

JOINT RELATIONAL SAVORING: CORRELATES AND PROTECTIVE EFFECTS AMONG  
INDIVIDUALS IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

BY

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THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

Savoring is a process that involves focusing attention on sources of pleasure that one experiences. Prior research has primarily investigated savoring as an *individual* cognitive-behavioral process. The current study adds to our understanding of savoring by testing the measurement and distinct benefits of savoring as a *mutual* process with one's romantic partner. Among a nationwide sample of 589 individuals, results from confirmatory factor analyses suggest the superiority of a one-factor model of a joint relational savoring scale that subsequently demonstrated strong validity and reliability. Multiple regression models reveal that higher levels of joint relational savoring were positively associated with indicators of relationship well-being and quality of life while controlling for multiple individual and demographic factors. Some evidence was also found for the protective effects of joint relational savoring from perceived stress for a subset of relationship and individual outcomes. Study findings contribute toward relationship maintenance scholarship and practitioners working with couples.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Methods .....	16
Chapter 3: Results .....	23
Chapter 4: Discussion .....	27
Chapter 5: Figures and Tables .....	33
References .....	40

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Savoring is a process that involves focusing attention on sources of pleasure that one experiences (Bryant, 2021). Individual savoring can be focused on past, current, or future experiences and is linked to indicators of better individual well-being (e.g., general health, mood, lower stress; see Antoine et al., 2020; Bryant, 2021; Lenger & Gordon, 2019) and couple well-being (e.g., relationship satisfaction, communication, dyadic adjustment). Research has also found that individual savoring can protect an individual's mood and relationship satisfaction from stressors such as experiencing stress, poor health, and stressful life events (e.g., Ford et al., 2017; Samios & Khatri, 2019; Smith & Bryant, 2016)

To date, research on savoring has primarily focused on an individual's savoring of life events in general (Bryant, 2021) and, to a lesser extent, savoring with respect to a specific interpersonal relationship (Borelli, Smiley, et al., 2020). This latter form (i.e., individual relational savoring) refers to when a person's attention is focused on relational experiences that occur with another individual with whom one shares a close bond (Borelli, Smiley, et al., 2020), such as a romantic partner. Engaging in a relational savoring task has been found to be associated with heightened positive emotion, relationship satisfaction, relationship confidence, and lower emotional reactivity compared to the general savoring task (Borelli, Bond, et al., 2020; Borelli et al., 2014, 2015).

Although important correlates and protective effects have been identified for general savoring and individual relational savoring, research on savoring has largely focused on savoring as an individual process. However, research highlighting the benefits of disclosing positive experiences to another person (e.g., Gable et al., 2004), partners expressing and perceiving gratitude with each other (Gordon et al., 2012; Wood et al., 2010), and interpersonal mindfulness

(Dekeyser et al., 2008; Kozlowski, 2013) suggests that scholars may benefit from conceptualizing and testing a type of mutual savoring process, which could be distinguished from general savoring and which may have unique benefits for individuals and couples. The current study addresses these possibilities and builds on previous literature by conceptualizing *joint relational savoring* as an interactive process that occurs between two individuals and focuses on shared positive experiences. To better understand the construct of joint relational savoring, the current study investigates (a) the psychometric properties of a newly developed measure assessing joint relational savoring, (b) the unique association of joint relational savoring with couple and individual well-being outcomes while controlling for general savoring, and (c) joint relational savoring as a moderator that buffers the negative effects of perceived stress on couple and individual outcomes.

## **Conceptualization**

### **General Savoring**

The capacity to savor has been defined as an individual's ability "to attend to, appreciate, and enhance the positive experiences in one's life" (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, p. xi). The process through which a person exercises this ability given a positive experience is called savoring (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Savoring is a cognitive-behavioral process through which positive emotions are derived from positive experiences (Bryant, 2021). Savoring is distinct from the direct experience of positive emotions (Smith et al., 2014). Rather, savoring represents an awareness and appreciation of one's positive emotional experience (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Three foundational concepts of savoring have been defined in the literature: (a) savoring as a meta-awareness of positive feelings, (b) savoring as the management and regulation of positive

experience, and (c) savoring consisting of multiple time orientations toward positive experience (Bryant, 2021). These three domains are briefly outlined in the subsequent paragraphs.

### ***Meta-Awareness of Positive Experience***

Savoring requires focusing attention on one's subjective experience, such that one's perceiving self attends to, yet is set apart from, the immediate pleasurable experience (Bryant & Smith, 2015; Bryant & Veroff, 2007). In this way, savoring entails consciousness of personal experience, referred to as second-order consciousness or "introspective awareness and appreciation of one's emotions" (Lambie & Marcel, 2002, p. 219). Even if the positive experience itself is external or shared with others, savoring nevertheless entails a cognitive process of introspection (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). In focusing attention, savoring involves mindfulness of one's experience, and this mindfulness involves an openness to new ways of perceiving and appraising the experience (Bryant & Smith, 2015; Langer, 1989).

### ***Management and Regulation of Positive Experience***

Savoring involves not only an awareness of a positive event (i.e., second-order consciousness, mindfulness) but also the regulation of one's experience. Regulating one's positive experience can involve various possible savoring strategies (Quoidbach et al., 2010). One such strategy is greater amplifying (e.g., fostering, maintaining, or growing) of positive feelings, which is linked to greater well-being and happiness (Bryant, 1989; Kurtz, 2018). Cross-cultural studies have found that savoring efforts may also involve greater dampening (e.g., see Quoidbach et al., 2010) of positive feelings. Dampening involves lessening one's pleasurable feelings to protect oneself from future disappointment (Norem & Cantor, 1986), and dampening is negatively associated with happiness (Jose et al., 2012), enjoyment in the present (Quoidbach et al., 2010), and self-worth (Feldman et al., 2008; Raes et al., 2012; Wood et al., 2003). The

specific management strategies that are used in savoring (i.e., amplifying versus dampening) depend on individual and cultural factors (Kurtz, 2018; Smith et al., 2019). For example, dampening was found to be more common in East Asia compared to North America (Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Kim & Bryant, 2017) as well as among individuals with lower life satisfaction and psychological well-being compared to those with higher levels (Gross & John, 2003; Polman, 2010).

### ***Temporal Dimension***

The experience that a person savors may have occurred in the past (retrospective savoring), be ongoing in the present (concurrent savoring), or be expected or planned for (prospective savoring) (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Research has found that correlates of savoring may differ based on the timing of the experience that one savors (i.e., retrospective, concurrent, prospective) (e.g., Jose et al., 2012).

### **Individual Relational Savoring**

As described previously, savoring refers to focusing on one's own experience (which may involve other person(s) or not). However, researchers have specified a type of savoring specific to interpersonal experiences: relational savoring (e.g., Borelli, Smiley, et al., 2020). Individuals often prefer to savor experiences that involve another person rather than situations, events, or places (Bryant et al., 2005). Relational savoring is "savoring an experience that occurs in physical and temporal conjunction with another person with whom one is emotionally close" (Borelli et al., 2015, p. 1085). Like general savoring, relational savoring involves the core processes of a meta-awareness and the regulation of a positive experience; however, it differs in that its content is a shared experience with an attachment figure (i.e., a person that one turns to for support and comfort; Bowlby, 1973) rather than any possible positive experiences (Borelli,

Smiley, et al., 2020). The process of relational savoring involves, as an individual, activating secure and positive representations of another person to provide a sense of security, closeness, or love (Borelli et al., 2014; Borelli, Smiley, et al., 2020).

### **Joint Relational Savoring**

To date, savoring has largely been studied as a cognitive-behavioral process operating in an individual (see Bryant, 2021), even when the content of the savored experience involves an intimate emotional relationship with another person (i.e., relational savoring; see Borelli et al., 2014). However, the process of savoring (i.e., attending to, appreciating, and enhancing positive experiences) may occur when two individuals mutually interact *together* to savor a shared positive event simultaneously. Given the context of interpersonal interaction between the two individuals, savoring, in this case, may involve individual processes (e.g., cognitions, emotions, behaviors) as well as mutual processes. These mutual processes could involve, for example, joint actions (e.g., looking through an old photo album together), communication (e.g., discussing aspects of a beautiful sunset while outside), or emotional sharing (e.g., laughing together following a humorous event). Given its distinct *mutual* aspect compared to general and individual relational savoring, joint savoring may confer unique benefits beyond individual savoring, even if that savoring is with respect to one's romantic relationship. Consistent with this line of thinking, previous research has identified individual and relationship benefits from communicating with others about positive events that one experiences (Gable et al., 2004; Langston, 1994; Quoidbach et al., 2010).

As conceptualized, joint relational savoring would include foundational elements of general savoring (e.g., meta-awareness, regulation of positive experience, multiple temporal dimensions) and individual relational savoring (i.e., savoring an experience that was shared with

an attachment figure) (see Borelli, Smiley, et al., 2020; Bryant, 2021). These elements of savoring, as conceptualized in previous literature, align with, and may be further elaborated, through the shared processes that joint relational savoring would involve. Joint relational savoring (in contrast to general savoring or individual relational savoring) would uniquely involve two individuals savoring a shared event, and this form of savoring would occur through mutual processes. Previous research on constructs related to savoring that support well-being, such as gratitude (Wood et al., 2010) and mindfulness (Dekeyser et al., 2008; Pratscher et al., 2018), have conceptualized gratitude and mindfulness as both intrapersonal and interpersonal processes. Given the conceptualization of both intra- and interpersonal gratitude and mindfulness, as well as evidence of their importance for individual (Keng et al., 2011; Wood et al., 2010) and relationship (Gordon et al., 2012; Kozlowski, 2013) well-being, the present study examines perceptions of joint savoring, specifically in the context of a person's romantic relationship.

### **Theoretical Integration**

Joint relational savoring involves a mutual process of attending to and appreciating shared positive experiences, including those in the past, present, or future. Research on individual relational savoring (see Borelli, Smiley, et al., 2020) raises the possibility that joint relational savoring can occur with a variety of individuals with whom one shares positive, meaningful experiences (e.g., romantic partners, close friends, family members). The present study focuses on romantic relationships as an exemplar because a romantic relationship often represents one of the most meaningful relationships in an individual's life as well as an attachment bond (Shaver & Hazan, 1987). Romantic relationships, at least at some point in their duration, often involve shared positive experiences, even if individuals are not always together

physically (e.g., long distance relationships, military deployment). Because joint relational savoring may occur largely in the context of romantic relationships and can potentially confer benefits for couples, joint relational savoring can be theorized as a relationship maintenance strategy.

### **Relationship Maintenance**

Relationship maintenance is defined as “A broad array of activities that partners use to preserve their romantic partnerships” (Ogolsky et al., 2017, p. 275). As theorized by Ogolsky et al. (2017) in the Integrative Model of Relationship Maintenance, relationship maintenance involves two types of motives: threat mitigation (i.e., resisting forces that may comprise relationship outcomes) and relationship enhancement (i.e., promoting relationship well-being separate from efforts to resist threats). Each of the two types of relationship maintenance, namely threat mitigation and relationship enhancement, involves both individual and interactive maintenance strategies (Ogolsky et al., 2017).

Different types of savoring can be situated within the Integrative Model of Relationship Maintenance. General savoring is not necessarily focused on a person’s romantic relationship, although it may be by happenstance (Bryant, 2021). However, *individual* relational savoring (i.e., an individual attending to positive relationship experiences) may be positioned within the framework as an individual relationship enhancement process, given that it occurs within an individual yet confers benefits for their relationship (Borelli et al., 2014, 2015; Borelli, Smiley, et al., 2020). On the other hand, *joint* relational savoring (i.e., two individuals attending to positive relationship experiences together) could be situated in the framework as an interactive relationship maintenance strategy, given that joint savoring involves mutual processes that capitalize on shared positive experiences. To the extent that joint relational savoring involves

communication (verbal or non-verbal), it may be closely aligned with a specific category of interactive relationship maintenance, namely communicative relationship maintenance strategies (see Ogolsky et al., 2017).

Communicative relationship maintenance strategies have been theorized and measured as consisting of five tactics, including assurances, openness, positivity, social networks, and sharing tasks (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Multiple of these factors (e.g., positivity, openness, assurance) may occur in joint relational savoring. Joint savoring may involve positivity (i.e., gracious action toward one's partner and positive interaction) insofar as the process is oriented toward appreciating shared pleasurable experiences. Openness (i.e., disclosure related to the relationship) may be a feature of joint savoring, given that joint savoring involves talking about relationship-specific experiences and contributing to a positive framing of the relationship. Assurances (i.e., convincing one's partner that the relationship has a future and affirming commitment and support) may also be a part of joint savoring. For example, looking forward to future positive events may provide a sense of a shared future. Savoring present and past events together may highlight for the couple the ways in which their relationship has developed and its enduring importance. Thus, joint relational savoring may be seen as an interactive relationship maintenance strategy that affords the use of multiple communicative maintenance strategies, suggesting its potential co-occurrence with couple well-being.

With this theoretical orientation established, extant literature on correlates of general savoring and individual relational savoring are subsequently discussed to elucidate potential couple (and individual) correlates of joint relational savoring.

## **Correlates of Savoring for Individual and Couple Well-Being**

### **General Savoring**

Researchers have identified various correlates of general savoring, including in the areas of family and couple relationships as well as individual well-being. For instance, general savoring has been found to be positively associated with family functioning and life satisfaction as well as negatively associated with depressive symptoms (Cheung et al., 2019). For the couple relationship in particular, prior studies have found general savoring to be positively correlated with relationship satisfaction among individuals in dating relationships (Lenger & Gordon, 2019) as well as among married or dating couples that had experienced a recent stressful life event (Samios & Khatri, 2019). In addition to relationship satisfaction, general savoring has been linked to other aspects of well-being. For example, in a randomized control trial, participants who received a savoring intervention showed greater increases in dyadic adjustment, couple communication, and positive emotions compared to the waitlist control group (Antoine et al., 2020).

Studies have also noted the unique effects of different temporal dimensions of savoring. With respect to couple outcomes, each temporal dimension (retrospective, concurrent, prospective) was correlated with relationship satisfaction (Lenger & Gordon, 2019; Samios & Khatri, 2019). In particular, prospective savoring was associated with relationship satisfaction, even when controlling for the effects of concurrent and retrospective savoring (Lenger & Gordon, 2019). Other research has found concurrent savoring (but not prospective or retrospective savoring) to be positively associated with relationship satisfaction cross-sectionally (Samios & Khatri, 2019) as well as the individual outcome of better perceived health 2.5 years later (Geiger et al., 2017). Taken as a whole, previous findings on correlates of general savoring

have demonstrated its association with family and couple functioning, relationship satisfaction, and communication as well as positive emotion and general health, with some differences apparent based on the temporal dimension of savoring.

### **Individual Relational Savoring**

The primary findings to date for individual relational savoring appear from a series of studies by Borelli and colleagues (Borelli, Bond, et al., 2020; Borelli et al., 2014, 2015). Results indicated that compared to engaging in a general savoring task, engaging in an individual relational savoring task yielded increased relationship confidence among military personnel (Borelli et al., 2014), greater well-being among individuals in long-distance relationships (Borelli et al., 2015), and lower heart rates, which may be an indicator of lower emotional reactivity, among older adults (Borelli, Bond, et al., 2020). Thus, engaging in individual relational savoring – at least when experimentally induced – may coincide with higher levels of relationship confidence and emotional well-being.

### **Joint Relational Savoring**

The present study examines whether associations with areas of couple and individual well-being exist for joint relational savoring, a construct little to no studies to date have considered. To date, correlates of joint savoring remain relatively unexplored, offering few, if any, findings. Nevertheless, previous research has highlighted the benefits of telling others about positive events from one's life (Gable et al., 2004), and when such events have been experienced with the other individual, such communication is an example of joint relational savoring. Research on discussing positive events with another individual has highlighted its favorable associations with individual outcomes, including positive emotion and life satisfaction (for review, see Gable & Reis, 2010). One study, however, distinguished between the effects of

talking about a positive event and general savoring found that when general savoring was controlled for, talking about a positive event did not have a unique effect on one's positive emotion (Quoidbach et al., 2010).

In the context of couple well-being, when telling a romantic partner about a positive event, individuals tended to experience greater relationship quality and intimacy (Gable et al., 2004). In the aforementioned studies, positive experiences that were discussed had not necessarily occurred in the context of the immediate relationship. The present study, on the other hand, focuses on attending to mutual positive experiences (whether they are discussed or not) with the same person with whom they occurred.

### **Protective Effects of Savoring**

#### **General Savoring**

In addition to examining correlates of different types of savoring processes for couples and individuals, prior research has also examined general savoring as a protective factor for a variety of stressors. For example, one study found that the negative association between the impact of a stressful life event on a person and their relationship satisfaction was moderated by their partner's level of savoring in the moment. Specifically, at low levels of savoring (but not high), reporting a heightened impact of the stressful event predicted lower relationship satisfaction (Samios & Khatri, 2019). With respect to the effects of a stressful work event, concurrent savoring (i.e., savoring in the moment) buffered the link between a stressful work event and increased depression and anxiety (Samios et al., 2023). In prior research examining the effects of another type of stressor, namely minority stress, savoring was found to buffer the positive association between minority stress and alcohol misuse, such that minority stress was

unrelated to alcohol misuse at high levels of savoring (Simpson et al., 2023). Thus, general savoring appears to be protective from a variety of stressors an individual may experience.

In addition to its protective effects from stress, general savoring has also been examined as protective from poor physical health and negative life events. From data collected on the effects of perceived physical health, general savoring moderated the relationship between physical health and life satisfaction. For those with low savoring ability, poorer health was associated with lower life satisfaction. However, individuals with higher levels of savoring reported high life satisfaction, irrespective of their health (Smith & Bryant, 2016). In another study focusing on the impact of negative life events, high levels of savoring (but not medium or low) buffered the current association between negative life events and depression (Ford et al., 2017). Taken collectively, studies examining general savoring as a protective factor have found that general savoring may provide protective effects for mood and relationship satisfaction from the negative associations stemming from experiencing stress, poor health, or negative life events.

### **Joint Relational Savoring**

Currently, little is known regarding the potential protective effects of joint relational savoring for couple and individual outcomes. However, support for the potential of joint savoring to elicit such protective effects is evident from findings of other relationship-enhancing strategies. For instance, having higher levels of positive affect (i.e., humor, affection) has been found to attenuate the negative association between high levels of negative relationship skills and marital satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2005). Similarly, higher levels of perceived gratitude from one's partner has been found to mitigate the negative effects of financial strain on relationship outcomes (Barton et al., 2022).

## Measurement of Savoring

Various measurements of general savoring have been used previously (for review, see Bryant, 2021). One of the most widely used measures is the Savoring Beliefs Inventory (SBI; Bryant, 2003), which is a 24-item Likert-type scale that assesses one's capacity to attend to positive experiences. An example item includes, "I know how to make the most of a good time". The SBI presumes that one's capacity to savor reflects one's actual savoring (Bryant, 2021). The SBI has been supported by studies as reliable and valid (Smith & Bryant, 2017). Examination of individual items of the SBI has supported the content validity of the scale (Kawakubo et al., 2019). In addition to its measurement strengths, the SBI aligns with previous conceptualization and research on general savoring. It captures multiple temporal aspects of savoring (retrospective, present, prospective) and provides a subscore for each temporal aspect. These subscales are important as specific temporal dimensions of general savoring have been associated with different outcomes (e.g., see Lenger & Gordon, 2019; Samios & Khatri, 2019). The SBI also attends to other conceptual foundations of savoring, namely savoring as a meta-awareness and regulation of a positive experience (Bryant, 2021).

In contrast to general savoring, individual relational savoring has not been directly measured using a Likert-type scale (see Borelli, Bond, et al., 2020; Borelli et al., 2014). Instead, researchers have utilized an individual relational savoring task. In brief, the relational savoring task consists of an experimenter guiding the participant to focus on a positive, shared memory with one's romantic partner. During this time, the participant is guided by five prompts, including feelings during the memory, details of the memory, current or past thoughts about the memory, implications of the memory for the future, and an opportunity to savor a new or previously discussed facet of the memory. Although these studies benefited from an

experimental design, they did not test relational savoring as a mutual process between partners (versus an *individual* cognitive process) or measure it outside of laboratory contexts.

Because the purpose of the present study was to investigate joint relational savoring, a robust survey measure of savoring was sought that could be revised to capture mutual processes that are shared between two individuals (e.g., communication) and represent a defining feature of joint relational savoring but not general or individual relational savoring. Thus, for the present study, an adapted version of the SBI was utilized that could be applied in the context of joint experiences (see Measures for more information).

### **Present Study**

The present study examined three aims by collecting data from a nationwide sample of adults who were married, engaged, or in a committed romantic relationship. For the first aim, the study investigated the psychometric properties of the new joint relational savoring measure with respect to its factor structure, internal reliability, and validity. For the second aim, the present study investigated the unique predictive utility of joint relational savoring for indicators of relationship and individual well-being. The three couple outcomes considered in the current study (i.e., relationship satisfaction, communication conflict, relationship confidence) were chosen based on prior research demonstrating their associations with individual savoring or engaging in a relational savoring task. With respect to individual outcomes, the present study considered three outcomes (i.e., general health, psychological distress, quality of life) that have also been associated with general savoring or a relational savoring task in previous research. It was expected that, controlling for the effects of general savoring, higher levels of joint relational savoring would be favorably associated with both couple outcomes (i.e., higher relationship satisfaction, higher relationship confidence, lower communication conflict (Hypothesis 1) and

individual outcomes (i.e., higher general health, higher quality of life, lower psychological distress (Hypothesis 2). As a third aim, the study investigated the moderating role of joint savoring. Consistent with prior research demonstrating the protective effects of general savoring, the buffering effects of joint relational savoring from the deleterious effects of perceived stress were examined for the six couple and individual outcomes in the current study. If a significant moderation effect was observed, it was hypothesized that at low levels of joint relational savoring, increased perceived stress would be unfavorably associated with the outcome of interest (i.e., lower relationship satisfaction, lower relationship confidence, higher communication conflict, lower general health, lower quality of life, and higher psychological distress). Conversely, at high levels of joint relational savoring, it was hypothesized that the unfavorable association between perceived stress and the outcome under investigation would be attenuated, such that better outcomes (e.g., higher relationship satisfaction, lower psychological distress) would be observed under conditions of high relational savoring compared to low relational savoring even among individuals reporting higher levels of perceived stress (Hypothesis 3).

## **CHAPTER 2: METHODS**

### **Participants**

The sample for the present study was comprised of a nationwide sample of 589 adults (51.6% female). The mean age of participants was 39.2 (range: 25-68; *SD* = 6.79). Median educational attainment was a bachelor's degree. With respect to relationship status, 85.4% were married, 10.6% dating, and 4.0% engaged. More than three-quarters (85.1%) of the sample identified as White, 8.6% as Black or African American or Caribbean American, 6.2% as Hispanic or Latino, 5.9% as Asian, 1.5% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.3% as Middle Eastern or North African, 0.3% as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 0.5% indicated that their race or ethnicity was not listed. The median annual household income was \$85,000 to \$95,000. The lower 25% of the sample reported less than \$65,000, and the upper 25% reported more than \$105,000 for annual household income.

### **Procedure**

Individuals were recruited through the survey panel Prolific ([www.prolific.co](http://www.prolific.co))<sup>1,2</sup> to participate in a study examining resilience in families. Data were collected in September and October 2023. To be eligible, individuals were required to be age 18 or older; married, engaged, or in a committed romantic relationship; and parenting at least one child who was 4 to 17 years old at their initial wave of data collection.

Eligible individuals were sent a message from Prolific about the opportunity to participate in the present study. A link to the consent form was included in this message. After individuals consented, they were directed to the online survey. Participants were compensated \$10 for survey completion. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the

sponsoring institution (Protocol 23107; Title: Your Life: A study of resilience in families). Seven attention check questions were included in the survey to ensure data quality.

Based on funding availability, 610 individuals were recruited for data collection. Of these individuals, nine individuals were removed as they indicated no longer being in a relationship or separated from their partner. Seven individuals whose partner also already completed the survey were removed to avoid interdependence in the data. Submissions in which an individual failed more than two attention check questions were not accepted. Five entries were not accepted as they failed three attention checks.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the final sample size was 589 individuals.

## **Measures**

### **Dependent Variables: Couple Outcomes**

#### ***Relationship Satisfaction***

Individuals' relationship satisfaction was assessed using the four-item version of the Couple Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007). An example item includes, "How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?". Response options ranged from 0 = *Extremely unhappy* to 6 = *Perfect* (question 1), 0 = *Not at all true* to 5 = *Completely true* (question 2), and 0 = *Not at all* to 5 = *Completely* (questions 3 – 4). Items were summed with higher scores representing higher relationship satisfaction ( $\alpha = .97$ ).

#### ***Communication Conflict***

Experience of negative communication was assessed using seven items created for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Healthy Marriage Initiative (see Doss et al., 2020). Participants were asked to rate how frequently communication conflict occurred during the past month on a Likert-type scale. Response options ranged from *Never* (1) to *Often* (4). A sample item includes, "My partner/spouse blamed me for his/her problems". All items were

summed, with higher scores indicating greater communication conflict. Cronbach's alpha was = .93.

### ***Relationship Confidence***

Individuals' confidence in the future of their relationship was measured using four items from the Relationship Confidence Scale (Stanley et al., 1994). Each item was measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*. Sample items included, "I feel good about my and my partner's prospects to make this relationship work for a lifetime" and "My partner and I have the skills a couple needs to make a relationship last" ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

### **Dependent Variables: Individual Outcomes**

#### ***Psychological Distress***

Individuals' psychological distress was assessed using the 6-item Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (Kessler et al., 2002). This 5-point Likert-type scale asked individuals to report how often they experienced certain stress-related symptoms during the past 30 days. Items include "Nervous", "Hopeless", "Restless or fidgety", "So depressed that nothing could cheer you up", "That everything was an effort", and "Worthless" (1 = *None of the time* to 5 = *All of the time*). Items were summed such that higher scores indicated higher psychological distress ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

#### ***General Health Perceptions***

Perceived physical health was measured using the 4-item General Health Perceptions subscale of the SF-36 (Ware Jr. & Sherbourne, 1992). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from 1 = *Definitely true* to 5 = *Definitely false*. A sample item includes, "I expect my health to get worse". Two items were reverse coded and then

summed with the other items to create a composite score, with higher scores indicating better perceived health ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

### ***Quality of Life***

Participants' perceived quality of life was assessed using a single item from the Quality of Life-Brief (WHOQoL Group, 1998). Individuals were asked, "How would you rate your quality of life?" A Likert-type scale was used, ranging from 1 (*Very poor*) to 5 (*Very good*). Higher scores indicated greater perceived quality of life.

### **Independent Variables**

#### ***General Savoring***

An individual's general ability to savor positive experiences was measured using an abbreviated 9-item version of the Savoring Beliefs Inventory to ease participant burden (SBI Bryant, 2003). Items were selected from the original SBI such that three items (including one that was negatively worded) were used from each temporal scale. See Supplemental Table 1 for a full list of items included in the abbreviated scale. Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*) consistent with the full SBI measure. Three items were reversed coded and then summed with the other items to create a composite score. Higher scores indicated a greater capacity to savor in general ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Three-item subscales were also calculated for each temporal dimension of savoring, including prospective savoring (e.g., "Before a good thing happens, I look forward to it in ways that give me pleasure in the present"), concurrent savoring (e.g., "I know how to make the most of a good time"), and retrospective savoring (e.g., "I enjoy looking back on happy times from my past"). Internal reliability was adequate for each subscale, including for prospective ( $\alpha = .79$ ), concurrent ( $\alpha = .77$ ), and retrospective ( $\alpha = .81$ ) savoring.

### ***Joint Relational Savoring***

A romantic couple's capacity to collectively savor shared positive experiences from their relationship was measured using an adapted version of the 9-item Savoring Beliefs Inventory (SBI; Bryant, 2003). The wording of items was adjusted to align with joint relational savoring conceptualized as a dyadic and interactive process. See Supplemental Table 1 for a full list of items. Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*). Three items were reversed coded and then summed with the other items to create a composite score. Higher scores indicated a greater capacity to mutually savor shared experiences. Three-item subscales were also calculated for each temporal dimension of joint relational savoring, including prospective savoring (e.g., "Before a good thing happens between my partner and I, we look forward to it together in ways that provide us with pleasure in the present"), concurrent savoring (e.g., "My partner and I know how to make the most of a good time together"), and retrospective savoring (e.g., "My partner and I enjoy looking back on happy times from our relationship"). Reliability information for the final measure is reported in the Results section.

### ***Perceived Stress***

Perceived stress was measured using the 10-item Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen & Williamson, 1988). The 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Very often*. Participants were asked how often they experienced a list of feelings during the past month, such as "Been angered because of things that were outside of your control?", "Felt that you were on top of things?" (reverse scored), and "Found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do". Four items were reverse coded and then summed with other items to create a composite score, such that higher scores indicated higher perceived stress ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

### ***General Optimism***

An individual's dispositional optimism was measured using the 10-item Life Orientation Test (LOT; Scheier et al., 1994). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). A sample item includes, "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best". Consistent with prior research, three items were reverse coded and then summed with three other items to create a composite 6-item score, such that higher scores indicated greater general optimism ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

### **Plan of Analysis**

Analyses were conducted consistent with the three study aims of the study. To examine the psychometric properties of the new joint relational savoring measure (Aim 1), confirmatory factor analysis was used. A total of four competing measurement models were examined based on the model structure of the original SBI measure from which the current measures was developed. The four examined models were: (a) a one-factor model, (b) a three-factor model with three correlated factors representing three temporal dimensions (i.e., retrospective, concurrent, prospective), (c) a one-factor model with correlated residuals of the three negatively worded items, and (d) a three-factor model with three corrected factors representing each temporal dimensions along with correlated residuals of the three negatively-worded items (e.g., Bryant, 2003; Kawakubo et al., 2019). Given that the current measure of joint relational savoring only contained 9 items (versus 24 in the original SBI), some models were adjusted to be able to adequately estimate parameters (e.g., residual terms were correlated among negatively-worded items instead of adding an additional factor loaded by negatively-worded items). Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal reliability and bivariate correlates were examined for discriminant and convergent validity.

For the second set of analyses examining the association between joint relational savoring and individual and couple outcomes (Aim 2), linear regression models were used. A total of six multiple regression models were run, corresponding to each of the dependent variables. Joint relational savoring was included as the independent variable, and individual outcomes (i.e., general health, psychological distress, quality of life) and couple outcomes (i.e., relationship satisfaction, communication conflict, relationship confidence) were entered as dependent variables. General savoring, optimism, perceived stress, and various demographic factors (i.e., sex, income, relationship length, relationship status, and number of children) were entered as control variables.

The third set of analyses tested whether joint relational savoring moderated the associations between perceived stress and each of the six aforementioned couple and individual outcome variables (Aim 3). For moderation analysis, perceived stress and joint relational savoring were mean-centered to permit better interpretability of results (Dalal & Zickar, 2012). All control variables from regression models from Aim 2 were included in models for Aim 3. Interactions between perceived stress and joint relational savoring were computed within the same model for each of six outcome variables. Significant interactions were probed at 1 standard deviation above and below the mean of perceived stress and joint relational savoring. For Aim 1, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted using the packages lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) and haven (Wickham et al., 2023) in RStudio (R Core Team, 2023). For Aim 2, regression analyses were conducted using SPSS (IBM Corp, 2023). Missing data for all study variables (<0.3%) were handled with listwise deletion in SPSS.

## CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for study variables. In the current sample, levels of joint relational savoring ( $M = 50.00$ ,  $SD = 9.57$ , Range 10-63) and individual savoring ( $M = 49.49$ ,  $SD = 8.71$ , Range 10-63) were generally high, and perceived stress was relatively low ( $M = 14.46$ ,  $SD = 8.31$ , Range 0-38). Thus, on average, individuals endorsed savoring positive experiences generally, as well as experiences with their romantic partner.

#### Research Question 1: Psychometric Properties of Joint Relational Savoring Measure

As described in the Plan of Analysis, confirmatory factor analysis was used to test four potential measurement models of the joint relational savoring data: (A) a one-factor model, (B) a three-factor model with correlated factors representing three temporal dimensions, (C) a one-factor model with correlated residuals of the three negatively worded items, and (D) a three-factor model with correlated residuals of the three negatively-worded items. Chi-square difference tests were used to compare the goodness-of-fit of nested CFA models. As depicted in Table 2, among Models A-D, Model D (three factors, correlated residuals of the three negatively worded items) showed the best fit to the data. However, high correlations appeared in the model between the three factors (range: 0.77 – 0.84). These findings suggested that a three-factor solution may provide a better fit statistically, but conceptually and practically, a single-factor solution may be preferable. Thus, Model C (single factor, correlated residuals of negatively worded items) was reconsidered.

Fit indices showed Model C had an appropriate fit with respect to CFI and SRMR indices but not TLI and RMSEA indices (Table 2). To improve model fit, modification indices suggested correlating the residual terms of certain items that corresponded to the same temporal dimensions

(i.e., prospective, concurrent, or retrospective). A subsequent fifth model, Model E, was created that included correlations among the residual terms of these items (i.e., items two and five, four and eight, one and three, three and six) (see Figure 1). As shown in Table 2, Model E met the cutoff criteria for all fit indices ( $\chi^2(20) = 88.15, p < .001$ ; CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.02). Model E also had a superior fit with the data compared to Model C ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 92.75, \Delta df = 4, p < .001$ ) and the three-factor Model D ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 39.55, \Delta df = 1, p < .001$ ). All standardized factor loadings were above the acceptable level (see Figure 1). Thus, Model E was selected as the optimal model, and all original scale items were retained as indicators for a single, global joint relational savoring factor.

Having found evidence for a one-factor measurement model of joint relational savoring, additional psychometric properties of the nine-item scale (i.e., Joint Savoring Inventory [JSI]) were evaluated. Internal reliability of the JSI was adequate ( $\alpha = .92$ ). Examining bivariate correlations revealed that joint savoring and general savoring were moderately correlated ( $r = 0.63$ ), supporting the discriminant validity of the JSI with respect to the abbreviated SBI. In addition, joint relational savoring was positively correlated with couple satisfaction, relationship confidence, general health, quality of life, and optimism ( $.28 < r < .75$ ) as well as negatively correlated with communication conflict, psychological distress, and perceived stress ( $-.52 < r < -.41$ ) (Table 1), providing support for the convergent validity of the JSI. Given evidence for the internal reliability and validity of the scale, the unique predictive utility of joint relational savoring was assessed in subsequent analyses.

### **Research Question 2: Direct Effects of Joint Relational Savoring**

Multiple regression models tested the effects of joint relational savoring on couple relationship outcomes (Table 3) and individual relationship outcomes (Table 4). All models

controlled for general savoring, perceived stress, general optimism, and multiple demographic variables. Results indicated that, with respect to couple relationship outcomes, higher levels of joint relational savoring were associated with greater couple satisfaction ( $\beta = .75, p < .001$ ) and relationship confidence ( $\beta = .73, p < .001$ ) as well as less communication conflict ( $\beta = -.47, p < .001$ ). General savoring was also associated with each indicator of relationship well-being. Among other control variables included in regression models for couple outcomes, sex, years in the relationship, marital status, number of children, and perceived stress were significantly ( $p < .05$ ) associated with one or more couple outcome (see Table 3).

Concerning individual outcomes, higher levels of joint relational savoring were associated with greater quality of life ( $\beta = .17, p < .001$ ) but were not significantly associated with psychological distress ( $\beta = -.01, p = .693$ ) or general health perceptions ( $\beta = .01, p = .785$ ). General savoring was not significantly associated with any individual outcome. Results for other control variables indicated that income, marital status, number of children, perceived stress, and general optimism were significantly associated with one or more individual outcome (see Table 4). Overall, results confirmed hypothesized associations between joint relational savoring and all couple relationship outcomes (Hypothesis 1) but only partially confirmed hypothesized associations between joint relational savoring and individual outcomes (Hypothesis 2). Specifically, joint relational savoring was only significantly associated with one individual outcome, namely quality of life, after controlling for demographic and individual characteristics.

### **Research Question 3: Moderating Effects of Joint Relational Savoring**

With the main effects established, the final set of analyses tested the protective effects of joint relational savoring for study outcomes from the negative effects of perceived stress. Results from these models are summarized in Table 3 (for couple outcomes) and Table 4 (for individual

outcomes). For couple outcomes, one significant interaction effect was observed, which appeared with relationship confidence ( $\beta = .11, p < .001$ ). For individual outcomes, one significant interaction effect appeared, which occurred with respect to psychological distress ( $\beta = -.17, p < .001$ ).

To probe these two interactions, estimated levels of relationship confidence (Figure 2a) and psychological distress (Figure 2b) were plotted at low (1 *SD* below the mean) and high (1 *SD* above the mean) levels of joint relational savoring and perceived stress. As shown in Figure 2a, a significant negative association between perceived stress and relationship confidence appeared at low levels of joint relational savoring (simple slope =  $-.10, SE = .02, p < .001$ ); however, at high levels of joint relational savoring, this association was no longer significant (simple slope =  $-.02, SE = .02, p = .420$ ). As depicted in Figure 2b, perceived stress was positively associated with psychological distress at low and high levels of joint relational savoring, although this association was approximately 1.5 times the order of magnitude at low (simple slope =  $.53, SE = .03, p < .001$ ) compared to high (simple slope =  $.34, SE = .02, p < .001$ ) levels of joint relational savoring.

In sum, joint relational savoring moderated associations between perceived stress and two study outcomes, namely relationship confidence and psychological distress. Simple slope statistics indicated that the deleterious association between perceived stress and each of these outcomes that appeared among individuals who reported low joint relationship savoring was either smaller (for psychological distress) or completely eliminated (for relationship confidence) among individuals who reported high joint relational savoring. Thus, results provide partial support for Hypothesis 3.

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Relationship maintenance scholarship highlights various strategies that couples use to protect and enhance their relationships. Such strategies include frequently researched constructs such as partner support and conflict management as well as more newly emerging constructs such as perceived gratitude and joint goal pursuit (for review, see Ogolsky et al., 2017). The current study contributes to this scholarship by providing some of the first empirical findings on the measurement, predictive utility, and protective effects of joint relational savoring, a heretofore understudied maintenance strategy for romantic relationships.

### **Research Question 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Joint Relational Savoring**

The first aim of the current study investigated the psychometric properties of the JSI (Joint Savoring Inventory), a new measure of joint relational savoring. Four competing measurement models were tested based on prior research on general savoring (e.g., Bryant, 2003), with results indicating a model with a single global factor best described the joint relational savoring measure in the current study. This finding differs from previous research investigating general savoring at the intrapersonal level (using the SBI) that found the superior fit of a five-factor model (as opposed to a one-factor model), with factors corresponding to the three temporal dimensions (i.e., retrospective, concurrent, and prospective), a positive method factor (loaded by all positively worded items), and a negative method factor (loaded by all the negatively worded items) (Bryant, 2003; Kawakubo et al., 2019). These distinct findings raise the possibility that temporal dimensions may be less salient for processes of joint relational savoring compared to general savoring; however, this distinction may also be due to the different number of items in the JSI compared to the original SBI (9 versus 24 items).

After testing the construct validity of the scale, additional psychometric properties of the Joint Savoring Index were assessed. An adequate Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for the total score was observed, and correlations were in the expected directions with measures of individual and relationship well-being. Such findings for the JSI measure are also consistent with previous studies on general savoring that used the SBI (e.g., Kawakubo et al., 2019; Lenger & Gordon, 2019), and overall lend further support for the internal reliability and convergent validity of the JSI. In addition, the moderate correlation between the JSI and the abbreviated SBI scores provides support for the discriminant validity of the JSI. Thus, results with respect to the psychometric properties of the JSI measure support its use in future research on mutual savoring in romantic relationships.

### **Research Question 2: Direct Effects of Joint Relational Savoring**

With the psychometric properties of the Joint Savoring Index established, the second aim of the current study examined associations between joint relational savoring and indicators of couple and individual well-being while controlling for the effects of general savoring and other factors. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, individuals who reported higher levels of joint relational savoring generally reported greater couple well-being (i.e., higher levels of couple satisfaction and relationship confidence as well as lower levels of communication conflict). These findings provide some of the first empirical support for the benefits of joint relational savoring for couple relationship quality, and do so in ways that are similar to, yet empirically distinct from the effects of general savoring (e.g., Lenger & Gordon, 2019; Samios & Khatri, 2019). In addition, findings build upon prior experimental research that documented the short-term benefits of a general savoring intervention for couple communication (Antoine et al., 2020) and an individual relational savoring intervention for relationship confidence (Borelli et al., 2014). The current

study extends these experimental studies by suggesting that joint relational savoring, as it naturally appears in relationships and is perceived by individual partners, is related to couple communication, relationship confidence, and couple satisfaction (and not only when experimentally induced).

With respect to Hypothesis 2 and associations with individual outcomes, increased joint relational savoring was associated with greater quality of life but was not significantly associated with psychological distress or general health perceptions. Thus, this hypothesis was partially supported. The significant findings with respect to quality of life were consistent with prior research that found general savoring (Cheung et al., 2019) and capitalization (i.e., telling others about positive events) (Gable et al., 2004) to be positively associated with life satisfaction. In contrast, joint relational savoring was not associated with psychological distress, despite prior research that found significant negative associations between general savoring and depressive symptoms (Cheung et al., 2019) and between engagement in an individual relational savoring task and negative emotions (Borelli et al., 2015). These findings suggest that joint relational savoring, compared to individual savoring, may be less commonly associated with aspects of individual well-being. As an alternative explanation, results from the present study for psychological distress may have been non-significant as the aforementioned studies did not control for perceived stress, which was a strong predictor of psychological distress in the current sample. Taken as a whole, mixed findings regarding the significance of joint relational savoring for predicting individual outcomes suggest that the benefits of joint relational savoring process may be most relevant to couple well-being and, to a lesser degree, individual well-being.

### **Research Question 3: Moderating Effects of Joint Relational Savoring**

Having examined the main effects of joint relational savoring, the third study aim investigated whether joint relational savoring would be protective for couple and individual outcomes from the negative effects of perceived stress (Hypothesis 3). Overall, hypothesis 3 received partial support. Of the three couple outcomes investigated, one significant interaction effect was observed involving relationship confidence. Similarly, of the three individual outcomes examined, one significant interaction effect emerged involving psychological distress. Findings from simple slope analyses indicated relationship confidence was significantly associated with perceived stress under conditions of low joint relational savoring but not under conditions of high joint relational savoring, indicative of a buffering effect of joint relational savoring. For the moderation involving psychological distress, perceived stress remained significantly associated with psychological distress at low and high levels of joint relational savoring but was of a smaller magnitude among individuals reporting higher joint relational savoring. Thus, results provide only partial evidence that better outcomes from perceived stress are experienced under conditions of high joint relational savoring.

Although previous research has highlighted the protective effects of general savoring for couple satisfaction from a stressful life event (Samios & Khatri, 2019), the current study found that joint relational savoring was not a significant protective factor for couple satisfaction from perceived stress. These findings suggest that, apart from relationship confidence, the benefits of joint relational savoring for couples may appear with respect to promoting relationship outcomes directly and less so by mitigating the effects of stress, at least perceived stress. At the individual level, results regarding psychological distress are consistent with other research that found general savoring to be protective for mental health symptoms from a stressful life event (Samios

& Khatri, 2019). These findings suggest that joint relational savoring may serve to reduce the effects of individuals' perceived stress on their mental well-being. Future studies may examine whether joint relationship savoring could be protective from specific types of stressors that impact couple well-being, such as financial strain (Barton et al., 2015).

As a final point of discussion, findings highlight the relevance of joint relational savoring as a relationship maintenance strategy. Given stronger evidence from the current study of the direct (compared to protective) effects of joint relational savoring for couple well-being, this construct may primarily serve as a relationship *enhancement* strategy as opposed to a threat mitigation strategy (for review, see Ogolsky et al., 2017). Furthermore, joint relational savoring may have been indicative of relationship quality above and beyond the effects of general savoring because it involves a *mutual* process, and mutual maintenance efforts have been highlighted as beneficial yet conceptually distinct from individual maintenance strategies (Ogolsky et al., 2017).

### **Limitations**

Results from the current study should be considered in light of certain limitations. First, data were cross-sectional, precluding any ability to draw conclusions about the test-retest reliability of the JSI or test the causal effects of joint relational savoring. Second, analyzed data were only from one member of each couple dyad, thus preventing an ability to examine partners' shared understandings and/or congruence in perceptions of joint relational savoring in the relationship. Future research with dyadic data represents a logical next step to further our understanding of how mutual savoring occurs in romantic relationships. Third, joint relational savoring was highly correlated with couple satisfaction and relationship confidence, introducing concerns of discriminant validity between these measures. Positively, distinct correlates were

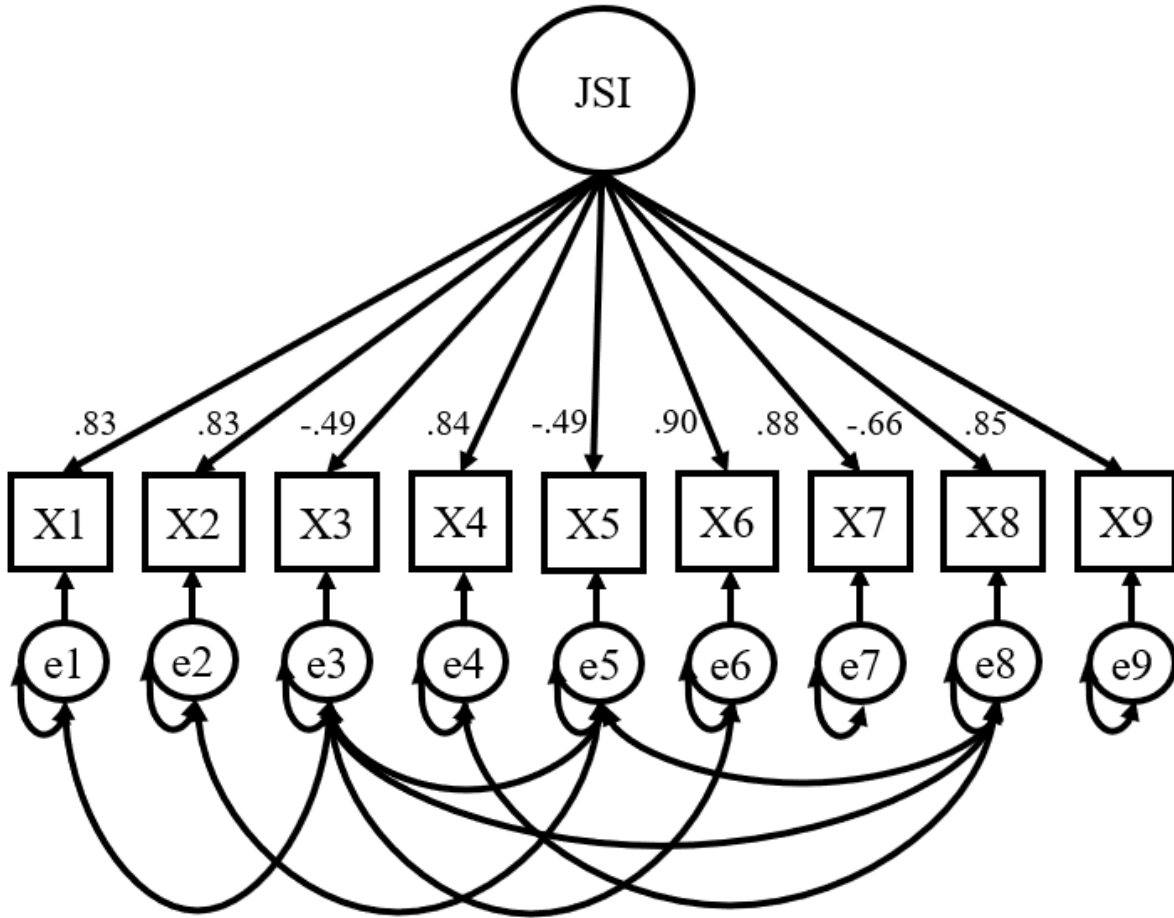
found between these variables and certain demographic factors, as greater levels of couple satisfaction and relationship confidence (but not joint relational savoring) were significantly associated with being male and being married. Hence, some differences emerged between measures of joint relational savoring and couple outcomes. Fourth, the entirely self-report single informant nature of the data introduces possible issues with general sentiment override. Concerns with this issue are somewhat assuaged as general optimism was controlled for in regression analyses.

### **Conclusion**

Notwithstanding these limitations, the current study provides novel contributions to the larger relationship maintenance literature. The study provides some of the first empirical findings on the direct and protective effects of joint relational savoring for couple outcomes, suggesting its potential benefit as a relationship maintenance strategy and warranting future longitudinal research on this topic. Given these associations, practitioners currently working to enhance couple relationships may consider devoting attention toward mutual savoring processes between romantic partners. Furthermore, study findings provide a validated survey measure of joint relational savoring that can be used by researchers and clinicians in future work with this construct.

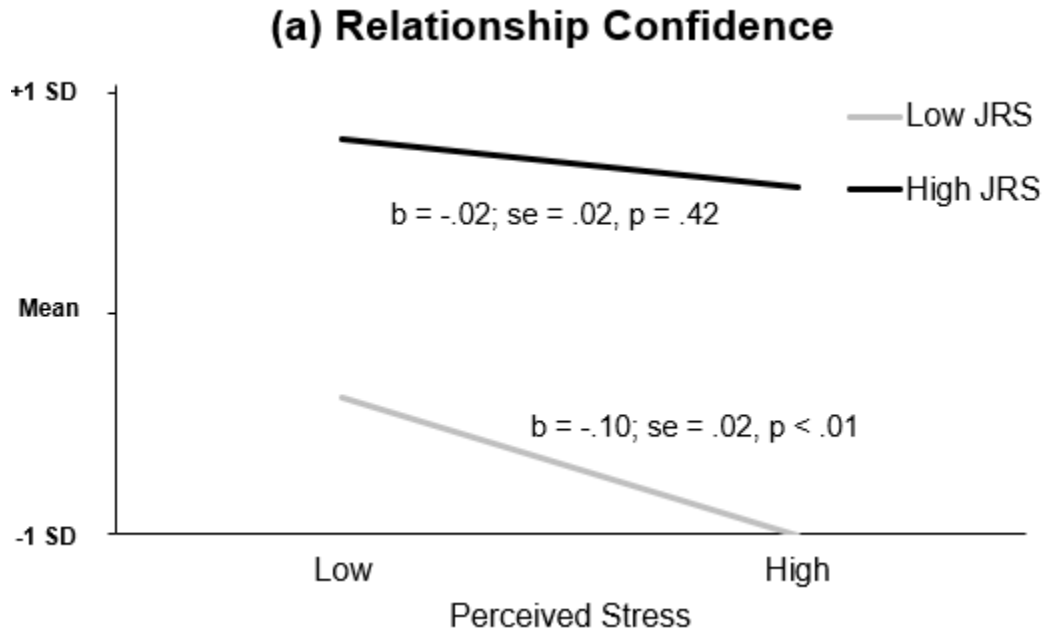
CHAPTER 5: FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Joint Savoring Index: Final One-Factor Measurement Model



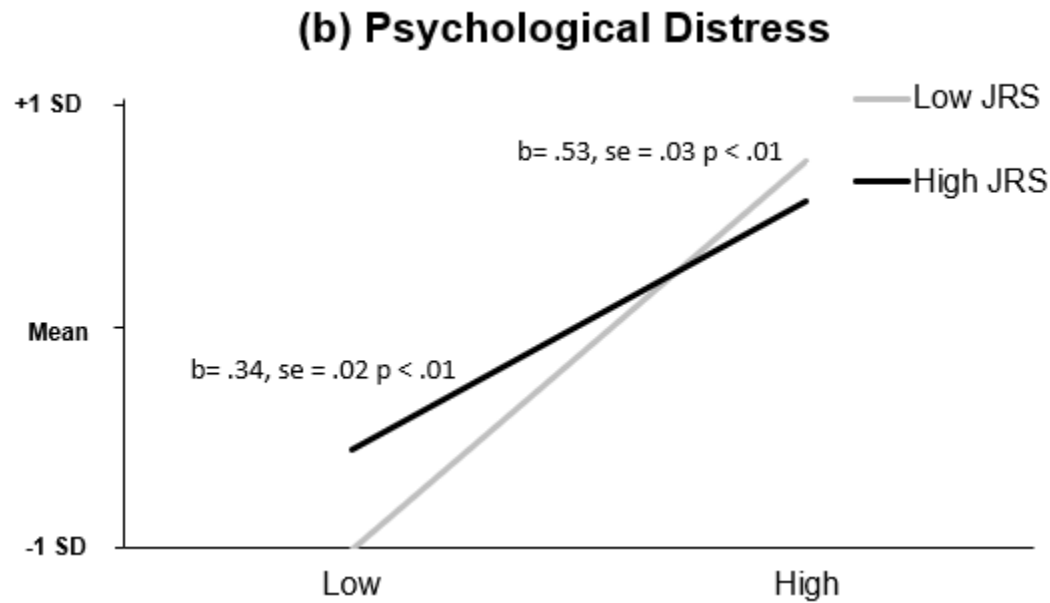
Note. JSI = Joint Savoring Index; X1-X9 = Items 1 – 9 (see Supplemental Table 1 for a full list of items); e1-e9 = residual terms.

**Figure 2a.** Moderation Effects of Joint Relational Savoring for Relationship Confidence from Perceived Stress



Note. JRS = Joint Relational Savoring.

**Figure 2b.** Moderation Effects of Joint Relational Savoring for Psychological Distress from Perceived Stress



Note. JRS = Joint Relational Savoring.

**Table 1.** Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables ( $N = 589$ )

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Joint relational savoring	--														
2. General savoring	.63**	--													
3. Couple satisfaction	.75**	.41**	--												
4. Communication conflict	-.52**	-.29**	-.63**	--											
5. Relationship confidence	.73**	.43**	.84**	-.56**	--										
6. Psychological distress	-.41**	-.50**	-.45**	.40**	-.44**	--									
7. General health perceptions	.28**	.35**	.30**	-.29**	.29**	-.50**	--								
8. Quality of life	.42**	.44**	.48**	-.32**	.47**	-.55**	.46**	--							
9. Perceived stress	-.46**	-.53**	-.49**	.47**	-.47**	.81**	-.53**	-.56**	--						
10. Optimism	.31**	.48**	.27**	-.24**	.29**	-.48**	.40**	.36**	-.52**	--					
11. Sex (1 = female) <sup>a</sup>	-.03	.02	-.17**	.06	-.15**	.24**	-.19**	-.16	.25**	-.13	--				
12. Income	.09*	.13**	.13**	-.03	.17**	-.16	.21**	.36**	-.17**	.16**	-.21**	--			
13. Years in a relationship	-.02	.08*	-.02	.01	.07	-.17**	.07	.20**	-.18**	.09*	-.01	.24**	--		
14. Marital status (1 = married) <sup>a</sup>	.02	.07	.11**	0.1	.15**	-.14**	.11**	.25**	-.17**	.14**	-.08*	.28**	.47**	--	
15. Number of children	-.05	.01	-.08*	.15**	-.01	.04	-.02	-.01	.11**	-.03	.05	.02	-.01	.17**	--
Mean	50.00	49.49	14.68	12.98	16.85	10.70	14.30	4.10	14.46	20.84	.52	6.22	14.13	.85	2.14
SD	9.57	8.71	4.95	5.11	3.57	4.96	3.85	.78	8.13	5.65	.50	2.77	7.09	.35	1.07
Minimum	10.00	10.00	0	7.00	4.00	6.00	4.00	1.00	0	6	0	1	.16	0	0
Maximum	63	63	21	28	20	28	20	5	38	30	1	9	66	1	8
% missing	<1%	<1%	0%	0%	0%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%

Note. <sup>a</sup> Spearman correlation. \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

**Table 2.** Results of Confirmatory Factor Analyses for Multiple Models of Joint Relational Savoring ( $N = 589$ )

Model	Fit Statistics						Model Comparisons			
	$\chi^2$	$df$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	Comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	$p$
A. One general factor	323.43	27	0.93	0.90	0.06	0.14	A vs. B	32.36	3	< .001
B. Three factors (three subscales)	291.07	24	0.93	0.90	0.06	0.14	B vs. D	163.37	3	< .001
C. One general factor and correlated residuals of negatively worded items <sup>a</sup>	180.91	24	0.96	0.94	0.03	0.11	C vs. D	53.21	3	< .001
D. Three factors (three subscales) and correlated residuals of negatively worded items <sup>a</sup>	127.70	21	0.97	0.95	0.03	0.09	C vs. E	92.75	4	< .001
E. One general factor and correlated residuals of negatively worded items <sup>a</sup> and items with the same temporal orientation <sup>b</sup>	88.15	20	0.98	0.97	0.02	0.08	D vs. E	39.55	1	< .001

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>Negatively worded items included 3,5,8 (see Supplemental Table 1). <sup>b</sup>With respect to items of the same temporal orientation, residual terms were correlated between items two and five, four and eight, one and three, three and six.

**Table 3. Multiple Regression Models Predicting Couple Relationship Outcomes (N = 587)**

Predictor	Couple Satisfaction		Couple Communication		Relationship Confidence	
	Model 1.1	Model 1.2	Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 3.1	Model 3.2
	B ( $\beta$ ) (se)	B ( $\beta$ ) (se)	B ( $\beta$ ) (se)	B ( $\beta$ )*** (se)	B ( $\beta$ ) (se)	B ( $\beta$ ) (se)
Perceived stress (PSS)	-.12 (-.19)** (.02)	-.12 (-.19)** (.02)	.25 (.40)** (.03)	.25 (.40)** (.03)	-.06 (-.13)** (.02)	-.06 (-.14)** (.02)
Joint relational savoring (JRS)	.39 (.75)** (.02)	.39 (.75)** (.02)	-.25 (-.47)** (.02)	-.27 (-.50) (.03)	.27 (.73)** (.01)	.25 (.68)** (.01)
Sex (1 = female)	-.69 (-.07)* (.27)	-.72 (-.07)** (.27)	-.55 (-.05) (.36)	-.51 (-.05) (.36)	-.57 (-.08)** (.21)	-.52 (-.07)** (.20)
Income	.03 (.02) (.05)	.03 (.02) (.05)	.05 (.03) (.07)	.04 (.02) (.07)	.05 (.04) (.04)	.04 (.03) (.04)
Years in a relationship	-.06 (-.08)** (.02)	-.06 (-.08)** (.02)	.03 (.04) (.03)	.03 (.04) (.03)	.00 (.01) (.02)	.00 (.00) (.02)
Marital status (1 = married)	1.52 (.11)** (.42)	1.52 (.11)** (.43)	.10 (.01) (.56)	.12 (.01) (.56)	1.19 (.12)** (.32)	1.22 (.12)** (.32)
Number of children	-.15 (-.03) (.12)	-.15 (-.03) (.12)	.39 (.08)* (.16)	.37 (.08)* (.16)	.08 (.03) (.09)	.06 (.02) (.09)
Optimism	.03 (.04) (.03)	0.03 (.04) (.03)	.04 (.04) (.04)	.04 (.04) (.04)	.02 (.04) (.03)	.02 (.04) (.03)
General savoring	-.11 (-.19)** (.02)	-.11 (-.19)** (.02)	.11 (.19)** (.03)	.12 (.20)** (.03)	-.06 (-.13)** (.02)	-.05 (-.13)** (.02)
PSS x JRS	---	.00 (-.01) (.00)	---	.00 (.06) (.00)	---	.004 (.11)** (.00)
R <sup>2</sup>	.62	.62	.38	.38	.59	.60
$\Delta R^2$	.32	.00	.13	.00	.30	.01

Note. \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

**Table 4: Multiple Regression Models Predicting Individual Outcomes (N = 587)**

Predictor	Psychological Distress		General Health Perceptions		Quality of Life	
	Model 4.1	Model 4.2	Model 5.1	Model 5.2	Model 6.1	Model 6.2
Perceived stress (PSS)	.43 (.70)** (.02)	.44 (.71)** (.02)	-.14 (-.30)** (.02)	-.14 (-.30)** (.02)	-.03 (-.30)** (.01)	-.03 (-.31)** (.01)
Joint relational savoring (JRS)	-.01 (-.01) (.02)	.03 (.07)* (.02)	.01 (.01) (.02)	.00 (.00) (.02)	.01 (.17)** (.00)	.01 (.15)** (.00)
Sex (1 = female)	.09 (.01) (.25)	-.03 (.00) (.25)	-.30 (-.04) (.28)	-.29 (-.04) (.28)	.03 (.02) (.05)	.03 (.02) (.05)
Income	-.02 (-.01) (.05)	.00 (.00) (.04)	.14 (.10)** (.05)	.14 (.10)** (.05)	.06 (.23)** (.01)	.06 (.22)** (.01)
Years in a relationship	-.03 (-.04) (.02)	-.02 (-.03) (.02)	-.02 (-.04) (.02)	-.02 (-.04) (.01)	.00 (.03) (.00)	.00 (.03) (.00)
Marital status (1 = married)	.35 (.03) (.39)	.29 (.02) (.38)	-.12 (-.01) (.43)	-.11 (-.01) (.43)	.19 (.08)* (.08)	.19 (.09)* (.08)
Number of children	-.23 (-.05)* (.11)	-.18 (-.04) (.11)	.11 (.03) (.13)	.10 (.03) (.13)	.01 (.02) (.02)	.01 (.01) (.02)
Optimism	-.10 (-.11)** (.03)	-.10 (-.11)** (.03)	.21 (.31)** (.03)	.21 (.31)** (.03)	.02 (.13)** (.01)	.02 (.13)** (.01)
General savoring	-.03 (-.05) (.02)	-.04 (-.07)* (.02)	.00 (.00) (.02)	.00 (.00) (.02)	.01 (.05) (.00)	.01 (.06) (.00)
PSS x JRS	---	-.01 (-.17)** (.00)	---	.00 (.02) (.00)	---	.00 (.06) (.00)
R <sup>2</sup>	.68	.70	.35	.35	.44	.44
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	.00	.03	.00	.00	.02	.00

Note. \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

**Supplemental Table 1.** *Items from the Abbreviated Savoring Beliefs Inventory and Items from the Joint Relational Savoring Scale*

Abbreviated Savoring Beliefs Inventory Items	Joint Relational Savoring Scale Items	Subscale
1. Before a good thing happens, I look forward to it in ways that give me pleasure in the present	1. Before a good thing happens between my partner and I, we look forward to it together in ways that provide us with pleasure in the present	Prospective
2. I enjoy looking back on happy times from my past	2. My partner and I enjoy looking back together on happy times from our relationship	Retrospective
3. I don't like to look forward to good times too much before they happen (reverse coded)	3. My partner and I don't like to look forward to good times too much before they happen (reverse coded)	Prospective
4. I know how to make the most of a good time	4. My partner and I know how to make the most of a good time together	Concurrent
5. I don't like to look back at good times too much after they've taken place (reverse coded)	5. My partner and I don't like to look back together at good times from our relationship too much after they've taken place (reverse coded)	Retrospective
6. I feel a joy of anticipation when I think about upcoming good things	6. My partner and I share a joy of anticipation when we talk about upcoming good things in our relationship	Prospective
7. When something good happens, I can make the enjoyment of it last longer by thinking or doing certain things	7. When something good happens between my partner and I, we can make the enjoyment of it last longer by talking about or doing certain things together	Concurrent
8. I don't enjoy things as much as I should (reverse coded)	8. My partner and I don't enjoy things with each other as much as we should (reverse coded)	Concurrent
9. It's easy for me to rekindle the joy from pleasant memories	9. It's easy for my partner and I to rekindle joy from positive memories we shared	Retrospective

*Note.* The original Savoring Beliefs Inventory has 24 items. See Bryant (2003) for a complete list of the original SBI items.

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