is a consideration for whether or not to pursue this actor for advice. In other words, the value of an advice source will interact with the accessibility of that value to advice seekers. Advice seekers will therefore pay attention to cues that signal that a focal actor will be generous with what they know. Nebus lists examples of potential factors that could serve as indicators that the advice source would be willing to share their knowledge, including whether the source is trusted and whether the source has a history of being responsive.

Based on this rationale, we expect that the frequency with which a person publicly displays behaviors that signal to others that the person has a history of being considerate of the needs of colleagues will be a contingency. Advice sources with high LMX quality are potentially valuable

advice givers due to their greater opportunities to possess resources and information (Sin et al., 2009). Provided that they also have a tendency to help their coworkers, the value of their high LMX quality will become more accessible to advice seekers. It has long been recognized that while helping others may make a person feel good, it also makes them “look good” by creating a positive impression of the person who is being helpful (Bolino, 1999). Those who display helpful behaviors towards others are more likely to have a reputation of being available to help, and colleagues are likely more comfortable approaching these people for advice given the greater likelihood that they will.

As a result, we predict that high LMX quality should be associated with higher levels of advice network centrality for those people who demonstrate a high tendency to help others. In contrast, for those who demonstrate low levels of helping behaviors, LMX quality is likely to be less relevant to their becoming central in advice networks. Although these members will have useful information and knowledge to result in good advice, they also signal that approaching them for advice or information is unlikely to yield positive results, which would make their value as advice sources, or their LMX status, irrelevant for advice network centrality. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between LMX quality and advice network centrality will be moderated by the focal actor’s tendency to help others such that LMX quality will be positively related to advice network centrality for only those actors with a high tendency to help others, although there should be no relationship for those who demonstrate a low tendency to help others.

Likelihood of Actually Incurring Costs From High LMX Members: The Moderating Role of the Tendency to Gossip

High LMX members, despite being valuable, also have the potential to be costly allies. Their frequent communication with the manager may result in advice seeker wariness, as any weakness or problem shared with the employee has the potential to be passed on to the manager. Therefore, despite their value, high LMX members are also *potentially* costly, and their advice network centrality should depend on their likelihood of *actually* being costly. We predict that the primary cost associated with seeking advice from a high LMX member (vs. a low LMX member) will be the risk of undesired information sharing about them or a lack of discretion. Thus, coworkers are likely to be attuned to behavioral cues suggesting that a potential advice source will be discreet with information shared with

them and respect the privacy of information. In fact, discretion is regarded as a key behavior that will make one a trusted knowledge source (Levin, Whitener, & Cross, 2006).

In personal, as well as organizational spheres, individuals often talk about others. Although such talk may be positive and complimentary, it is the negative talk about others that is regarded as gossip by the average person (Turner, Mazur, Wendel, & Winslow, 2003). Gossip is a much denounced but frequently practiced way of communicating (Michelson & Mouly, 2000). It has been argued that gossip serves important functions including as a source of information, entertainment, stress relief (Grosser, Lopez-Kidwell, & Labianca, 2010), peer monitoring (Loughry & Tosi, 2008), and making sense of the organizational context (Mills, 2010).

Despite potential advantages for the gossiper, gossip may be self-handicapping for those who have a close relationship with their manager. Coworkers perceived as contributing negative information about others during conversations are perceived as less warm than those who do not (Farley, Timme, & Hart, 2010). A study of college students showed that those who engage in gossip were less likely to be trusted (Turner et al., 2003). Kurland and Pelled (2000) further predicted that seeking information from someone who frequently gossips would be risky. This is because those who have a tendency to share negative information about others will be regarded as less discreet and more likely to share the revealed vulnerability of the advice seeker to others. Thus, for members with high tendency to gossip, higher LMX quality will result in higher costs to be incurred. As a result, we expect that for those who frequently share negative information about third parties in conversations, LMX quality should negatively relate to advice network centrality. In contrast, for those with low tendency to gossip, higher LMX quality should relate to higher levels of advice network centrality, given that these individuals are valuable information sources that do not entail a great deal of costs. We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between LMX quality and advice network centrality will be moderated by the focal actor's tendency to gossip such that LMX will be positively related to advice network centrality for only those actors with a low tendency to gossip, although the relationship should be negative for those who have a high tendency to gossip.

Joint Effects of the Tendencies to Help and Gossip

Finally, we expect that the degree to which an employee emerges as a central actor in the advice network will be jointly determined by one's

LMX quality, tendency to help others, and tendency to gossip. Sought-after actors will be those with access to valued resources, who demonstrate willingness to help, and who are not too costly to seek advice from. Nebus' (2006) framework suggests that value and cost should interact with factors that increase the likelihood of actors actually obtaining value or incurring costs. Thus, it follows that the ultimate relationship between LMX quality and network centrality will be jointly determined by both tendency to help others and tendency to gossip. Formally:

Hypothesis 3: There will be a three-way interaction between LMX quality, tendency to help others, and tendency to gossip such that the relationship between LMX and advice network centrality will be positive only when tendency to help is high and tendency to gossip is low.

Method

Sample and Procedure

All employees and store managers employed in 23 store locations of a clothing retailer in Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey, were invited to participate in our study ($N = 636$). Employees were paid for the time they spent completing the surveys on site, although store managers ($N = 23$) were invited to mail in their surveys. We utilized three sources of data (employee, manager, and coworkers) obtained via two separate sets of surveys. Employees reported their LMX quality, demographic variables, and their own tendency to gossip, as well as naming those they go to for advice. Thus, a focal individual's advice network centrality was calculated using data provided by their coworkers. Store managers reported employee helping behaviors toward coworkers.

We received completed surveys from 416 employees (65% response rate) and 22 store managers (95% response rate). After surveys with missing data and without matching manager data were dropped, 297 dyads with information on LMX, advice network centrality, tendency to help others, and tendency to gossip remained. Excluding cases with missing control variables yielded a sample of 250. Those who responded to the employee survey and those who did not were not significantly different in how central they were in the advice network ($M_1 - M_2 = .16$, $t = .71$, $p > .05$) or in their helping behaviors ($M_1 - M_2 = .13$, $t = 1.30$, $p > .05$).

The employee sample was 54.9% female; included sales consultants (74%), cashiers (16%), and stock room workers (10%); was on average 22.8 years old; and had worked for this organization for 1.7 years and in

their current stores for 1.3 years. Of the sample, 35% held a high school diploma, 41% were college students, and 23% were college graduates. The 22 managers were 69% male, were 30.3 years of age, had worked for this organization for 6.1 years, and had worked in their current stores for 1.3 years.

Measures

Surveys were translated into Turkish following a back-translation procedure (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973). Unless otherwise noted, we used a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* Likert-type format.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) quality. LMX quality was measured with the seven-item questionnaire developed by Scandura and Graen (1984). A sample item is “My supervisor understands my problems and needs” ($\alpha = .92$).

Advice network centrality. Using standard network survey techniques (Burt, 1992; Wasserman & Faust, 1994), we created each store’s advice network by asking respondents to “list the names of all coworkers you go to for *work-related* advice.” We did not give respondents a list of names nor did we specify the number of coworkers in order to mitigate any social desirability concerns. Because employees worked in self-contained stores, they should be able to accurately recall the coworkers they seek out for advice (Marsden, 1990, 1993). We then calculated each employee’s indegree centrality (Freeman, 1979), or the frequency with which other employees seek advice from a focal person, using UCINET 6.347 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). Our choice of indegree centrality is in line with recent studies on networks (e.g., Bono & Anderson, 2005; Mehra, Dixon, Brass, & Robertson, 2006) and captures the extent to which a focal employee is sought after by coworkers to discuss organizational matters (Venkataramani et al., 2010). Indegree centrality is computed on the basis of a focal employee’s coworkers’ responses.

When using indegree centrality measures, obtaining high within-group response rates is important to ensure that the observed centrality metrics approximate the actual centrality of the focal individual. Costenbader and Valente (2003) showed, using bootstrapping procedures, that the correlations between observed and actual centrality tend to be lower when the within-group response rate is below 50%. In our sample, within-group response rates of groups ranged between 40% and 100%, and dropping two groups with less than 50% response rate did not affect the results, leading us to retain all groups in our analyses to preserve statistical power.

Tendency to help others. The manager of each store reported helping behaviors of each employee they supervised, using Williams and Anderson’s (1991) Organizational Citizenship Behaviors Targeting Individuals

(OCBI) scale. A sample item was "This employee helps others who have heavy workloads" ($\alpha = .87$).

Tendency to gossip. We were unable to identify a measure of tendency to gossip suitable for use in an organizational context. The only validated scale of gossip we identified by Nevo, Nevo, and Derech-Zehavi (1993) focused on gossip about the physical appearance of others, achievement (in the form of grades or leaving the country), celebrities, and dating affairs. Therefore, we created four new items to capture a person's tendency to pass negative information about others at work. Because these were self-reported items, we avoided the word "gossip" in the measure due to its potentially negative connotation. The items we created were "At work, I talk with others about other people's mistakes." "At work, I talk about other people's poor performance." "At work, I talk about other people's failures." "At work, I talk about the bad things that happen to other people." ($\alpha = .89$). To validate these items, we followed scale validation procedures recommended by Hinkin (1995, 1998), which are outlined in the Appendix for scale validation of the Tendency to Gossip Scale (TTG).

Control variables. Past research has shown that age, gender (Klein et al., 2004), and education are correlated with centrality (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). Therefore, we included them as controls. Consistent with Ibarra (1993), we also controlled for number of years of retail experience. Education and experience are important indicators of expertise and hence are expected to provide alternative explanations for advice network centrality. We further controlled for employee task performance reported by store managers using the seven-item scale by Williams and Anderson (1991) because task performance as another indicator of expertise may be yet another reason employees are sought after for advice. A sample item was "Adequately completes assigned duties" ($\alpha = .91$). Finally, we controlled for two variables that could have effects on advice network centrality: full-time status (coded 1 = full-time employee, defined as those who work more than 30 hours in a typical week, 0 = part-time employee) and whether the employee worked in the stock room (coded 1 = stock room worker, 0 = others) as stock room workers often worked irregular hours, which structurally limits their interactions with others.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are presented in Table 1. Because employees were nested within stores, the use of OLS regression could underestimate standard errors (SE). Thus, we tested our hypotheses using random coefficient regression in MPlus 7. The intraclass correlation (ICC) for the unconditional model was .00 for advice network centrality, .38 for LMX, .28 for tendency to help others, and .08 for tendency to

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. LMX	5.24	1.32										
2. Advice network centrality	2.22	2.80	.06									
3. Tendency to help	5.27	.86	.12*	.15*								
4. Tendency to gossip	4.16	1.60	-.06	-.01	-.17**							
5. Age	22.83	3.23	.04	.19**	.08	-.05						
6. Gender	.55	.50	-.03	-.11	-.12	.15*	-.21**					
7. Education	1.88	.76	.05	.11	.01	-.01	-.12	-.05				
8. Retail experience	2.33	2.07	.10	.25**	.14*	.08	.42**	-.05	-.16*			
9. Task performance	5.54	.78	.11	.20**	.58**	-.03	.09	.07	.05	.07		
10. Full-time status	.82	.38	.02	.13	.03	-.00	.09	-.02	-.06	.08	.00	
11. Stock room worker	.10	.29	.02	-.09	.08	-.14*	.24**	-.33**	-.13*	.09	.01	.04

Note. $N = 250$. LMX = leader-member exchange quality. Gender was coded as 1 = female, 0 = male. Education was coded as 0 = less than high school, 1 = high school graduate, 2 = college student, 3 = college graduate. Retail experience was measured in years. Full-time status was coded as 1 = full-time worker (works an average of more than 30 hours a week) and 0 = part-time worker. Stock room worker was coded as 1 = stock room worker, 0 = other.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

gossip. Regression results are presented in Table 2. In Model 1, we entered the Level-1 correlates (age, gender, education, retail experience, full-time status, the dummy code for stock room worker, and task performance) as predictors of the intercept. In Model 2, we entered LMX, tendency to help others, and tendency to gossip. In Model 3, we entered the two 2-way interaction terms representing hypothesized relationships. These analyses were used to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. In order to test Hypothesis 3, we entered the two-way interaction of tendency to help and gossip in Model 4 and entered the three-way interaction in Model 5. Following Hofmann and Gavin (1998), we used grand-mean centering for all variables. We examined the significance of coefficients and conducted χ^2 tests comparing each model with the nested model. Because χ^2 tests produced by Mplus cannot be directly used for difference testing, we conducted Satorra–Bentler scaled χ^2 difference tests using log likelihoods (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2010).

As presented in Table 2, education, retail experience, full-time status, and task performance were positive predictors of advice network centrality, whereas those employees who worked in the stock room had lower levels of advice network centrality. Moreover, the interaction of LMX and tendency to help others had a significant coefficient in Model 3, indicating preliminary support for Hypothesis 1, although the nonsignificant interaction of LMX and tendency to gossip provided no support for Hypothesis 2. Figure 2 illustrates the nature of the first interaction (plotted at one *SD* above and below the mean). LMX was positively related to advice network centrality only for those who displayed a high tendency to help others ($\gamma = .32, t = 2.50, p < .05$) and was not significant for those who had a low tendency to help others ($\gamma = -.22, t = -1.39, p > .05$), providing support for Hypothesis 1.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 predicted a three-way interaction between LMX, tendency to help others, and tendency to gossip. The results presented in Table 2 and Figure 3 support this hypothesis. LMX quality is positively related to advice network centrality only for those employees who had a high tendency to help others and a low tendency to gossip ($\gamma = .53, t = 3.80, p < .01$). For those with high tendencies to help others as well as to gossip ($\gamma = -.02, t = -.08, p > .05$), and for those who had a low tendency to help others but high tendency to gossip ($\gamma = -.04, t = -.22, p > .05$), LMX and advice network centrality were not related. Interestingly, for those who had low tendency to help others and gossip, LMX was negatively related to advice network centrality ($\gamma = -.57, t = -2.58, p < .05$). Slope difference tests (Dawson & Richter, 2006) confirmed the pattern of results such that the high-help and low-gossip slope was significantly more positive than the high-help and high-gossip

TABLE 2
Random Coefficient Regression Model Results for the Moderator Analyses With Advice Network Centrality as the Outcome Variable

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
Intercept	2.20**	(.22)	2.21**	(.23)	2.16**	(.22)	2.16**	(.23)	2.19**	(.23)
Age	.12	(.09)	.12	(.09)	.11	(.09)	.11	(.09)	.11	(.09)
Gender	-.75	(.43)	-.70	(.40)	-.73	(.40)	-.73	(.40)	-.64	(.39)
Education	.43*	(.18)	.43*	(.18)	.40*	(.17)	.40*	(.17)	.44*	(.18)
Retail experience	.30*	(.14)	.30*	(.14)	.27*	(.13)	.27*	(.13)	.29*	(.14)
Full-time status	1.01**	(.28)	1.01**	(.28)	.99**	(.32)	.99**	(.31)	.94**	(.31)
Stock room worker	-1.64**	(.58)	-1.67**	(.58)	-1.69**	(.54)	-1.69**	(.55)	-1.64**	(.52)
Task performance	.76**	(.28)	.70	(.38)	.64	(.36)	.64	(.36)	.64	(.36)
LMX			.02	(.11)	.06	(.08)	.06	(.08)	-.03	(.08)
Tendency to help			.09	(.41)	.07	(.36)	.07	(.36)	.04	(.36)
Tendency to gossip			-.05	(.10)	-.05	(.10)	-.05	(.10)	-.05	(.09)
LMX × help					.32*	(.15)	.32*	(.14)	.33*	(.14)
LMX × gossip					-.02	(.07)	-.02	(.07)	-.00	(.07)
Help × gossip									.04	(.10)
LMX × help × gossip									-.20*	(.07)
$\Delta\chi^2 (\Delta df)$	99.38** (7)		34 (3)		7.05* (2)		0.00 (1)		8.20** (1)	
R^2	15%		15%		17%		17%		18%	

Note. $N = 250$. SE = standard error; LMX = leader-member exchange quality. Gender was coded as 1 = female, 0 = male. Education was coded as 0 = less than high school, 1 = high school graduate, 2 = college student, 3 = college graduate. Retail experience was measured in years. Full-time status was coded as 1 = full-time worker (works an average of more than 30 hours a week) and 0 = part-time worker. Stock room worker was coded as 1 = stock room worker; 0 = other. $\Delta\chi^2$ refers to Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test as outlined by Muthén and Muthén (1998–2010). Δdf is change in degrees of freedom. R^2 is the proportional reduction in error variance (Snijders & Bosker, 2012). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

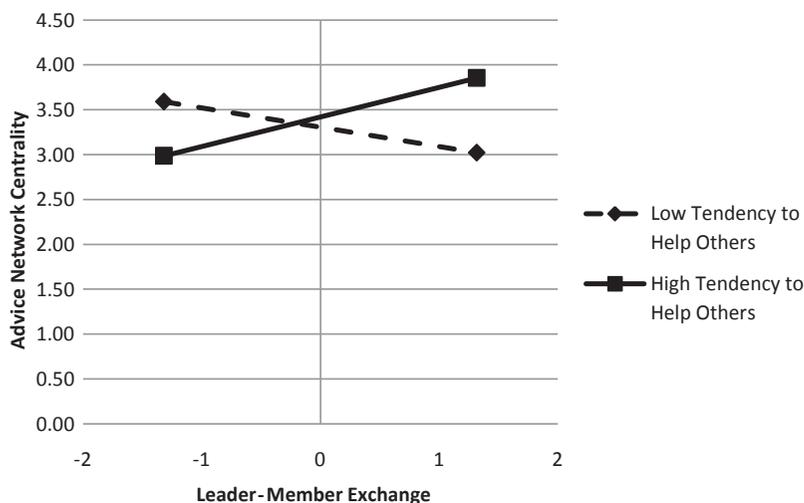


Figure 2: Plot of the Interaction Between LMX and Tendency to Help Others.

($t = 2.08, p < .05$), low-help and high-gossip ($t = 2.24, p < .05$), and low-help and low-gossip slopes ($t = 3.55, p < .01$).

We also performed supplemental analyses as our network centrality measure was positively skewed (range: 0–20, skewness = 2.40). Following Tabachnick and Fidell (2012), we performed two transformations to address a possible violation of the normality assumption. First, we performed a square-root transformation of advice network centrality scores, appropriate for moderately positively skewed data. The two interactions remained significant (LMX \times help: $\gamma = .15, t = 3.06, p < .01$ and LMX \times help \times gossip: $\gamma = -.08, t = -2.87, p < .01$). Second, we performed a log transformation, appropriate for severely positively skewed data. We added the constant 1 to the indegree centrality score to ensure that the smallest score was 1 and then log transformed the scores. Again, the two interactions remained significant (LMX \times help: $\gamma = .05, t = 3.00, p < .01$; LMX \times help \times gossip interaction: $\gamma = -.03, t = -3.01, p < .01$). Because the results remained unchanged, we retained the raw scores for advice network centrality in order to aid the interpretation of our results.

Discussion

Relationships with managers and employees are two types of relationships critical to effectiveness, morale, and attachment to organizations.

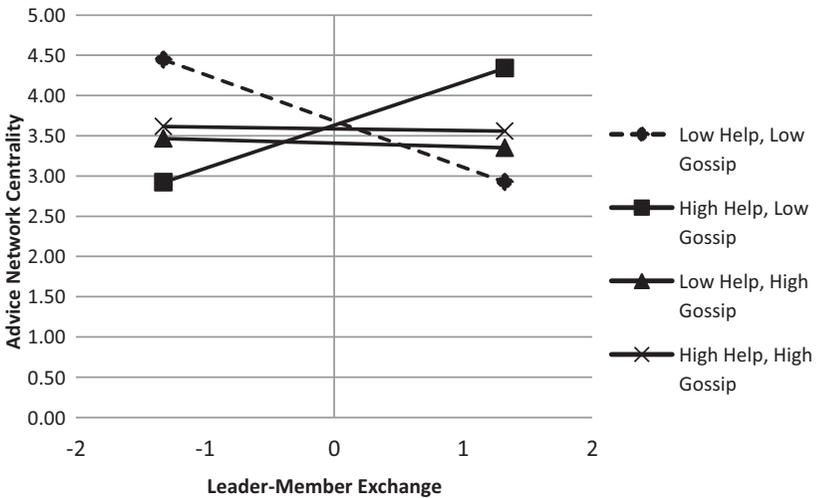


Figure 3: Plot of the Three-Way Interaction Between LMX, Tendency to Help Others, and Tendency to Gossip.

Note. Help refers to the tendency to help others; Gossip refers to tendency to gossip about others

In this study, we set out to investigate the nature of the link between LMX quality and an employee's network standing. Scholars have contended that LMX quality may relate to getting closer to or getting more distant from one's coworkers (e.g., Kramer, 1995; Sias & Jablin, 1995). To address this question, we integrated LMX theory with Nebus' (2006) network generation theory. Our results have shown that LMX quality was positively associated with advice network centrality to the degree to which employees demonstrated high tendency to help others, thereby signaling that they will actually share their knowledge with peers. In contrast, when focal members had low tendency to help coworkers, LMX quality was not related to network centrality, suggesting that when employees have a history of not being helpful, the value they may possess as advice sources becomes irrelevant to their network centrality. Further, tendency to gossip acted as a moderator such that LMX quality was positively related to advice network centrality only when actors had high tendency to help others and low tendency to gossip about others. Members who are helpful and discreet seem to be best positioned to benefit from their high LMX status in the form of also achieving high levels of network centrality. Finally, the results unexpectedly indicated that when focal actors were both discreet and unhelpful, they were isolated from coworkers in such a way that higher LMX status resulted in lower network centrality.

Theoretical Implications

The LMX literature has long recognized the strategic value a high-quality relationship with a leader may bestow upon a member (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Gerstner & Day, 1997). At the same time, early LMX theorists (Kramer, 1995; Sias & Jablin, 1995) recognized the potential tension between having a high LMX relationship and having effective relationships with one's coworkers. In fact, because high LMX relationships are highly visible and salient to coworkers (Duchon, Green, & Taber, 1986), high LMX members may be regarded as "teacher's pets," and being close to one's manager may result in potentially repelling one's peers. Theoretically, exploring this possibility is important for advancing LMX theory because, to date, LMX researchers have effectively viewed high LMX relationships as without social costs (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Our study revealed that, in fact, the degree to which focal actors may leverage their LMX status for their social standing among coworkers is related to their own actions. As expected, we found that LMX quality was positively related to advice network centrality when coupled with a high tendency to help others and a low tendency to gossip, indicating that a solid pathway to influence within one's work group is to have a high-quality exchange with the leader while also being helpful to coworkers and discreet.

It was also interesting and potentially important that behaviors that signal accessibility of advice (i.e., the tendency to help others) were not solely sufficient for the positive relationship between LMX quality and advice network centrality. In fact, high levels of tendency to gossip, in essence, neutralized the beneficial effects of a high tendency to help others. In other words, leveraging LMX quality for network centrality depends on individuals signaling being *both* accessible and low-cost sources of advice simultaneously.

Although our main prediction regarding when LMX quality would be positively related to advice network centrality was supported, an unexpected negative relationship between LMX and advice network centrality under the low tendency to help others and gossip condition also emerged. Although unexpected, this interaction is interesting and theoretically meaningful. It is plausible that the low tendency to help others and gossip condition is one where the focal individual is socially and emotionally isolated from the work group. For these individuals, having high LMX seems to have resulted in lower levels of advice network centrality. In fact for these individuals who signal being unhelpful but discreet, having low LMX was associated with emerging as more central in the advice network compared to having high LMX. It seems that team members who are isolated from both the leader and other members (low LMX, low helpfulness, low gossip) are preferred to members who are isolated from

the team but close to the leader (high LMX, low helpfulness, low gossip). In other words, we found that it is possible for higher LMX quality to be associated with lower advice network centrality when coupled with behaviors signaling psychological withdrawal from the work group.

Our study also contributes to the literature on social networks by examining their behavioral correlates and boundary conditions. To date, researchers have predominantly focused on demographic or personality antecedents of network structures (e.g., Klein et al., 2004; Mehra et al., 2001), as well as structural and attitudinal correlates (Hofmann, Lei, & Grant, 2009). We extend past research theoretically by placing the focal actor at the center of the stage to examine the extent to which an actor's own behavior is related to their network centrality. By shedding light on the actions that serve to constitute the social network structures actors are ultimately embedded in, our study provides insights into the microfoundation of agency in the context of social networks (Ahuja et al., 2012; Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994). Our framework does not conceptualize actors as shaping their respective social networks through unilateral actions, such as initiating or severing relationships, but rather indirectly through building a reputation for helpfulness as well as discretion.

More specifically, we advance research on advice network centrality by testing key tenets of network generation theory (Nebus, 2006). In line with this theory, having access to valued resources is not sufficient to garner network centrality. Instead, important aspects of this theory, such as factors representing the likelihood of actually obtaining value and the likelihood of actually incurring the cost of seeking advice were empirically supported as moderators in our study. Our study, therefore, addresses Salancik's (1995) influential critique of social network theory lacking explanations for *why* social interactions exist. More importantly, by accounting for actors' decisions *not* to engage in interactions with coworkers who are prone to gossip, we address his warning that "even easier to ignore than the interactions that exist are the interactions that don't exist" (Salancik, 1995, p. 346).

Finally, we make a contribution to the literature with our empirical focus on gossip in the workplace. Past researchers have contended that gossip may have instrumental benefits for the initiators of gossip such as reduced stress (Grosser et al., 2010), sense making (Mills, 2010), and access to information (Michelson & Mouly, 2000). However, few empirical studies of gossip actually exist in the organizational domain. Our study has shown that gossip has a social cost at work. When it comes to building social capital, gossip erodes an actor's ability to leverage a high LMX relationship into network centrality. Instead, only those members who also display discretion seem to become attractive targets of advice seekers. At the same time, we have found that a low tendency to gossip may be an

indicator of social isolation from the work group. When coupled with a low tendency to help one's coworkers and a high-quality exchange relationship, a low tendency to gossip resulted in the lowest level of advice network centrality, indicating that the absence of gossip may signal social distance from the group, although its presence at higher levels may signal a lack of discretion. Further research seems warranted to continue to make sense of the benefits and costs of engaging in gossip at work.

Practical Implications

Focal actors have several avenues for becoming more central in their work groups' social networks. Our findings suggest that those who are interested in managing their relational resources may be advised to invest in developing a high-quality relationship with their managers. These relationships are salient to coworkers and are a source of numerous tangible and intangible benefits, information, and resources. High LMX members may become the liaison that advice seekers go to when in need of information and advice.

At the same time, simply building high-quality relationships with one's manager is no guarantee that these relationships can be leveraged into high network centrality. In fact, it seems that focal actors will also need to consider what they signal to their colleagues by their own actions, as we have shown that coworkers are more likely to seek advice from focal actors who have a high likelihood to actually share their value and who are less likely to make advice seekers actually incur the associated costs. Specifically, the frequency of helping behaviors targeting one's colleagues will make a person more attractive as a target of information-seeking efforts, although the frequency of negative gossip will make an actor more repellent. In other words, how focal actors manage their own standing is firmly within their own control.

Potential Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

First, although we have strong theoretical reasons to expect that LMX quality would precede the development of advice network centrality, our study design does not allow us to test the temporal order of variables, and under certain conditions it may be plausible for network centrality to precede LMX. The theoretical reason we expect LMX to relate to advice network centrality and not vice versa is that the LMX literature has shown that LMX quality forms quickly (Bauer & Green, 1996; Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Ilies, 2009), as early as within the first 5 days in which the leader and member start working together (Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993). Empirically, however, it was not possible for us to tease apart the causality

of the observed relationship, as leaders and members had similar levels of average store tenure (1.33 years for managers, 1.30 years for employees), even though managers had much longer organizational tenure (6.1 and 1.7 years, respectively). A possible different interpretation of our results, however, could be that advice network centrality results in building higher quality relations with the manager, on the condition that the employees who are sought after for advice are also discreet and helpful. Excluding employees who had been in their stores significantly longer than their managers (6 months or longer) resulted in dropping 65 individuals, and even with this reduced sample, the results were identical. These findings provide at least some evidence that treating LMX as an antecedent, rather than a consequence, of network centrality is consistent with theory as well as sample characteristics we studied.

Still, future research should seek to further explore directionality by temporally separating LMX and network centrality and collecting data at multiple points in time. Examining these relationships longitudinally may be revealing as, for example, LMX quality may indeed result in higher levels of advice network centrality. However, when a new leader arrives, some employees may lose their advice network centrality as their relationship with the new manager may be different from their relationship with the former manager. In fact, formerly central employees may constitute a threat to the new manager as a different source of power and influence, which may result in lower LMX quality and reduce their centrality in the network. In other words, investigating these relationships over time should result in revealing a more dynamic picture of the nature of the link between LMX quality and network status and thus represents a fruitful avenue for future research.

Second, a potential limitation is related to the context in which our study was conducted. We studied retail employees in Turkey, and it is unclear whether results would generalize to disparate occupations and cultures. Past research on LMX has shown, however, that LMX quality is important in the Turkish context and that the construct's relations to outcomes are similar to the ones observed in Western cultures (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2004; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006). Furthermore, the retail sector is an important employer around the world. According to recent statistics, the retail industry employs over 14.7 million workers in the United States, constituting 13% of private employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012), making this industry an important setting for studies in management.

Third, Nebus' (2006) model proposes that accessibility of value and cost will serve as moderators of value and cost. We chose tendency to help others and gossip as behavioral moderators to represent this accessibility. Yet, we recognize that these are not the only two moderators that may

result in a greater likelihood to obtain value or incur costs. For example, high LMX members may be more willing to share their information with advice seekers depending on how agreeable they are in terms of their personality, or whether or not they occupy a position that requires them to share their information. Similarly, the social costs of seeking information from a high LMX member may be compounded when leaders are more, rather than less, powerful and connected within the organization or when the tasks in question are more risky in nature, with higher consequences for not seeking information. Although we attempted to identify how employees may influence their own standing through their own behaviors, Nebus' model may be useful in directing further work on identifying personality, structural, and task-related moderators as well. We encourage future research in this area.

Conclusion

In this study, we have shown that different aspects of an individual's social capital are related to each other, albeit not always in a synergistic manner. A person's standing with coworkers and manager seem to covary depending on the types of behaviors he or she displays, and the ability to leverage one's relationship with a manager seems to depend on behaviors signaling that the person is likely to help others and is discreet in relation to coworkers. In other words, whether employees capitalize on LMX relationships with respect to network centrality depends largely on the nature of the behaviors they demonstrate. High LMX members may be regarded as a liaison to the manager (Kramer, 1995) to the degree to which they are helpful and avoid displaying behaviors that violate the principle of discretion, helping their centrality in the advice network. In contrast, high LMX members may be shunned and avoided akin to teacher's pets (Sias & Jablin, 1995) to the degree to which they neither help nor gossip with their team members. Further investigation into the potential costs of LMX quality is a fruitful area for future research.

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Appendix

Scale Validation Procedures for the Tendency to Gossip (TTG) Scale

In order to validate our measure of gossip, we followed the five steps outlined by Hinkin (1995, 1998), which include item generation, questionnaire administration, initial item reduction, confirmatory factor analysis, and convergent/discriminant validity evidence.

Step 1: Item generation. Our first step was to generate four items following the deductive approach (based on the definition of tendency to gossip). We followed best practices in writing items, including keeping statements simple, as short as possible, as well as written from a consistent perspective. These items are as follows:

- (1) At work, I talk with others about other people's mistakes.
- (2) At work, I talk about other people's poor performance.
- (3) At work, I talk about other people's failures.
- (4) At work, I talk about the bad things that happen to other people.

Content validity assessment. We asked three subject matter experts (advanced doctoral students in industrial-organizational psychology) to review these items along with items from established scales of feedback giving, loneliness, knowledge sharing, and social undermining items for a total of 50 items. They matched items with the set of definitions we presented them with based on the literature. All three experts correctly matched our four items with the definition of tendency to gossip.¹

Step 2: Questionnaire administration. In our study, we surveyed four independent samples. We used a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* Likert-type format. **Sample 1** included working students at a North-western university in the USA. The 109 students were 62% male, averaged 25 years old, and had worked in their organizations for over 2 years. We distributed the gossip items along with job satisfaction (three items by

¹The experts also placed two items from social undermining under the definition of tendency to gossip ("I talked bad about a coworker behind their back" and "I spread rumors about a coworker"). In other words, the four items we developed seemed to measure tendency to gossip, whereas social undermining had two items that may be classified as gossip, but the remainder of the 13-item undermining scale did not appear to tap gossip.

Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983, $\alpha = .94$), stress (seven items by House & Rizzo, 1972, $\alpha = .86$), role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload (five, three, and five items by Peterson et al., 1995, $\alpha = .85, .75,$ and $.91$, respectively) because we reasoned that the tendency to gossip should relate to dissatisfaction, stress, and tension at work (Michelson, van Iterson, & Waddington, 2010). **Sample 2** included 276 adults working in the USA recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Mason & Suri, 2012), an online labor market where requesters post tasks and workers choose which tasks to complete for pay. Prior research has shown this population to be representative and reliable (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). Participants averaged tenure of 4 years, were 36 years old, 50% female, 52% college graduates, and 74% Caucasian. Based on the suggestion of the editor and an anonymous reviewer, we expanded the measures collected with **Sample 3**, which was a second sample of 176 working adults in the USA recruited through Amazon's MTurk. These participants worked in their current organization for 3.5 years, were 30 years old, and responded to 50 items, including the newly created gossip items, 11-item loneliness scale (de Jong Gierveld & Kamphuis, 1985), 13-item social undermining scale (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), 14-item communication scale (Kramer, Callister, & Turban, 1995), 8-item feedback giving scale (Susan, 2005), and demographic questions. **Sample 4** was a third separate data collection and sample from Amazon MTurk ($n = 200$). These participants worked in their current organization for 3.5 years, were 62% male, and averaged 30 years old. This sample received the same items as Sample 3 to respond to in their survey.

Step 3: Initial item reduction. For **Sample 1**, we conducted a principal components analysis with oblique rotation that resulted in six factors explaining 74% of the variance. Gossip items had high loadings on their intended factor ($>.84$) and did not have any cross-loadings. Further, following Gerbing and Anderson (1988), after unidimensionality was established, an internal consistency assessment was conducted. For this sample, the scale was above the .70 to .80 recommended for newly established scales (Nunnally, 1978) at $\alpha = .95$. It also showed high reliability in **Sample 2** with $\alpha = .91$. We further repeated these analyses using our **Sample 3**, which contained additional measures. Here, we found that when we subjected the 50 items to an exploratory factor analysis using principal components with oblique rotation, nine factors explained 73% of the variance. The gossip items fell under their intended factor with loadings $>.87$ and no cross-loadings ($\alpha = .95$).

Step 4: Confirmatory factor analysis. Hinkin (1998) notes that once Steps 1 through 3 are followed, it is "highly likely that the new scales will be internally consistent and possess content validity" (p. 114). However,

it is further recommended that a CFA be conducted using an independent sample (Henson & Roberts, 2006). Therefore, we used **Sample 4** to conduct a CFA specifying 10 factors. Then, we performed a series of model comparisons by setting the correlation between tendency to gossip and other variables to one and conducting chi-square tests. In all the pairwise comparisons, the chi-square difference test yielded significant results, indicating that the original model fit was significantly better.²

Step 5: Convergent/discriminant validity. For **Sample 1**, as expected, the tendency to gossip was negatively correlated with job satisfaction and positively correlated with stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload. For **Sample 2** tendency to gossip was negatively correlated with job satisfaction and positively correlated with stress, role conflict, and role overload. Role ambiguity and gossip were not correlated. For **Sample 3**, our tendency to gossip scales was positively and significantly correlated with undermining, specific feedback behavior, and negative feedback but not correlated with loneliness, initiating unsolicited information, answering information requests, providing unsolicited information, or positive feedback. For **Sample 4**, a similar pattern emerged.

²In the interest of space, we do not share detailed statistics here. However, full results may be obtained by contacting the first author.