

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION SAVORING ON EMOTIONS DEPENDENT UPON
CLOSENESS IN A RELATIONSHIP



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The Impact of Communication Savoring on Emotions Dependent upon Closeness in a
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Abstract

Social emotion regulation is a useful tool when a situation becomes too emotionally taxing or stressful for a person to handle on their own. Communication savoring is a mechanism by which people can remember and appreciate an experience with another person, usually in the form of a memory. The other person in the memory is often a close family member, friend, or significant other. The present research examined the impact of communication savoring on emotions dependent upon closeness in a relationship. Participants completed emotion questionnaires and then were assigned to one of four conditions in which the relationship was either close or familiar and communication savoring was either present or absent. They were then given five minutes to perform a memory recall task given their assigned condition. Finally, participants completed the emotion questionnaires again after the memory recall. The hypotheses were that participants would have an increase in positive emotions when recalling a memory with someone they were close to and when recalling a memory using communication savoring. However, the results did not support these hypotheses such that there was little change in positive emotions from before and after the memory recall. In some instances, there was an increase in negative emotions after memory recall when communication savoring was used. Overall, more research is needed to determine the best modality for savoring to successfully regulate emotions, specifically increasing positive emotions.

The Impact of Communication Savoring on Emotions Dependent upon Closeness in a Relationship

Relationships and social communication are a part of everyday life; humans are social animals. Since the majority of communication experiences involve other people, a multitude of special memories in various relational contexts accumulate over time. The good memories that evoke pleasure could serve a greater purpose, such as contributing to overall well-being or happiness (Bryant, Smart, & King, 2005; Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). The present research aims to investigate if the impact of communication savoring on present emotions changes dependent upon closeness in a relationship between two people in the memory that is recalled. In order to establish how the recall of relationship memories impact present emotions, the concept of social emotion regulation is first discussed as a premise for the mechanism that could contribute to up-regulating positive emotions. Then, the construct of savoring and various models of savoring are reviewed. After that, the impact of memory recall on present emotions is discussed. Finally, a proposal for how to measure the impact of communication savoring, in the context of relationships, on present emotions is considered.

Social Emotion Regulation

Experiencing positive emotions and decreasing stressful or threatening situations are things people tend to strive for (Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Samios & Khatri, 2019). Self-regulation strategies for emotion sometimes are not enough to regulate one's emotions or are too taxing on certain areas of the brain such as the prefrontal cortex (Coan, 2011). The prefrontal cortex assists in other cognitive tasks such as attention and decision-making so having to direct attention and effort to regulate emotions can take away from other cognitive tasks. The default or baseline emotion regulation strategy, according to Coan (2011) therefore is social emotion regulation. The goal of social emotion regulation is to use others when the situation is too taxing or effortful to

use self-regulation of emotions. Attempting to regulate emotions by oneself may not lead to the best outcome or desired state of emotion, hence the baseline theory of social emotion regulation. Social resources can serve as either mediators or moderators of emotions; the mere presence of a social resource, usually close in proximity and interaction, can change emotions (Coan & Maresh, 2014).

As a mediator, social relationships can act as a mechanism through which emotions are regulated. For example, if a child is distressed, the mother may provide soothing behaviors to regulate emotions. In this example the behavior of the mother is the mechanism by which the emotions of the child are regulated. If the social relationship is a moderator, the proximity and interaction of social relationships can act as third variables that can change the conditions of the emotions and the effectiveness of the regulation. For example, if the mother soothes the child in anticipation of the child's distress, her behavior could be seen as moderating. The mother soothing the child in his/her distressed state could be seen as the interaction of their social relationship while the physical closeness and availability of the mother to the child could be seen as the proximity of their relationship.

As stated, both social proximity and interaction are important in the previous examples of social emotion regulation because they contribute to the quality of the relationship. The quality of the social resources is an important indicator of how effective social emotion regulation will be for the person. When social relationships are far away or not accessible, physically and emotionally, the demands on personal resources increase resulting in self-regulation which is more effortful and taxing on the brain (Coan & Maresh, 2014). Being physically far away from a person in a relationship can be equally as taxing as being emotionally or mentally distant from the person.

The idea that emotions can be regulated through social experiences or interpersonal methods suggests attempting to change emotions by oneself is not the most effective regulation strategy and instead turning to others for assistance in managing emotions is more effective (Coan, 2011). A model that seeks to interpret how this interpersonal regulation of emotions might function was constructed by Zaki and Williams (2013). In this model, the authors include intrinsic and extrinsic processes of regulation and response-dependent and response-independent processes of regulation. For an intrinsic response-dependent process the person revealing emotions looks for a signal from the other person that can indicate whether emotional support will most likely be available. For example, if one is talking to a friend and is about to reveal her significant other broke up with her, she is going to look for a signal while talking to her friend that if she reveals this information there will be emotional support available. In an intrinsic response-independent process the person is labeling and appraising emotions out loud as a mode of regulation regardless of how the other person responds. For example, talking about the emotions out loud associated with a break up can be beneficial even if the other person present does not offer any response, just simply is there to listen. In these cases sometimes the presence of another person could be all it takes for emotion regulation to be beneficial.

However, as Zaki and Williams (2013) further explain, interpersonal emotion regulation can be achieved extrinsically as well. In an extrinsic response-dependent process a person helping another person regulate emotions can perhaps in turn regulate his/her own emotions in the process. For example, if one is helping a friend regulate her emotions after a break up, he could also be regulating his own emotions related to relationships ending as well. The original goal may have been to successfully regulate the other person's emotions but in accomplishing that, one's own emotions are successfully regulated as well. For an extrinsic response-

independent process the person regulating another's emotions takes on the feeling of a "warm glow"; in other words there is a sense that successful emotion regulation occurred even if it is not known for sure. For example, he could feel really good after helping a friend regulate her emotions even if he does not know for sure if emotion regulation was successful. All these interpersonal strategies discussed are methods of successful social emotion regulation that can be utilized in real-life situations. Out of all the methods, the intrinsic response-independent process would occur most often when one is alone, because emotion regulation does not depend on the response of the other person.

One way to see intrinsic emotion regulation processes in action is by examining the concept of capitalization adopted by Gable, Reis, Impett, and Asher (2004). Capitalization as an interpersonal emotion regulation strategy that highlights the benefits of seeking out another person to talk to about a positive event. For example, capitalization might entail sharing the good news of a job promotion with a family member or spouse. It is the process of informing another person about a positive event that provides additional benefits of positive emotions. In the daily diary study conducted by Gable et al., undergraduate students were asked to describe "the most important positive issue or event of the day" (p. 231), which could include school, social, or work situations. Capitalization was then measured using a 5-point scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very much), by asking participants to indicate how often they "let others know about the event/issue" (p. 231). The results indicated for about 71% of the days participants capitalized on the event they described in the diary, especially if it was a positive event (Gable et al., 2004). This interpersonal regulation strategy showed participants reporting higher life satisfaction and positive emotion scores when they shared the positive event with another person. The reasoning behind these findings pointed to the overlooked importance of positive events and interpersonal

relations on emotional well-being and relationships. The social sharing of positive events is important for experiencing more positive emotions.

In a follow up experiment, Gable et al., (2004) focused on capitalization in more specific relationships such that they only used dating or married couples. This study allowed them to demonstrate how extrinsic emotions regulation processes could be influenced by capitalization. Participants were dating or married couples in which they were asked to use perceived responses to capitalization as an attempt at emotion regulation. Partners used a capitalization scale to convey whether they perceived the sharing as active/passive or constructive/destructive. An active-constructive example would be when the partner capitalizing on the positive event senses that the other partner is even more excited about the positive event than they are. A passive-constructive approach would be when a partner is silently supportive of the positive events capitalized by the other partner. An example of an active-destructive approach would be when a partner points out the negative aspects of the positive event being capitalized. Finally, a passive-destructive approach would be when a partner seems disinterested or does not pay much attention to the capitalization of a positive event.

The researchers found if the partner responded in an active-constructive manner (voicing the emotions in a positive way) to the shared positive event, there was a correlation with better relationship quality as measured by a relationship or marital satisfaction assessment. In addition the degree of positive emotions experienced measured by satisfaction, intimacy, and trust questionnaires, was much greater when the active-constructive approach was used (p. 235-237). Capitalization can thus be seen as an effective mode of interpersonal emotion regulation in close attachment relationships.

When the concept of relationships expands to include more than two people, the idea of emotionships can be useful (Cheung, Gardner, & Anderson, 2015). Emotionships highlight how people can broaden their social relationships by relying on certain people for specific emotion regulation needs. For example when a person is feeling sad or happy, there is a particular person to which he/she can go for the appropriate emotion regulation. In contrast, there is a particular person he/she will not go to when experiencing a certain emotion. When researching the concept of emotionships, Cheung et al., (2015) instructed participants to nominate one friend who would be effective in helping them regulate emotions in five domains (i.e., cheering up sadness, calming anxiety, calming anger, enhancing happiness, and amplifying anger). When these emotions were later induced in participants, they were rated on accessibility of, desirable amount of time spent with, closeness to, and relationship satisfaction with the nominated friend. The results indicated emotionships do in fact exist because participants were able to identify relationships that fulfilled specific emotion regulation needs. Particularly, the people participants were close to and had satisfactory relationships with contributed to their choice in emotionship.

To further demonstrate the importance of emotionships, Cheung et al., (2015) conducted a follow-up experiment focusing on participants' portfolios of emotionships. Participants nominated up to four people that would be effective in helping regulate emotions in seven different emotional domains. To measure well-being as a dependent variable the structure of the emotionship portfolio was broken down into the breadth of emotional domains, average number of emotionships per domain, and proportion of specialized emotionships. The results indicated when people diversify their emotion-regulation needs across a large pool of distinct relationships rather than a few general relationships, well-being is achieved more effectively by measures of higher relationship satisfaction and decreased feelings of loneliness (p. 411). A more diverse

emotionship portfolio, that is, one in which a person has more relationships to choose from that are effective in regulating various and specific emotional needs, correlates to greater well-being. Overall the study of emotionships provides evidence that social relationships are tools for emotion regulation, and that having relationships with multiple people can allow for picking and choosing when one is perhaps feeling a certain emotion.

Savoring & Positive Emotions

A popular consequence of using interpersonal emotion regulation is upregulating emotions. One method that can further enhance positive emotions and potentially serve as an emotion regulation strategy is the concept of savoring. Savoring is a concept, similar to capitalization, which includes attending to, appreciating, enhancing and drawing out the positive emotions associated with experiences (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). An example of savoring would be stopping to appreciate the emotions experienced during a birthday party. Savoring is different from capitalization in the sense, savoring can but does not require a social aspect such as telling another person about the positive event.

The process of savoring was proposed to be divided into four aspects: experience, process, response and strategy, and beliefs (Bryant, Chadwick, & Kluwe, 2011). In terms of the type of savoring experience, it can be either world-focused savoring when positive emotions are identified with something externally from the self, or self-focused savoring when positive emotions are perceived as originating from within the self. Relationships with someone else could be an experience that could be considered world-focused savoring since it is outside oneself and involved with another person. The process of savoring is the time period when the positive stimulus transforms into the positive feelings that are savored by a person. Savoring responses and strategies vary, but in general they are the operational components of the savoring

process. The responses and strategies are the specific thoughts or behaviors that can amplify or dampen and prolong or shorten the experience of positive feelings. Finally, savoring beliefs are people's perceptions of their ability to enjoy the positive experience and fully encompass the concept of savoring (Bryant et al., 2011). In this sense savoring is seen as an individual difference and a tool that can change and be further developed over time. Given the nature of savoring, it could serve as another useful emotion regulation tool because just the thought or experience of positive emotions or events could influence emotion regulation.

In a study on savoring that investigated savoring in relation to positive emotions and positive memories, Jose, Lim, and Bryant (2012) researched momentary positive emotions. Momentary positive life events were measured on frequency, intensity and impact. Momentary positive emotions were measured by participants rating the degree to which they felt happy on a four-point scale whereas momentary savoring was measured on three items from the Ways of Savoring Checklist (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). The results indicated that all emotion measures were significantly and positively related and savoring in particular was a mediator for the ability for positive events to increase positive mood. These results are interesting because they seem to lend support to the ideas of Coan and Maresh (2014) that social resources (like our positive memories of being with others) can serve as a mechanism by which emotions can be regulated. In other words the results of Jose et al., (2012) suggest that savoring can serve as a mechanism for emotion regulation. Specifically, savoring can be a mediator in the effects of positive events on positive emotions.

In a study designed to examine the difference among natural savoring, intentional savoring, and dampening, Gentzler, Palmer, and Ramsey (2016) found that different forms of savoring have different consequences on emotions. In their study, natural savoring was defined

as the natural consequence of expressing positive emotions after an event (e.g., expressing and thinking about positive emotions). For example, thinking about the positive emotions felt during a wedding without effort or conscious will. Intentional savoring focused on the benefits of the event to the self (e.g., reflecting and rewarding self). For example, thinking about how well one looked at the wedding or how the wedding gave many opportunities to flirt with people. Finally, dampening was defined as disconnecting from the positive emotions (e.g., not thinking about it and downplaying the emotions). For example, ignoring or not reflecting on the positive emotions felt during the wedding. Participants were given eight vignettes that were intended to evoke a moderate amount of positive emotions and were then asked to rate how likely they were to engage in different behaviors concerning the three savoring techniques (six intentional savoring, four natural savoring, three dampening). In addition, savoring techniques, could be either individual (e.g., reflecting and rewarding self), or were social (e.g., sharing the event with someone).

According to the results, natural savoring and intentional savoring seem to serve different purposes. Specifically, natural savoring seemed to make not only oneself feel good, but to make others feel good as well (Gentzler, Palmer, & Ramsey, 2016, p. 953). Therefore, natural savoring, in addition to capitalization and social emotional regulation, could also be an effective strategy for enhancing positive emotions. In addition, the results indicated when participants were measured on perceived ability to savor and subjective happiness, natural savoring was most commonly used (p. 950).

The authors also made a connection between natural savoring and the long-term benefits of the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001). Natural savoring is more about expressing and thinking about positive emotions associated with an experience, so in the long-term it could

be more apparent that natural savoring is more beneficial. Fredrickson (2001) coined the broaden-and-build theory, defining it as positive emotions broadening a person's momentary thought-action repertoire as well as building personal resources. When positive emotions are used to expand a person's behaviors and social resources it can lead to a greater trend upward in terms of well-being and sustaining positive emotions. Fredrickson (2001) elaborated on how positive emotions can promote long-term upward trends of well-being which can contribute to the experience of more positive emotions. Specifically, Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) hypothesized that positive emotions could improve broad-minded coping over time, and broad-minded coping could improve positive emotions. Broad-minded coping is a coping mechanism for stress and problem-solving defined as taking a broad perspective on problems and being able to produce more than one solution to the problem.

In the study by Fredrickson and Joiner (2002), participants were measured on emotions using the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) and coping responses were measured inquiring about coping strategies used to approach an important problem. The final results supported the hypothesis: positive emotions are correlated with broad-minded coping; the more positive emotions the more a person will utilize broad-minded coping. In addition, the more a person uses broad-minded coping, the more he/she will experience positive emotions (p. 173). The findings ultimately led the authors to predict positive emotions as important contributors to upward spirals of emotional well-being. It is important that positive emotions take on a temporal aspect and lengthen over time to promote positive emotional well-being.

In the previous sections, the articles discussed adequately establish grounds for why positive emotions are important in the first place; positive emotions can contribute to greater

well-being, especially if they can be sustained. Knowing the mechanisms that can affect positive emotions behaviorally allow us to understand how social emotion regulation and savoring can improve and enhance the best aspects of life. These are not the only methods of enhancing positive emotions that have been researched. Another mechanism worth discussing in which positive emotions can be enhanced is the process of retrospection and recall.

Retrospection & Recall

Research on savoring suggests that people can use past memories to improve their present emotions. Therefore, it is useful to consider the role of retrospection and recall on savoring. One way to do this would be to consider the ability of people to reminisce. For example, Bryant, Smart, and King (2005) measured participants on positive emotional experience, perceived ability to enjoy life, and a self-reported reminiscence event. The results showed that college students reminisced about positive relationship events in the context of family, friends, and romantic partners more than they did individually experienced positive events. In addition, participants reported improved levels of happiness and a greater ability to enjoy their lives after the reminiscence task (Bryant et al., 2005). The authors discussed the importance of being able to reminisce about positive events to not just improve present emotions, but to also increase awareness and gain new perspectives on life. Reminiscing is an important idea to consider because it is an avenue that allows social emotion regulation and savoring methods to increase awareness of present emotions, specifically upregulating positive emotions.

Already it can be seen that the ability to reminisce can be related to emotions in a positive way while also incorporating social resources and savoring. A study looking at different types of processing modes to see which was most effective during reminiscence was conducted by Gadeikis, Schweizer, Murphy, and Dunn (2017). Participants first recalled a memory and then

were assigned to use either an experiential processing mode, analytical processing mode, or a control processing mode during recall of the same memory. Experiential processing mode requires being concretely aware of sensory and bodily experience in each present moment. For example, being aware of the breeze blowing, the smell of the flowers, or the emotions being felt in class. In contrast, analytical processing mode attends to the abstract and conceptual portions of an experience. For example, thinking about why it is windy, what causes the flowers to give off a scent, or the causes of the emotions being felt. It is important to note that an experiential processing mode can also be defined in terms of savoring, in which a person becomes fully engrossed in the perceptual experience and focuses on the most positive aspects of the event (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). In other words, researchers should keep in mind that savoring involves experiential processing. The researchers expected that participants using an experiential processing mode would have an increase in happiness from the first memory recall to the second, and the results supported this claim (p. 73). An increase in positive affect and a decrease in sadness scores were seen in the results when participants engaged in experiential processing. These results are similar to the results of the study by Bryant et al., (2005) in which drawing on past experiences can enhance present emotions. Reminiscing and using a past memory through an avenue such as savoring or experiential processing can improve positive emotions.

The method of retrospection and recall of events, specifically involving social contexts and savoring, has thus been shown to work well in improving present emotions in people. Not only can the effects of recall be seen in the behavior of participants, but research allows us to understand how this process engages activity in the brain. Not only can positive emotions be seen in behavioral and real-life situations, but positive emotions activate distinct parts of the brain as well. Taking into consideration the role of positive emotions in the brain, Heller and

colleagues (2015) identified the striatum and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) as important neural substrates that coincide with the rewards associated with positive emotions. Participants completed a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) task for positive emotional reactivity after winning a game to see how rewarding it was to the participant. The researchers found that the DLPFC amplitude was directly related to the intensity of positive emotions, and the ventral striatum was associated with the duration of positive emotions (Heller et al., 2015). The results indicate therefore that the striatum and DLPFC are indeed important components of the brain that are more active during intense and long periods of positive emotions.

In a similar study looking at brain activity related to reward and positive emotions, Speer, Bhanji, and Delgado (2014) examined activity in the brain using fMRI when participants recalled positive memories. The results indicated positive memories resulted in an increased experience of positive emotions both in feeling and intensity thus showing increased activity in the striatum and prefrontal cortex. One suggestion by Speer et al., (2014) as to why these particular substrates are closely associated with recall and greater magnitudes of positive emotion is the concept of reward-processing. The mechanism of reward-processing often includes the striatum which is why positive emotions activate that region as well. When engaging in something, whether it be with another person, savoring an experience, or recalling a positive event, positive emotions feel good and can be rewarding. Finding the most effective mechanism in enhancing positive emotions is important, but perhaps combining strategies could be the ultimate strategy.

Communication Savoring & Relationship Emotion Regulation

Recently researcher Pitts (2018) proposed a new dimension of savoring in which communication and interpersonal experiences can be savored. By her definition communication

savoring is, “the process of mindfully attending to pleasurable or meaningful social interaction in real, remembered, or anticipated/imagined encounters and enhancing or prolonging the positive affect” (pg. 254). Communication savoring brings a whole new component to social emotion regulation and the way people communicate; it is able to integrate the original construct of social emotion regulation discussed by Coan (2011) with the construct of savoring discussed by Bryant and Veroff (2007). The goals of the study of savoring as a positive communication by Pitts (2018) were to see how individuals savor communication, investigate the different types of communication savoring, and see how the experience of communication savoring changes across past, present, and future contexts.

To address the goals of her article, Pitts (2018) performed a study in which college students were asked to share a detailed narrative of a savory communication experience. In other words participants were instructed to share a savored moment involving another person. These moments were then examined for types of communication savoring, the context of the communication savoring event, and then the physiological experience participants reported during the communication event. The relational context that participants reported most often for their communication experience was with a family member (35%); other relational contexts included romantic partners (22%), a shared social experience (15%), or memories with a friend (14%). Identifying the context in which the communication savoring event occurred in addresses the first goal of how individuals savor communication: with a family member or significant other. Within close relationships, communication savoring may bring people closer and be a possible strategy for emotion regulation or enhancing well-being.

In addition to examining the contexts of the communication savoring experience, Pitts (2018) also considered the type of communication savoring most often used. The types that were

reported most often were extraordinary communication and communication presence which identifies with the second goal of investigating the most common types of communication savoring. Extraordinary communication is recognizing the experience as novel, special, or unique while communication presence is pleasure derived from genuinely and fully attending to the communication experience resulting in intense feelings of connection (p. 244). The combination of extraordinary communication and communication presence mirror the construct of savoring since it requires full attention to a special experience. The components of communication savoring can also be considered similar to the intrinsic response-dependent process of social emotional regulation discussed by Zaki and Williams (2013). Specifically, because if the other person in which someone is communicating with is fully involved and providing support, the event could be deemed to be more savory contributing to successful emotion regulation. For example, having emotions regulated successfully by another person is going to be an event that is more likely to be remembered in a savory way, rather than an event in which emotions were not regulated and the other person did not provide support.

Another important aspect of savoring Pitts (2018) discussed was how it can be used for past, present, and future enhancement of emotions and communication. Most important for the present study is the discussion of the method of retrospection for communication experiences. Pitts (2018) discusses a common idea that appeared in many responses from participants in which during retrospection of communication savoring, they were aware of recalling a savory experience for the purpose of broadening and building on the experience. As Fredrickson (2001) discussed in respect to her broaden-and-build theory, people use positive emotions to broaden their momentary thought-action repertoires as well as build personal resources. Savoring past

experiences, specifically those involving communication may contribute to an increase in present positive emotions resulting in better personal and social resources.

Samios and Khatri (2019) have extended this line of research to examine savoring as a method of interpersonal regulation when stressful life events occur. In their study, couples in romantic relationships were measured on the impact of a stressful life event occurring in the past year, such as monetary stress or an illness, their savoring capacity using the Savoring Beliefs Inventory (Bryant, 2003), and their relationship satisfaction through time spent together and perceptions of happiness in the relationship. The extent of positive affect experienced for each partner was also measured using the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969) in which participants rated the extent to which they felt each of the five different positive states.

Overall, the results of Samios and Khatri (2019) indicated the effects of the stressful events impacted each partner in the relationship differently. One partner perceived savoring capacity to be greater when the other partner was more affected by the stressor. In other words one partner's savoring ability increased when the other partner seemed more distressed. Samios and Khatri (2019) explained this further in terms of savoring as a more effective strategy when one partner attempts to decrease heightened feelings of distress in the other partner. The intensity of emotions experienced by one partner relates to the regulation of savoring of the other partner. In addition, positive affect was a mediator in savoring and relationship satisfaction but not at the interpersonal level. This means that for each individual partner, instead of the relationship itself, positive affect was the mechanism through which savoring affected relationship satisfaction. (p. 138). Savoring predicts one's own positive emotions in turn predicting positive emotions in the relationship as a whole.

To further consider the effects of savoring in romantic relationships, Borelli, Rasmussen, Burkhart, and Sbarra (2015) wanted to see if savoring could work for emotional regulation in long-distance romantic relationships as well. In the study, participants involved in long-distance romantic relationships were assigned to engage in a mental reflection task using relational savoring, personal savoring or a neutral control method. In the relational savoring condition participants were instructed to reflect on a positive experience with their partner. In the personal savoring condition participants reflected on a personal positive experience. Finally in the neutral control condition, participants were told to think about their morning routine. After the mental reflection task, emotional states were measured using the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) to assess levels of positive and negative emotions. Finally, a relationship stressor task was completed with a measure of relationship satisfaction taken after the stressor was introduced. The authors hypothesized that relational savoring would result in higher positive emotions, that relationship satisfaction would be a moderating variable between relational savoring and emotional state, and that emotions resulting from the mental reflection task would act as a mediator between the savoring condition and relationship satisfaction following the stressor.

In line with the first hypothesis, the results indicated that relational savoring resulted in greater positive emotions (Borelli et al., 2015, p. 1096). In terms of the second hypothesis, they found that the relational savoring condition did not have an effect on positive emotions when relationship satisfaction was low, but that relational savoring produced great increases in positive emotions when relationship satisfaction was high. Thus, relationship satisfaction seems to be a moderator between savoring in relationships and positive emotions. Finally, the last hypothesis was supported in that emotions were found to be a mediator between relational savoring and

relationship satisfaction following a stressful event (Borelli et al., 2015). Emotions can be a vital piece of relationships when regulated through the most effective mechanism and in the most effective context.

The Present Study

The present study aimed to explore how the impact of communication savoring on present emotions would change dependent upon closeness in a relationship between two people during memory recall. For the purposes of this experiment, the closeness within a relationship was manipulated by participants recalling a memory either with a person they were close to or a person they were familiar with. In addition, for the savoring condition, participants were asked to attend to, appreciate, and enhance the memory they are attempting to savor through recall. The degree to which emotions changed from baseline to post-memory recall was measured to see if closeness in a relationship and communication savoring contributed to a change in emotions, specifically an increase in positive emotions.

The first hypothesis was a main effect of relationship closeness; participants who recalled a memory in which they were close to someone would have a greater increase in positive emotions than participants who recalled a memory in which they were familiar with someone. The second hypothesis was a main effect of communication savoring; participants who were given savoring instructions would have a greater increase in positive emotions than participants who were not given savoring instructions. Last, an interaction between relationship closeness and communication savoring was hypothesized. Specifically, it was predicted that while communication savoring would increase positive emotions in both relationship closeness conditions, there would be a significantly greater increase when that savoring involved someone close to the participant.

Method

Design

The study used a 2x2 between subjects design with both closeness in a relationship (close or familiar) and communication savoring (present or absent) as between subjects variables. Across these conditions, the change in positive and negative emotions from before and after memory recall was measured using three questionnaires concerning happiness, affect, and positive/negative emotions.

Participants

Sixty undergraduate students from Allegheny College were recruited through SONA. Participant ages ranged from 18-22 years ($M=19.5$, $SD=1.13$) with 36 females and 24 males. The description of the study was stated as a study looking at how the impact of communication savoring on emotions changes depending on the closeness of a relationship during memory recall. On the SONA site, participants were able to sign up for a time slot to participate in the study. They were informed the study took about 30-40 minutes to complete. Participants were compensated for 2 credits via SONA after completion of the study. There were 15 participants in the communication savoring/close condition, 15 participants in the communication savoring/familiar condition, 15 participants in the no communication savoring/close condition, and 15 participants in the no communication savoring/familiar condition.

Materials

To measure the dependent variable of emotions, the Positive Affect, Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988), Discrete Emotions Questionnaire (DEQ; Harmon-Jones, Bastian, & Harmon-Jones, 2016), and Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999) were used. The PANAS scale consists of ten words associated with negative affect

and ten words associated with positive affect in which participants rated on a 5-point scale (very slightly or not at all to extremely) how they were feeling at the present moment in the context of the word (see Appendix C). For example, the word “excited” was associated with positive affect, and the word “nervous” was associated with negative affect. For the Subjective Happiness Scale, four statements/questions were included in which participants rated on a 7-point scale what they felt was most appropriate in describing themselves (see Appendix D). For example, one question asked, “in general, I consider myself:” in which participants rated their response based on the 7-point scale with 1 being “not a very happy person”, and 7 being “a very happy person”. Finally, the DEQ scale is a relatively new measure with thirty-two emotional words in which participants rated on a 7-point scale (not at all to an extreme amount) the extent they experienced the emotional word during recall of the memory (see Appendix E). Twenty words were associated with negative emotions, while twelve words were associated with positive emotions. For example, the word “anger” was associated with negative emotion, and the word “happy” was associated with positive emotion. All three measures were used rather than just one, because all three have been used in the literature in the past successfully. In addition, using all three gave different means of measuring changes in emotions for positive and negative emotions.

In the conditions in which participants were told to engage in savoring during recall of the memory, they were provided with prompts (see Appendix F) to help guide their savoring experience and allow them to recall the memory to the best of their ability. Questions such as, “What time of the day did the communication occur?”, “What was your partner/family member wearing?”, “How did you feel at the time of the communication?”, and “What thoughts were you having at the time?” were provided to enhance participants’ memory recall and savoring

experience. These questions and prompts were adapted from the procedures used by Borelli et al. (2015).

A post-test questionnaire was administered after the experiment to assess the manipulation conditions (see Appendix G). First, demographic questions such as age, sex, and major/minor were asked. Then, questions pertaining to the relationship of the person participants recalled the memory with were asked. These included questions such as the length of time participants knew the person in the memory, how satisfied they were in the relationship, and why they chose that particular person. The questions assessing the relationship were being asked as a manipulation check of whether or not the memory recall was with someone participants were close or familiar with. After that, questions about the quality of the memory were asked such as how vivid the memory was and to what degree it was positive or negative. Finally questions from the Savoring Beliefs Inventory (Bryant, 2003) pertaining to savoring the past through retrospection and recall were asked as a manipulation check for communication savoring.

Procedure

Before participants come in for the study, they were assigned a random number to preserve confidentiality. Once participants arrived to the individual testing room during their time slot, participants were seated at a desk with access to a computer screen and given an informed consent to read over and sign (see Appendix A). After that, the PANAS (see Appendix C) and Subjective Happiness Scale (see Appendix D) was administered via the computer without the researcher in the room.

Upon completion of the pre-task measures, participants started the memory recall task according to the random assignment to one of the four conditions. Participants were randomly assigned into a communication savoring condition and into a relationship closeness condition.

Those in the communication savoring condition were given instructions to attend to, appreciate and enhance the memory with the person they were recalling the memory with. They were asked to try and recreate the memory and emotions associated with the memory as much as possible. In addition, participants were asked to use the savoring prompts on the computer screen to guide the savoring process (see Appendix F). Those in the condition with no communication savoring were simply asked to recall a memory of a communication experience with another person. In addition, participants were given a blank document on the computer screen with no savoring prompts to guide them. In both communication savoring conditions, participants were given the option to type in the document to help further guide the memory recall. Participants in the close relationship condition were instructed to recall a memory with a person they were close to. Those in the not close relationship condition were instructed to recall a memory with a person they were familiar with. The reason for using the word “familiar” is so participants have some form and semblance of a memory to recall with the person. If the instructions were to recall a memory with someone they were not close to, the fear was that the memory would evoke more negative emotions.

A total of 5 minutes was given for memory recall in which the researcher was not present in the room. At the end of the five minutes, the researcher returned and participants were instructed to delete anything typed on the document in which they described the memory they recalled. After participants were finished recalling their memories, they were given the DEQ to complete, and the PANAS and Subjective Happiness Scale to complete on the computer a second time. In addition, participants were given the post-test questionnaire to fill out. Finally, participants were given a copy of the debriefing form (see Appendix B), debriefed and compensated for participation with 2 credits via SONA.

Results

In the present study, a series of between-subjects ANOVAs was conducted with closeness in a relationship (close vs. familiar) and communication savoring (present vs. absent) as the independent variables for each of the dependent variables that examined changes in emotions: the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), and Discrete Emotions Questionnaire (DEQ). A series of planned mean comparisons were conducted to further break down the interaction between the two independent variables. Then, participants' general experiences with savoring using questions from the Savoring Beliefs Inventory (SBI) were examined. After that, a manipulation check for closeness in the relationship from the post-test questionnaire was conducted along with an analysis using vividness as a proxy for savoring. Finally, analyses looking at qualitative themes such as relationship satisfaction, the person chosen for the memory, and length of time the participant knew the person were analyzed.

Emotion Changes

For the PANAS, participants rated words on a 5-point Likert scale before and after the recall manipulation. The ten words associated with a positive affect were added together for a pre PANAS score (scores range from 10 to 50) and then for a post PANAS score (scores range from 10 to 50). The change in emotions was obtained from subtracting the pre PANAS score from the post PANAS score (scores range from -40 to 40). Negative scores indicated a decrease in positive emotions after the memory recall task while positive scores indicated an increase in positive emotions following the memory recall task. For the positive affect PANAS score, the main effect of communication savoring was not significant, $F(1,56)=1.87$, $p=0.177$, $\eta_p^2=0.032$. Those in the savoring condition showed no difference in positive emotion scores ($M=0.97$,

$SD=6.86$) than those in the non-savoring condition ($M=-1.20$, $SD=5.26$). The main effect of closeness in a relationship was also not significant, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.517$, $\eta_p^2=0.008$. Those in the close condition showed no difference in positive emotion scores ($M=0.40$, $SD=6.64$) than those in the familiar condition ($M=-0.63$, $SD=5.71$). There was no significant interaction between communication savoring and closeness in a relationship, $F(1,56)=1.15$, $p=0.288$, $\eta_p^2=0.020$. However, a series of planned mean comparisons was run to examine the relationship among the variables. Those in the close relationship condition, when given savoring prompts, had an increase in positive PANAS scores ($M=2.33$, $SD=7.31$) compared to those who were not given savoring prompts ($M=-1.53$, $SD=5.46$), $F(1,28)=2.70$, $p=0.112$, $\eta_p^2=0.088$. In contrast, participants in the familiar relationship condition, when given savoring prompts, showed a small, negative change in positive PANAS scores ($M=-0.40$, $SD=6.33$) compared to those not given savoring prompts ($M=-0.87$, $SD=5.22$), $F(1,28)<1$, $p=0.827$, $\eta_p^2=0.002$.

The ten words associated with a negative affect were added together for a separate pre PANAS score (scores range from 10 to 50) and then for a post PANAS score (scores range from 10 to 50). The change in emotions was obtained from subtracting the pre PANAS score from the post PANAS score (scores range from -40 to 40). Negative scores indicated a decrease in negative emotions, while positive scores indicated an increase in negative emotions. For the negative affect PANAS score, the main effect of communication savoring was not significant, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.484$, $\eta_p^2=0.009$. Those in the savoring condition showed no difference in negative emotion scores ($M=-1.47$, $SD=7.63$) than those in the non-savoring condition ($M=-2.60$, $SD=4.25$). The main effect of closeness in a relationship was also not significant, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.805$, $\eta_p^2=0.001$. There was no difference in negative emotion scores between those in the close relationship condition ($M=-2.23$, $SD=5.54$) and those in the familiar relationship condition

($M=-1.83$, $SD=6.79$). There was no significant interaction between communication savoring and closeness in a relationship for the negative PANAS, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.366$, $\eta_p^2=0.015$. A series of planned mean comparisons was then run to examine the relationship among the variables. When participants in the close relationship condition were given savoring prompts, there were less negative PANAS scores ($M=-0.93$, $SD=6.64$) than those not given savoring prompts ($M=-3.53$, $SD=3.98$), $F(1,28)=1.70$, $p=0.204$, $\eta_p^2=0.057$. In contrast, participants in the familiar relationship condition given savoring prompts had slightly higher negative PANAS scores ($M=-2.00$, $SD=8.71$) than those not given savoring prompts ($M=-1.67$, $SD=4.44$), $F(1,28)<1$, $p=0.896$, $\eta_p^2=0.001$.

For the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), participants rated questions based on a 7-point Likert scale before and after the memory recall. Question four was reverse coded, and then the scores were added together for a separate pre SHS score (scores range from 4 to 28) and then for a post SHS score (scores range from 4 to 28). The scores were then averaged across the four questions (scores range from 1 to 7). The change in emotions was obtained by subtracting the pre SHS score from the post SHS score (scores range from -6 to 6). Negative scores indicate a decrease in positive emotions after memory recall while positive scores indicate an increase in positive emotions after memory recall. The main effect of communication savoring was not significant, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.751$, $\eta_p^2=0.002$. Those in the savoring condition had no difference in SHS scores ($M=0.133$, $SD=0.830$) than those in the non-savoring condition ($M=0.192$, $SD=0.548$). The main effect of closeness in a relationship was also not significant, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.390$, $\eta_p^2=0.013$. Those in the close relationship condition showed no difference in SHS scores ($M=0.083$, $SD=0.761$) than those in the familiar condition ($M=0.242$, $SD=0.631$). There was no significant interaction between communication savoring and closeness in a relationship

for the SHS, $F(1,56) < 1$, $p = 0.441$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.011$. A series of planned mean comparisons were then run to examine the relationship among the variables. Those in the close relationship condition given savoring prompts had a slight decrease in SHS scores ($M = -0.017$, $SD = 0.914$) compared to those not given savoring prompts ($M = 0.183$, $SD = 0.586$), $F(1,28) < 1$, $p = 0.481$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.018$. In contrast, those in the familiar relationship condition given savoring prompts showed little difference in SHS scores ($M = 0.283$, $SD = 0.737$) compared to those not given savoring prompts ($M = 0.200$, $SD = 0.528$), $F(1,28) < 1$, $p = 0.725$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.005$.

For the Discrete Emotions Questionnaire (DEQ), participants rated words on a 7-point Likert scale only after the manipulation. There were twelve words associated with positive affect and twenty words associated with negative affect. The twelve scores for the positive words were added together and averaged to yield a positive DEQ score (scores range from 1 to 7). The higher the score, the more positive emotions experienced from the memory recall. For the positive DEQ score, the main effect of communication savoring was not significant, $F(1,56) = 1.11$, $p = 0.296$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.019$. Those in the savoring condition showed no difference in positive emotion scores ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.09$) than those in the non-savoring condition ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.21$). The main effect of closeness in a relationship was also not significant $F(1,56) = 1.70$, $p = 0.198$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.029$. There was no difference in positive emotion scores between the close relationship condition ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.23$) and the familiar relationship condition ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.05$). There was no significant interaction between communication savoring and closeness in a relationship for the positive DEQ, $F(1,56) = 2.003$, $p = 0.162$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.035$. A series of planned mean comparisons were run to further examine the relationship among variables. Participants in the close relationship condition given savoring prompts showed little difference in scores ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.28$) compared to those not given savoring prompts ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.22$), $F(1,28) < 1$,

$p=0.819$, $\eta_p^2=0.002$. In contrast, those in the familiar relationship condition given savoring prompts had somewhat higher positive scores ($M=4.17$, $SD=0.903$) than those not given savoring prompts ($M=3.45$, $SD=1.09$), $F(1,28)=3.904$, $p=0.058$, $\eta_p^2=0.122$.

The twenty scores for the negative words were added together and averaged to yield a negative DEQ score (scores range from 1 to 7). The higher the score, the more negative emotions experienced from the memory recall. For the negative DEQ score, the main effect of communication savoring was significant, $F(1,56)=6.05$, $p=0.017$, $\eta_p^2=0.097$. Those in the savoring condition had more negative emotions ($M=2.10$, $SD=1.20$) than those in the non-savoring condition ($M=1.51$, $SD=0.522$). The main effect of closeness in a relationship was not significant, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.863$, $\eta_p^2=0.001$. There was no difference in the negative emotion scores for those in the close relationship condition ($M=1.78$, $SD=1.13$) compared to those in the familiar relationship condition ($M=1.83$, $SD=0.772$). There was no significant interaction between communication savoring and closeness in a relationship for the negative DEQ, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.390$, $\eta_p^2=0.013$. A series of planned mean comparison were conducted to further examine the relationship among variables. When participants in the close relationship condition were given savoring prompts the negative emotion score was somewhat greater ($M=2.18$, $SD=1.46$) than those not given savoring prompts ($M=1.38$, $SD=0.436$), $F(1,28)=4.14$, $p=0.051$, $\eta_p^2=0.129$. Similarly, those in the familiar relationship condition given savoring prompts had no difference in negative emotion scores ($M=2.02$, $SD=0.904$) than those not given savoring prompts ($M=1.63$, $SD=0.583$), $F(1,28)=1.91$, $p=0.178$, $\eta_p^2=0.064$.

Participant Experiences with Savoring

To look at participants' general experiences with savoring (i.e., possible individual differences), questions from the Savoring Beliefs Inventory (SBI) concerning remembering past

events were used. Participants rated statements concerning positive or negative savoring beliefs on a 7-point Likert scale. Specifically, they were asked to what extent either positive (felt good by remembering the past) or negative (felt disappointed by remembering the past) statements described their feelings during the memory recall. The statements were added and averaged in their respective positive and negative aspect to yield a positive score and a negative score. For the positive score on the SBI, there was no difference across the communication savoring condition concerning savoring beliefs, $F(1,58) < 1$, $p = 0.830$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$. There was no difference in positive savoring beliefs when participants were given savoring prompts ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.57$) and when participants were not given savoring prompts ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.41$). For the negative score on the SBI, there was also no difference across the communication savoring condition concerning savoring beliefs, $F(1,58) < 1$, $p = 0.799$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$. There was no difference in negative savoring beliefs when participants were given savoring prompts ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 1.13$) and when participants were not given savoring prompts ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.22$).

Manipulation Checks

For the manipulation check for closeness in a relationship, a question from the post-test questionnaire was used asking participants to rate on a 7-point Likert scale how close of a relationship they had with the person they recalled the memory with. Closeness in a relationship was manipulated successfully since there was a significant difference across the reported closeness in a relationship condition, $F(1,58) = 57.07$, $p = 0.00$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.496$. Participants in the close relationship condition rated the relationship with the person they recalled the memory with closer ($M = 6.37$, $SD = 1.07$) than those in the not close relationship condition ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.87$).

As a proxy for savoring, an analysis looking at the vividness of the memory during recall was conducted. Participants rated on a 7-point Likert scale the extent to which their memory was

vivid during recall. Across the communication savoring condition, there was no difference in how vivid the memory was for participants, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=1.00$, $\eta_p^2=0.00$. Participants who were given savoring prompts had the same amount of vividness ($M=6.03$, $SD=0.890$) as those who were not given savoring prompts ($M=6.03$, $SD=0.964$).

Characteristics of Recalled Memories

The first aspect of the memories that was analyzed was relationship satisfaction. Participants were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale how satisfied they were in the relationship with the person they recalled the memory with. There was a significant effect for closeness in a relationship, $F(1,56)=54.17$, $p=0.00$, $\eta_p^2=0.492$. Those in the close relationship condition reported higher scores of relationship satisfaction ($M=6.13$, $SD=1.11$) than those in the familiar relationship condition ($M=3.47$, $SD=1.70$). There was also a significant effect for communication savoring, $F(1,56)=4.10$, $p=0.048$, $\eta_p^2=0.068$. Those in the communication savoring condition reported lower scores of relationship satisfaction ($M=4.43$, $SD=2.05$) than those in the non-communication savoring condition ($M=5.17$, $SD=1.82$). There was no significant interaction between closeness in a relationship and communication savoring, $F(1,56)<1$, $p=0.583$, $\eta_p^2=0.005$. A series of planned mean comparisons were conducted to further examine the variables. When participants in the close relationship condition were given savoring prompts they reported slightly less scores of relationship satisfaction ($M=5.87$, $SD=1.36$) than those who were not given savoring prompts ($M=6.40$, $SD=0.737$), $F(1,28)=1.79$, $p=0.191$, $\eta_p^2=0.60$. When participants in the familiar relationship condition were given savoring prompts they also reported slightly less scores of relationship satisfaction ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.56$) than those not given savoring prompts ($M=3.93$, $SD=1.75$), $F(1,28)=2.38$, $p=0.134$, $\eta_p^2=0.078$.

The next aspect of the memories recalled analyzed was the valence of the memory participants chose to recall. Participants were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale to what extent the memory they recalled was positive or negative. Overall, 77% of participants rated the memory as more positive, 12% rated the memory as neutral, and 11% rated the memory as negative. Further broken down, there was a significant effect of closeness in a relationship, $F(1,56)=8.53, p=0.005, \eta_p^2=0.132$. Those in the close relationship condition reported their memories as more positive during recall ($M=4.60, SD=0.77$) than those in the familiar relationship condition ($M=3.70, SD=1.49$). There was no significant effect of communication savoring, $F(1,56)<1, p=0.591, \eta_p^2=0.005$. Those in the communication savoring condition had no difference in valence scores ($M=4.23, SD=1.04$) than those in the non-communication savoring condition ($M=4.07, SD=1.46$). There was also no significant interaction between closeness in a relationship and communication savoring, $F(1,56)<1, p=0.334, \eta_p^2=0.017$. A series of planned mean comparisons were conducted to further look at the interaction. When participants were given savoring prompts and recalling a memory with someone they were close to, the valence of the memory was more positive ($M=4.53, SD=0.640$) than when they were recalling a memory with someone they were familiar with ($M=3.93, SD=1.28$), $F(1,28)=2.64, p=0.116, \eta_p^2=0.086$. When participants were not given savoring prompts and recalling a memory with someone they were close to, the valence of the memory was more positive ($M=4.67, SD=0.90$) than when they were recalling a memory with someone they were familiar with ($M=3.47, SD=1.68$), $F(1,28)=5.92, p=0.022, \eta_p^2=0.175$.

Another aspect of the memories that was analyzed was length of time participants had known the person with whom they recalled the memory with. Participants were given a choice between less than 3 months, 3-6 months, 6-9 months, 9-12 months, 1-5 years, or greater than 5

years. Overall, 65% of participants recalled a memory with someone they had known for either 1-5 years or greater than 5 years while 35% of participants recalled a memory with someone they had known for less than a year (less than 3 months, 3-6 months, or 9-12 months). Further broken down, 90% of those asked to recall a memory with someone they were close to chose someone they had known for either 1-5 years or greater than 5 years. In addition, 60% of those asked to recall a memory with someone they were not close to chose someone they had known for less than a year.

The final aspect of the memories that was analyzed was the type of person chosen by participants in their memory recall. Participants were given a choice between parent/guardian, sibling, other family member, friend, significant other, class mate, acquaintance, or other with a space to specify. Overall, 37% of participants identified the person in the memory as a friend, 22% identified the person as a significant other, and 12% identified the person as an acquaintance. Parents and siblings made up 20% of the chosen people. When it was the close relationship condition, 57% of participants chose either a friend or significant other, with only 33% of participants choosing a family member or sibling. In the not close relationship condition, 87% of participants chose either a friend, significant other, or acquaintance for the memory recall, while only one person chose a family member. In terms of communication savoring, those given savoring prompts and those not given savoring prompts both had a friend as the most popular choice to recall a memory with.

Discussion

Summary

The purpose of the present study was to examine the impact of communication savoring (present or absent) on emotions dependent upon closeness in a relationship (close or familiar). It

was hypothesized that people would increase their emotions during recall of a memory with a person they are close to. In addition, it was hypothesized that people would increase their emotions during memory recall when they engaged in communication savoring. An interaction was further hypothesized between that people engaging in communication savoring would increase their positive emotions more than people not engaging in communication savoring in all instances of closeness in a relationship, but to a greater degree when the relationship between the two people is close. The results of the study did not support these hypotheses since there was no main effect of closeness for any of the emotion measures. In addition, there was no main effect of communication savoring on any of the emotion measures, except concerning the negative DEQ score, but the effect was in the opposite hypothesized direction. There were no significant interactions between communication savoring and closeness in a relationship for any of the emotions measures as well.

Communication Savoring

In terms of savoring and positive emotions, the results of the present study were inconsistent with previous findings. In a study by Jose, Lim, and Bryant (2012), positive life events, positive emotions, and savoring were all significantly and positively related with savoring as the mediator. They found savoring to be a mechanism for emotion regulation, but in the present study, the presence or absence of communication savoring during memory recall was not effective in changing emotions, specifically increasing positive emotions. A main effect for communication savoring on emotions was not significant for any of the emotion measures used in the present study. The presence or absence of communication savoring did not make a difference in the change of emotions from before and after participants recalled a memory. The prompts used to promote savoring adapted from Borelli et al., (2015) could not have been a

powerful enough tool to increase positive emotions and decrease negative emotions in participants after they had engaged in communication savoring.

The only emotion measure with a significant main effect of communication savoring was the negative DEQ score, however the trend was in the opposite direction that was hypothesized. Participants in the close relationship condition given savoring prompts had a greater score of negative emotions than those that were not given savoring prompts. The original hypothesis stated that those given savoring prompts to engage in communication savoring would experience greater positive emotions, and in turn less negative emotions. People not asked to savor in the present study had less negative emotions than those asked to savor. The same interaction was seen in the not close relationship condition. Participants given savoring prompts had greater scores of negative emotion than those not given savoring prompts. Perhaps participants that were asked to savor a memory, no matter who it was with, recalled negative memories. The valence of the memory participants chose to savor could have been more negative contributing to an increase negative emotions. There was no specification in the instructions that the memory had to be positive or negative, so it was up to the participant how positive or negative the memory they chose to recall was. It did not matter the type of relationship recalled in the memory, but it mattered whether or not participants were given savoring prompts.

Considering the interpersonal regulation model by Zaki and Williams (2013) in the context of the results for the present study brings up the possibility that the conditions were not indicative of a successful intrinsic or extrinsic, and response-dependent or response-independent regulation process. Since there was not another person physically present or offering support, emotion regulation may not have been achieved even if savoring occurred. In all four scenarios presented by Zaki et al., (2013) there is another person present, but they do not have to respond

to the person expressing emotions. In the present experiment, there was not another person in the room while participants were recalling a memory and attempting to regulate emotions. If the results would have been more consistent in showing that participants increased their positive emotions after the memory recall, it could have been said a successful intrinsic response-dependent process was seen.

Communication savoring is comparable to this type of interpersonal regulation process because the person regulating their emotions is looking for the other person to give them emotional support. Pitts (2018) defines communication savoring as “the process of mindfully attending to pleasurable or meaningful social interaction in real, remembered, or anticipated/imagined encounters and enhancing or prolonging the positive affect” (p. 254). The event that participants were recalling would have been with someone they had support from and positive emotions associated with, contributing to this savoring aspect. If the memory being recalled is with someone that enhances the communication experience, then the memory could be subject to increased savoring. What seems to have happened more so in the present study is that an intrinsic response-independent regulation process was used in which the person is labeling and appraising their emotions regardless of how the other person responds (Zaki & Williams, 2013). The person being recalled in the memory was not physically there; it was simply the participant recalling the memory on their own, so it may have been more difficult for successful regulation, specifically upregulation of positive emotions, to occur with just the memory of the communication.

In terms of engagement in savoring being a successful tool for increasing positive emotions, the results of the present study also did not match with a study completed by Gadeikis and colleagues (2017) in which participants using an experiential processing mode in a memory

recall. Experiential processing mode is similar to savoring in that a person attends to and becomes fully aware of the perceptual experience, in this case the memory. Participants had an increase in happy emotions when they engaged in experiential processing mode. In essence, for the present study when participants were given the communication savoring prompts to use during memory recall there would have been an increase in positive emotions. For future purposes, to demonstrate the effects of savoring, two memory recall tasks could be performed. One in which participants would be asked to simply recall the memory, and then for the next memory they would be asked to use the prompts to promote savoring. Basically, participants would engage in memory recall for the first memory and then memory recall using communication savoring for the second condition.

Relationship Closeness

One similarity that was found between the present study and previous findings concerns the memory itself. Pitts (2018), the researcher that coined the term communication savoring reported that when participants were asked to savor a communication experience with another person, people chose a family member (35%) or romantic partner (22%) the most. In the present study, participants chose to recall a communication experience with a friend (37%), significant other (22%), or family member (20%). The relational context in which people recall communication experiences most often in is with a family member, significant other, or a friend.

In terms of closeness in a relationship, another study that is inconsistent with the results of the present study dealt with a reminiscence event, positive emotional experience, and perceived ability to enjoy life (Bryant et al., 2005). The ability to reminisce a past event was able to improve present emotions in participants with reports of higher levels of happiness after the task. The past event that students reminisced about the most included events in the context of a

positive relationship with either a family member, friend, or romantic partner. In the present study, participants only showed a slight trend in having more positive emotions when recalling a memory with someone they are in a close relationship with when measured on the PANAS. The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and Discrete Emotions Questionnaire (DEQ) did not successfully indicate that communication savoring or recalling a memory with someone close to the participant increased positive emotions. They have been used in other research on emotions, but not involving savoring. The PANAS has been used in studies concerning savoring, so perhaps in the future only this emotion measure would be useful.

In a previous study, the PANAS was used to indicate savoring resulted in greater positive emotions when participants reflected on a positive experience with the other person (Borelli et al., 2015). For the present study, only the PANAS was an adequate predictor of the possibility of a positive change in emotions, however the results were not significant. Participants that were instructed to recall a memory with someone they were close to and savor that memory had a greater increase in positive emotions, and a slight decrease in negative emotions after the memory recall. For those that did not savor, there was actually a decrease in positive emotions and an increase in negative emotions after the memory recall. Although there was no significant interaction between communication savoring and closeness in a relationship, there was something driving an increase in positive emotions after the memory recall was done, especially for people that engaged in savoring and recalled the memory with someone they were close to.

On the negative PANAS score, participants given savoring prompts and recalling a memory involving a person they were not close to actually had a slightly higher mean of negative emotions than those not given savoring prompts. This contradicts the previous research and the hypothesis since it was thought positive emotions would increase after memory recall,

not negative emotions. On the positive DEQ score, there was close to a significant effect such that participants in the not close relationship condition given savoring prompts had greater positive scores than those not given savoring prompts. This trend only appeared for people in the not close relationship condition, even though the interaction hypothesized was concerned with people recalling a memory with someone they are close to.

Memory Characteristics

Relationship satisfaction, in the present study, was a theme that was included to see if it had any influence on communication savoring or relationship closeness. There was a significant effect of closeness in a relationship and communication savoring, but no interaction. Overall, relationship satisfaction was greater when participants recalled a memory with someone they were close to rather than someone they were not. In addition, relationship satisfaction was slightly greater when participants were not given savoring prompts compared to when they were given savoring prompts. In the study by Borelli and colleagues (2015), savoring had more of an effect on positive emotions when relationship satisfaction was high. In the present study, relationship satisfaction was quite different across groups. People that recalled a memory with someone they were close to reported much higher scores of relationship satisfaction than those that recalled a memory with someone they were not close to. With this in mind, relationship satisfaction may be an important factor along with feeling close to the person one is recalling a communication experience with. Being satisfied in the relationship with the person could also be more important than the actual savoring of the memory. Samios and Khatri (2019) also had positive emotions being a mediator in relationship satisfaction such that savoring affected relationship satisfaction through positive emotions.

Another theme that was analyzed was the valence of the memory. In previous research a positive event or memory is more prevalent and successful in increasing positive emotions than a negative event or memory (Gable et al., 2004; Bryant et al., 2005; Jose et al., 2012; Borelli et al., 2015). In the present study closeness in a relationship was significant such that whether or not participants were given savoring prompts, those recalling a memory with someone they were close to had a more positive memory than those who recalled a memory with someone they were not close to. A positive memory could be more useful in increasing positive emotions than a neutral or negative memory. For future studies, it would be worth looking at how to make it be a positive event that participants engage with rather than simply their choice.

Limitations

In the present study, overall participants did show a trend on some of the emotion measures such as the PANAS and SHS towards having more positive emotions after savoring a memory with someone they were close to, however the results were not consistent and translated the same across the DEQ. This may also be a limitation to the present study, in that the five emotions scores used to measure change in emotions are inconsistent with each other. Individually the emotion measures can stand on their own and have been successful in previous research (Borelli et al., 2015; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). However, the scores have never been used simultaneously to measure emotions in a study. The thought process was to have as many reputable emotion measures as possible without overwhelming participants. Perhaps participants were too taxed after rating their emotions multiple times and it affected their ability to savor or reminisce properly.

Another aspect of the emotion measures that could have limited the results of the study was that the DEQ and PANAS both have negative emotion components while the SHS only has

one question that concerns negative emotions. The main focus was on increasing positive emotions after the memory recall, so using emotion measures only pertaining to positive emotion questions could have influenced the results of participants' emotions. In addition, the PANAS and DEQ are relatively long questionnaires consisting of 20 or more questions, while the SHS is limited to four questions. The positive emotions participants experienced after the manipulation may have been negated by the lengthy questionnaires. In addition, it could have been better for participants to only fill out similar questionnaires. The PANAS and DEQ were ratings on emotion words while the SHS was actual questions. Perhaps the differing formats of the questionnaires played a role in participants being too mentally taxed to regulate their emotions using savoring and memory recall.

A final limitation to the present study could be concerning the method of memory recall. Participants were asked to sit in a room by themselves and recall a memory with prompts to savor or not and instructions to remember someone they are close to or familiar with. In a previous study by Gable and colleagues (2004) instead of having participants simply sit with their positive event by themselves, they capitalized on the event to someone else. Perhaps involving someone else and telling the memory out loud to someone would result in more of a change in emotions. Capitalization could be an interpersonal regulation strategy that is more beneficial than sitting and savoring the event by oneself. On the other hand communication savoring may be more successful when the other person is present or when the experience can be shared with someone else. Instead of people recalling a communication experience and savoring it to regulate their emotions, it might be that they need another person present during the savoring regardless of whether or not that person assists in emotion regulation. The mode of having participants sitting and thinking about the memory could be insufficient in evoking a

strong change in emotions; perhaps voicing the memory out loud in recording rather than writing it down would enhance positive emotions more.

Future Directions and Conclusion

To continue the research presented in the current study, using a different combination of questionnaires or fewer questionnaires to measure emotion would be beneficial. Participants may feel less taxed filling out one emotion questionnaire at a time rather than three. Using just one emotion measure at a time may also be beneficial to see if the results are consistent across the various emotion measures. Having participants fill out one emotion questionnaire before memory recall and savoring may also be a way for future researchers to establish which emotion measures are most useful and relevant for research pertaining to savoring in relationships.

Another way to pursue further research on communication savoring and closeness in a relationship would be to change the setting in which memory recall takes place. As stated earlier, if participants had the option to verbalize rather than write down their memory, the positive emotions associated with savoring and the person in the memory may become more significant. Giving participants the option to talk out loud or write down their memory may contribute to a more realistic savoring experience with another person. The context of the memory recall could also be manipulated further to have someone else in the room with the participant as they recall the memory in writing or out loud. The researchers could look at the presence of another person and whether that contributes to participants savoring and recalling communication experiences.

Recalling a memory with someone we are close with and really appreciating and engaging with the memory can be a possible mechanism for upregulating positive emotions. If life is becoming too stressful or taxing, taking a break for a simple, mindful memory recall may be the best mode of regulating emotions. Recalling and savoring a past experience could enter

the realm of social emotion regulation as a useful tool for people to use when they need to experience more positive emotions, and less negative emotions.

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Appendix A**Research Participant Consent Form**

The impact of memory recall on emotions

Jacelyn Alberts

Allegheny College Departments of Neuroscience & Psychology

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of memory recall on emotions. The results of this research could help psychologists understand how memory recall can affect emotions in everyday social situations.

Procedure:

I understand that I will be asked to respond to questions regarding present emotions. I understand I will then be asked to participate in a memory task in which I recall a memory. I will also be asked to provide demographic information and respond to additional questions regarding emotions after the task is complete. All information I provide is confidential. I understand the study may take between 30-40 minutes.

Risks to the Participant:

I understand there will be no risk other than what is experienced in everyday life.

Compensation:

I understand I may receive 2 SONA credits for the class of my choosing upon completion of the study.

Confidentiality:

I understand all information provided will be kept confidential and never associated with my name. My data will be assigned and labeled with a random number and stored in a locked room. I understand only the primary researcher and faculty advisor will have access to my data. I understand the researcher is not focused on individual data scores and the final results will be depicted in general trends and terms.

Nature of Participation:

I understand that I do NOT have to participate in this experiment. Furthermore, once the experiment has begun, I may choose to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty. I understand that I may skip any questions that I do not wish to answer, and I may choose not to participate in any part of the study without being questioned.

Contact Information:

If I have any questions about this research project, I can contact Jacelyn Alberts at albertsj@allegheny.edu or Dr. Aimee Knupsky at aknupsky@allegheny.edu. If I have questions or concerns about the treatment of research participants I can contact Professor Rich Bowden, Chair of the Allegheny College Institutional Review Board at (814) 332-2869 or rbowden@allegheny.edu.

By responding “yes” below, I am indicating that I have received, carefully read and understood the informed consent, and verify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Yes

No

Please sign your name _____

Appendix B

Research Participant Debriefing Form

The impact of communication savoring on emotions dependent on closeness in a relationship

Jacelyn Alberts

Allegheny College Departments of Neuroscience & Psychology

Purpose of Research:

The purpose of this study was to determine if people experience more positive emotions during recall of a memory via a communication savoring technique depending on the closeness of the relationship. Specifically the study was interested in whether the closeness in the relational context of the memory (close or familiar) and communication savoring (present or absent) affected the degree of positive emotions experienced. Social emotion regulation is a construct in which people attempt to change their current emotions via another person. This study was interested in whether communication savoring could act as an emotion regulation strategy. Communication savoring is the process of mindfully paying attention to a meaningful social interaction either in the present, past or future (for this study past memories), and enhancing the positive feelings associated with the experience. This study was also interested in if participants using communication savoring experienced increased positive emotions after memory recall with a person they were close to. I hypothesized that in general engaging in recall of a memory involving a close relationship with a person would result in a greater increase of positive emotion. Additionally, I hypothesized people that engage in communication savoring would have a greater increase in positive emotions compared to simple memory recall without utilization of communication savoring. I expect that overall people engaging in communication savoring that recall a memory with a person they are in a close relationship with will experience the greatest increase in positive emotions.

Compensation: I understand that I may receive 2 SONA credits for the class of my choosing upon completion of the study.

Confidentiality: I understand all information provided will be kept confidential and never associated with my name. My data will be assigned and labeled with a random number and stored in a locked room. I understand only with primary researcher and faculty advisor will have access to my data. I understand the researcher is not focused on individual data scores and the final results will be depicted in general trends and terms.

Contact Information:

If you have questions, concerns, or would like to receive information about the results of this study, please feel free to contact Jacelyn Alberts at albertsj@allegheny.edu or Dr. Aimee Knupsky at aknupsky@allegheny.edu. For questions about the treatment of participants, please contact Professor Rich Bowden, Chair of the Allegheny College Institutional Review Board at (814) 332-2869 or rbowden@allegheny.edu.

If you would like to learn more about the topics in this research study please use the following links below:

Social Emotion Regulation

Cheung, E.O., Gardner, W.L., & Anderson, J.F. (2015). Emotionships: Examining people's emotion-regulation relationships and their consequences for well-being. *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, 6(4), 407-414.

Communication Savoring

Pitts, M.J. (2018). The language and social psychology of savoring: advancing the communication savoring model. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 38(2), 237-259.

Increasing Positive Emotions

Gadeikis D., Bos, N., Schweizer, S., Murphy, F., & Dunn, B. (2017). Engaging in experiential processing mode increases positive emotional response during recall of pleasant autobiographical memories. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 92, 68-76.

Appendix C**Positive Affect, Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)**

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel the following emotions at the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1 very slightly or not at all	2 a little	3 moderately	4 quite a bit	5 extremely
	_____	interested	_____	irritable
	_____	distressed	_____	alert
	_____	excited	_____	ashamed
	_____	upset	_____	inspired
	_____	strong	_____	nervous
	_____	guilty	_____	determined
	_____	scared	_____	attentive
	_____	hostile	_____	jittery
	_____	enthusiastic	_____	active
	_____	proud	_____	afraid

Appendix D
Subjective Happiness Scale

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you at the present moment.

1. In general, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not a very happy person				a very happy person		

2. Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
less happy				more happy		

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all				a great deal		

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all				a great deal		

Appendix E

Discrete Emotions Questionnaire

Please indicate your response using the scale provided. While engaging in memory recall and describing it, to what extent did you experience these emotions?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much	An extreme amount
	Anger _____			Scared _____		
	Wanting _____			Mad _____		
	Dread _____			Satisfaction _____		
	Sad _____			Sickened _____		
	Easygoing _____			Empty _____		
	Grossed out _____			Craving _____		
	Happy _____			Panic _____		
	Terror _____			Longing _____		
	Rage _____			Calm _____		
	Grief _____			Fear _____		
	Nausea _____			Relaxation _____		
	Anxiety _____			Revulsion _____		
	Chilled out _____			Worry _____		
	Desire _____			Enjoyment _____		
	Nervous _____			Pissed off _____		
	Lonely _____			Liking _____		

Appendix F
Prompts for Communication Savoring Condition

Prompt:

Using as much detail as possible, describe what happened.

What time of day did the moment occur?

What were you wearing? What was the other person wearing?

How did you feel at the time?

What thoughts did you have at the time? About the person? About your relationship?

What thoughts are you having now about the other person and about your relationship?

Appendix G
Post-Test Questionnaire

Please answer the questions below using the scales provided. Please answer honestly and to the best of your ability.

1. Age: _____

2. Sex: Male_____ Female _____ Gender NonBinary _____ Prefer not to say _____

3. Major/Minor:

4. How would you describe the relationship of you and the person in the memory?

- _____ Parent or Guardian
- _____ Sibling
- _____ Other family member
- _____ Friend
- _____ Significant other (e.g., girlfriend, boyfriend, fiancé)
- _____ Class mate
- _____ Acquaintance
- _____ Other, please specify:

5. How long have you known the person in the memory?

- _____ < 3 months
- _____ 3-6 months
- _____ 6-9 months
- _____ 9-12 months
- _____ 1 to 5 years
- _____ > 5 years

6. Briefly indicate why you chose this person for your memory.

7. How close are you to the person from the memory that you recalled?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not close						Extremely close

8. How satisfied are you in the relationship with the person from the memory you recalled?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Not satisfied

Extremely satisfied

9. To what extent was the memory you recalled positive or negative?

1	2	3	4	5
Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat positive	Positive

10. How vivid was the recall of your memory?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all vivid	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very vivid	Extremely vivid

11. To what extent did the statements below describe your feelings during the memory recall?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			neutral			strongly agree

Enjoyed looking back on happy times _____

Did not like to look back during memory recall _____

Felt good by remembering the past _____

Felt disappointed by remembering the past _____

Like to store memories for later recall _____

Reminiscing was a waste of time _____

Best not to recall past fun times _____

Like to rekindle joy from happy memories _____