



LAKE FOREST  
COLLEGE

# Collaborative Recall of Social Information

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## Abstract

Three experiments explored the influence of social information on collaborative memory performance.

Experiment 1 used passages by Mesoudi et al. (2006) and showed that collaborative inhibition was eliminated when participants were asked to recall social information. However, near ceiling performance and confounds in the passages rendered the results inconclusive.

Experiment 2 addressed these problems while manipulating gossip and sociability. Results showed collaborative inhibition across all conditions. There was a significant effect of gossip (gossip > non) and an effect of sociability (explicit > implicit).

Experiment 3 separately manipulated gossip and interest in collaborative recall. Early results suggest that, while both interest and gossip enhance memory, interest yields stronger mnemonic benefits. Further, some degree of collaborative inhibition appeared present in all manipulations. More data are required.

## Background

Collaborative Inhibition (e.g., Weldon & Bellinger, 1997)

- Combined output of participants working together (**Collaborative Group**) is less than the combined non-redundant recall of several participants working alone (**Nominal Group**)
- Robust across variety of contexts
- See Harris et al, 2008 for a review

Strategy Disruption Hypothesis (Basden & Basden, 1995)

- CI occurs because individuals working alone are free to adopt their preferred retrieval strategies while members of collaborating groups are exposed to repeated disruptions from their group members

## Questions of Interest

Does collaborative inhibition occur in natural conversational settings when participants are tasked with remembering the sorts of things that people often attempt to remember together?

Will remembering gossip information reduce strategy disruption (rely on story structure) and, in turn, reduce or eliminate collaborative inhibition?

Are interest and gossip separable? Related to CI?

## Experiment 1

Purpose

- Compare collaborative and nominal group memories for gossip vs. person facts vs. city facts

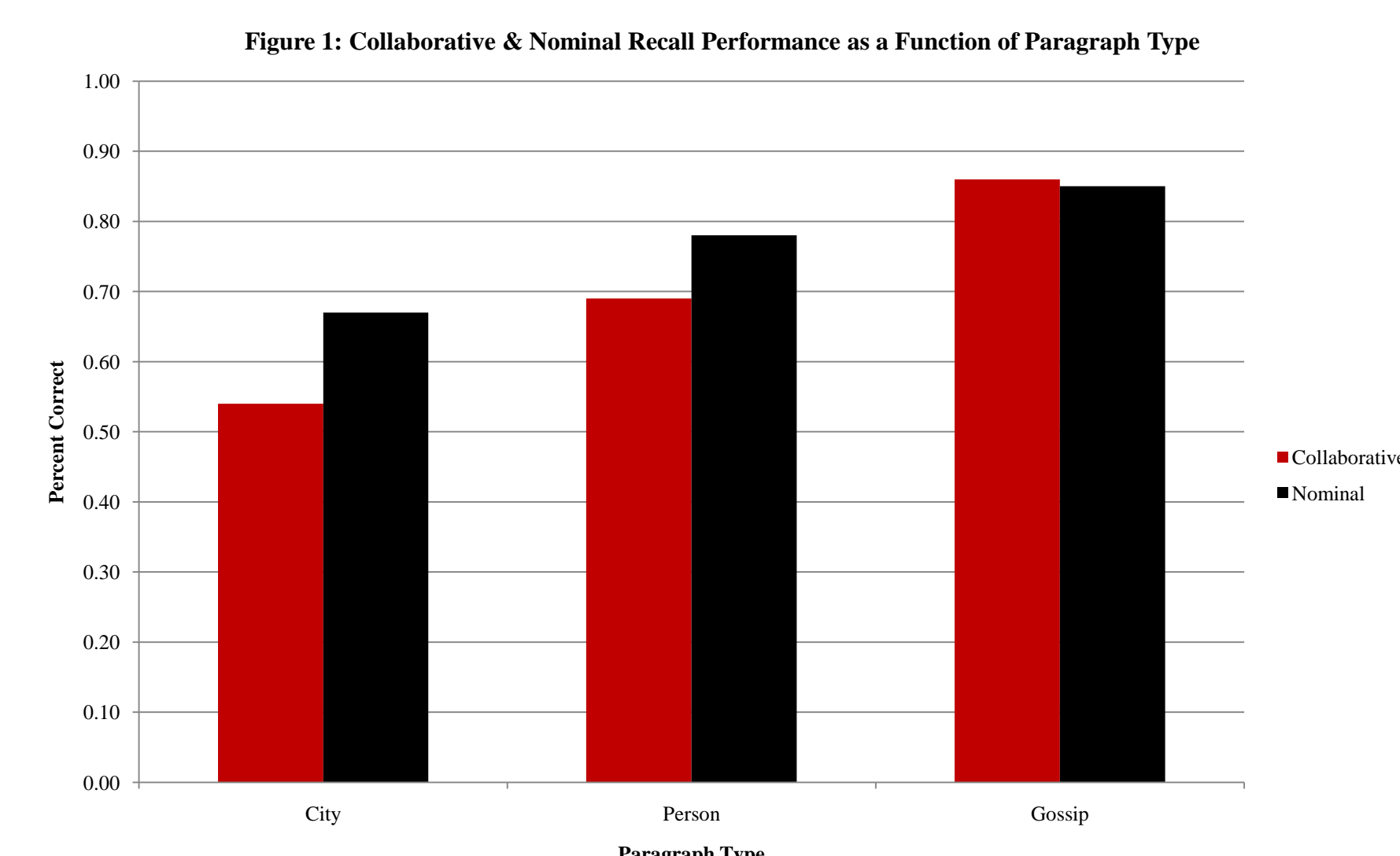
Method

- Participants heard and viewed three paragraphs from Mesoudi et al. (2006)
- Brief (30 s) math distracting task
- Free recall of all 3 paragraphs

Scoring

- Paragraphs contained 4 propositions. Two raters achieved consensus.
- Kelley & Wright (in press) technique used to obtain representative nominal groups

## Exp1 Results



Collaborative inhibition eliminated for gossip paragraph only.

Problems

- Near ceiling performance with gossip
- Confounds – gossip had story structure, logically ordered info, and multiple people

## Experiment 2

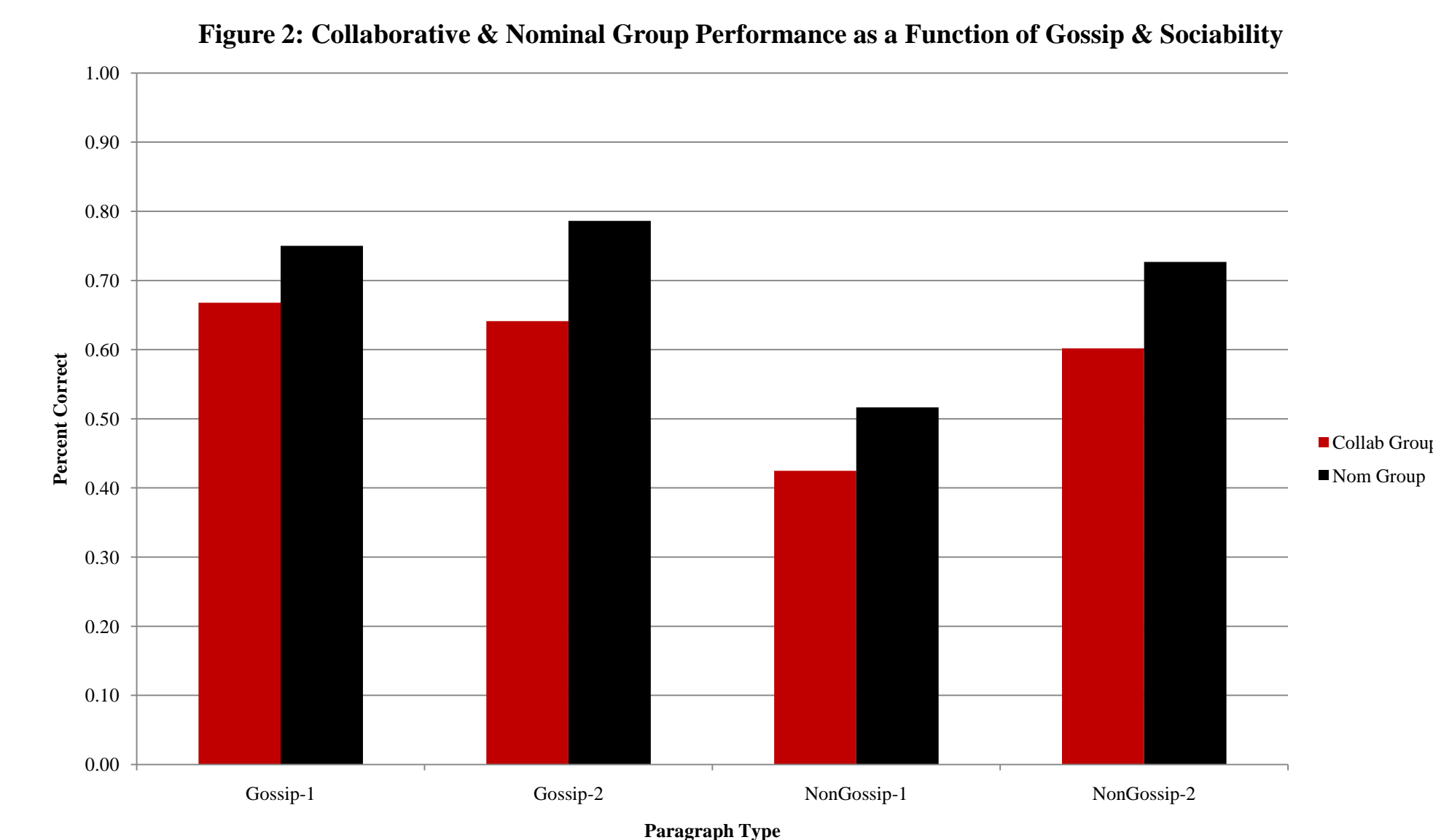
Purpose

- Eliminate Exp 1 confounds by controlling for story structure and manipulating gossip and sociability directly
- Reduce performance by adding one more paragraph (4 total) and lengthening distracting task (90 s)

Design

- Sociability: # of people in passage (1 or 2)
  - Implicit: 1 person, must infer how s/he treat others
  - Explicit: 2 people, overtly see how they treat others
- Gossip: 2 types of cheating (fiancé vs. exam)
- Non-gossip: 2 daily activities

## Exp 2 Results



Collaborative inhibition present in all conditions

- Failed to replicate Exp 1 findings
- Possible that ceiling effect masked collaborative inhibition in Exp 1

Main effect of Gossip

- Gossip (.71) > Non-Gossip (.57)

Main effect of Sociability

- Explicit (.69) > Implicit (.59)
- Possible that info about social relationships is easier remembered when those relationships are made explicit

Gossip x Sociability Interaction

- Implicit Non-Gossip remembered worst of all

Problems

- May have confounded gossip with interest
- Are these separable and do they produce different mnemonic effects?

## Experiment 3

Purpose

- Separately manipulate gossip and interest and assess their influence on collaborative recall

Design

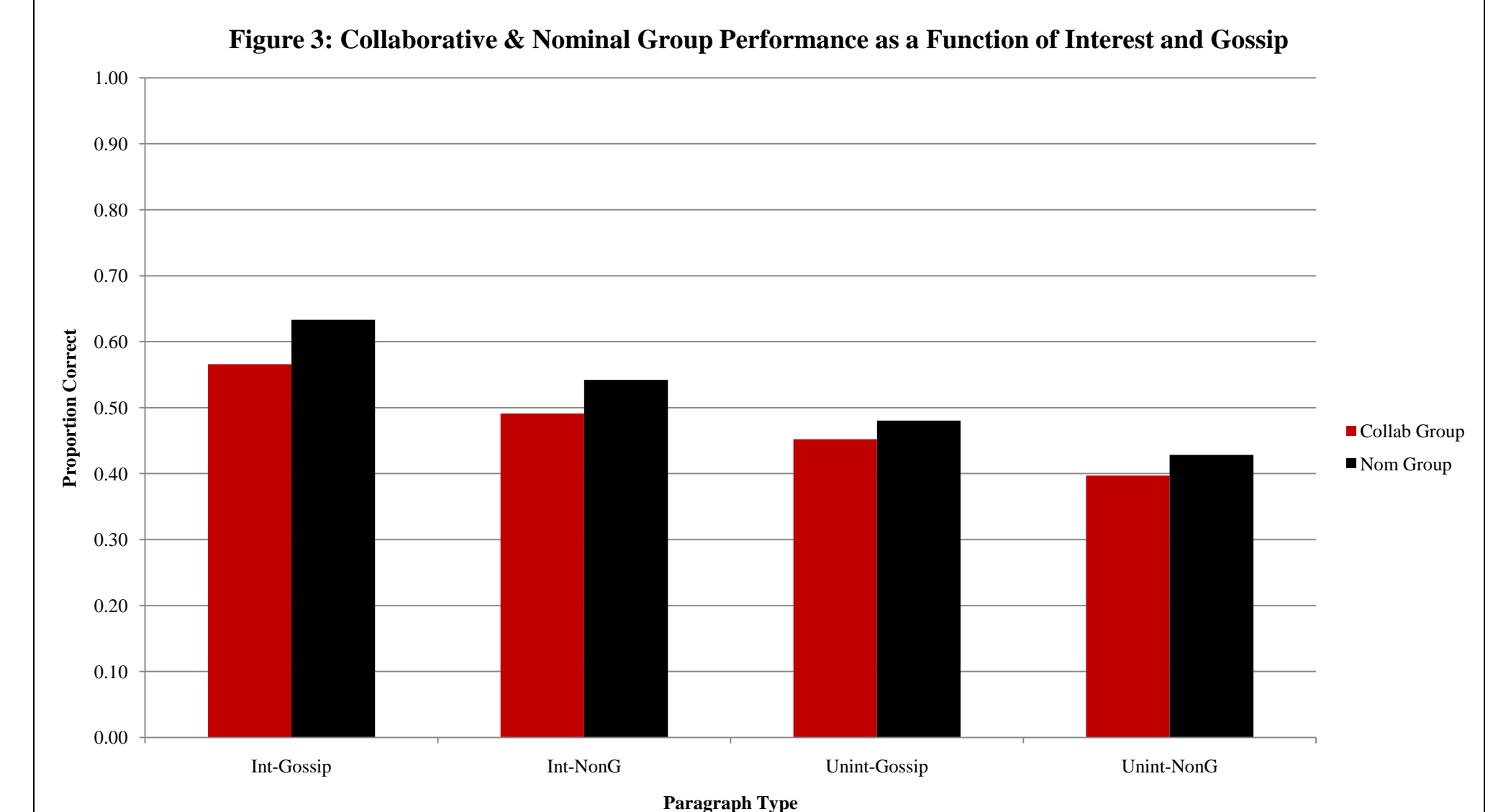
- Interesting = characters of same age as Ss
- Uninteresting = characters older than Ss
- Gossip: 2 types of cheating
- Non-gossip: 2 daily activities

- Int-Gos: affair between engaged student and fiancé's best friend
- Int-Non: student wins trip; meets Oprah
- Unint-Gos: scandal in senior citizen bingo
- Unint-Non: old salesman caught in rain

Procedure

- Same as Exp 2
- Read/Heard 4 passages; 90 sec math distractor; Free recall of 4 passages; Score propositions with multiple raters; K & W representative nominal groups

## Exp 3 Results



With only ½ the data collected, here are the trends:

Main effect of Interest

- Interesting (.56) > Uninteresting (.44)

Main effect of Gossip

- Gossip (.53) > Non-Gossip (.48)

Stronger mnemonic effect of interest than gossip, but both contribute to performance

Collaborative inhibition either reduced or non-existent (p=.16)

- Additional participants should clarify this finding

## General Discussion

Given that Exp 3 is not yet complete, we can only offer general impressions:

- While gossip and interest enhanced memory performance, collaborative inhibition remained with both manipulations.
- Providing a consistent story structure was not sufficient to eliminate collaborative inhibition.

## References

- Basden, D. R., & Basden, B. H. (1995). Part-list cuing inhibition as retrieval strategy disruption. *JEP:LMC*, 21, 1659-1672.
- Harris, C. B., Paterson, H. M., & Kemp, R. I. (2008). Collaborative recall and collective memory: What happens when we remember together? *Memory*, 16, 213-230.
- Kelley, M. R., & Wright, D. (in press). Obtaining representative nominal groups. *Behavior Research Methods*.
- Weldon, M. S., & Bellinger, K. D. (1997). Collective memory: Collaborative and individual processes in remembering. *JEP:LMC*, 23, 1160-1175.