It has been recently suggested that gossip is a valuable epistemic resource. In particular, it has been argued that gossip is a relatively safe way for members of marginalized groups to resist the norms and values of their oppressors, as well as circulate potentially protective information. People who make this argument think we should rethink the value of gossip.

However, before we decide to reclaim the term ‘gossip,’ it is worth investigating the way we currently deploy it. This is because it is not immediately obvious that speech that conveys information that might protect its hearers really does count as gossip. In this talk, we report the results of two studies designed to get empirical traction on folk practices of classifying certain sorts of speech as gossip. The hope is that by getting clear on how we currently deploy the term ‘gossip,’ we will be in a better position to know whether it is worth reclaiming that term at all.