Sourcing Through the Grapevine: Comprehending Multiple Perspectives in Texts Reflecting Gossip

Erica D. Kessler

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Sourcing Through the Grapevine: Comprehending Multiple Perspectives in Texts Reflecting Gossip

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Major: Psychology
Dedication

I dedicate this work to Wanda Louise “Wezi” Grisham.
It was all for you.
Acknowledgements

This paper marks the conclusion of a great journey, one that would not be possible without the support of many people. First and foremost, I give my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to my advisor, mentor, and friend, Dr. Jason L.G. Braasch. Dr. Braasch has guided me and encouraged me in countless ways, particularly during my most vulnerable times as a student. I know that without his support, I would not be where I am or who I am today. Many can teach and mentor, but it takes a remarkable human being to change someone’s life for the better, and Dr. Braasch has done just that. An accomplished scholar, wise mentor, and all-around incredible human being, Dr. Braasch sets the example I want to follow in and outside of the academic life.

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Abstract

The current work sought to examine how the degree of consistency in texts enhances memory for sources within the context of gossip, a new approach that has not been attempted empirically. Theoretically motivated by models and frameworks that characterize source processing and representation, multiple aspects of source memory were assessed, including memory for connections between the sources and their respective gossip statements, but also memory for pairs that spoke about the same topic. Additionally, the present studies investigated various relationships between individual differences such as attitudes towards gossip, tendency to engage in gossip situations, and interpersonal curiosity and text comprehension. Results demonstrated increased processing time and better memory for sources associated with discrepant information across texts when compared to consistencies. Additionally, errors for source recall were increased for consistent texts. Interesting relationships between individuals’ Attitudes Toward Gossip, Tendency to Gossip, Interpersonal Curiosity, and memory for consistent information emerged. Limitations and future directions are discussed.
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List of Abbreviations

RESOLV: Reading as problem SOLVing Model

DMF: Documents Model Framework

S-C: Source to Content

S-S: Source to Source

D-ISC: Discrepancy-Induced Source Comprehension
**Introduction**

People talk. On average, people use about 16,000 words per day, making discourse a relatively frequent occurrence in our daily lives (Mehl et al., 2007). Discourse is the means by which people communicate ideas to and about each other. This form of communication is unique to the human race, allowing individuals to gather and process information about the world around them. Discourse can be extremely diverse in content and delivery. Within certain contexts, this involves communicating expository information; for example, a company relaying its plan of action for moving forward when an employee is absent from a required meeting. Other examples may be more narrative in nature, such as a parent telling their child a bedtime story or the explanation of a historical event.

Discourse comprehension researchers have thoroughly examined the ways in which people comprehend expository and narrative discourse experiences. General findings suggest that inferences support comprehension, as does the incorporation of prior knowledge and ideas gleaned from prior read texts (McNamara & Magliano, 2009). Additionally, there are differences in the comprehension strategies that expository and narrative texts evoke, such as drawing on prior experiences or allocating cognitive resources like attention in order to achieve understanding (Braasch & Bråten 2017; Braasch et al., 2016; Bråten & Strømsø, 2005; Bråten et al., 2009, 2014; Graesser et al., 2003; Kiili et al., 2008; Lawless et al., 2012; Wineburg 1999). Studies focused on characterizing the ways that people comprehend narrative information in discourse contexts have mainly concentrated on people’s comprehension of texts that are more story-like or chronologic in nature (O’Brien & Myers, 1987). However, many discourse experiences involve narrative content that does not match the contexts described above. For example, gossip is a type of discourse that is particularly exclusive to humans. Gossip in its most
basic form allows individuals to acquire social information about one another (Bergmann & Bednarz, 1993), however, that acquisition can be quite complex in nature.

**Gossip**

One type of discourse that is less frequently studied is gossip. Gossip is an essential form of communication and a type of conversation that is unique to humans in general (Dunbar, 2004). As social beings, we are curious and eager to learn about those around us. Gossip allows us to obtain social information that would be otherwise unobtainable through other forms of discourse (Bergmann & Bednarz, 1993). Around two-thirds of conversations involve talking about others who are not present (Levin & Arluke 1985; Dunbar 2004). Even though many people gossip, most do not admit to partaking in gossip and claim they do it less frequently than others (Ellwardt et al., 2012). People report that they like people less if they gossip more frequently compared to those who gossip less frequently (Farley, 2011). As Dunbar (2004) explains, gossip has a negative reputation for reasons that are not entirely apparent. For example, it may be the case that gossip does not always reflect someone in a negative light (i.e., people say nice or complimentary things when gossiping too). Despite its negative reputation, gossip as a form of communication warrants further research to understand its implications more fully for comprehension.

Gossip is motivated by many social, emotional, and biological factors (Dunbar, 2004). Understanding why, how, and who engages in gossip has been a goal of researchers for decades. However, variability in how gossip is operationally defined across disciplines has led to various interpretations of what gossip actually is. For example, Rosnow and Fine (1976) define gossip as simply an exchange of mutual entertainment, explaining that the topic of gossip is typically something trivial and unimportant. Litman and colleagues (2005) define gossip as unproven
information about personal matters that is typically exchanged between individuals. Hartung and Renner (2006) give a broad definition of gossip as the evaluative transmission of information, a phenomenon that is almost always likely to occur when two or more individuals engage in discourse. While definitions of gossip may vary, the current work is informed by the largely agreed-upon definition of gossip as discourse about personal or social topics (Dunbar, 2004; Hartung & Renner, 2013).

As previously mentioned, the term gossip has grown to become associated with a negative connotation, something that we should avoid or ignore if we encounter it (Dunbar, 2004). Qualitative research based on participants’ interview responses painted a picture of someone who gossips as “immoral, uneducated, female, and lower class,” potentially contributing to the unfavorable reputation of gossip (Robbins & Karan, 2019, p.8). Early research by Eder and Enke (1991) descriptively examined gossip tendencies of middle school students in a longitudinal study that took place over three years. In this study, both male and female graduate students served as confederates during naturally occurring social interactions at lunch between middle school peer groups (e.g., groups of two or more individuals). After establishing trust with these students and building rapport, the researchers were able to collect audio, video, and written accounts of conversations across time with multiple peer groups. They then analyzed these audio, visual, and written transcriptions by coding for two key interactions to identify gossip: identification of target (i.e., the individual being gossiped about) and evaluation of the target (i.e., what was said about the target of the gossip). After the initial identification and evaluation of the target occurred, the researchers coded for a variety of subsequent actions: explanations, expansions on the evaluation, support, exaggerated effect, and challenges (for a detailed account of each of these categories please see Eder and Enke, 1991). The frequency of
gossip and possible subsequent actions were analyzed. While several findings emerged, one of the most interesting contributions of this research shows that despite the target of gossip, challenges made to the initial gossip statement were infrequent, meaning that in general the middle school students typically supported the gossip without questioning the information further. As most of the gossip in this study carried a negative connotation (15 out of 16 gossip episodes evaluated were deemed negative by the researchers), the unwavering support for the gossip contributed to more expressions of negative statements, which in turn provided more support for the overall idea that gossip serves a negative form of communication.

This cyclic pattern of gossip as a negative form of discourse was consistent with previous studies on gossip in adolescent children (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). As the authors explain, the complex structure of gossip provides overwhelming support for the negative reputation of gossip in general, particularly when it involves teenagers and young adults (Eder & Enke, 1991). However, recent work by Robbins and Karan (2019) used data from five naturalistic observational studies to investigate different facets of gossip across various everyday situations. In doing so, this research sought to better understand (1) who gossips (2) how people gossip, and (3) the frequency of gossip in a variety of populations (e.g., college students, cancer patients, etc.). Participants wore an Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR) device for 2-3 consecutive days which recorded approximately 7-12% of the participants' conversation while they were awake. Participants in all five studies also completed a self-report questionnaire about their personality traits and characteristics. The meta-analysis of these studies revealed that despite age and/or gender, most people gossiped and gossiped quite frequently: over 4,000 instances of gossip were observed and reported by the authors. The results showed that in a 16-hour day, about 5% (or 52 minutes) of the day was spent engaging in gossip. These results showed no
evidence for the lay theory that people with less education or from lower socio-economic classes tended to gossip more frequently. Rather, gossip tends to be linked more to personality traits or factors. For example, the most consistent predictor of gossip in this study was extroversion. By using the unique EAR method, Robbins, and Karan (2019) provided more accurate measures of who, how, and why people gossip by adding an additional perspective on gossip (i.e., that of the observer of gossip).

While these descriptive studies have looked at the tendency, frequency, and personality traits of those who gossip, very few studies have looked at gossip experimentally. In one influential study, Farley (2011) investigated the relationship between gossip, power, and likeability in undergraduate students. Participants were told the study evaluated “informal communication,” and were presented with an instructional manipulation in which they were randomly assigned to think of either a man or a woman who either frequently or rarely engaged in gossip. Afterwards, participants were tasked with answering various questions about social power and likability before completing a final questionnaire on their tendency to gossip. The results showed that those who gossiped more frequently were liked significantly less compared to those who gossiped less frequently. Additionally, those who gossiped more frequently and negatively were liked significantly less than positive gossipers. Farley (2011) is one of the only empirical studies to date that represents how those who engage in gossip are perceived by others through experimental manipulation.

While descriptive and limited experimental studies do exist, there have been no studies that investigate the mechanisms by which gossip functions as a source of information. When gossip is transmitted between people, there are always sources associated with the gossip, either the person sharing the gossip (i.e., the gossiper) or a specific source within the gossip (i.e., from
whom the gossiper heard the gossip or whom the gossip is about). How discourse is processed can be directly influenced by the source of the information, an element of gossip research that is as-of-yet unstudied. Understanding the mechanisms by which gossip functions as a source of information is imperative for understanding how gossip functions as a form of discourse and relaying vital information about others.

**Theoretical Models of Text Comprehension**

Research in cognitive psychology has produced a number of theoretical models of discourse comprehension, which guide the current research investigating gossip as a form of discourse. Decades of research have been conducted to better understand what factors contribute to successful comprehension. When required to integrate information across multiple documents or sources, for example, research has demonstrated that individuals are more likely to achieve a deeper understanding of the information at hand (Braasch, et al., 2016; Bråten & Strømsø, 2009; Firetto & Van Meter, 2018; Hagen, et al., 2014; Kobayashi, 2009; Wiley, et al., 2009; Wiley & Voss, 1999). Foundational work on comprehension has provided insights into the various difficulties readers encounter as they work to develop a more complete understanding of consistent, complementary, or discrepant information (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Britt, Rouet, & Durik, 2017; Britt et al., 1999; Britt & Rouet, 2012; Lawless, et al., 2012; List & Alexander, 2017; Wineburg, 1991).

A common understanding amongst these models is that individuals must be able to allocate cognitive resources in order to evaluate, process, and integrate information during reading, particularly when reading multiple conflicting texts (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch et al., 2010, 2012, 2014; Britt & Rouet, 2012; Rouet & Britt, 2011; Rouet, et al., 2017). Interacting with conflicting information across multiple documents presents additional
challenges, and often results in the evaluation of available text features. Specifically, readers may increase effort to strategically evaluate the reliability and accuracy of the text features and consider available metadata such as source information in an attempt to successfully comprehend what they are reading (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Bråten et al., 2009; Bråten et al., 2014; Bromme & Thomm, 2016; Goldman et al., 2012; Lawless et al., 2012; McCrudden et al., 2016; Strømsø & Bråten, 2009).

Source features can vary from information about the author’s credentials to information about the date, type, and genre of the text. As past work explains (Barzilai & Strømsø, 2018; Bråten et al., 2018), source features can be embedded within the text or provided in addition to textual information. Thus, sourcing can be defined as “attending to, evaluating, and using available or accessible information about the texts” (Barzilai and Strømsø, 2018, p.974). Models of text comprehension have grown to include source features and information when explaining the cognitive processes associated with successful comprehension.

More recently, the REading as problem SOLVing (RESOLV) model (Britt, Rouet, & Durik, 2018; Rouet et al., 2017) extends earlier theorizations about components of multiple text comprehension to include the context model and the task model. The RESOLV model accounts for the understanding that reading is influenced by physical and social aspects that contribute to the overall comprehension of multiple texts. When reading multiple texts, individuals will be influenced by a variety of factors such as prior knowledge on the topic, the reading task, and the audience intended for the task, all of which are included in the Context Model (Britt et al., 2018; Rouet et al., 2017). Additionally, the RESOLV model uniquely includes theoretical considerations of the goals a reader might have when interacting with texts by incorporating the Task Model to better understand the individual interpretations and variations in motivation.
behind reading. Britt et al. (2018) explained that an individual must be able to form an accurate and complete mental model of their goal for reading that is activated by their reading task. A Task Model is highly subject to change and will be updated as a function of reading multiple texts while guiding reading and processing based on individual goals. In summary, the RESOLV model poses two major ideas: 1) readers base their reading decisions on their interpretation of task demands, and 2) readers represent contextual cues beyond the task statement itself (Britt et al., 2018; Rouet et al., 2017).

Foundational work by Kintsch (1988, 1998) explains that readers organize three layers of mental representation when processing a single text. Readers must be able to organize a surface code, which is simply a verbatim representation of the lexical and syntactic structure of the text. The textbase provides a sense of meaning from the text as the reader begins to make inferences between parts of the text that are coherent with one another. The situation model is where readers draw deeper meaning from the text by incorporating their pre-existing knowledge and inferences to make sense of the text. The situation model is constructed as readers surpass what is provided textually and develop their own representation of the situation (Britt & Rouet, 2012; Kintsch, 1988; 1998).

Building on Kintsch’s work, the Documents Model Framework (DMF) was developed by Britt, Perfetti, Sandak, and Rouet (1999) to provide a detailed understanding of the specific processes that promote multiple document comprehension. The DMF describes two additional/more layers of representation beyond those specified by Kintsch (1988) that are important for understanding the content and sources involved in multiple documents: the intertext model and the integrated mental model. These additional layers result in a better understanding of the relationship between the documents, their respective content, and respective
source features (Britt et al., 1999). It is important to note, the DMF relies on the expectation that readers do not simply process texts as dialectic propositions, rather we encounter texts as social entities (Wineburg, 1991). Readers can use various contextual and source features both within and across texts to construct their mental representations. The representation of source features is critical when deciphering discrepant information in an attempt to form an accurate representation of the text(s) (Britt et al., 1999; Wineburg, 1991).

The first additional layer provided by the DMF, the intertext model, functions to represent information about semantic content found within the documents, and their respective information sources. According to the DMF, the intertext model allows for the representation of source information, adding layers to the representation of discourse (Britt et al., 2017). The intertext model includes document nodes, which can indicate what a reader knows about the contextual or source features of the text. These document nodes can vary and take on many features including source information like the author’s name or where the text was published. Additionally, the document nodes can have both objective information and information drawn from assumptions made by the reader. Readers will vary in how they choose to represent the textual and source features (see Figure 1). Within the intertext model, intertext links allow the reader to make connections between the document nodes and the features of the document. For example, a reader can use intertext links to connect source features to one another (e.g., the politician disagrees with the scientists), described by the DMF as source to source (S-S) links. Readers can also use source to content (S-C) links to connect how source features connect to the textual features (e.g., the scientist claims global warming is responsible for the current climate crisis; the politician says global warming simply involves natural fluctuations). The intertext links provide readers with a chance to create an accurate and coherent understanding of
discrepant or opposing information. In general, intertext links are generated by the reader as they work to process and organize the information within and across texts, a cognitively demanding task (Britt et al., 1999; 2017). However, studies have shown that textual discrepancies may increase readers' attention to source information, which in turn should result in readers using that information as intertext links between the sources themselves and between the sources and the content presented in the text(s) (Rouet et al., 2009).

The integrated mental model is the second additional layer of representation presented by the DMF. Above and beyond the intertext model, readers must be able to organize and integrate information from multiple texts into a model that represents the current situational context. Britt et al. (2012, p.290) defines the integrated mental model as “an idealized representation of the integrated semantic content of the complete meta-situation or phenomena” and further explain that the structure and the content within an integrated mental model are equally important. The content that readers are attempting to organize is often complex and can overlap if the content is presented in more than one text. There is also the additional challenge of organizing information that is discrepant or inconsistent, potentially forcing the reader to allocate cognitive resources to develop a coherent intertext model. Readers are the creators of their integrated mental model meaning they typically must organize and transform information, a process in which deeper processing of the content is required (Britt et al., 2012; Wiley & Voss, 1999). These unique facets of the DMF allow for a deeper understanding of how readers manage to organize and make sense of potentially discrepant sources of information (Britt et al., 2017).

As previously explained, discrepancies across texts experienced during reading can guide individuals to seek out, attend to, and evaluate source information. By attending to and evaluating source information, readers may be able to monitor the accuracy and coherence of the
content and resolve textual conflicts by using available source components to organize their mental representations (Braasch et al., 2012). Descriptive and correlational research focusing on the evaluation and application of source information during comprehension shows there is a wide spectrum of reading strategies used when processing source features (Braasch & Bråten 2017; Braasch et al., 2016; Bråten & Strømsø, 2005; Bråten et al., 2009, 2014; Kiili et al., 2008; Lawless et al., 2012; Wineburg 1999). When available information sources are conveying discrepancies, this may encourage readers to participate in a deeper encoding of the texts, which should result in better memory for sources overall (Braasch, et al., 2012).

Recent work on the Discrepancy-Induced Source Comprehension (D-ISC) model sought to describe what circumstances promote source evaluation, especially when discrepant information is present (Braasch & Bråten, 2017). In alignment with previous models of text comprehension, the D-ISC model describes how an individual uses source information in single text settings and expands to account for sourcing across multiple texts (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Braasch et al., 2012). However, this work also describes that, while the majority of models of multiple text comprehension determine a need for source evaluation for successful comprehension, there is a lack of empirical knowledge of exactly what types of factors encourage individuals to attend to and evaluate source information (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch et al., 2012). For example, recent work by Braasch and Scharrer (2020) suggests that additional research on what circumstances promote inquiring into a source’s intentions, biases, and general knowledge would inevitably lead to a more competent analysis of the presented information.

The D-ISC model proposes when an individual is reading and comes across discrepant information, a passive phase of processing occurs in which the discrepant information is co-
activated in working memory (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Bråten & Braasch, 2018; Braasch et al., 2012). The co-activation of discrepant information acts as a catalyst for the second phase of processing that requires additional cognitive effort. D-ISc explains that during the second stage of processing readers may strategically choose to expend cognitive resources in order to successfully evaluate, integrate and organize conflicting information across texts (see Figure 2). Additionally, in order to assess the reliability of various textual and source features, readers may rely on their own pre-existing knowledge about the sources, or the information provided by the text(s).

Research by Saux et al. (2017; 2018) has shown that when texts provide discrepant claims, readers' memory for source information is increased relative to situations where the sources agreed. Specifically, Saux and colleagues (2017) conducted two experiments to investigate whether the relationship between respective sources may be strengthened by conflicts during reading. During both experiments, participants read brief news reports that consisted of two statements each associated with different sources. Agreement between sources was manipulated such that in half of the reports the two sources disagreed with one another; in the other half, they made similar assertions. Across both experiments, participants’ memory for the sources was tested, as well as their ability to recognize source integration from the texts. The results showed that in both experiments, the presence of discrepant information during reading increased readers’ memory for sources in general. In comparison to sources that were consistent, discrepancies also increased readers’ abilities to recall the other source within the text when presented with its pair. Overall, these findings support the assumptions of the D-ISc model and provided additional support in understanding how discrepancies during reading can promote
better memory for source information (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Bråten & Braasch, 2018; Braasch et al., 2012).

**Individual Differences**

In addition to descriptive studies that look at the tendency and frequency of gossip outlined above, certain personality traits and individual differences have emerged as significant indicators of gossip. Individual differences can be defined as permanent characteristics that allow individuals to distinguish themselves from one another in terms of cognitive, affective, behavioral, and/or genetic traits (Chen & Miller, 2007). Three important individual personality characteristics were included in the current research to examine for whom conflicts in gossip are detected, and whether and in what ways these factors relate to improved memory for the sources of gossip.

**Tendency to Gossip**

Understanding how an individual thinks and feels about gossip, in general, could be vital in understanding how they interpret gossip as a form of discourse. Research by Nevo and colleagues (1993; 1994) sought to empirically study the relationship between one’s disposition to gossip and gender, vocational interests, and social desirability. Through factor analyses, the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (Nevo et al., 1994) emerged with four subscales of gossip tendencies: (1) physical appearance, (2) achievement, (3) social information, and (4) sublimated gossip. Additionally, it was reported that differences between the frequency in which men and women gossip were small, and that men tended to under-report how often they gossiped in comparison to women. More interestingly, this work also found a positive relationship between an individual’s tendency to gossip and interest in people-oriented vocations (i.e., nursing, electrical technician, commercial pilot, etc.), suggesting a core social link in both constructs. A
negative relationship between the tendency to gossip and social desirability also emerged, suggesting that an individual’s tendency to gossip may be strongly associated with how they want to be perceived socially. These relationships between the tendency to gossip and the aforementioned social constructs could provide nuanced understandings in how gossip is comprehended as a form of discourse, with a focus on the ways that different individuals comprehend the social component, i.e., which sources are providing the different gossip statements.

**Attitudes Towards Gossip**

Related to individuals’ tendencies to gossip, the Attitudes Towards Gossip Questionnaire (Litman & Pezzo, 2005) was designed to investigate individual differences in how people generally feel or their attitudes toward gossip. Across several studies, two subscales were identified via factor analysis, one involved the social value of gossip (e.g., It’s fun to talk about other people) while the other involved the moral value of gossip (e.g., It is wrong to talk about others when they aren’t around). Additionally, the relationship between the Attitudes Toward Gossip Scale, the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire, and various other personality traits were evaluated. The social value of gossip subscale emerged as a positive predictor of feelings of interest and one’s intentions to transmit negative gossip to others. The authors suggest the social value scale might provide a means to distinguish between those who are more or less likely to share and respond positively to gossip that is potentially harmful to others. This study also found a positive relationship between both the social and moral subscale of the Attitudes Toward Gossip scale and the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire. In alignment with prior work (Nevo et al., 1994), both the Attitudes Toward Gossip Scale and the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire were negatively related to social desirability. More interestingly, there was no distinct
relationship between the Attitudes Toward Gossip Scale and extroversion, whereas the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire again had a positive relationship with extroversion. The authors explain that these results provide a distinction between an individual’s tendency to disseminate gossip and their views about its social and moral value. However, this distinction needs further exploration. The current work is particularly interested in the social value subscale of the Attitudes Toward Gossip Scale and its relationship to discourse comprehension and other individual differences in gossip.

**Interpersonal Curiosity**

There is an intrinsic motivation to seek out information about others and this motivation is the basis for the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale (Litman & Pezzo, 2007; Singer & Antrobus, 1963). Using factor analyses, three subscales of the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale emerged: (1) Curiosity about Emotions, (2) Spying and Prying, and (3) Snooping. The results also demonstrated a positive relationship between each of these subscales and various other measures of curiosity and interest in gossip. For example, a positive correlation between the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale and the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire emerged, as both target an individual’s interest in disseminating gossip. However, there was no relationship found between the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale and the Attitudes Towards Gossip Scale. The authors explain these constructs may lack a relationship due to the focus on the value of gossip in the Attitudes Towards Gossip Scale rather than the transmission of gossip. Surprisingly, the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale did not correlate with social desirability. Given the social nature of gossip and its impact on one’s feelings and emotions, the current work is interested in specifically the Curiosity About Emotions subscale as it relates to discourse comprehension and the other individual differences.
Relevant to multiple text comprehension, prior research indicates that a spectrum of individual characteristics and differences regulate how and when individuals will use available source information when comprehending multiple texts (Barak & Levenberg, 2016; Bråten et al., 2015; Hofer, 2000; Kammerer et al., 2013; Kammerer, et al., 2015; Kessler et al., 2021; Kiili et al., 2008; Schommer, 1990; Strømsø & Kammerer, 2016). Individual differences are presumably important to the current work and might moderate the use of source information. For example, Kessler et al. (2021) found that readers’ preexisting beliefs about childhood vaccinations (specific misconceptions about vaccinations) were detrimental to their online information sharing propensities. After reading multiple conflicting texts on vaccinations, readers with preexisting misconceptions about childhood vaccinations (e.g., Vaccines only reduce illness in a small percentage of children) were less likely to distinguish more from less reliable information, putting them at risk for misinforming others. However, people’s beliefs and attitudes surely also play a role that warrants further research, motivating the current work to assess specific beliefs and attitudes about gossip and their relationship to discourse comprehension. As individual differences have primarily been studied in informational text situations, investigating the unique manifestation of individual differences in everyday discourse could shed light on their relationship to source comprehension and use (Kammerer et al., 2013, 2015; Strømsø & Kammerer, 2016).

**Reading Time**

In addition to varying individual differences in dispositions towards gossip, time spent reading and processing textual information has a direct relationship with recall ability after reading texts (Barzilai & Eshet-Alkalai, 2015; Braasch et al., 2012; 2016; Bråten, Salmerón, & Strømsø, 2016; Rouet, Le Bigot, de Pereyra, & Britt, 2016). Individuals who spend more time
reading texts tend have better memory for content and source information when asked to recall this information later. The understanding that more time spent encoding information leads to better memory for that information is one of the most prominent memory effects in memory literature, first introduced by Ebbinghaus (1885) and is still used to motivate current research. For example, work by Braasch et al. (2016) asked participants to read a set of texts making claims about the benefits and detriments of social media for society. The statements varied in congruency among the claims and in sources of information making the claims. Participants reading time was captured and memory recall for content and source information were measured using comprehensive essay data. Results showed that when more time was spent reading the texts, participants displayed better memory for contextual information, particularly when the information is congruent in comparison to distinct in terms of the claims being made. We anticipate the same patterns in the current work with the hopes of replicating and potentially extending these understandings to texts more social in context.

**Vocabulary Knowledge**

Related to the theories outlined above, general vocabulary knowledge has a long-standing relationship with overall text comprehension during reading and general working memory capacity (Cain, et al., 2004). For example, early work by Carroll (1993) demonstrates that vocabulary knowledge and reading ability are highly correlated. This effect has been demonstrated in both adults and children (Carroll, 1993). As Cain and colleagues (2004) explain, larger vocabulary size may be indicative of better memory for learning during reading. In one study, children aged 9-10 were assessed in their ability to infer meanings from novel vocabulary words from their related context (Cain et al., 2004). After being categorized as having either skilled or less skilled comprehension ability using the Gates-MacGinitie Primary Vocabulary
Test (Level 4, Form K; MacGinitie & MacGinitie, 1989), students read eight short stories that included an abstract word with a novel connotation. Researchers manipulated the processing demands of a reading task for children by placing the novel word and its useful context further or closer together for both skilled and poor comprehension readers (Cain et al., 2004). Working memory capacity for all readers was assessed independently to determine the relationship between working memory capacity and vocabulary ability.

The results of this study generated several interesting findings, one of which indicated that children with poorer comprehension skills were less likely to remember the full definitions of the novel words in the texts. This inability to encode and store this information in long term memory indicates problems generating a complete mental representation during processing. In general, those considered less skilled in terms of comprehension also performed worse on the working memory capacity test in comparison to the more skilled readers. Taken together, these results allude to the combined importance of general vocabulary knowledge, comprehension abilities, and working memory capacity on a student’s ability to infer meaning and construct accurate mental representations of texts. The assessment of vocabulary ability in the current study could provide implications for understanding how source and contextual information is stored during processing of everyday discourse, and the role that a more extensive vocabulary knowledge supports these processes.

**Current Study**

Given the aforementioned framework, the current study seeks to better understand the relationship between conflict detection in discourse comprehension, particularly when that discourse takes the form of gossip. More specifically, the current research examines how detected conflicts between sources of information in gossip improves overall memory for
sources, which would reflect a more complete comprehension of the situations described by the texts. The work seeks to empirically study how the manipulation of text consistency during reading enhances memory for content and sources within the context of gossip, a new approach that has not been attempted empirically. Past research has shown that attention to and evaluation of source information within and across texts facilitates memory for links between sources and their respective content statements and between the sources themselves (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Braasch et al., 2012; Bråten & Braasch, 2018). I primarily focus on the D-ISC model for the current work, as the model seeks to uncover the specific cognitive mechanisms associated with increased processing efforts towards and improved memory for discrepant sources of information during comprehension. Specifically, the D-ISC model motivates the current work to experimentally test this relationship when it occurs in everyday discourse, such as gossip. While there is growing empirical support for the assumptions theorized within the D-ISC model, the current work extends prior research to examine how discrepancies influence memory for gossip experiences. In doing so, I hope to examine the generalizability of the mechanism, while also providing a more nuanced understanding of discourse comprehension (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Bråten & Braasch, 2018; Braasch et al., 2012). However, all prior examinations of D-ISC’s assumptions have focused on expository texts, leading the current work to specifically focus on gossip as discourse. Additionally, I intend to investigate various relationships between individual differences related to social constructs such as gossip and text comprehension (Kammerer et al., 2013, 2015; Strømsø & Kammerer, 2016; Litman & Pezzo, 2005; 2007; Nevo et al., 1993;1994).

In two experiments, participants were presented with text(s) that reflect unique, consistent, and discrepant statements in the specific context of high school gossip. Participants
read the texts in either paired (Experiment 1) or blocked (Experiment 2) order. Afterward, their memory for source-content links and source to source links was assessed. Dependent measures reflect the accuracy of memory for source-content links, as well as accuracy of memory for source to source links. Source intrusion errors and reading time will also be evaluated for differences in patterns across manipulations. In addition, the relationship between various individual personality characteristics and the different aspects of source processing and memory will be analyzed. In alignment with prior work, for both experiments, I hypothesize that sources associated with discrepancies in gossip will be better remembered than sources for unique content statements, and both will be better than sources who agree. There are expectations for the same patterns for source to source links in both experiments: Memory for source pairs of gossip statements that are discrepant with one another would be better remembered than those that were consistent with one another. It is also expected that an individual’s tendency to gossip, attitudes towards gossip (social value subscale), and interpersonal curiosity will have a positive relationship with source memory. Additionally, for both experiments, I predict differences in reading time such that discrepant statements will result in longer reading times than unique and consistent statements, which may reflect the detection of incongruity during processing. Given the relationship between general vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Braasch et al., 2016; Cain et al., 2004), a positive relationship between participants’ accuracy on the vocabulary measure and overall memory for sources is expected.

**Experiment 1**

**Method**

**Participants**
Sixty-five individuals (66.2% female) at a large university in the Mid-South participated ($M_{age} = 20.54, SD_{age} = 3$). Participants were recruited through the University’s research participation system (SONA) and compensated with credit towards their final course grade. The sample consisted of the following ethnic composition: 51% African American, 35% Caucasian, 7.7% Asian, 3.1% Middle Eastern, 1.5% Hispanic, 1.5% identified as other. Participants had an average self-reported GPA of 3.12 ($SD_{GPA} = 0.73$).

**Materials**

*Task instructions*

Participants were provided with the following instructions before reading the gossip statements, “Today you will read a series of sentences about people, followed by questions about what you read. For this task, imagine that you just started a new high school. You want to know more about all of the people, so you pay attention to all of the gossip that you hear at the school in order to learn more about them. Imagine that the sentences that you will be reading are statements that you overhear as you are walking through the halls at your new school.” In addition, participants were made aware that their memory for the gossip statements, specifically the sources of information, would be tested. Additionally, participants were advised they would not be able to return to previously read texts once they had moved on.

*Text stimuli*

Thirty target statements were created that served as the to-be-remembered information. Each consisted of a person making a claim about an event (e.g., The front desk receptionist claims that the principal is going through a messy divorce). As such, the materials were constructed such that there were source-content links within each target statement. To embody the primary manipulation of discrepancy presence, an additional set of 60 statements were
created. Thirty consistent sentences were constructed to paraphrase each target sentence as provided by a different information source (e.g., The speech therapist reports that the principal's life is chaotic because he is going through a divorce). Thirty additional statements were constructed by changing the content of the 30 sentences just described to have the opposite meaning, thus making them discrepant with the target statements (e.g., The speech therapist claims that the principal is happily married). Each topic was randomly assigned to one of three conditions such that any topic could be presented uniquely (reflecting a control condition where no other people discussed the topic), as a consistent pair whereby a target statement was preceded by someone stating the same idea, or a discrepant pair whereby a target statement was preceded by someone stating the opposite idea. Thus, participants read a total of 50 statements. The structure of the text stimuli resulted in varying credibility among the sources of information. For example, gossip transmitted by a student may not be as impactful as gossip transmitted by a figure of authority (e.g., vice principal, superintendent, etc.). As this fluctuation in credibility was unavoidable, strenuous measures were taken to limit the impact of source credibility on participant’s memory. For example, the sources of information were randomly matched with the content statements and each complete text was presented to participants in randomized order. Additionally, the presentation of unique, consistent, and discrepant blocks was also presented in random order to participants. See Table 1 for list of all text stimuli used in both experiments.

**Reading time**

Reading time was measured (in seconds for each text as a coarse-grained measure of processing. Reading time on each text type (unique, consistent, discrepant) was collected to ensure no effects of text structure were present. In alignment with prior work (Osborne & Overbay, 2004) any reading times that significantly exceeded the sample mean (see Tables 2 and
3) by more or less than two standard deviations were removed from the study. Additionally, as skewness is typically present with reading time data, log transformation was conducted before proceeding with any analyses.

**Vocabulary distractor task**

To reduce recency effects of working memory, participants completed a 15-item general vocabulary knowledge test immediately after reading. Fifteen words were randomly chosen from a 30-item vocabulary quiz developed for a college population (Campbell & Raney, 2016). These vocabulary words (e.g., indifferent, perjure, equivocal) were presented in a randomized order one at a time with four possible answer choices for each word, of which the participants selected the accurate synonym response option. Participant’s vocabulary score was assessed for accuracy, resulting in a total vocabulary knowledge score ranging from zero to 15.

**Assessment of memory for source-content links**

Each participant received a set of 30 randomized statements assessing their memory for source-content links from the target statements they read earlier. Participants were presented with a statement with a blank line representing the source information (e.g., The ________ claims the principal is going through a messy divorce). Multiple-choice response options consisted of the correct target source, the source of the consistent and discrepant statement for the same topic, two incorrect sources from statements unrelated to the target but were previously seen, and a “none of the above” option. The answer choices were randomized for each participant apart from the “none of the above” option always appearing as the last response option for each question. Moreover, the items themselves were also randomized. Memory for source-content links was inferred from the total number of accurate recognition of sources for the target statements. Thus, accurate recognition could range from 0 to 10 per each condition. Source
intrusion errors were also calculated reflecting the frequency of times each participant chose the response option making the *other* related statement, that is, when the person has made an error by mixing up the two information sources talking about the same topic. These, too, could range from 0 to 10 per each condition.

*Assessment of memory for source-source links*

Each participant received a set of 30 randomized statements assessing their memory for source-source links from the previously read target statements. Participants were presented with the original target statement and asked, “If another source also talked about this topic (whether they agreed or disagreed), select that source below.” Multiple-choice response options consisted of the related source pair making the previously experienced consistent or discrepant statement, two incorrect sources from statements unrelated to the target but were previously seen, and a “none of the above” option. The answer choices were randomized for each participant apart from the “none of the above” option always appearing as the last response option for each question. Moreover, the items themselves were also randomized. Memory for source-source links was inferred from the total number of accurate recognition of sources for the target statements. Thus, accurate recognition could range from 0 to 10 per each condition.

*Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire*

Participants completed the 5-item Social Information subscale from the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire (Nevo et al., 1994) to evaluate their tendency to gossip about others (e.g., I talk with friends about other people's problems at work). Each of the 5-items was randomized for each participant and answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “Never” to (5) “Always”. Average scores were aggregated. Higher scores indicate a higher level of one’s tendencies to gossip. See Appendix A for items used in the inventory.


Attitudes Toward Gossip Scale

Participants completed the 12 item Attitudes Toward Gossip Scale (Litman & Pezzo, 2005) to measure their feelings and thoughts towards gossip in general. The scale included six items that reflect the social value subscale (e.g., It’s fun to talk about other people) and six items that reflect the moral value subscale (e.g., It is wrong to talk about others when they aren’t around). Each of the 12-items was randomized for each participant and answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “Strongly disagree” to (5) “Strongly Agree”. Average scores for each subscale will be aggregated. Higher scores indicate a level of agreement with either social or moral subscale items. See Appendix B for items used in the inventory.

Interpersonal Curiosity Questionnaire

Participants completed the 5-item Curiosity About Emotions subscale from the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale (Litman & Pezzo, 2007) to assess their desire to learn information about others (e.g., I try to understand people's feelings). The 5-items were presented in randomized to each participant and were answered on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “Almost never” to (4) “Almost always”. Average scores were aggregated. Higher scores indicate higher levels of interpersonal curiosity. See Appendix C for items used in the inventory.

Procedure

Participants completed the current experiment in a computer lab that accommodated up to seven participants at a time. Upon arrival to the lab, an undergraduate research assistant (who was unaware of the specific motivation behind the study) placed the participant at a desk that housed a computer, keyboard, and mouse that was spaced approximately six to ten feet away from other participants. The undergraduate research assistant gave the participant a brief verbal description of the study and instructed that no cell phones or other personal electronic devices
could be used during the experiment. Participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent before participating in the experiment (Appendix D). Afterward, participants were randomly assigned a unique participant ID, given additional verbal instructions on the experiment, and asked if they had any questions before they began.

Participants read 50 gossip statements in a randomized order presented one at a time. Participants were able to read and move through the texts at their own pace using an arrow at the bottom of their computer screen to move forward to the next text. The average total reading time of the texts was 10.76 minutes (SD = 3.44 minutes). Participants were then asked to complete the 15-item vocabulary distractor task which took on average 3.05 minutes (SD = 2.04). Next, participants answered the 30 multiple choice questions that assessed their memory for source to content links in the texts. Then, participants answered the 30 multiple choice questions that assessed their memory for links between the sources themselves. Participants were then presented with all three individual difference measures in a randomized order before answering demographic questions about their age, gender, GPA, and ethnicity. The experiment was done in a single session and lasted approximately 24 minutes (SD = 8.06 minutes) for each participant. Upon completion of the study, participants were provided with a short debriefing statement and instructed to reach out to the lead graduate researcher via email with any questions. All procedures and materials used in the present study were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board, #2941 (Appendix E).

**Experiment 1 Results**

Normality, skewness, and kurtosis as well as homogeneity of variance using Levene’s test were assessed before proceeding with any further parametric statistical analyses (see Table 2). Necessary log transformation of any variables is discussed in detail below.
**Reading Time**

As expected, reading time for each text type (unique, consistent, discrepant) were significantly skewed. Log10 transformation was applied to each variable to achieve an acceptable level of normality. Reading time (seconds) for the texts was submitted to one-way ANOVA using text type (consistent, discrepant, unique) as the within-participants variable. There was a significant main effect for reading time, $F(2,128) = 19.72, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .24$. A series of t-test revealed significant simple effects such that reading time for unique statements was longer than reading time for discrepant statements, $t(64) = 4.08, p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 0.25$. Additionally, reading time for unique statements was longer than reading time for consistent statements, $t(64) = 5.88, p < .001$, Cohens $d = 0.52$. Reading time for discrepant statements was also longer than reading time for consistent statements, $t(64) = 2.38, p < .05$, Cohens $d = 0.22$. See Figure 3 for a graph representing the relationship between text type and reading time.

**Source-Content Accuracy**

The accuracy of source to content links was submitted to one-way ANOVA using text type (consistent, discrepant, unique) as the within-participants variable. There was a significant main effect for memory for source-content links, $F(2,128) = 10.08, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .15$. A series of t-tests revealed significant simple effects such that memory for unique statements was better than memory for consistent statements, $t(64) = 4.17, p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = .17$. Additionally, memory for discrepant statements was also better than memory for consistent statements, $t(64) = 3.8, p < .001$, with a much larger effect size Cohen’s $d = .66$. However, there was no significant difference in memory for unique statements and memory for discrepant statements, $t(64) = 0.63, p = 0.53$. See Figure 4 for a graph representing the relationship between text type and source-content memory$^1$.

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$^1$ S-c accuracy was analyzed using vocabulary ability as a covariate. The results did not change the nature of the reported effects.
Source Intrusions

A paired samples t-test revealed a significant effect for source intrusion errors reflecting how often participants selected the inaccurate response option related to the other statement on the same topic. Participants produced more memory errors for consistent statements \((M = 2.89, SD = 1.61)\) than they did for discrepant statements they read on the same topic \((M = 1.52, SD = 1.24)\), \(t(64) = 6.29, p < .001\), Cohen’s \(d = 0.95\). All told, discrepancies produced a greater ratio of correctly differentiating “who said what” in memory (3.8 x more likely to be accurate than to make an intrusion error) than did consistencies (only a 1.6:1 ratio).

Source-Source Accuracy

A paired samples t-test did not reveal a significant difference for accuracy of source-source links for consistent and discrepant texts\(^2\), \(t(64) = .381, p = .704\). Overall, memory for source-source accuracy for consistent \((M = 5.48, SD = 2.37)\) and discrepant \((M = 5.58, SD = 2.38)\) texts was relatively low, suggesting a possible floor effect which will be discussed further in the discussion.

Bivariate Correlations

Spearman correlations for all measures of source memory and the individual differences were examined. There was a significant positive relationship between Attitudes Towards Gossip Moral Scale score and an individual’s Tendency to Gossip score, \(r_s(63) = .259, p < .001\). Additionally, there was a significant positive relationship between Attitudes Towards Gossip Social Scale score and an individual’s Tendency to Gossip score, \(r_s(63) = .641, p < .001\). All correlations relating individual differences of Attitudes Towards Gossip, Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire, and the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale with source-content memory, source intrusion, and source to source memory were not significant.

\(^2\) Unique text type was not relevant to the current analysis as they did not have a “pair” to assess for accuracy.
Experiment 2

Experiment 1 was intended to demonstrate better memory for source information when people read target texts directly after sentences that were either consistent with or discrepant with them (with a comparison to a single text in which nobody else talked about the topic). The close proximity of related statements in Experiment 1 ensures that both the target and corresponding statements become co-activated in working memory, allowing for connections to be made that may influence long-term memory. However, discourse is not always continuously experienced; that is, typically, various amounts of time elapse in between statements on the same topic. Experiment 2 seeks to simulate these experiences by providing some spacing in between instances where different information sources gossiped about the same topic. Importantly for the D-ISC theory, doing so affords opportunities to evaluate inferences concerning the extent to which previously read information becomes re-activated from long-term memory when the current text input agrees with or disagrees with what was read in prior texts. In alignment with D-ISC’s assumptions about passive and strategic processing, it was theorized that, prior-read information would return to working memory to become co-activated with the current text input. This co-activation should afford opportunities for further processing including, in the case of where discrepancies exist, further sourcing.

Methods

Participants

Sixty-nine individuals (87% female) at a university in the Mid-South participated ($M_{age}$ = 21.41, $SD_{age}$ = 6.13). Participants were recruited through the University’s research participation system (SONA) and compensated with credit towards their final course grade. The sample consisted of the following ethnic composition: 48% African American, 39% Caucasian, 4.3%
Hispanic, 4.3% Middle Eastern, 2.9% Asian, 1.5% identified as other. Participants had an average self-reported GPA of 3.21 ($SD_{GPA} = 0.59$).

**Materials and Procedure**

The materials and procedure for Experiment 2 were identical to Experiment 1 with the exception of the spacing in the presentation of the texts. In Experiment 1, discrepant and consistent statements on a topic were presented in succession (i.e., as pairs). Experiment 2 reflected a “blocked” presentation such that the statements that would ultimately be consistent or discrepant with the later-read target statements were always presented first, followed by a “block” of all 30 target statements.

**Experiment 2 Results**

Normality, skewness, and kurtosis as well as homogeneity of variance using Levene’s test were assessed before proceeding with any further parametric statistical analyses (see Table 3). Necessary log transformation of any variables is discussed in detail below.

**Reading Time**

As expected, reading time for each text type (unique, consistent, discrepant) were significantly skewed. Log10 transformation was applied to each variable to achieve normality. Reading time (seconds) for the texts was submitted to one-way ANOVA using text type (consistent, discrepant, unique) as the within-participants variable. There was not a significant main effect for reading time, $F(2,136) = 0.29, p = 0.75$.

**Source-Content Accuracy**

The accuracy of source-content links was submitted to one-way ANOVA using text type (consistent, discrepant, unique) as the within-participants variable. There was a significant effect for memory for source-content links, $F(2,136) = 16.00, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .19$. A series of t-test
revealed significant simple effects such that memory for unique statements was better than memory for consistent statements, \( t (68) = 5.86, p < .001, \) Cohen’s \( d = .61 \). Additionally, there was a significant simple effect such that memory for unique statements was better than memory for discrepant statements, \( t (68) = 2.24, p < .05, \) Cohen’s \( d = .19 \). There was also a significant effect such that memory for discrepant statements was better than memory for consistent statements, \( t (68) = 3.08, p < .05, \) Cohen’s \( d = .39 \). See Figure 5 for a graph representing the relationship between text type and source-content memory.\(^3\)

**Source Intrusions**

A paired samples t-test revealed a significant effect for source intrusion errors reflecting how often participants selected the inaccurate response option related to the other statement on the same topic. Participants produced more memory errors for consistent statements (\( M = 3.57, SD = 1.63 \)), than they did for discrepant statements they read on the same topic (\( M = 1.65, SD = 1.4 \)), \( t (68) = 7.26, p < .001, \) Cohen’s \( d = 1.26 \). As in Experiment 1, discrepancies produced a greater ratio of correctly differentiating “who said what” in memory (2.7 x more likely to be accurate than to make an intrusion error) than did consistencies. In fact, for consistent statements, people were equally likely to be accurate than to make an error (1.01:1 ratio).

**Source-Source Accuracy**

A paired samples t-test did not reveal a significant difference for accuracy of source-source links for consistent and discrepant texts, \( t (68) = 1.12, p = .27 \). Much like Experiment 1, memory for source-source accuracy for consistent (\( M = 5.19, SD = 2.32 \)) and discrepant (\( M = 4.88, SD = 2.45 \)) texts was relatively low, suggesting a possible floor effect which will be discussed further in the discussion.\(^4\)

**Bivariate Correlations**

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\(^3\) S-c accuracy was analyzed using vocabulary ability as a covariate. The results did not change the nature of the reported effects.

\(^4\) Unique text type was not relevant to the current analysis as they did not have a “pair” to assess for accuracy.
Spearman correlations for all measures of source memory and the individual differences were examined. There was a significant positive relationship between the Attitudes Towards Gossip Social Scale score and Unique Source-Content memory, \( r_s(67) = .39, p<.001 \). There was a significant positive relationship between the Attitudes Towards Gossip Social Scale score and Consistent Source-Content memory, \( r_s(67) = .295, p<.05 \). The Attitudes Towards Gossip Social Scale scores also correlated positively with Consistent Source-Source memory, \( r_s(67) = .344, p<.001 \) and with Discrepant Source-Source memory, \( r_s(67) = .382, p<.001 \). There was also a positive relationship between the Attitudes Towards Gossip Social Scale scores and Tendency to Gossip scores, \( r_s(67) = .512, p<.001 \). Finally, Interpersonal Curiosity scores correlated positively with Consistent Source-Content Memory, \( r_s(67) = .301, p<.05 \), and Consistent Source-Source Memory, \( r_s(67) = .253, p<.05 \). Correlations between the Attitudes Towards Gossip scale and discrepant source-content memory, source intrusions, and unique source-content and source to source memory did not reach acceptable levels of significance. Additionally, correlations between Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire and source-content, source intrusions, and source to source memory did not reach acceptable levels of significance. Finally, correlations between the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale and discrepant and unique source-content and source to source memory, as well as source intrusions, were not significant.

**Discussion**

The current work sought to better understand the relationship between conflict detection in discourse comprehension and memory for source information, particularly when that discourse takes the form of gossip. Moreover, the current research examined how detected conflicts between sources of information in gossip improved overall memory for sources and better comprehension. The present studies also examined how the manipulation of text consistency
during reading enhances memory for links between content and sources, and the sources themselves, within the context of gossip. This is a new approach that has not been attempted empirically. Additionally, the present studies investigated various relationships between individual differences related to social constructs such as attitudes towards gossip and frequency of engaging in gossip situations and memory for source information.

**Processing Time**

The processing results demonstrated that participants had the fastest reading times for consistent texts in comparison to unique and discrepant texts, for Experiment 1. This finding was paired with worse memory for source to content and source to source memory for consistent texts, again across both experiments. Taken together, this suggests that readers may only be superficially processing consistent information, perhaps as a result of a false sense of familiarity when they are presented with consistent information across texts, as also demonstrated by poorer scores on memory measures. The current findings align with prior work showing similar patterns in reading time and memory consistent texts. For example, work by Braasch et al. (2016) demonstrated that students had shorter reading times and poorer memory for texts that were semantically congruent with one another in comparison to those that were semantically distinct. This finding was present across two experiments, which appears to align with the current work in demonstrating that shallow processing of consistent information is detrimental to memory for texts (Braasch et al., 2016). Thus, the current findings replicate prior studies in that superficial processing does not appear to allow for proper encoding and construction of an intertext model as described by the DMF (Britt & Rouet, 2012), making retrieval of information more difficult or even impossible.
The current work also demonstrated in Experiment 1, that reading time for discrepant texts was longer than that for unique texts. This finding can be interpreted with reference to the D-ISC model in that spending more time processing discrepancies may reflect experiences of cognitive conflict, which is consistent with prior examinations (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Braasch et al., 2012; Bråten & Braasch, 2018). For Experiment 2, there were no observed differences in reading times across the 3 text types. As the distance between the target texts and their consistent or discrepant pairs was much greater, perhaps readers were less likely to notice the discrepancies between the statements, leading to similar reading times for consistent, discrepant, or unique texts. Additionally, as there were multiple texts read between the pairs of related texts, it can be assumed that interference was highly likely to occur during retrieval. As prior research has demonstrated, the ability to maintain information in working memory protects that information from interference during retrieval (Unsworth, 2016). Since information would no longer be available in working memory and would thus be backgrounded in long-term memory, organized search and retrieval from memory would be of importance. Future research may seek to use longer text stimuli to observe differences in reading times across consistent, discrepant, and unique text types. Longer text stimuli may support more accurate content integration during situational model development (Braasch et al., 2016) and allow for information to remain in working memory and therefore be less susceptible to interference during retrieval (Unsworth, 2016).

Source Memory

Regarding memory for source-content links, it was hypothesized that source-content links in discrepant texts would be better remembered than those in consistent texts, and both would be better remembered than source-content links in unique texts. The results of both experiments
partially supported the original hypothesis, in that memory for source to content links was better for discrepant and unique texts than for consistent texts. However, the findings show that discrepant texts were not better remembered than the unique texts, a finding that was unexpected. However, the unique texts are essentially a single text baseline measure, by which comparisons can be made to the discrepant and consistent pairs of texts. Co-activation of the information in discrepant texts could allow readers to detect breaks in situational coherence caused by the discrepant information across the text pairs (Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Kendeou & O’Brien, 2014). Even though two sources were talking about the same situation, disagreements between sources made it such that readers were able to successfully map each piece of content to their respective sources. In alignment with the D-ISC assumption, attending to these discrepancies more than likely facilitates a more complete and accurate mental representation of the texts, especially one that includes sources (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Braasch et al., 2012; Bråten & Braasch, 2018). Specifically, discrepancies may serve as a mechanism for stimulating source processing, and when readers expend cognitive resources to evaluate, integrate and organize conflicting information across texts, they are better able to make connections and develop a more coherent intertext model. A more organized and coherent intertext model allows for easier and more accurate retrieval of source information from long-term memory (Braasch & Bråten, 2017; Braasch & Kessler, 2021; Bråten & Braasch, 2018; Braasch et al., 2012; Britt et al., 2012; Wiley & Voss, 1999). This was not the case when the two sources agreed with one another. Instead, participants appeared to generally know that two sources were talking about the same situation but were similarly likely to match the source accurately and inaccurately (source intrusions) to the correct situation.
Turning to memory for source-source information, it was hypothesized that memory for source-source links in discrepant texts would be better remembered than for consistent texts. However, memory for source-source links did not differ across discrepant and consistent situations, despite original predictions. Across both experiments, memory for source-source links was assessed at the end of the experimental session and was relatively low. There are several possibilities for these findings, especially when taken into consideration memory for source-content did, in fact, differ as a function of intertextual relationships. The fact that no studies have looked at memory for both source-content links and source-source links in one study suggests that readers may not be creating an ideal mental representation of the texts. Specifically, the structure of the intertext model may be lacking important connections that allow readers to make connections between source-source links during reading.

Further, it could be that readers might prioritize representing source-content links over source-source links. As the DMF (Britt et al., 1999) suggests, representations of source information in the intertext model will vary in terms of what readers use to construct document nodes within the intertext model, as well as the intertext links between document nodes. It may be that readers are placing more importance on making connections between source-content intertext links to represent how source features are related to semantic information during processing at the expense of source to source intertext links to represent how the source features are related to one another. The integrated mental model requires additional organization and cognitive efforts on the part of the reader as they work to make sense of content and source information. As is the case with multiple texts, this requires the transformation of complex and often overlapping information. Readers may expend their cognitive resources in making sense of source-content information in both their intertext and integrated mental models, leaving little
cognitive efforts to be applied to organizing and representing source to source information. This inability to adequately process and store source information in mental representations of the texts could be directly related to overall low source memory across both experiments (Britt et al., 2012; Wiley & Voss, 1999).

In addition to connections to theories of multiple text comprehension, the very nature of experimental methods, especially when the different facets of memory were assessed relative to the reading experience, provides two other possible explanations for the disconnect between the source-content and source-source memory effects. First, participants may have simply demonstrated a “fatigue effect” due to their completing a sequence of several tasks during the study, only finally completing the source-source memory test which showed no effects due to the manipulation. In this sense, after reading and completing the source-content memory task, participants may have exhausted their mental resources prior to completing the source-source memory task. However, an alternative explanation is as follows: Participants may have been experiencing retrieval induced forgetting, a common issue in memory research (Anderson et al., 1994; 2000; Murayama et al., 2014; Storm et al., 2006). Although it is speculative, readers may have actually processed discrepancies in ways that established links between the respective ideas and their sources, but also the sources themselves. However, the act of retrieving which source was associated with the retrieval cue (based on the content statement for the source-content memory items) may have made it such that source to source links were inhibited. The theory of retrieval induced forgetting of Anderson, Bjork, and Bjork (1994) states that recalling information from long-term memory can inhibit the memory of associated representations. The negative consequences of these inhibition processes may have made it such that source-source links were forgotten more often, and thus performance on these measures suffered. In fact, there
is a long history of studies focused on retrieval induced forgetting (Anderson et al., 1994; 2000; Murayama et al., 2014; Storm et al., 2006).

Although the materials did not reflect sources making comments, studies have shown that when an attempt to retrieve information is made, retrieval induced forgetting can occur, even if the retrieval attempt is unsuccessful (Storm et al. 2006). Similarly, research by Hicks and Starns (2004) showed that retrieval induced forgetting could be found in explicit memory tests such as item recognition tasks, while a collection of research has also shown the same effects with explicit memory tasks (Bajo et al., 2006; Butler et al., 2001; Parker & Dagnall, 2009; Perfect et al., 2004). Future research could provide memory contexts in which source-source memory links were assessed first. If discrepancies do promote source-source memory when assessed first, then the current work could be interpreted as resulting from fatigue or inhibition. In the future, studies could investigate both explanations further by randomizing the order of the source-content and source-source memory tasks. Perhaps mental representations of the source-source links would be improved or more evident during recall if participants were tested on this first. In sum, retrieval-induced forgetting may have led to focusing retrieval efforts on source-content links that source-source links were suppressed, and thus memory for those links were poorer in comparison.

The current study also investigated the ways the intrusion errors would manifest during the processing of consistent and discrepant texts. It was hypothesized that source intrusion errors would be greater for consistent texts than for discrepant texts, which was supported by the results of this study. In both experiments, we saw an increased rate of errors for recall of sources for consistent texts than discrepant texts. This could be attributed to the fact that memory traces for consistent information and their respective sources contain high levels of overlap, which may lead to competition between the memory traces during the retrieval process. For example, when
readers are asked to recall consistent contextual and source information accurately, they may struggle to make distinctions across the information due to increased interference. This interference is evident not only in the rate of intrusion errors but also in poorer memory for consistent texts across both experiments. Taken together, these findings suggest that readers struggle to differentiate between two sources making consistent claims with one another but are able to accurately represent when two sources make discrepant claims. This finding not only aligns with multiple experiments conducted by Braasch et al. (2012), but also replicates across the two present experiments.

**Individual Differences**

Several interesting findings regarding the influence of individual differences on source memory also emerged. The various predictions for both experiments were partially supported and replicated past findings. In alignment with prior work (Litman & Pezzo, 2005), there was an observed positive relationship between the Attitudes Towards Gossip subscales and the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire in both experiments. This replicated pattern suggests that an individual’s tendency to disseminate gossip is intertwined with their attitudes towards both the social and moral values of gossip. In Experiment 2, a relationship between the social subscale of the Attitudes Towards Gossip scale and memory for unique source to content memory, as well as consistent source to content and source to source memory was observed. A positive relationship between consistent source memory and the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale was also present. As described above, consistencies in textual information appeared to disrupt engagement in a deeper encoding and consequently, retrieving that information later suffered. However, if individuals possess dispositions that reflect a more positive attitude or outlook on the social value of gossip, this may counteract memory deficits for consistent information. When considering the
processing and memory performance in combination with the individual difference findings, an interesting conclusion can be made. When there is agreement among texts, readers spend less time processing and encoding information, which results in poorer memory and increased errors for consistent information. However, patterns associated with memory for consistent information seem to differ if one values gossip, as the correlations suggest.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

As previously mentioned, the brevity of the text stimuli used in this work could account for similarities in memory for discrepant and unique information. The short nature of the texts could result in the target statements remaining activated in working memory while reading. Future work could seek to replicate our findings with longer text stimuli. Additionally, extending the current work to more diverse and unique populations could result in interesting findings. As Kuttler (2002) reported, middle school-aged children were especially responsive to conflicting information in gossip (Kuttler et al., 2002). Perhaps middle school-aged children are more socially impacted by gossip than college students, given that developmentally they are seeking social belonging and acceptance (Eder & Enke, 1991).

Moreover, it remains an open question as to whether the effects and the strength of said effects would replicate in situations where gossip might reflect greater importance in the lives of the participants. For example, people spend a great deal of time on social media. According to the Pew Research Center’s 2021 report of social media use, seven in ten adults report using various social media platforms several times a day, a statistic that was also observed in the 2019 report (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Additionally, the Pew Research Center also indicates that most teenagers in the United States (specifically ages 13-17) have access to technology that provides them various opportunities to interact with Internet resources on a daily basis. (Braasch
et al., 2022). A large percentage of adolescents (88%) have access to a computer at home and nearly all (95%) own a smartphone (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Through these various forms of technology, 89% of teenagers report online activity multiple times a day, and 45% reporting that they use the Internet “almost constantly” (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The omnipresence of the Internet in adolescent’s lives almost guarantees they have access to a wide range and depth of information on unlimited topics and contexts. As a great deal of gossip presumably exists within information found online, future work could simulate situations where participants, more interestingly adolescents, are reading gossip within an Internet-like environment. Extensions to these situations could help to evaluate the generalizability to more ecologically valid discourse contexts.

Conclusions

Gossip is a unique form of discourse that has been studied less frequently in terms of reading comprehension. The current work added nuanced understandings of how individuals process gossip, and specifically sources of information within gossip contexts. As the current findings suggest, discrepancies in gossip situations promote better memory for the people offering the gossip as a result of cognitive conflict encountered during processing. These findings have been demonstrated with texts that are expository in nature (Saux, 2017; 2018) as well as narrative in nature (O’Brien & Myers, 1987). However, this study is the first to relate the processing of gossip texts to overall memory for sources of information. Additionally, the current work provides insight on interesting relationships between various individual differences and thinking dispositions and memory for source information related to gossip. Gossip is an essential form of communication that is exclusive to the human race, demonstrating our innate
curiosity about those around us. It is the hope of the current work to add to existing knowledge about the importance of gossip in terms of transmitting information about those around us.
References


Osborne, Jason W. and Overbay, Amy (2004) "The power of outliers (and why researchers should ALWAYS (check for them)," Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation: Vol. 9, Article 6. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.7275/qf69-7k43](https://doi.org/10.7275/qf69-7k43)


Appendix A

Items on the Social Information subscale from the Tendency to Gossip Questionnaire.

1. I can contribute interesting information in conversations about people.
2. I know what is going on, who is dating, etc.
3. I analyze with friends the compatibility of couples.
4. I talk with friends about other people's love affairs.
5. I talk with friends about other people's problems at work.
Appendix B

Items on the Attitudes Towards Gossip Scale.

*Social Value Subscale.*
1. Gossip is a good ice-breaker.
2. Gossiping is a great way to pass the time.
3. It’s fun to talk about other people.
4. I love to know what is going on in other people’s lives.
5. Gossip is often true.
6. I like to share what I hear about others.

*Moral Value Subscale.*
7. It is wrong to talk about others when they aren’t around.
8. Rumors are hardly ever true.
9. You should never mention rumors even if you think they are true.
10. I have never known gossip to be helpful to anyone.
11. I always mind my own business instead of gossiping.
12. You can’t trust gossip.
Appendix C

Items on the Curiosity about Emotions Subscale of the Interpersonal Curiosity Scale.

1. I attend to non-verbal messages people send.
2. I observe facial expressions to figure out feelings.
3. I figure out what others are feeling by looking.
4. I try to understand people's feelings.
5. People open up to me about how they feel.
Appendix D

Consent to Participate in Research Study

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about text comprehension. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 600 people to do so at the University of Memphis.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Professor Jason Braasch of the University of Memphis Department of Psychology. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

By doing this study, we hope to learn more about the way you remember and understand texts you have read. These studies will be used to investigate the text, task, and reader characteristics that guide successful comprehension.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

To take part in this study you must be at least 18 years of age.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research procedures will be conducted at the University of Memphis. You will need to come in to a specified University room one time as requested, lasting approximately 60 minutes.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?
You will be asked to sit at a desk or at a computer, to read a set of texts, and to respond to open and close-ended questions about the topic. Full instructions will be made to you both verbally and in writing before you begin and you may ask questions at any time. No part of this study is invasive or poses any risk to you, and is meant to look at your everyday, naturalistic text comprehension.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the tasks you will complete have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, some people will learn and gain knowledge about the topic. Your willingness to take part may also, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. As a student, if you decide not to take part in this study, your choice will have no effect on you academic status or grade in the class.

IF YOU DON’T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study. Ask your course instructor for more information on alternative assignments.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will receive course credit for taking part in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you give came from you.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?
If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you, if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you, or if the agency funding the study decides to stop the study early for a variety of scientific reasons.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Jason Braasch at jlbrasch@memphis.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.
Appendix E

IRB Approval for #2491

PI NAME: Jason Braasch
CO-PI: Erica D. Kessler
PROJECT TITLE: Comprehending Texts
FACULTY ADVISOR NAME (if applicable): N/A
IRB ID: #2941
APPROVAL DATE: 8/23/2019
EXPIRATION DATE: 
LEVEL OF REVIEW: Exempt Modification
RISK LEVEL DETERMINATION: No more than minimal
Please Note: Modifications do not extend the expiration of the original approval
Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:
1. If this IRB approval has an expiration date, an approved renewal must be in effect to continue the project prior to that date. If approval is not obtained, the human consent form(s) and recruiting material(s) are no longer valid and any research activities involving human subjects must stop.
2. When the project is finished or terminated, a completion form must be completed and sent to the board.
3. No change may be made in the approved protocol without prior board approval, whether the approved protocol was reviewed at the Exempt, Expedited or Full Board level.
4. Exempt approval are considered to have no expiration date and no further review is necessary unless the protocol needs modification.

Approval of this project is given with the following special obligations:
Thank you,
Pamela M. Valentine
Interim Institutional Review Board Chair
The University of Memphis.
Note: Review outcomes will be communicated to the email address on file. This email should be considered an official communication from the UM IRB. Consent Forms are no longer being stamped as well. Please contact the IRB at IRB@memphis.edu.
Table 1

Text stimuli used in Experiment 1 and Experiment 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Consistent</th>
<th>Discrepant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The front desk receptionist claims that the principal is going through a messy divorce.</td>
<td>The speech therapist reports that the principal's life is chaotic because he is going through a divorce.</td>
<td>The speech therapist claims that the principal is happily married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The local news stated that the graduating class had the highest ACT scores in state history.</td>
<td>The Department of Education claimed that the graduating class made state history by having the highest ACT scores.</td>
<td>The Department of Education claimed that the graduating class had embarrassingly low ACT scores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hall monitor claims that the student council president perfectly dissected their frog in biology class and got an A.</td>
<td>The volleyball player asserts that the student council president did a good job dissecting their frog in biology class and got a perfect grade.</td>
<td>The volleyball player reports that the student council president hacked up their frog in biology class and got an F.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The guidance counselor mentioned that the art club president is working three jobs to save up for college tuition.</td>
<td>The yearbook staff disclosed that the art club president will save up for college tuition by working three jobs.</td>
<td>The yearbook staff mentioned that the art club president doesn't need to work because she got a full ride scholarship for college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sports announcer said that the quarterback started several fights with the opposing team last week at the football game.</td>
<td>The vice principal asserts that the quarterback was involved in several fights with the school's rival team at the football game last week.</td>
<td>The vice principal reports that the quarterback made new friends from the opposing team at last week's football game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lunchlady claims that the home economics class always makes beautiful pastries.</td>
<td>The extrovert disclosed that the home economics class makes award-winning pastries.</td>
<td>The extrovert asserts that the home economics class burns and has to throw out their pastries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target</strong></td>
<td><strong>Consistent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Discrepant</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The choir teacher mentioned that the soccer coach writes poems that all of the students love.</td>
<td>The English teacher mentioned that the soccer coach writes poems that are loved by all the students.</td>
<td>The English teacher mentioned that the soccer coach writes poems that all of the students make fun of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The class clown disclosed that the honors student was arrested for this year’s senior prank.</td>
<td>The local authorities said that the honors student was arrested as the mastermind behind this year's senior prank.</td>
<td>The local authorities said that the honors student had nothing to do with this year's senior prank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The captain of the chess club mentioned that the school nurse watches soap operas all day instead of working.</td>
<td>The dancer said that the school nurse only watches soap operas all day.</td>
<td>The dancer said that she school nurse works harder than any other staff member at the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The valedictorian says that the robotics club was disqualified from Battle Bots for using banned weapons.</td>
<td>The computer scientist says that the robotics club used banned weapons and was disqualified from Battle Bots.</td>
<td>The computer scientist says that the robotics club followed all the guidelines and won Battle Bots fair and square.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The P.E. teacher reports that no students have hurt themselves in the chemistry lab since the renovation last year.</td>
<td>The student activist claimed that no students have hurt themselves in the chemistry lab this week due to last year's extra safety precautions.</td>
<td>The student activist claimed that many students have sustained injuries in the chemistry lab this week because of the many dangerous materials laying around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spanish tutor affirms that the SGA rigged the voting for the homecoming court.</td>
<td>The librarian said that the SGA tampered with the votes for the homecoming court.</td>
<td>The librarian said that the SGA triple-checked that the votes for the homecoming court were counted up correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The security guard disclosed that the foreign student is the most popular student.</td>
<td>The psychology teacher said that the foreign student makes friends easily and is very popular.</td>
<td>The psychology teacher said that the foreign student struggles to make new friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Discrepant</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chaperone reports that the senior class president skipped the annual trip to Washington DC to save money for prom.</td>
<td>The class treasurer says that the senior class president was unfortunately unable to go on the annual trip to Washington DC.</td>
<td>The class treasurer asserts that the senior class president went on the annual trip to Washington DC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rich kid states that the drama club members often fake being sick to stay home from school.</td>
<td>The debate team mentioned that the drama club members constantly play hooky and stay home from school.</td>
<td>The debate team states that the drama club members have perfect attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The new kid claims that the substitute teacher lets students goof off all day.</td>
<td>The school board claims that the substitute teacher lets students slack off all day.</td>
<td>The school board asserts that the substitute teacher requires students to do busy work all day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physics club claimed that the nerd's science project impressed several judges at a recent science fair for being so innovative.</td>
<td>The geography teacher disclosed that the nerd's innovative science project impressed several judges at the recent science fair.</td>
<td>The geography teacher claimed that the nerd's science project did not impress the judges at a recent science fair because it injured several people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The captain of the soccer team reports that the algebra teacher is more lenient on athletes' assignments so they can all get A's.</td>
<td>The cheerleading captain said that the algebra teacher doesn't read athletes' papers and just gives them A's</td>
<td>The cheerleading captain said that the algebra teacher fairly grades athletes' and non-athletes' assignments in the exact same way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gamer asserts that the hippies constantly smoke weed in the first floor bathrooms.</td>
<td>The captain of the softball team affirms that the first floor bathrooms reek of weed when the hippies are in there.</td>
<td>The captain of the softball team claims that the hippies never use the first floor bathrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Discrepant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The groundskeeper claims that the school library is expanding because so many students use it.</td>
<td>The administrative assistant claims that the school library is planning to build an extra wing because so many students use it.</td>
<td>The administrative assistant reports that the school library will close down because no students use it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bus driver asserts that the baseball team was rowdy and rude on the ride home from the state championship.</td>
<td>The third baseman says that he couldn't hear himself think because the baseball team celebrated so loudly on their ride home from the state championship.</td>
<td>The third baseman says that the bus was silent because the team slept the whole way home from the state championship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The concerned parent stated that the school is raising tuition because the state's yearly taxes have skyrocketed.</td>
<td>The superintendent stated that the school's tuition will increase to pay for the huge hikes in yearly state taxes.</td>
<td>The superintendent mentioned that the school is decreasing tuition for parents because yearly taxes are at an all-time low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The shop teacher says that the mathletes won the &quot;best in state&quot; competition.</td>
<td>The driver's ed teacher says that the mathletes were awarded &quot;best in state&quot; at their competition.</td>
<td>The driver's ed teacher disclosed that the mathletes were disqualified from the &quot;best in state&quot; competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The jocks claim that the school math tutor failed all his math classes.</td>
<td>The color guard member claims that the school math tutor is terrible at math.</td>
<td>The color guard member mentioned that the school math tutor is extremely good at math.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A clarinet player claims the popular kids found a Band-Aid in the chili at lunch.</td>
<td>The editor for the school newspaper claims the popular kids were eating lunch and found a Band-Aid in the chili.</td>
<td>The editor for the school newspaper claims the popular kids love chili day at lunch because the ingredients are so fresh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Freshman student said that the choir allows students of all ages to audition.</td>
<td>The vocal coach said that the choir holds open auditions for students of all ages each term.</td>
<td>The vocal coach affirms that the choir forbids underclassmen from auditioning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sourcing Through the Grapevine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Consistent</th>
<th>Discrepant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The journalism student claims that the longjumper constantly sprains her ankles from years of wear and tear.</td>
<td>The scoreboard operator claims that the longjumper frequently sits out of competitions due to ankle pain.</td>
<td>The scoreboard operator claims that the longjumper has never been injured in her entire career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The history teacher claims that the skater failed his test because he lost his cheat sheet.</td>
<td>The foreign language club sponsor claims that the skater lost his cheat sheet and failed his test.</td>
<td>The foreign language club sponsor affirms that the skater passed his test even though he cheated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school blog said that the yearbook club only included pictures of the most popular kids in the yearbook</td>
<td>The 4H club said that the yearbook club was biased to put more pictures of popular students in the yearbook.</td>
<td>The 4H club said that the yearbook club fairly represents all students when they choose what pictures to include in the yearbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The band director said that the center of the basketball team made every free throw during the championship game.</td>
<td>The janitor mentioned that the center of the basketball team didn’t miss a single free throw during the championship game.</td>
<td>The janitor said that the center of the basketball team missed every free throw during the championship game.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Descriptive statistics for all variables measured in Experiment 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Skewness (SE)</th>
<th>Kurtosis (SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading time for unique texts (secs)</td>
<td>79.53 (35.58)</td>
<td>1.43 (0.3)</td>
<td>1.94 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reading time for consistent texts (secs)</td>
<td>63.07 (26.86)</td>
<td>1.39 (0.3)</td>
<td>3.47 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reading time for discrepant texts (secs)</td>
<td>70.32 (38.06)</td>
<td>2.84 (0.3)</td>
<td>12.81 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Total text reading time (secs)</td>
<td>212.92 (88.69)</td>
<td>1.19 (0.3)</td>
<td>1.08 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accurate memory for unique source-content links</td>
<td>5.97 (2.23)</td>
<td>-0.12 (0.3)</td>
<td>-0.35 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Accurate memory for consistent source-content links</td>
<td>4.72 (1.76)</td>
<td>0.15 (0.3)</td>
<td>-0.71 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Accurate memory for discrepant source-content links</td>
<td>5.77 (2.39)</td>
<td>-0.20 (0.3)</td>
<td>-0.97 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Accurate memory for consistent source-source links</td>
<td>5.48 (2.37)</td>
<td>0.10 (0.3)</td>
<td>-0.57 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Accurate memory for discrepant source-source links</td>
<td>5.58 (2.38)</td>
<td>-0.48 (0.3)</td>
<td>-0.85 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Vocabulary Accuracy</td>
<td>8.20 (2.73)</td>
<td>0.36 (0.3)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Time on vocabulary task (secs)</td>
<td>166.23 (72.56)</td>
<td>1.20 (0.3)</td>
<td>0.97 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Attitudes Toward Gossip (Moral Subscale)</td>
<td>13.08 (4.03)</td>
<td>0.15 (0.3)</td>
<td>-0.41 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Attitudes Toward Gossip (Social Subscale)</td>
<td>13.17 (5.75)</td>
<td>0.80 (0.3)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Tendency to Gossip</td>
<td>11.06 (4.86)</td>
<td>1.15 (0.3)</td>
<td>0.79 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Interpersonal Curiosity (Emotions Subscale)</td>
<td>16.20 (3.32)</td>
<td>-0.67 (0.3)</td>
<td>-0.56 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

Descriptive statistics for all variables measured in Experiment 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Skewness (SE)</th>
<th>Kurtosis (SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading time for unique texts (secs)</td>
<td>67.67 (34.11)</td>
<td>2.05 (0.29)</td>
<td>7.33 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reading time for consistent texts (secs)</td>
<td>66.26 (33.67)</td>
<td>1.55 (0.29)</td>
<td>2.68 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reading time for discrepant texts (secs)</td>
<td>66.25 (34.55)</td>
<td>2.15 (0.29)</td>
<td>7.15 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Total text reading time (secs)</td>
<td>200.17 (93.80)</td>
<td>2.08 (0.29)</td>
<td>7.06 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accurate memory for unique source-content links</td>
<td>4.90 (2.27)</td>
<td>0.20 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.67 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Accurate memory for consistent source-content links</td>
<td>3.59 (2.00)</td>
<td>0.84 (0.29)</td>
<td>0.83 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Accurate memory for discrepant source-content links</td>
<td>4.36 (2.44)</td>
<td>0.21 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.95 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Accurate memory for consistent source-source links</td>
<td>5.19 (2.32)</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.73 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Accurate memory for discrepant source-source links</td>
<td>4.88 (2.45)</td>
<td>0.27 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.59 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Vocabulary Accuracy</td>
<td>8.13 (2.97)</td>
<td>0.24 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.59 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Time on vocabulary task (secs)</td>
<td>198.44 (154.20)</td>
<td>3.14 (0.29)</td>
<td>10.64 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Attitudes Toward Gossip (Moral Subscale)</td>
<td>13.78 (4.54)</td>
<td>0.12 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.37 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Attitudes Toward Gossip (Social Subscale)</td>
<td>15.16 (5.89)</td>
<td>0.10 (0.29)</td>
<td>-1.16 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Tendency to Gossip</td>
<td>11.67 (4.38)</td>
<td>0.89 (0.29)</td>
<td>0.17 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Interpersonal Curiosity (Emotions Subscale)</td>
<td>16.35 (3.06)</td>
<td>-0.68 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.30 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Graphical representation of the Documents Model Framework (DMF) adapted from Britt et al., 1999.
Figure 2. Graphical representation of the Discrepancy-Induced Source Comprehension Model (D-ISC) from Braasch & Kessler, 2021.
**Figure 3.** Reading time for each text type (+/− SEM) in Experiment 1.
Figure 4. Accuracy for memory of source to content links for each text type (+/- SEM) in Experiment 1.
Figure 5. Accuracy for memory of source to content links for each text type (+/- SEM) in Experiment 2.