

BRIDGING THE GAP:
HOW SOCIAL SAVORING THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA AIDS LONG DISTANCE
COUPLES IN MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore social media use among long distance couples as a tool for communication and relational savoring. Savoring is the process of identifying positive experiences, noting the pleasure caused, and prolonging those feelings throughout the present and future (Pitts, 2019). Although some relational and communicative dimensions of savoring have been explored (Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Miyamoto & Ma, 2011; Quoidbach, Berry, Hansenne, & Mikolajczak, 2010), the role of digital media as it relates to savoring has yet to be studied. Two research questions guided this qualitative inquiry to examine the role between digital media use and relational savoring; “What patterns of relational maintenance do long distance relationship couples exhibit via their use of social and digital media?” and “How do couples in a long distance relationship utilize digital and social media to savor elements of their relationship through communication and increase potential for relational benefits?”. Ten interviews were conducted with three men and seven women in long distance romantic relationships. Findings suggest that similar patterns of maintenance exist among long distance partners and the deliberate act of savoring positive experiences from the past, present, and future has a lasting, positive impact on relationships.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to enhance our knowledge of the role that savoring plays in our relationships, while developing an awareness of the positive potential that savoring via social and digital media channels can have on relationships between romantic partners. This thesis will cover the background of savoring in communication and the importance of social and digital media in relation to savoring. To understand the positive effects social and digital media can have on a relationship, long distance couples will be interviewed regarding their use of social and digital media and how they use those means to savor elements of their relationships through communication. This thesis will aim to provide an answer to the question of how communication through digital and social media acts as a potential means for increasing the positive personal and relational benefits through savoring, in addition to providing recommendations for best-practices strategies and methods that can be utilized in an effort to cultivate, support, maintain and enhance relationships of all types.

Background of Relational Savoring in Communication

The concept of savoring is well established within the realms of positive psychology and communication; savoring refers to an individual's capacity to realize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences (Pitts, 2019). Bryant and Veroff (2007) define savoring as a psychological construct, being the "capacity to attend to, appreciate, and enhance the positive experiences in one's life" (p.87). Savoring can be a valuable practice across the lifespan; in terms of enhancing a moment's positive emotional impact (Bryant & Veroff, 2007), being a valuable asset in the resolution of work-family conflicts (Camgoz, 2014), in cultivating a state of cognitive-emotional well being (Smith & Bryant, 2017), and being a beneficial practice in later life to increase levels of happiness and life satisfaction, while lowering levels of depression (Pitts, 2018). There are a

variety of means in which savoring can be applied to different relational situations.

Communication savoring, anticipatory savoring, present-moment savoring, and retrospective savoring (see Table 1) act as mechanisms to enhance the emotional capacity of a relationship.

Significance to Communication

Communication through digital media is especially prevalent and continues to become more pervasive as we progress socially and technologically. As we advance in our use of technology to communicate with those whom we are in relationships with, it is important to develop an understanding of ways we can use this technology to maintain or enhance our relationships. Due to digital communication and social media's large role in our daily lives, being able to use them in ways that increase our quality of life and well-being is important. As social and digital media use relate to communication savoring as a strategy for relational maintenance, practices of long distance, romantic partners become salient as we aim to understand the progressive role that digital media has in our ability to communicate within our core relationships.

Important Terms Defined

There are several terms used throughout this thesis that are important to define in order to aid in comprehension and to adequately understand the patterns of social and digital media communication used by individuals in long distance relationships (Table 1).

Table 1: *Core Constructs*

Term	Definition	References
Relational Maintenance	The practice within relationships that requires prolonged effort to preserve on-going, stable and satisfactory relational connections with others.	(Canary & Yum, 2016).
Communication Savoring	The deliberate process of attending to and deriving pleasure from verbal and nonverbal messages in current, remembered, or imagined interactions.	(Pitts, 2019).
Anticipatory Savoring	The process of deriving pleasure in the current moment by imagining a future interaction and invoking the positive emotions associated with that experience.	(Bryant & Veroff, 2007).
Present Moment Savoring	The process of identifying, heightening, and prolonging pleasurable experiences.	(Bryant & Veroff, 2007) .
Retrospective Savoring	The process of mentally reliving positive experiences, events or memories.	(Bryant, Chadwick & Kluwe, 2011).
Imagined Interactions	A form of intrapersonal communication: a process of social cognition, where actors imagine and therefore indirectly experience themselves in interaction with others.	(Honeycutt, Zagacki, Kenneth & Edwards, 1990).
Peak Communication	Moments of highest mutual understanding, happiness and fulfillment deriving from the process of communicating with other human beings.	(Gordon, 1985).

Statement of the Problem and Importance

While some relational and communicative dimensions of savoring have been explored (Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Miyamoto & Ma, 2011; Quidbach, Berry, Hansenne, & Mikolajczak, 2010), there is an absence of research pertaining to the role of digital and social media as it relates to savoring. To enhance our knowledge about the positive potential for relational benefits that emerge from savoring via social and digital media channels, it is important to focus on the usage patterns and techniques employed by romantic partners in long distance relationships. Close relationships maintained across geographic distance are fairly common due to adoption of modern communication technologies and society's increasing mobility (Jiang & Hancock, 2013). Worldwide, 14 million couples define themselves as being in a long distance relationship and 3.75 million married couples are in a long distance relationship in the United States alone (Guldner, 2018). Long distance relationships are of interest in regard to this study because they challenge the traditional constructs of standard, close proximity relationships (Borelli, Rasmussen, Burkhart & Sbarra, 2015). As we might expect, individuals in long distance relationships engage with their partner significantly less on a daily basis, but utilize more mediated channels of communication (via phone calls, text messages, video calling, apps, etc.) than their close proximity counterparts (Jiang & Hancock, 2013). Additionally, partners in long distance relationships are inclined to exhibit communication maintenance practices more often through mediated communication such as computers or cellular devices, than partners not separated by geographic distance. For these reasons, long distance partnerships were chosen as the focus of this study in order to understand how digital savoring acts as a potential means for increasing the positive personal and relational benefits that result from communication via social

and digital media. From this, best-practices strategies and methods can be recommended in order to support and cultivate enduring and positive relationships.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature is aimed to expound upon the concepts of savoring that have already been studied and examined for their relational effectiveness.

Savoring

Bryant and Veroff (2007) define savoring as the process underlying the capacity to attend to, appreciate, and enhance the positive experiences that are attached to experiences. Bryant and Veroff applied the term “savoring” to this process due to its ability to capture the active process of enjoyment; outside of a communication context, “to savor” or “savoring” conjures up thoughts of sensory experiences. The extension of the term beyond its usual sensory connotations is intentional, as Bryant and Veroff aimed to include cognitive reflection in order to encompass a higher awareness on behalf of the individual.

Communication and Relational Savoring

Communication and relational savoring takes many different forms; retrospective, present-moment, and anticipatory. Present moment savoring occurs when individuals are absorbed in a moment (Pitts, 2019) and become aware of the emotional significance that a occasion or moment in time holds. Retrospective savoring occurs through savoring past memories of events that have previously occurred (Borelli et al., 2015) and is performed through recall of memorable and pleasurable experiences (Pitts, 2019). Positive reminiscence has been noted to provide insight towards present problems, provide opportunities to increase awareness and offer new perspectives of present or past moments (Bryant, Smart, & King, 2015). Meanwhile, anticipatory savoring presents itself as a way in which individuals anticipate future interactions, encounters and emotions. This awareness for the future can augment the process of

savoring in the present, in a positive way through calling attention to the significance of the current moment (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Anticipatory savoring manifests itself as forward looking to planned interactions, romantic vacations or moments of reunification. This type of savoring can also emerge through imagined interactions; a process of social cognition, where an individual envisions a dialogue or social situation (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1990). Communication savoring has been posed as a new dimension of social savoring (Pitts, 2019). Individuals not only savor communication, but they savor a variety of communication experiences.

Relational Maintenance

The process of maintaining relationships can last years, while relational maintenance has been described by many researchers in a variety of ways; the process in which we keep a relationship in existence, in a specified state of condition, in satisfactory condition, or to keep a relationship in repair (Dindia & Canary, 1993). The most generalized definition of relational maintenance, is the practice within relationships that requires prolonged effort to preserve on-going and stable relational connections with others. Within romantic relationships, there are five strategies of relational maintenance; positivity, openness, assurances, networks, and task sharing (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Maintenance strategies differ according to the relationship type. Between lovers, relatives, friends and others, it is found that openness was used the most frequently, followed by assurances, and sharing joint activities (Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993).

Rationale

Contemporary relationships are unique in their ability to connect and communicate across a variety of distances. Social and digital media are ubiquitous features of these modern types of

relationships that take place over geographic distance; 14 million couples worldwide define their relationships as being long distance, and 3.75 million married couples defining their relationships as long distance in the United States alone (Guldner, 2018). Due to the salience of media's affect within contemporary relationships, is it important to understand the role of social and digital media as it is utilized as a mechanism of relational maintenance and enhancement.

Research Questions

RQ1: What patterns of relational maintenance do long distance relationship couples exhibit via their use of social and digital media?

RQ2: How do couples in a long distance relationship utilize digital and social media to savor elements of their relationship through communication and increase potential for relational benefits?

METHODS

For this study, I used a purposive sampling technique to maximize variation within my sample of long distance romantic relationships who use social and digital media to maintain their relationship. I aimed to create an experience-rich sample to answer the established research questions via participation in respondent interviews. The interview method was chosen due to the participant's ability to provide answers which assist in coming to understand their individual perspective and psychological self as they relate to the research questions.

Sample

Aiming to represent a variety of relationship types, the pool of participants in this study were intentionally diverse. Purposive sampling was utilized in order to focus on couples in long distance relationships, who are likely to facilitate communication via digital and social media more so than couples in close proximity. Purposive sampling is the process of making informed

judgments about what is important observe or who would be beneficial to interview (Lindlof & Taylor, 2015) and was utilized in this study by focusing on relationship types which would have been most likely to engage in communication and relational savoring patterns (i.e. long distance relationships). As opposed to random sampling, a purposive sample provides the opportunity to focus on participants within a specific context and gain a deeper understanding of distinct social realities (Lindlof & Taylor, 2015).

Participants of this study included ten emerging adults (i.e. 18-30 years of age), comprised of three men and seven women who are either attending university currently as an undergraduate, in graduate school, or are recent graduates. Variations in relationship type within the sample include two participants in heterosexual relationships, one participant who is in a same sex relationship, one whose partner is in the military, one who has a partner struggling with depression, another who is newly engaged, three who have experienced an international long distance relationship, and one other who is in a new long distance relationship of only a couple months. These variations construct a diverse pool of participants. Due to the small sample size, the aim was to diversify the pool of participants as much as possible. This was important to allow a variety of perspectives to be shared from a broad range of relationship types. It was determined that saturation of the sample was reached once a sufficiently heterogeneous faction was achieved.

Recruitment

This study utilized maximum variation sampling to ensure that many different variations of relationship types were explored. Maximum variation sampling is a common method in qualitative research due to its ability to achieve a variety of “qualities, attributes, situations or incidents of the phenomenon under study” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, pg. 113). Personal social

networks were utilized to recruit participants who adhered to the age range of 18-30 years old and qualified for the study by being involved in a long distance relationship. Once a general sample was created, certain individuals were defined as exhibiting unique characteristics which would aid in developing a diverse sample; these individuals were then formally recruited via email to participate in the study (See Appendix A for recruitment script).

Participants

Due to the rich variation in this sample, the following section gives a brief description of each participant in this study. Noting their gender, duration of their long distance relationship, and other unique characteristics aids in understanding the differing and common viewpoints of the respondents.

Participant A is a male who is in a same-sex relationship with his partner. They have known each other for 8 years, and have been in a relationship for 4 months. Having experienced short periods of long distance throughout their brief relationship so far, he and his partner will be long distance again for approximately three years due to Participant A joining the army and attending basic training.

Participant B is a female who has been in a relationship for two and a half years with her partner, a male. Her relationship has been long distance for one year and three months. Participant B has known her partner, who is in the military, for 3 years and describes him admirably; commenting on his genuine and confident nature.

Participant C is a female, and her partner, Participant D is a male. They have been dating for a little over one year and met online via the dating app “Bumble.” Throughout their relationship, they have experienced a variety of distances, ranging from three to seven hours

apart. Participant C and D are at the point in their relationship where they are beginning to plan for the future and steps they can take towards being together full time.

Participant E, a female, has been in a long distance relationship for four out of the seven years that she has been dating her male partner, who struggles with depression. Having met on move-in day at a Southern university, Participant E and her partner began dating in their sophomore year and soon graduated two years later. Both striving to continue their education to receive PhDs in their respective fields, Participant E remained in the United States and her partner moved out of the country, thus beginning their long distance, international relationship.

Participant F, a female, and her partner, a male, have known each other for nearly five years. Participant F and her partner met during college and have endured a range of distances throughout their two year, long distance relationship which was international for a period of time.

Participant G is a female who is newly engaged to her partner, a male. They have known each other for eight years, and have been long distance for five out of the six years that they have been dating. Their long distance relationship came to be once they both left for college; she remarks that her partner's passion about his work is something she admires in him, as she values working hard as well.

Participant H is a male, who has known his partner, a female, since he was 13 years old. Participant H and his partner are from the same West Coast hometown, but began their relationship in a popular East Coast city. His partner was accepted into law school and returned to the West Coast while he remained on the East Coast to pursue his career in real estate. They have been long distance for approximately 4 months.

Participant I, a female, is in an international long distance relationship with her European, male partner. Having met online, they were connected through her partner's cycling travels across the United States. They began dating in January of 2019 and have been long distance internationally for several months.

Participant J, a female, is from the same hometown as her male partner, whom she has known since high school. They attended the same Southwestern university until her partner transferred to a Midwestern university. They began their long distance relationship shortly after.

Procedures

Once this study received IRB approval, participants were formally recruited via email; after agreeing to participate, they were required to complete a consent form (see Appendix B for informed consent form). At this time, participants indicated their voluntary participation and understanding of what would be required of them. Additionally, prior to signing the consent form, the participant had the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the study or the data being collected. Respondent-style interviews were performed for this study; as the name implies, this interview method is aimed to elicit open ended responses in an effort to find out how the participants express their views, construe their actions and conceptualize their life world or their relationship (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Participants of respondent-style interviews speak only of their individual perspectives and their subjective standpoints. The majority of the interviews for this study were conducted via telephone, while one was conducted face-to-face; all interviews were recorded. On average, interviews were 32.12 minutes long; each participant was interviewed based on the same set of questions and prompts (See Appendix C for question pool). In cases where the participant was in a relationship with unique characteristics, additional

questions and prompts emerged throughout the interviews. Following completion of the interview, the audio was transcribed by hand (See Appendix D for transcripts of interviews).

Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data collected via interviews. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that focuses on identifying, analyzing, organizing and reporting patterned meaning across a dataset (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). After transcribing each interview, I engaged in two cycles of coding; in the first cycle of coding, participants' narratives were read and carefully analyzed for general themes which were noted using open codes, or brief descriptive labels. Open codes are broad summarizations of a respondent's answer to an interview question which addresses a portion of a research question; they act as the foundation of the model when placed together in larger conceptual groupings. Once these broad summarizations were made for each response from all the participants, second cycle coding began; open codes were put into broader thematic categories which, when compiled, achieve a broader, more abstract scope of the data. Throughout this process, my advisor and I met frequently to discuss coding and achieve intercoder agreement through conversation and collaborative coding of a master transcript.

FINDINGS

Overview

The research questions that guided this study were grounded in interpersonal communication concepts. In order to understand the maintenance practices employed within long distance relationships, the first research question focused on patterns and rituals of communication or engagement that were facilitated by social and digital media use. The practice

of savoring was analyzed through the second research question in order to uncover the potential for relational benefits that come from this practice.

Relational Maintenance Behaviors and Communication Rituals

All continuing relationships require maintenance and different relationship types, long distance relationships for example, require a distinct focus on certain strategies for effective maintenance. With respect to research question one, “What patterns of relational maintenance do long distance relationship couples exhibit via their use of social and digital media?”, themes of communication routines and rituals, in addition to maintenance efforts that align with Stafford and Canary’s (1991) strategies of relational maintenance emerged from the data.

Ritual and Routine. To maintain and enhance their relationship across the distance, the majority of participants noted practicing a routine, or a communication ritual, of engaging with their partner at certain times of the day, through specific channels. Relational maintenance is the practice within relationships that requires prolonged effort to preserve ongoing and stable relational connections with others (Canary & Yum, 2016).

Participants noted following a schedule of when to communicate through digital and social media; whether utilizing FaceTime or Skype, phone calls, texts, or apps like Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook, positive and affirming messages were often exchanged throughout their day through these channels. Participant C describes following a routine and scheduling when she and her partner will communicate: “I think the biggest routine we follow is that he’ll text me first ... we set expectations for the day of how busy we will be and that helps a lot.” (See Appendix D: Participant C for transcript). When Participant H was asked what channels of communication he uses in the rituals of his long distance communication with his partner, he said the following:

“Definitely phone calls; even just sending little texts throughout the day to let each other know that we’re thinking of each other. Social media has made it really easy to get in contact with each other. As cliché as it sounds, for modern millennial relationships...tagging each other in memes, just funny stuff like that lets them know that you’re thinking of them.” (See Appendix D: Participant H for transcript)

Relational maintenance in the form of communication rituals commonly appeared among the individuals interviewed. Many participants noted maintaining and enhancing their relationship through rituals where messages of positivity, openness and assurance are shared via social or digital media. The maintenance behaviors of partners in long distance relationships create a healthy and positive climate that is primed for relational savoring.

Relational Maintenance Behaviors. Of the five strategies to relational maintenance; positivity, openness, assurances, networks, and task sharing (Stafford & Canary, 1991), participants noted positivity, openness, and assurances as being used most frequently in their long distance maintenance behaviors.

Openness. Openness can be displayed through a variety of means; discussing the quality of a relationship, routine discussions involving self-disclosure regarding personal needs or wants, and willingness, or encouragement from both partners to discuss thoughts and feelings within or concerning the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1991). Participants in this study noted practicing openness with their partner in order to maintain and enhance their relationship despite the distance. Participant B and F noted how their partners encourage them to open up about their emotions and communicate concerns:

“He has taught me to communicate because I’m the type of person where if something is wrong, I’ll just shove it under the rug and not acknowledge it. ... He really encourages me to be open with him all the time.” (See Appendix D: Participant B for transcript).

“I think honestly the biggest thing I've learned is to be open and to share my actual feelings or my actual thoughts because I think a lot of the time I'm just like “oh it's fine or whatever” but he's always like do you actually feel this way? I think the biggest thing is to be open and to have patience as well.” (See Appendix D: Participant F for transcript).

Additionally, Participant I noted how practicing the maintenance strategy of openness helped challenge her to disclose to her partner aspects of her life which were difficult for her to discuss: “He is really adamant that I be open with him and really challenge myself to talk about certain things that are difficult for me.” (See Appendix D: Participant I for transcript). Participant C notes that practicing openness aids in maintaining their relationship through difficult times: “To manage the challenges, we try to be as open as possible” (See Appendix D: Participant C for transcript).

Assurances. Assurances present themselves within relationships as expressions of commitment, displays of faithfulness and love, or hopefulness for the future of the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1991). Participant A noted that a benefit of long distance relationships is that each partner has to stay on their toes and continuously reassure each other that they are not going anywhere and that their love is “always going to be solid...the constant reminder and reassurance is comforting.” (See Appendix D: Participant A for transcript). Participant J describes how positive types of talk helps enhance their relationship; more specifically, words of

affirmation and forward-looking within their relationship with regard to the future: “I need some reassurance and I think he does too, and we both have talked about that before... we're always kind of telling each other ‘I really like you...I see a future with us, this is going to work, etc.’” Long distance relational partners utilize maintenance strategies more often when they're enduring distance “...because we need to reassure each other”(See Appendix D: Participant J for transcript).

Forms of maintenance also present themselves in more strategic patterns; for example, Participant C and E's partners will offer assurances during times of stress or uncertainty:

“He will know when I'm stressed and he'll affirm me in that way over the phone, text or Facetime. He's always there to affirm me when I really need it or whether I don't need it; he always offers it.” (See Appendix D: Participant C for transcript)

“...If I'm stressed out, he will text me some of the cute phrases we use between just us. We will send each other small affirmations; we will say I love you a lot via text.”(See Appendix D: Participant E for transcript)

Positivity. Positivity, as a maintenance strategy, makes its way into relationships in many forms. It can occur through conscious attempts to make relational interactions enjoyable, cooperation in the ways that disagreements are handled between couples, and efforts to build up one-another's self esteem (through compliments, etc). Relational partners who engage in positivity also have a tendency to approach interactions and conversations in a nice, courteous or polite manner, in addition to presenting oneself as cheerful, optimistic, and positive when interacting with one's partner (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Participant J describes the importance of expressing emotions in addition to how forward-looking and positivity help to maintain the

health of her relationship: “I feel sometimes it’s so easy to focus on how tough it is; and it’s okay to feel that way and express that but it’s important to be positive and look forward to things.”

(See Appendix D: Participant J for transcript)

While there are many obstacles within long distance relationships, many couples choose to focus on the benefits and positive aspects of their relationship rather than dwelling on the challenges. Participant B notes that while her partner was in basic training for the military, they always shared positive messages through letters or phone interactions: “We didn’t have anything to argue about; you’re just grateful that you got to talk to them” (See Appendix D: Participant B for transcript). Participant I utilizes positivity through anticipating the future and appreciating the distance, despite the challenges:

“I miss him but I am also very hopeful for the future because I’m visiting him soon; I kind of have a positive perspective about not being together currently. One benefit is that I can focus on things without having to do a lot of real-time relational maintenance” (See Appendix D: Participant I for transcript).

Savoring to Increase Potential for Relational Benefits

With respect to research question two, “How do couples in a long distance relationship utilize digital and social media to savor elements of their relationship through communication and increase potential for relational benefits?”, themes of savoring being utilized as a strategy for increasing relational benefits emerge from participants’ narratives.

The majority of the participants who were interviewed noted engaging in communication via social media platforms and digital media to savor aspects of their relationship. Savoring refers to the process of identifying positive experiences, noting the pleasure caused by that experience, and prolonging those feelings throughout the present and future (Pitts, 2019). Digital

and social media's involvement in this process is extensive when it comes to long distance relationships. Demonstrated by the participants responses to the interview questions, the concept of savoring can be trifold, especially when addressed by respondents who are in differing relationship types. Anticipatory savoring, present moment savoring, and retrospective savoring (See Table 1) are all various forms of savoring which relational partners may use to appreciate moments in the present, past or future of their relationship.

Present Moment Savoring. Present moment savoring occurs often when individuals are absorbed in a moment (Pitts, 2019) and become aware of the emotional significance that a occasion or moment in time holds. Additionally, present moment savoring can also occur through experiencing heightened physical and emotional arousal or heightened intrapersonal cues to savor (Pitts, 2019). Participant C notes how the utilization of digital devices in the midst of memorable moments can act as a cue that the occasion she is presently experiencing is one that she will likely want to look back on, sometime in the future. "I'm trying to not live behind the lens, but at the same time I like to document things using my camera and remember that time we had and be able to show kids someday." (See Appendix D: Participant C for transcript). Additionally, Participant J speaks of how present moment savoring is valuable for the future when digital messages of support or advice can be enhanced by referencing photos and videos of special moments on social media:

"When we're together I take picture and videos ... those are fun to use especially when [he is] really stressed about school... it's nice to have social media and pictures or videos that I can send to him and he'll respond with 'oh that just made my day'. [I make] sure that we are capturing those moments because they are so special" (See Appendix D: Participant J for transcript).

While the usage of digital devices in the present moment aids in retrospective savoring that may occur in the future, the absence of digital devices also aids in savoring moments in real time:

“I’ll take photos when we’re together sometimes... it is a way of identifying those moments that are worth taking a photo of...moments that I would say that I savor are moments when phones are not nearby and we’re really enjoying the moment together” (See Appendix D: Participant E for transcript).

Digital media’s involvement in present moment savoring is twofold. While it aids individuals in identifying memorable moments or experiences that they may want to remember in the future through capturing photos and videos, the absence of digital media also acts as an intrapersonal cue to savor the present moment.

Retrospective Savoring. Retrospective savoring occurs through reminiscence of past memories or events (Borelli et al., 2015) and is performed through recall of memorable and pleasurable experiences (Pitts, 2019). Positive reminiscence has been noted to provide insight towards present problems, an opportunity to increase awareness and to offer new perspectives of present or past moments (Bryant, Smart & King, 2015). For example, Participant G notes that retrospective savoring through digital media helps her through days in her relationship when the distance becomes taxing:

“If I haven’t been able to talk to him all day, [I] look back at the photos and remember a great vacation that we had or share with him a nice memory; I think that’s definitely helped in terms of when some days are more difficult than others” (See Appendix D: Participant G for transcript).

Digital media plays a large role in the process of retrospective savoring for long distance partners; 60% of participants (six out of ten) in this study noted looking back on photos or

meaningful conversations that occurred over text to reminisce on the emotions and sentiment of a moment. Participant C describes this process: “Sometimes I’ll screenshot moments that we have over text that were really memorable and I’ll save them to look back on them when I’m feeling down” (See Appendix D: Participant C for transcript). Additionally, Participant J notes how present moment savoring has the potential to transcend time and provide potential for retrospective savoring in the future once a moment has passed:

“...If a time comes that I realize is really special, I’ll make sure that I’m taking it all in and taking photos or videos of where we are and of our surroundings [in order] to remember it better.” ... “It’s so nice to look back on the memories and remember how you felt in those moments.” (See Appendix D: Participant J for transcript).

Participant F reiterates this sentiment, further speaking to the future savoring potential that presents itself from utilizing digital media to savor a moment in real-time: “We went traveling this summer and every time I look back on the photos I think of how great of a trip it was, so I think that’s a great way to savor a moment after it’s happened” (See Appendix D: Participant F for transcript). Digital media plays a large role in the process of savoring for long distance couples; both retrospectively, and anticipatorily, as discussed in the following section.

Anticipatory Savoring. Participants also noted their tendency to engage in anticipatory savoring; imagining future interactions (i.e., reuniting with their partner) assists the individual in terms of it acting as a rehearsal or planning device as it relates to anticipated interactions (Honeycutt et al., 1990). Honeycutt (1990) also depicts imagined interactions as a strategy for addressing communication issues and relational problems by envisioning the act of discourse, contemplating the response and adjusting roles as they see fit. However, as Participant B

describes it and according to what the dataset shows, imagined interactions are typically centered on positive experiences in long distance relationships, such as planning for the future and anticipating relational goals: “I think of reuniting with him once he gets out of the military; we talk about our plans for our future and buying a house together; putting those plans into action and just being grateful that he’s home” (See Appendix D: Participant B for transcript).

Relational savoring through communication allows individuals to transcend time and present moment circumstances by offering opportunities for reflection and anticipation (Pitts, 2019). In terms of savoring in long distance relationships, partners increase their potential for relational benefits by practicing a variation of savoring strategies over an array of social and digital media channels; anticipatory, present-moment, and retrospective savoring all result in positive effects on the well-being of a long distance relationship.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The present study sought to enhance our knowledge about the positive potential for relational benefits to emerge from social and digital media use between long distance, romantic partners, with a focus on the effects of relational savoring. The results provide confirmation for previous relational maintenance and savoring research, but also extend upon that research in meaningful ways.

Major themes emerged from the data which showed that among the long distance relational partners that were interviewed, similar patterns of maintenance were necessary in order to sustain their relationship over time. Among Stafford and Canary’s (1991) five strategies for relational maintenance, positivity, openness, and assurances were noted to have been shared between the long distance partners, all proving to have a positive influence on the well-being of their relationship. Ranging from strategic to nonstrategic (Canary & Yum, 2016), the

maintenance behaviors described by the participants include positive types of talk, self disclosure and affirmations. Facilitated by digital and social media, these types of messages were shared frequently among the participants using a variety of mediated channels, as part of a relational communication ritual. The use of mediated forms of communication is more urgent for long distance relational couples than it is for close proximity couples; geographic separation requires couples to utilize a technological medium to communicate and sustain the relationship (Billedo, Kerkhof, & Finkenauer, 2015). Further, maintenance behaviors that are shared via mediated channels pose a greater challenge of being accurately received when compared to maintenance behaviors which are practiced in face to face communication settings.

Further, among the respondents, the practice of savoring proves to have constructive effects on the strength of the relationship. Within the context of the long distance relationships being examined in this study, relational savoring occurs through savoring a memory or experience that occurred with the participant's long distance romantic partner (Borelli et al., 2015). Through anticipatory, present moment, and retrospective savoring, participants were able to bridge the emotional and cognitive gaps that exists due to being separated from their partner for prolonged time periods.

The results of this study show that relational maintenance through rituals and the practice of savoring increases in salience as relationship types expand in complexity and our tendency, desire, and need to communicate through digital media continues to surge over time. The concept of maintenance and savoring applies to a variety of relationships (Stafford & Canary, 1991), suggesting that these practices are important aspects of all relationships; however, as this research has shown, practices of savoring and maintenance are especially important in long distance relationships where the focus is on communicating across distance. Best-practice

strategies of maintaining a communication ritual and engaging in relational savoring, transcend relationship type and are recommended in order to cultivate and sustain emotionally satisfying relationships. Practicing a communication ritual and participating in relational maintenance strategies are part of a routine, but they cannot only be that. It is important to combine positive relational behaviors, such as openness, assurances, positivity and savoring, with a communication ritual in order to not only enhance, but advance a relationship.

Relational maintenance is not simply the maintaining of a status quo within a partnership; Based on the findings of this research, I would pose that relational savoring is a form of relational maintenance within a variety of relationships. Stafford and Canary's (1991) five strategies of relational maintenance transcend relationship type and are utilized in order to maintain or enhance relationships of different standings. However, as demonstrated within long distance relationships, the practice of savoring proves to be an important factor in the sustainability of a relationship regardless of the proximity of its partners. The purpose of relational maintenance is to keep a relationship in existence, in a specified state or condition, in a satisfactory condition or to keep a relationship in repair (Dindia & Canary, 1993). When savoring is viewed as a form of relational maintenance, it aids in elevating relationships beyond simply a level of maintenance and increases relational satisfaction.

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Appendix A

General Recruitment Script

Note: Recruitment will be informal and will occur primarily through personal networks. The individual conducting the interviews will include this information in their recruitment message in person, on paper, or via electronic communication.

Script: To be tailored to each individual participating in the interview.

“I am participating in a collaborative research project for my Honor’s thesis at the University of Arizona. We are interviewing people in long-term, enduring relationships about their positive communication practices in those relationships. We are particularly interested in long distance, romantic relationships.

I am contacting you because of your long distance relationship. We would like to learn from you how to successfully manage long distance, romantic relationships. If you decide to participate, I would like to conversationally interview you. I have only a few questions to guide our conversation, for example, “What do you do to enhance your relationship with your partner through digital/social media communication?”. I expect interviews to last approximately one hour. I would like to do the interview at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Of course, participation is entirely voluntary and you can discontinue participation at any time. We will maintain your privacy and confidentiality throughout the research process and will never disclose your identity in any reports or presentations of the data. I should also let you know that while we cannot compensate you for your time, many people find

these types of interviews rewarding; as it gives you time to reflect upon and talk about the positive aspects of your relationships. Additionally, I would be happy to give you a copy of your interview at the conclusion of our study. Would you be willing to participate?

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact Dr. Margaret Pitts at mjpitts@email.arizona.edu or myself, Elizabeth Oien at elizabethjoien@email.arizona.edu”

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Research



Consent Version: 2/21/2019

University of Arizona**Study Title:** Positive Communication in Enduring Relationships**Principal Investigator:** Margaret J. Pitts (PhD), Associate Professor of Communication,
Department of Communication, University of Arizona, mjpitts@email.arizona.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you do not have to participate. This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

Purpose of Study: This is a collaborative research project undertaken by the undergraduate and graduate students who were enrolled in Relational Communication (COMM 417/517) during the Spring 2018 semester at the University of Arizona. Dr. Margaret Pitts was the course instructor. Our goal is to understand better the communication practices that people in long-term, enduring relationships engage in to develop, maintain, preserve, and enhance their relationships over time. Long-term, enduring relationships include siblings, romantic partners, mentoring relationships, friendships, and relationships in places of leisure or worship. We are interested in the

ways that different relationship types use positive communication to facilitate their relationship. You are being asked specifically because you are in a long distance romantic relationship.

Your Participation: If you choose to participate, a student will interview you about your long distance romantic relationship. You will be asked to reflect on things like communication moments that changed your relationship, types of communication that you use to maintain or enhance a relationship, and your best communication moments. You will also be asked some questions about the nature of your relationship.

Duration and Location of Participation: Interviews should take no more than 60 minutes of your time. You and your student interviewer(s) will determine a time and place that is convenient to you for the interview. If it is preferable, you may also choose to do the interview over the telephone or Skype.

Eligibility Criteria: There are three eligibility criteria for this study (1) You must be at least 18 years of age to participate, (2) You must be comfortable responding to questions and speaking in English, and (3) You must be in a long-term, enduring relationship with an individual and be comfortable talking about that relationship.

Risks/Benefits: There are no expected risks to you as a result of participating in this study beyond what you would normally encounter in talking about a personal relationship. While you may not benefit directly from participating in this study, most people find that discussing the positive communication strategies within a meaningful relationship is fulfilling.

Confidentiality: With your permission, we would like to audiotape your interview so that we can make an accurate transcript. Once we have made the transcript, we will erase the recordings. Your name will not be in the transcript or our notes. During transcription you will be assigned a pseudonym and neither your name, your long-term partner/sibling/friend's name, nor your identifying identification will be included in the transcript. Your name will not be used in any report. Identifiable research data will be encrypted and password protected.

The principal investigator will make any determination about sharing these de-identified data with scholars who request data for separate analyses (e.g., meta-analysis) if it is deemed ethical and related to original data collection/research purposes without additional consent.

The information that you provide in the study will be handled confidentially. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released or shared as required by law. The University of Arizona Institutional Review Board may review the research records for monitoring purposes.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact Dr. Margaret Pitts at mjpitts@email.arizona.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you

may contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at 520-626-6721 or online at <http://rgw.arizona.edu/compliance/human-subjects-protection-program>.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date

Appendix C

Interview Question Pool

The questions and prompts listed below will be used as a guide while conducting interviews.

Additional related questions and prompts might emerge in the conversational-style interviews.

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
3. What are the most important lessons you've learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance?
What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?

- b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
7. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
 - a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?
 - b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
8. Can you describe one peak communication experience (or best communication moment) that you have had with [name]? What was that moment like?
 - a. Follow up: When did that occur? How long into the relationship?
 - b. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?
 - c. What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance?
 - d. What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?

- e. What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?
9. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?
10. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?
11. How do you identify, as it's happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
12. How do you identify a moment, after it's happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?

Appendix D

Transcripts

Participant A

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
 - a. “My partner’s name is ----; there’s so much I want to share. He’s 32 and I’m 29. He is probably the most caring, loving person that I’ve ever met in my life. I actively avoid relationships, and I have for about 5 years... but with him it was really easy. I say that it’s his big heart and his kindness and his compassion that makes it incredibly easy. I’ve known him for 8 years and we rekindled our acquaintance with each other online; he saw that I was wearing a T-Shirt in a photo that said “thank you for being a friend” and it’s a part of the Golden Girls theme song, and he messaged me and finished the song lyric in his message to me and I thought that was so cute. One of the things that drew us together was our appreciation for modern and nostalgic pop culture. He’s a goofy, 6ft tall, lovable nugget.”
2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - i. “When I was an entertainer, he was one of my boss’ best friends so he would come to a lot of the events. The first time we met was at a pool party and he was pretty lit, I’m not going to lie. I had noticed him at a lot

of other events but this particular event, he was [shading himself] under a pool tube. I knew it was him, but we hadn't really talked before... I was wondering if he was okay, so I went over to him and asked him how he was doing and he introduced himself. He said he was shielding himself from the sun but he appreciated so much that I checked on him and that's how we first met."

- b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - i. "Our perception has changed over time; I was hired to be a host and an entertainer at these events, and the promoter for these events was my boss, he was very kind... but the VIPs and people that would go to these events were always very pretentious, and would treat me like I was the "hired help". He was a part of that group, so I never talked to him in the beginning because I always assumed he was like the rest of them in that group. My perception of him being this pretentious, nose-in-the-air kind of guy definitely changed when I allowed myself to be open and vulnerable with him."
- c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
 - i. "As soon as we started dating, we knew that there was an immediate attraction to one another. I always thought he was handsome but I never thought that I would be so romantically and spiritually attracted to him. We started dating 3 ½ months ago and it all happened very quickly but I always knew that I would know when it was right. From the very first

date, I knew. We started dating and we were an hour apart so we would drive to one another. A month ago, I was supposed to leave for basic training but my ship date was pushed back, and he offered for me to stay with him without me even asking. He lives with his parents but we stayed in the guest house off of the main house which was his. It only took him a week to say I love you. The day before he said that, I asked him to be my boyfriend, and when I asked him, I knew I loved him.

- ii. We've been dating for 3 months and have been long distance for two months."

3. What are the most important lessons you've learned from [name] about relationships and communication?

- a. "The one that stands out the most, is that the whole time prior to meeting him, when I would be dating someone or getting to know someone, I felt like the way I processed my emotions and the way I expressed my feelings for someone was wrong. I always felt like the way I wanted to show love or express that was wrong, and the lesson I learned from him was that it wasn't wrong, but I was expressing those feelings toward people that I wasn't naturally compatible with and I was forcing it. With him, I'm my raw self and those romantic behaviors and expressions of love are okay."

4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?

5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?

- a. “The challenges are that a part of both of our love language is physical touch. We hold hands while driving, we say goodbye with a kiss every time we leave the room... so that is a challenge. I never realized how that type of affection affected me in a positive way. Being away from that and being away from this person that makes me feel that way, hurts my heart. The benefits are that we both always have to be on our toes with how to continuously reassure the other that we’re not going anywhere, and that our love is going to always be solid. The constant reminder and reassurance is comforting. We also talk about our plans for the future; we discuss how I’m going to be gone for three years, but when we get married in a year or so, the military will give us a house; he has agreed to come live with me for six months or so on base. We manage the challenges by taking the days one at a time and not drinking from the fire hydrant. One situation at a time; that’s more manageable. I guess besides that, I don’t really think about the challenges that much because it’s so easy.”
6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?
 - i. “I only have Instagram, so we’re always sharing with one another posts that have interest to us. Cute Disney posts, and stuff like that or we’ll find stories on Instagram that will inspire us. While I’m at basic training, we’re writing to each other and I happen to enjoy snail mail. We have a couple phrases that are mainly tied to popular nostalgic movies that we enjoy and

share back and forth. We would rather Facetime than call each other. As far as texting and Instagram, we send each other things on a daily basis within every hour.”

- b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “Yes, definitely. There are some fellow queer couples who say “why do you post so much about your relationship? Aren’t you afraid of scrutiny or judgment?” usually my response is that if my relationship with my partner was that fragile to begin with, and could be fractured from a little bad energy, then we have no business being with each other anyway. My and our use of social media really ties into the expression of “sharing our love”, and I think that’s powerful because I feel far too often folks don’t feel that they have the strength to share their stories because of the stigmas and taboos of queer relationships.”
7. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
- a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?

- b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. “I think that at the core of all of that, is not just positive affirmations and compliments and sweet text messages, it’s honesty. He and I have expressed to one another that this is the most honest and raw that we have been in a relationship. Expressing those needs and those concerns make us stronger on a daily basis.”
8. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?
 - a. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?
 - i. What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance? What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?
 1. “I think it was a month ago, when he asked me to move in with him and I was unpacking my stuff and he allowed me to rearrange the space and tidy up, so I reorganized the house, cleaned, and moved around the furniture. Our part of the house looked completely different when he came home and he was looking

around and I couldn't tell what he was feeling and he said "this makes me feel so much better, I feel like you really made yourself at home here" and there was something special about the transition and exchange of space. It was a feeling we shared of creating a coexisting space that we shared with each other."

2. "Our love language is physical so when we have those peak communication moments, like when he expressed his gratitude for me reorganizing the space, he grabbed both of my hands and we were emitting positive energy to one another. When we're apart, we don't have that physical touch. Geographic separation does make the moments together more precious."
3. "It's nice when you get a little gem on social media and he posts a picture of us as a surprise and he puts a cute quote as the caption... that's nice when it happens. He is a man of little words, so sometimes he will dive into his emotions and give me a small paragraph, which is a lot for him, over text and I know that because of his effort put into write all of that, he really means what he is saying. Those are mini peak communication moments."
4. "This happened this morning, but when I was going through my tests [for basic training], they have to measure your chest and your neck, etc. to determine your body fat. [My partner] really likes health and fitness, so my recruiter pretty much put me in his hands... he took that seriously and worked really hard to maintain

my healthy relationship with food. This morning, the first person that measured me, failed me. I wasn't supposed to have my phone on me, but I had it and right after that happened, I ran to the bathroom and I texted him telling him I failed... he was immediately supportive and told me not to worry about it, telling me I did everything I could. When I went back into the testing room, they said they had to retake my measurements since I failed, and the person who re-taped me, measured me as being two inches under and so they knew that the first person taped me incorrectly and added inches onto my waist by accident. I went from thinking that I was going to be sent home, to calling him back and letting him know that I was really going and he was so excited for me and he was crying, telling me how proud he was of me. We used our phone during that interaction to facilitate that moment."

9. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?
 - a. "I make little videos, and one morning, he was talking to his parrot that his parents have in an atrium. I felt like it was a special moment since it was during the time when we were moving in together so I took a video of him talking to the parrot. Random, little videos like that is how I remember those moments."
10. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?

- a. “I literally imagine coming home to him all the time, and I do get sad because I imagine how happy that moment is going to be for us. I look forward to it but at the same time, I realize that all the time apart is going to make that moment even more special. I imagine that in that moment there won’t be many words, just tears.”
11. How do you identify, as it’s happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
- i. “We remind each other ‘to hold onto this’ for when we’re not together.”
 - b. How do you identify a moment, after it’s happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. “We communicate with gifs, so we’ll look back on moments through sending each other gifs over text.”

Participant B

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
 - a. “His name is -----, he is one of the kindest and most genuine individuals. He thinks things through and doesn’t really rush into making decisions. He’s very sure of himself; he is very unapologetically himself, and that’s one of the things I love about him. He is so secure in who he is, but not in an arrogant way.”
2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?

- c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
- i. “I have known him for probably close to 3 years now and we’ve been dating for 2 ½. Our relationship has changed a lot; the military had a lot to do with it. Before that we would argue a decent amount and just about stupid things; unnecessary arguments. That started to change when he went in and all of our communication was through letters and it hits you that you have to blindly trust this person. He has to put more trust in me because he’s in there with sweaty, nasty guys and I’m still back here where he left me. He’s in the army; we’ve been long distance since January 3rd 2018; a year and 3 months. Long distance has only changed us in a positive way; I think we have both grown substantially as individuals and as a couple. It started through letters where he was in this training environment where you can’t use the phone. You might get a phone call once a month, sometimes for 4 or 5 minutes; one of the calls I got was 45 and that was nice. With writing letters, you’re trying to let them know that everything is okay back home and everything is still good, and your relationship is still strong and you’re still there for them. There was never a negative letter; they were always positive. Same with the phone calls because we didn’t have anything to argue about; you’re just grateful that you got to talk to them. He was finally able to get his phone in May of last year; I’ve been able to talk to him every single day since September.”

3. What are the most important lessons you've learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
 - a. "He has taught me to communicate because I'm the type of person where if something is wrong, I'll just shove it under the rug and not acknowledge it. He taught me to communicate all the time; he really encourages me to be open with him all the time. The long distance has taught me to blindly trust someone and it makes it all worth it in the end when he's able to come home."
4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
 - a. "The challenges are that you don't have that physical touch; you can't talk all the time, you can't really see each other unless you FaceTime... so you kind of need to set apart time, set a date to FaceTime. For the benefits, when he comes home finally and you've spent so much time apart and you can't keep your hands off of them. It makes you grateful and it cuts down on all the negativity and arguing because you don't have time for it. You just have time to be grateful for them. To manage the challenges, I just stay really busy; I am constantly doing something."
6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?

- b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “We Facetime occasionally, we Snapchat each other any time we get the chance. He’ll text me good morning when he wakes up and tells me what he has planned for the day; you tell them about your day as if they were there. We use Instagram; I’ll send him pictures of cute dogs I see or vacations that we want to take together and we’ll send each other things that we see on Twitter that make us think of each other.”
 - c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “I do; we’re not the type of couple that gets jealous over social media. To me, it’s a positive aspect of our relationship.”
7. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
- a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?
 - b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. “I think just to show him that I’m thinking of him constantly; if I’m scrolling through Instagram and I see something that I know he would like; I’ll send him some things like that. We also use gifs; just sending

cute things back and forth to ensure that we still have that spark and that passion. His schedule is pretty crazy but we are able to talk. I have an office job so I'm able to talk too. We just realize when each other is busy and accept it. We're more understanding of that."

8. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?
 - a. "I read a lot, and I was reading this book called "The Mastery of Love". He was playing video games and I was summarizing the chapter for him about being responsible for your own happiness and how you have to both give 100%. We were reflecting on our relationship and how the book was mentioning how to take these steps to make these concepts work in your own relationship, and I was explaining it to him and I thought it was really cool."
 - b. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?
 - i. "I think it makes those moments more rare. You're talking everyday but it's when we're together after not seeing each other for three months and we have this heart to heart about everything. I don't think we have as many of those moments but after we leave each other, we'll reflect on those moments we had while we were together and we'll have a couple more of those moments, but they won't be as substantial as they are when he's here. Sometimes when we reflect on it later, we'll come up with more

questions for each other relating to that moment we had while we were together, that'll cause us to get back into that peak moment."

- ii. "One of my favorite moments was when he was in that training environment and I got a 45 minute phone call and I could not contain my excitement; he didn't want to talk about his day, he wanted to talk about mine even though I wanted to hear everything about what he was doing. When you haven't talked to someone in over a month, you just want to hear their voice. That was one of the biggest moments; of getting that phone call out of the blue."

9. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?

- a. "A big milestone was him getting into the military; that being such a big growing pain for both of us, and then staying together and progressing through that. His parents had a large going-away party for him. It was bittersweet; your mindset is kind of different a few days prior to him leaving when everyone is coming to say goodbye and giving him gifts, and it starts to set in. It was tense between us before he left because we didn't know where our relationship was going to go from there. We had that conversation but it makes it real when you realize they're leaving in three days. I'll post about when he's coming home; he's not big on flaunting the fact that he's in the military. He doesn't like when I post photos of him in his uniform; or when he graduated from boot camp or airborne... usually when we do those celebrations they're in private."

10. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?
- a. “I think of reuniting with him once he gets out of the military; we talk about our plans for our future and buying a house together; putting those plans into action and just being grateful that he’s home. I think about that.”
11. How do you identify, as it’s happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
- a. “When we’re both in silence and appreciating the moment; for example, we went to Dove mountain and climbed to the top to watch the sunset. It was one of those moments of appreciation where you’re grateful for the time you have together. “
 - b. How do you identify a moment, after it’s happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. “I think by taking photos and looking back on all the traveling we’ve done together.”

Participant C

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?

- i. “His name is ----. We met via Bumble. We’ve been dating a little over a year now. Through meeting online, we really got to know each other. I had moved to [city] a little over a month after we met; I was forward with him and told him that I was moving and we agreed to still hang out and see each other. That’s how it all started. Compared to previous relationships I’ve been in, this one is very healthy; in our communication and they give and take of our relationship is very healthy; that’s something I’ve never had before. He’s older than I am; he’s very understanding and understanding of the fact that I have different viewpoints since I am younger and I haven’t been a professional for as long as he has. He is the sweetest, most driven and caring person I know. I say this all the time, but there needs to be more people in the world like him. He truly is so amazing and I’m not just saying that because I date him. We were 7 hours apart for about 11 months, and for the past 3 ½ months, we’ve been 3 hours apart. I think it’s a very unique situation since we did meet in an online setting, however, I see it unique in the fact that... I remember being on my first date with him and I remember thinking how awesome he was. Then when I was moving 7 hours away, I knew I really wanted to make it work. Overtime it has evolved; a relationship is very long term. We’re at the point now where we’re talking about what steps look like to be in the same place and also we’re talking about weddings and our future. It took a little bit to get going in terms of... we were never together during the first part of our relationship and now that we’re closer, I feel like it’s evolved a

lot more since we can see each other more often. I don't like to compare myself to others, but compared to other people in relationships I feel like our relationship has progressed a lot quicker because of the fact that he is older. Our societal norms puts a little added pressure on us..”

3. What are the most important lessons you've learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
 - a. “The number one thing is that you just have to talk to one another; that sounds so basic but in a previous relationship, I never told the person how I felt and it was very surface level. With [name], we definitely talk a lot. I'll call him on my drive home, or we'll Facetime or set out certain times during the day when we can talk, and that helps a lot. I think the other lesson I've learned is that it can't always be about you; while I can be a little selfish, I have learned in a relationship, especially a long distance one, you sometimes have to put your own needs aside.”
4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
 - a. “The challenge is the day to day stuff; there will be times where we visit on the weekends and we'll get in a good routine and I think a challenge is when we're not together, we want that daily routine and interaction. A benefit is that I am a classically independent person; I do enjoy my alone time and I know he does too. Another benefit is that I think it makes you become best friends; especially when the communication is where it needs to be... He is truly my best friend. I tell him everything and it's because we talk to each other all the time. That's how we got

to know each other; that has made us so much stronger as a couple. To manage the challenges, we try to be as open as possible; as women, we don't want to step on people's toes, so we don't want our emotions to be out there all the time. For me, I kind of manage how I express what I'm feeling and question whether it's something that I really need to be upset about. Definitely managing the emotional side of it has been a learning experience for me as a person. I think also being able to call each other out on things; there are days where I'm having a bad day and he will put it into perspective for me and ask how this is going to affect me two days from now... there are days where I will put things into perspective for him as well. Just having that emotional balance within a relationship; we've worked on that a lot and managed how we interact with each other in that way."

6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?
 - i. "I think the biggest routine we follow is that he'll either text me first or I'll text him first; we set expectations for the day of how busy we will be and that helps a lot. I usually get off work later than him but I'll call him on my way home and let him know how my day was. In terms of long distance, we usually know when we're going to see each other next and that's what keeps us going. Not knowing when you'd see them next is terrifying; we always plan things with one another. We're going on

vacation soon... we try to be really good about planning things out and following through on those plans.”

- b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?:
 - i. “He never used FaceTime very much before our relationship and now we’re FaceTime pros; obviously we talk on the phone and we text. I think that’s common for everyone but we make it a point to Facetime one another. We’re not very good about being on social media. I’m on it more often than he is; he doesn’t normally post much. I kind of like that he doesn’t post much about me because that’s not how I want to be shown appreciation; I’d rather him buy me something. When we’re together, I don’t post much. We don’t use Snapchat; we never made that a priority. We really just text or call each other.”
- c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?:
 - i. “I think posting on Instagram and recognizing those moments; for example, recognizing that we’re on a trip together; He only allows me one Instagram per vacation, which I think is funny. Although, with social media and stuff, we know outside of social media how we feel about each other. Social media doesn’t really do anything to enhance that in terms of how lucky we are to be together; I think that feeling comes from being together, not from what they decide to show off to the world. He is not big

on posting on social media; we're confident in how we feel about each other so we don't feel that we need that type of gratification."

7. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
 - a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?
 - b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. "Sometimes it is; sometimes there's the occasional Instagram post. Also, when we're on Instagram we'll send each other things throughout the day. We appreciate each other's humor so we like to show each other that we're thinking of each other throughout the day by sending each other funny things. I don't think it really makes our relationship stronger but it definitely lets them know that you're thinking of them which is nice."
 - ii. "I feel like I do it more than him; I think it's kind of reverse psychology, where I am a person that needs a lot of affirmation, and he doesn't. He will know when I'm stressed and he'll affirm me in that way over the phone, text or Facetime. He's always there to affirm me when I really need it or whether I don't need it; he always offers it."
8. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other

electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?

- a. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?
 - i. “I truly felt in this moment that he really did have feelings for me; we had been dating for 3 or 4 months at this point, and I was driving back to [city] during a snowstorm throughout the 7 hour drive. It was awful and I was trying to make it back, and he called me every 30 minutes to make sure I was physically okay but also make sure I was doing alright emotionally since it was so stressful. I just remember that I had been driving about 6 hours already and I was only halfway home, and I remember just feeling that he was really trying to take care of me.”

“Sometimes I’ll screenshot moments that we have over text that were really memorable and I’ll save them to look back on them when I’m feeling down; I think the biggest thing regarding the geographic distance, when I was in [city] I was an hour ahead and that was difficult because I would need to do things on my own time schedule, but it would be hard because he would want me to stay up and talk or whatever. Also, it would be difficult if I was traveling a lot. Probably the biggest challenge we had was figuring out how to work out and manage all the different aspects of our own lives, combined with our relationship.”

- ii. What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance? What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?
 1. “I definitely think that we have more of those moments over FaceTime because we can actually see each other and it’s real time. I think it’s easier to have those moments because I really feel connected to him and we’re giving our full attention to each other. We’re so lucky where we can have a long distance relationship so easily with the technology we have; we don’t have to rely on seeing each other in person to know what’s going on.”
9. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?
 - a. “We will celebrate our anniversary over social media; also for birthdays or when we do things together, sometimes we post about it and can look back on those big moments that way. Those big milestones are difficult to celebrate while long distance so we’ll post something small to memorialize that.”
 - b. “I do get jealous seeing couples who are together physically when they are on social media sharing those moments.”
10. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?

- a. “I imagine what it’s going to be like when we’re not long distance anymore; moving in together, and how that’s going to feel and how we’re going to document that. I dream about that, but I don’t know what it looks like yet. Sometimes it’s hard for me to imagine what that looks like since we don’t know what our timeline is for that yet.”
11. How do you identify, as it’s happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
- a. “I usually just like to take photos of that moment. I just get so wrapped up in the moments and I take my phone out so I’m trying to be better about soaking it all in and not having to document everything. I’m trying to not live behind the lens, but at the same time I like to document things using my camera and remember that time we had and be able to show kids someday.”
 - b. How do you identify a moment, after it’s happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. “I always remember how to felt in a moment, but look back on it and wish I would have taken more photos of my surroundings to be able to reminisce on it more.”

Participant D

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
 - a. “[Name] is easy going, adventurous, fun to be around and fun-loving, she is personable. She can be in any situation and she is easily adaptable and likeable. I never worry about introducing her to a bunch of new people or anything.”

2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - i. “We met online and then talked for a couple texts and went out on a date here in [city], and then she moved a month and a half later to [city]. That was in January of 2018, and I have known her since December of 2017.”
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - i. “We definitely have gotten closer; we spent a lot of time together even before she moved. We spent long, extended periods of time together and I think long distance has helped with our communication. It’s just the nature of long distance; you have to stay in communication.”
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
 - i. “It’s been long distance for almost the duration; Jan of 2018 she moved to [city] and she told me early on that she got a job offer there and asked me if I still wanted to hang out while she was here; we pretty much hung out for a month straight, so it was an easy decision when she was leaving [to continue the relationship] since we had such a good time.”
3. What are the most important lessons you’ve learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
 - a. “I think that we are good at communicating how we feel because when you’re not together, you can’t pick up on some of the nuances of body language, so we have to communicate with each other and let each other know how we’re actually

feeling. [For example,] If we're frustrated about something, we try not to keep it bottled up because that doesn't help the situation. I think that helps when we're together in person also, because we are still very communicative."

4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
 - a. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. "I think the challenges are that you'd like to hang out and do things that are not predicated by just the weekend or days off that you have from work. The benefits of a long distance relationship, outside of growing communication; I think it's challenging; it's not a long term goal to stay long distance. I've gotten better at communication; at times I'm not great at it. I'm not great at texting back right away. I try not to have my phone strapped to me at all times. [To manage the challenges], being communicative about how we're feeling and not letting it bottle up or letting something turn into any form of resentment."
5. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?
 - i. "Our relationship would be a lot harder without FaceTime, just because it doesn't feel as long distance as a phone call does. We both maintain flexibility of being able to alter our schedules at times. It can be challenging but that's one way we've been able to fight the long distance

nature of it. Just being flexible and if something comes up on a weekend, that's work related and that we can't dictate, just making it work some way else and putting in the effort to make it work out."

- b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - i. "We don't use social media regularly, but she likes Instagram a lot more than I do, but we'll send each other little funny things that we find. I'd say we definitely use more of smartphones and computers; being able to FaceTime and see each other. I don't tend to share much on social media."
 - c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. "I think we see things that look fun to do [on social media]. We're going on a cruise at the end of the month together; we saw things online about it. I'm all for taking photos, I'll send it to my mom, but I don't feel that I need to share with everyone online. She and I have a shared album that we'll put photos in, and I'll take photos of her doing stuff and I think that's nice for her and I to have but I don't feel like everyone needs to see that [through social media]."
6. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
- a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?

- b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. “For me it’s done more often verbally over the phone or through FaceTime while we’re long distance, not necessarily through any social platforms. She will text me [in the morning], and I think we got in that habit because she was an hour ahead of me in [city] so she was getting up, and still gets up significantly earlier than I do. She gets up and works out in the mornings and I don’t do that until night. She will text me when she knows I’m about to be awake around 6:30 or 7. We’ll talk throughout the day but not a ton; I think that’s hard to do with a job; you have to be present there as well since they’re the ones paying the bills. We struggle with that a little bit as well.”
7. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?
 - a. “I don’t know if I can pinpoint one, but I’d say that the ones that are more significant in value happen more in person; I think you have deeper conversations in person about our future and how things will look moving forward. I’m sure we’re going to have another of those conversations in not too long to figure out where we’re going to live. I don’t necessarily know if there’s one in particular

that stands out [that happened] through text or anything like that; probably more in person is where the highest value of those conversations come from.”

- b. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?
 - i. “If we have a significant conversation to have and we’re not together, it’s probably over FaceTime; I think over text, your intent and tone can get lost pretty quickly and that can lead to even bigger issues so we try not to have [any] substantive or important conversations over text or even phone because you can’t pick up on body language or anything through [those channels].”
8. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?
 - a. “I think our relationship has continued to grow and evolve as we’ve been together longer. We make it a point to be together on birthdays if possible to celebrate those little things. [For example] On valentines, we weren’t able to [be together] since it was on a Tuesday so we’ll do it on another date, maybe a weekend.”
 - i. How does digital media play into celebrating holidays and birthdays together from a distance?
 1. “We’ll usually make a point to FaceTime; I usually try to send her something on some of those days; when she moved to [city], she was having a tough day so I sent her a box filled with a bunch of things she likes; when she was in [city] for that long period, I sent

her some flowers since I knew she was having a hard time; just to let her know I'm thinking about her."

9. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?
 - a. "I definitely look forward to those moments, for example, when I go on work trips to [city] I have a lot more to look forward to; going out to dinner and being able to see her as opposed to just being along like I normally am. I think the sense of anticipation is cool that we're so excited to see each other; even now, when we see each other a lot more."
10. How do you identify, as it's happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
 - a. "I think it's more of a feeling, but we remember them by taking a photo or two, but we're also good at being present and staying in the moment."
 - b. How do you identify a moment, after it's happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. "I think photos help with that when they're printed out. Also rehashing some of those moments; we'll laugh about some moments that happen on our trips. Little memories; through conversation and just remembering and enjoying some of the fun things that we do."

Participant E

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
 - a. "I am in a long distance relationship with my boyfriend [name]; we have been long distance for 4 and we've been dating for 7. He is very kind, he works at a

marketing firm currently, but he is going through a life transition so that may change soon. As far as his personality, he is the kindest person I know. He jumps on whatever interests I have. He is very flexible, and incredibly smart. I always joke that he is smarter than me; he is very interested in research and he is constantly on his phone reading investigative journals and stuff like that. He is a natural skeptic; he is also atheist. Physically he is very tall, curly hair, medium build.”

2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
 - i. “We met our first day of college in the dorms at the [university]; we were on the same floor and his roommate introduced us. We had the same friend group our freshman year and our sophomore year, I was spending a lot of time with him and finally after two weeks of noticing chemistry between us, we started pursuing a romantic relationship. It was very high risk dating each other since we shared all the same friends. We started dating, and I graduated 2 years later, I graduated a year early and went for my masters in [city], which is an hour from [university]. We continued dating then, and we both applied for PhD programs; he went to the [international university], and I went to the [university]. At that point we

had been dating for three years, so we were in a long distance, international long distance relationship.”

3. What are the most important lessons you’ve learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
 - a. “One thing is that you have to actively try to communicate with the other person; just calling each other or texting when you feel like it doesn’t work. We are both very busy people so if we don’t put that effort in, we get caught up in our lives and don’t talk to each other. I’ve also learned that you can’t make someone communicate the way you want them to. I used to love using Snapchat, but that was something he wasn’t into, so I gave that up. Same thing with face book; he doesn’t use it. I’ve just learned that we won’t really communicate via social media.”
4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
 - a. “The main challenge is making sure that we stay in each other’s lives. We won’t see each other for two or three months; sharing the novel things within my life with him; for example, I have recently started making my bed which is a big change for me because I have become a lot neater in my house-keeping. When we first started dating, I wasn’t like that. In order to maintain our relationship, we have to share even mundane things like that. The other challenge is talking to him on the phone; he has major depression so his reaction to stress is to withdraw, and his reaction to anxiety is to avoid. When he is stressed, and depressed, he will

withdraw from the world and being in a different country trying to get a hold of him would be difficult and frustrating. I wouldn't hear from him for three-four days. Not being able to get a hold of him sometimes has been a major challenge. A benefit has been that, as a grad student, not talking to him for a day and him understanding that has been helpful. I am much less productive when he's around."

6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?
 - i. "We communicate exclusively through texts and calls. We text but we never have full conversations via text; we didn't have smartphones until two years into our relationship so we never established the norm of having full conversations via text. When we do text; it's either good morning or small texts throughout the day. We also text to schedule phone dates. When we first started dating; we tried to do Skype, but internet connections didn't work with that. We also tried this thing called "Rabbit" which is an app that allows you to synchronize Netflix streams so you can watch the same program at once."
 - b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?

- i. “He doesn’t use Instagram or twitter; he checks Facebook maybe once a month. I don’t have facebook because I deemed it was bad for my mental health. I also deleted my Snapchat a couple years ago.”
 - c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “Sometimes; it’s nice to be able to look back on photos. Although we don’t utilize that as much as we could.”
- 7. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
 - a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?
 - b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. “Yes, if I’m stressed out, he will text me some of the cute phrases we use between just us. We will send each other small affirmations; we will say I love you a lot via text. Same with good morning or goodnight. We also do this thing when we started dating, but it’s called ‘one thing you don’t know about me’; self disclosing with each other is a good way to get to know each other. We also share with each other ‘one good thing that happened today’ which is nice to share our moments of gratitude with each other.”

8. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?

a.

i. What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance? What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?

1. “With his depression, and with my mental health, it has taken a toll on our relationship, so therapy would be very helpful, but long distance relationships don’t have a lot of options for those services. We explored online therapy app options and didn’t really like what we saw, but we did find one service where it was a guided intervention called ‘our relationship’ which is self guided therapy, so we focused on a lack of interdependence through that program. The program walked us through steps to address the issue and there was a moment where it was talking about emotions, and we ended up disclosing to each other a lot of personal emotions and we both really connected to each other’s feelings, including our negative feelings. That happened over Skype.”

ii. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?

1. “It makes those moments less frequent, but when they do happen it makes us appreciate them more. Every so often he will send me a text message out of the blue which will make me really happy and it will speak to me that he spent time to express that to me.”
9. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?
- a. “There have been a lot of transition point in our relationship with us moving so frequently; digital media made it possible for us to maintain our relationship through those times.”
10. How do you identify, as it’s happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
- a. “I’ll take photos when we’re together sometimes; he’s not into photos that much, so we’re not going to share that on social media but it is a way of identifying those moments that are worth taking a photo of; moments that I would say that I savor are moments when are phones are not nearby and we’re really enjoying the moment together.”
 - b. How do you identify a moment, after it’s happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. “I don’t think we do a very good job at doing that; I’ll probably say to him afterwards how much it meant for him to do something for me, or if he sends a sweet text message, I’ll thank him for it and tell him how much it meant to me. Acknowledging to him how much I enjoy those moments.”

Participant F

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
 - a. “He's on spring break right now, so he went to [state] and he's been gone already two or three days and I'm already missing him! He is very fun and funny; he's very laid-back and relaxed too. He's incredibly smart and caring. He's a teacher for middle school students, but he eventually wants to open his own beer garden. He likes to dream big. He is 26 and I'm 25; we're fairly close in age.”
2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
 - i. “I've known him now four and a half years which sounds simultaneously both so short and so long at the same time. We kind of met at my cousin's house after one of their basketball games, but we were only introduced briefly. I ended up sitting at a different side of the table all night so we didn't officially meet that night we were just introduced. But a week later we went to a concert in this park and my cousin who is one of his best friends brought him along and we officially met then and talked at this concert. We met during the summer; he went to [university] and I went to [university] and we did long distance for the first two years of our

relationship. The first semester that we did long distance, I was in [state] and he was in [state] and then the second semester I was in [international country] and he was in [state]. He had transferred from community college so by the time we started dating he had a year left, but then it ended up turning into an extra quarter or whatever. After I got back from [international country], I was back in [state] and he was still in [state] up until December and then he moved to [city] after that. We're kind of done a whole range of distances that has lasted about two years.”

3. What are the most important lessons you've learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
 - a. “He likes to joke that we're always the worst at what we study, so he always says that I'm the worst communicator... I think honestly the biggest thing I've learned is to be open and to share my actual feelings or my actual thoughts because I think a lot of the time I'm just like ‘oh it's fine or whatever’ but he's always like do you actually feel this way? I think the biggest thing is to be open and to have patience as well. He is really good at being in the moment and he doesn't use his phone a lot, but for me, I'm on my phone constantly and I want to talk to him constantly. When I'm not getting communication from him I have to remind myself that this is normal and I need to be patient with him.”
4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?

- a. “I think the challenge is trying to communicate when you are so far away. Especially in [international country], it was so rough trying to talk to him because of the time difference. While we would try to talk, he would be busy or I would be in class... it made it really difficult. I think it's hard trying to navigate your schedules when they're so different and still trying to be affectionate with one another and trying to talk to one another. Also a lack of physical communication is difficult. You don't realize how difficult it is to be missing someone and talking to someone and all you want to do is hold their hand. Those things were the hardest I would say. As for benefits, he doesn't hinder me from experiencing my life. We are very independent people and we're very comfortable with being without the other person and it doesn't bother us too much. I appreciated that he was so comfortable with me going to [international country] and then coming back to [state]; he was so understanding of those circumstances and I could grow as a person during that time. I feel like our time while we are part makes our time while we're together so much more valuable.”
6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?
 - i. “I realized last night that we have done this thing since we started dating where we say goodnight but we say it in such a specific way... It's almost formulaic where we say ‘I love you, I miss you, I hope you sleep well’ and then we send three emojis to one another. He will send me those three

emojis anytime he thinks I'm upset or just wants to convey love. We started this when we first started dating and I think it's cool that that has stuck so long. We text as much as we can but he's not super great at using his phone; we don't really do a lot of social media, we post about each other but I wouldn't say it's a form of communication for us. I would say it's mostly like calling FaceTiming texting. When I was in [international country] my phone broke and we had to Google Chat on our emails.”

- b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “I think social media brings us together and that aspect I enjoy about it, but we don't get direct enjoyment from using the media. It's more of enjoyment that comes from being able to communicate with each other in that way. I feel really fortunate that we are able to communicate so easily because of phones better computers and things like that.”
7. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
- a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?

- b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. “Yeah, I would definitely say that we do those things more often than not; it's a lot of gratitude and appreciation for each other and a lot of expressions of love. There's only so many times you can ask someone what's going on in their day, so we share a lot of how much we love each other and how grateful we are for the other person and that happens pretty frequently.”
8. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?
 - a. What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance? What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?
 1. “I want to say it was three years into our relationship and he was in [state] and I was in [state]. I like to go to bed super early and he likes to go out and stay out late... but he called me and left me a message and it was while he was drunk but it was one of the most sweetest messages I had ever received in my entire life. He was very complimentary and talking about how much he loved being with me and how much you miss me and how hard it was to be

away from me and how excited he was to see where our relationship would go. it was very sweet and unexpected. I mentioned it to him the next morning and he only partially remembered it and we kind of discussed it again at that point and had a really beneficial conversation at that point.”

ii. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?

1. “I think most of our peak communication moments happen in person because those are the times where we are so excited to be together but I do feel that digital communication helps us have almost peak communication or maybe just a step below peak communication.”

9. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?

a. “We celebrate our anniversary, and I will usually post about that on social media. We met at a park, so every year I plan for us to go back to that park and take a picture and I'll post that. He occasionally posts on our anniversary but he's more of an a birthday person, or if there is something that he wants to celebrate in my life that he wants to celebrate, he'll post about that. We'll celebrate birthdays using social media, but besides our anniversary we haven't had many big milestones yet in our relationship. Although when he doesn't post about me it

doesn't become a point of contention; I would rather him plan a date for me then post on social media about me.”

10. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?

- a. “I imagine that all the time; there's nothing that we do as a tradition but we definitely pick each other up from the airport and sometimes he will come with flowers. We will usually spend the day together after he picks me up from the airport or after I pick him up.”

11. How do you identify, as it's happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?

- a. “I'm actually the worst at being in the moment and I think a lot of savoring has to do with being in the moment; if there's something I want to savor, I just take a moment and appreciate it but I could do a better job of returning to that moment in the future.”
- b. How do you identify a moment, after it's happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. “I think photos are the best way to do that; I think within my relationship I will usually say something to him about how wonderful the moment is and how nice it is that we can experience it together. I think we identify the moment by being able to memorialize that together and we usually do that through photos that we can look back on. We went traveling this summer and every time I look back on the photos I think of how great of a trip it was, so I think that's a great way to savor a moment after it's happened.”

Participant G

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
 - a. “He’s a very intelligent person, which sometimes makes us butt heads because he can be a know-it-all sometimes and that gets us into fight sometimes. He's very smart and funny, but he will be shy around people he doesn't know very well, but he's not shy around his family or me. He's always been very focused on school and work; he's very passionate about his work. That's always been something that's very important to me and him as well.”
2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known him?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
 - i. “We've been together for 6 years; we met when we were in high school and then we dated throughout college. We've known each other for 8 years, we met at a church retreat and we became really good friends. He always had a crush on me and he told me that, but I was not interested originally, which is funny because we are now engaged. We met and we were friends for 2 years and then we started dating and we've been long distance for 5 years. The distance isn't too bad because he's in [city] and I'm here in [city], but it definitely still has been challenging for a lot of reasons. I think we trust each other a lot because we've known each other

for such a long time, and especially in a long distance relationship trust is very important. We became long-distance when he went away for college to [university] and I stayed here in [city] and went to the [university]. When we started long distance we had only been dating for a year and both of us didn't want to base where we went to college off of our relationship because our relationship wasn't very serious at the time and we didn't want to regret going to a certain school only because the other person was going there. We came to terms with that decision because it we knew it was best for both of us and we were willing to accept whatever was going to happen as a result of that.”

3. What are the most important lessons you've learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
 - a. “I would say that communication is very important; we have been in a long-distance relationship for so long that we can't rely on the feel-good feeling that you have when you're with the person; we've had to rely a lot on getting to know each other and actually being able to communicate with each other. Even in being able to express admiration towards the other person in a small amount of time while we're not busy during our day. We always try to find time for that communication whether it's a five-minute phone call or if it's a longer communication experience where we talk about what's happening in our lives. I also recently learned that you can't hold back or you shouldn't be afraid to express your feelings. there are higher stakes because we are in a long-distance

relationship. It's important to express your feelings when they arise otherwise issues will never resolve themselves.”

4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
 - a. “A big challenge is that I get kind of lonely sometimes; especially now, this is the first year that I'm living by myself which has its pros and cons, but a big con is that it's hard seeing your friends moving in with their significant others and doing things with them, and wishing you had that as well. I find myself comparing my relationship to others. I think part of the communication aspect of our relationship is that it's important to always be in communication, and that's not always to say that we are constantly in contact with each other, but we try to always stay in the loop with each other. I think I benefit that [my fiancé] and I both experienced is being able to be independent in college and it was nice for us to go through college and have each other as best friends but also be able to figure out who we want to be individually and have our own spaces to do that in. I think that was valuable to have that experience individually before we go into a life of being in a relationship with each other.”
6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?

- i. “I’m terrible at texting; I don’t text very often. He is the same way so we call each other. When we were in college we had a certain time when we would call each other, for me it would be while I would be driving to work because it’s the most convenient time for me; now that I’m out of college it kind of depends on when I have time to call. we don’t have as much of a schedule as we used to just because we both have crazy schedules. He usually calls me once he gets off work because he gets off later than I do. We use Skype but we don’t use Skype as much as we used to because we don’t have the time anymore. He gets off work at 7 and at that point we usually just call each other.”
- b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “He doesn’t use social media as much as he used to. Once we both got out of college it stopped being as important to us and I think a part of that stems from the fact that social media seems to be a way for couples to compare themselves to other people and relationships and we both agree that that’s not very healthy for either of us because everyone’s relationship is different regardless of whether or not they’re in a long distance relationship. We used to affirm each other on social media when we were in the beginning of college or end of high school, but now it’s just not something that’s important to us.”

- c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “I would say digital media more so than social media. I really only use social media to share with my family members and close friends but we definitely take a lot of pictures so we have shared albums of photos of things that we've done together. If I haven't been able to talk to him all day, being able to look back at the photos and remember a great vacation that we had or share with him a nice memory; I think that's definitely helped in terms of when some days are more difficult than others.”
7. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
 - a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?
 - b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. “Aside from texting, he's send bitmoji sometimes. If he's too busy to text me. If he sends me a bitmoji that says ‘miss you’, then it's kind of an unspoken signal that today is going to be cheap is easy for us to talk ‘oh, here's a cute bitmoji to remind you that I still care about you and that I don't have time to text you today.’ We text each other positive affirmations but we don't really use social media to publicly affirm each

other as much as we used to. We stopped feeling the need to share those details of our relationship with other people.”

8. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?
 - a. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?
 - i. What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance? What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?
 1. “The only thing that comes to mind was in December or October; we had both graduated and we also both started our jobs after college. I had just moved into my own apartment and I remember feeling really anxious about moving because I was really content with how everything was going in [city]; the idea of moving was really scary. I remember I called him and we got into a whole discussion because it was the first time that I had expressed that moving to [city] was not the most ideal thing for me in the moment. I will be the first to admit that I can get heated and blinded by a discussion. I remember we were talking about it and it had hit a dead end where I was getting angry and we both

determined that we needed to take a step back. We discussed it a little later that night, and I expressed how I was feeling and he acknowledged that and validated my feelings. The fact that we were able to express everything that we were feeling about moving together and starting the new chapter was a moment that I was really proud of for both of us; for overcoming the emotions that we both were feeling in that moment and being able to talk about it in a way that was productive towards our relationship.”

9. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?
 - a. “Well, I just got engaged last week! It was actually interesting because I had a conversation with him where I expressed to him that I didn't want to post a picture of the ring because I feel like that's not what the point of getting engaged is. I definitely wanted to post about getting engaged because I have a lot of family members that I communicate with over social media who would obviously want to know that I've had gotten engaged. He insisted that I post a picture of the ring because it was an accomplishment in a sense for him; he was proud that it was a nice ring and that he spent a lot of time planning for it. But I thought it was interesting that he didn't agree with me and wanted me to post a picture of it. We told the people closest to us first and then announced it on social media for everyone else. We were in [state] so we celebrated while we were there.”

10. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?
- a. “A lot of times when we reunite we will embrace each other and hug each other. I don't think we immediately say I love you; he's very intentional with when he says I love you. We usually we have something planned right after we reunite because it's nice to get out and do something together to kind of preserve that unity that we've been missing. Not having seen him since I got engaged, I'm not sure how it will be different! We have grown to not be very dependent on each other, but I will probably want more attention probably since I want to start planning things for the wedding. I think we will be more excited to see each other since we will be that much closer to being with each other for good.”
11. How do you identify, as it's happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
- i. “I think the conversations we have that I feel strengthen our relationship; any moment where I find it as a pivotal moment of moving in the right direction is how I identify one of those moments.”
 - b. How do you identify a moment, after it's happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. “I would say that there have been negative interactions where we have been fighting and I have thought that I am right about something; When he mentions something I said that hurt him; I wish I could pay more attention to those moments.”

- ii. “Little moments also that are meaningful are ones where I wish I could remember better.”

Participant H

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.
 - a. “She is a very introverted person who is determined in her work. She is very serious, driven, and organized. She is very focused in what she does but she is also more of a critical thinker and she likes to challenge things and that’s why I think our relationship is nicely balanced because I’m more of an extrovert.”
2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
 - i. “I’ve known her since I was 13. I was friends with her sister; her sister and I went to college together. I moved to [city] and a couple years later she moved to [city] as well; and that’s when we started dating. I always had a crush on her but we never developed on that. We had a lot of commonalities, like being from the same hometown so we went on a few dates and hit it off. She knew she wanted to go to law school, but prior to that we got an apartment together in [city] in August and we lived there

for a year because we knew the following year in that fall she would be going to law school; she ended up being accepted to [university], but I wasn't ready to move away from [city] back to [city]; I knew that because it was my first year in real estate I needed to do a full year out in [city] so that's why I didn't leave until the end of the year. We were long distance for about 4 months."

3. What are the most important lessons you've learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
 - a. "She has taught me a lot because she's a lot better with communication than I am; as men, we usually don't talk about our emotions until the little things get to us and then something bigger happens, when we let it all out. She is much better about talking through things and talking about her emotions; we also try not to go to bed mad at each other either."
4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
 - a. "The main challenge is not seeing each other on a daily basis; that's a big adjustment. There comes a time when you just feel like something is missing. However, a benefit is that throughout long distance I have learned a lot more about her. We've both got on a schedule of when we talk to each other. We are both serious about our business and our school, but we still made time for each other. Our main challenge is the different time frames that we're on; I thank god that I have more of a flexible schedule with realty so I can stay up later because

she, being in law school, isn't getting done until 10pm so I'm lucky enough where I have more flexibility with my job."

5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
 - a. "I think it's important to have an understanding of what the other person is doing with their time; For example, I know for certain sometimes that I need to let her focus on her school work. I also think it's important to have stability and also the strength of your relationship plays into how you manage the challenges."
6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?
 - b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - i. "Definitely phone calls; even just sending little texts throughout the day to let each other know that we're thinking of each other. Social media has made it really easy to get in contact with each other. As cliché as it sounds, for modern millennial relationships, tagging each other in memes, just funny stuff, like that lets them know that you're thinking of them."
 - c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. "Yes and no; because from how I see it, Instagram is a cool place where you can connect with your friends and you can see cool things and receive

news; but I think it is that Instagram has turned into the worldwide web now, where things kind of pop up on your screen. Whether it be some provocative image of a girl or whatever, I think it's important that you don't get caught up in what's shown on Instagram or social media. I think it's important to stay in the moment in your relationship. With that being said I don't think people should be following the accounts that will have an effect on their relationship. Instagram has become a place where everyone wants to put their best face forward, and make it look like they have their life together. Her and I have a positive relationship with social media; we were brought up in a household where you always present yourself the best way possible."

7. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
 - a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?
 - b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. "Yeah absolutely; definitely giving her an "atta girl" or a random appreciative post here and there if she's doing something important in her life. It's fun to know that you have that type of support, and it's nice to show that type of support privately, it doesn't always have to be over social media. I think I don't do it as much over social media, but once in a

while absolutely. We share more of those positive types of talk more over texts, calls, or privately. We are more private in our relationship. As happy and outgoing as I am, and having to put a social media presence out there, I really don't like [social media]. I try not to put too much out there about myself.”

8. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?
 - a. “I don't think it was one big moment, but generally looking forward to her calling and knowing that the call at the end of the day is a reward, in a sense. I think being long distance, you need to talk through things a lot more. You can't really do that over text, you have to be genuine [over FaceTime or calls].”
 - b. Distance follow up (for long distance couples): How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments?
 - c. What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance? What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?
 - d.
 - i. “If we wanted our relationship to thrive, we knew that we had to make a better attempt at communicating more. I'm good at talking but I'm better at listening, so that was a challenge for me; I feel like it's harder to explain my emotions or I'm afraid of the reaction sometimes. The geographic

separation was a learning curve for both of us that has turned into a benefit because we are able to talk things out as a couple a lot more now.”

- e. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?
 - i. “We’re probably not the best example to use for this, because she doesn’t really even like photos that much. She is very shy from the camera even though she’s gorgeous and she can be truly photogenic sometimes, she really does hate photos. In that regard, when you do try to memorialize a moment, she’ll definitely will be grateful for that. However, If it’s a big event and you post about it, it shows that you are thinking of them and showing a level of respect and that they’re a top priority. When she got into [university], that was a huge milestone; it was a big thing for all of us because my family is all with [that university] and my mom’s there; my mom kind of got her foot in the door and she was also lucky enough to get a half scholarship so it was huge for her to get in and I think that’s why she puts more pressure on herself because everyone’s invested in her success.”
9. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?
- a. “It’s never a crazy moment, of course we’re so happy to be back together but it’s more of a feeling of being back to normal. There’s no lost time between us; but I definitely hate it when we’re not together all time.”

10. How do you identify, as it's happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?

- a. "Pictures are always a great way to snapshot a moment in time; for me, it's about taking a step back, taking it all in and making sure that I can memorialize it in my mind because I think it's all about telling stories as well. I think we don't value and tell stories as much as we used to because you can see through a picture. So stepping back, visualizing things and taking it all in, but also taking those snapshots helps you fall back on that memory and you can go back and spout out that memory to anyone when it comes time to do so."
- b. How do you identify a moment, after it's happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. "Like I said, she doesn't like photos that much. I wish we would take more time to take photos and things like that, but also looking back on past memories, I think there's a lot of value in talking about those memories; being able to go ahead and talk about those memories; you don't have to live it just once or go back to a photo. A photo makes it easier to relive it, but I think it's important to talk about those memories too. We like to travel a lot so for big trips I like to hold onto tickets and brochures and stuff like that for things we go to, and -this is pretty cliché- but we get shot glasses from all the places we go to."

Participant I

1. Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words.

2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
 - i. “His name is [name]; he is really cool, he is very self motivated, highly driven, very funny (which is interesting because that’s normally not a big character trait I seek) He makes me laugh all the time. He is from [European country]; we met on a website where people are set up to crash on people’s couches while they’re traveling. He was cycling across the US, from [city] to [city] and he stayed [with me] two nights and then he expressed interest in my and I thought it was crazy because he lived in [European country] and I lived in [city], but I met back up with him in [city] a few weeks later and agreed to go out with him. He continued on to [city] and he ended up coming back to [city] and ended up staying with me for three weeks. He’s back in [European country] now though, but I have plans to meet him there this summer so that’s very exciting. I’m looking forward to that. Everything that happened began in January so it’s only been a couple months.”
3. What are the most important lessons you’ve learned from [name] about relationships and communication?

- a. “I have gone through a lot of trauma in my life, and that has really affected me in my relationships and that’s part of the reason I study what I study. I was kind of giving him a rundown of my life and all these terrible things that have happened and I basically told him that I thought I wasn’t good enough for him, and he kind of rejected that idea at first but brought it up a few days later and he said it was bullshit, and told me to never say that about myself again. He really validates me and I think that’s been one of the biggest things I’ve gotten out of the relationship so far. As far as communication, he is really adamant that I be open with him and really challenge myself to talk about certain things that are difficult for me. When I go to [European country where he’s from] this summer, we’re going to have to communicate more and that might be challenging.”
4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ?
5. How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
 - a. “For me, being in a LDR is not too hard. I miss him but I am also very hopeful for the future because I’m visiting him soon; I kind of have a positive perspective about not being together currently. One benefit is that I can focus on things without having to do a lot of real-time relational maintenance.”
6. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
 - a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?

- b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “Normally he texts me first, but sometimes I text him first too. He’s 9 hours ahead of me, so usually when I’m going to bed, he’ll be getting up. He FaceTime me, and we use WhatsApp so text all the time so we’ll set up times to call each other based on each other’s schedules. We use WhatsApp to send each other messages but we’re also friends on facebook and Instagram, so we like each other’s posts and little things like that.”
7. What language barriers are there and how do you manage that over digital or social media?
 1. “I really love languages and learning, so I think it’s really cool that he is a [foreign language] speaker; I took a [language] class a couple years ago and now I’m re-learning it because his family doesn’t speak English at all and he has a daughter that doesn’t speak English so I’m trying to learn at least conversational [language] and anticipate what they might ask me when I visit. As far as our communication back and forth, I’m really hoping and understanding; I’m really motivated to understand what he’s saying. Sometimes he’ll need feedback as far as word choice or pronunciation.”
 - b. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?

- i. What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance? What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?
 1. “Actually, I’d say it was a few days ago and we video messaged each other and he was with his daughter for the weekend so they both FaceTimed me, and he would try to get her to say some things in English. I would say that experience was especially impactful because it was the first time that I had seen him and his daughter really interact together and it was really overall a positive experience; I messaged him a few hours afterwards and was telling him how I felt about it. I think that was my favorite moment so far in our relationship.”
 2. “I don’t think that geographic separation has had a huge impact because going into this relationship, we both really thought about it and knew what we would be getting ourselves into and we were confident with that decision. Another thing that he does which helps, is to minimize the distance by saying “mars is far, [his country] is close”; he kind of puts it into perspective for me. I think the distance is harder for him actually.”

10. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?

- a. “I think one of the first things that we celebrated was when he finished his last round of cycling, and he had been riding about 80 miles a day; the day after he finished, I bought a piñata and we went to a park and it was kind of a celebration of him cycling 2400 miles and we took photos there also. Another milestone was when he first said he loved me, but that was in person.”
11. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?
- a. “I think about this a lot, but also my therapist has me do imagined interactions; it kind of differs from time to time, but I imagine meeting him at the bus station and just jumping on him out of excitement. Basically just me getting there with my bags and he has a small car so I plan for all my bags to fit into his car, and the logistics of it. Obviously I’d give him a hug immediately; he also might cry. He’s an easy crier; the first time we FaceTimed, he was super emotional.”
12. How do you identify, as it’s happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
- a. “I don’t know if I do this while it’s happening, but I think just trying to take in his expressions, his voice, the look of his face, his smile, all those things. Really try to soak it in so I can remember more clearly that moment after it’s passed. I feel like a lot of moments while we’re together are ones worth remembering. I just think it’s important to be very aware and mindful of our interactions.”
 - b. How do you identify a moment, after it’s happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?

- i. “I don’t think about it right after it’s happened, but with him being so far, I do try to remember certain moments that we’ve had and focus on the good ones. I actually have this idea where I’m going to write down different experiences or memories that we shared and put all of those in a jar and every once in a while, take one out and read it and think about the moment and remember it in that way.”

Participant J

Who is [name]? Let me get to know this person through your words. What is his personality like?

- a. “His name is [name], and I think the best way to describe him is very kind and patient, especially for this. I feel like I was attracted to him because he never tried to pressure me into anything; it feels easy. It all kind of fell into place. He is also very into sports and stuff too, which I am very into sports also. He is just very sweet, and kind, and nice to me.”
2. Tell me about your relationship with [name]. How did your relationship with [name] come to be?
 - a. Prompt: How long have you known [name]?
 - b. Prompt: How has your relationship with [name] changed over time?
 - c. Prompt: How long has this been a long distance relationship? How did that happen?
 - i. “I’ve actually known him since high school; we were in the same kind of circle of friends but it was one of those things where we were in the same circle but never really had anything [going on] and nothing really came of

that but we were always kind of friends. He knew my cousin and he also knew another one of my friends that goes [university] too. He actually went here up until junior year and then he transferred; so I've known him for a long time but never thought anything of it. It was weird because he transferred and then we started talking a little bit, keeping in touch, but then we started talking on the phone, and FaceTime, and I was like "I kind of like this guy". He is studying golf course management at [university], that's why he transferred there because they have a really good program. He had this golf conference in [city] and was like " I know this is a long shot but I've loved talking to you and I want you to meet me out here... and I said "you know what, I'm just going to go". I didn't really tell a lot of people; I told my parents obviously, and a couple of my really close friends but that was it. I was like, 'I don't want any opinions' so I just went for a weekend and we were in [city] and right from the very beginning it just felt right and it was the best weekend."

- ii. "He is originally from [city], which is where I'm from."
 - iii. "I've known him since about 2012."
- d. How has your relationship changed over time? (has only been dating for 2 months)
- i. "I think communication is the hardest thing, along with the time difference. During the day it's fine, but at night it's about 7pm here and he's going to bed because it's 9pm there. Over the past two months not

much has changed but just keeping up with communicating has been hard.”

3. What are the most important lessons you’ve learned from [name] about relationships and communication?
 - a. “Especially when doing long-distance, communication is key; even if it's just checking in throughout the day or even if he's going to have a busy day, saying ‘hey I'm going to be at work, I'm going to be doing this, I probably won't be talking that much’ but just him letting me know is really important because there have been days where we don't communicate as much, but what helps is him checking in and me checking in too; that’s the most important thing.”
4. What are the challenges and benefits of being in a long distance relationship with your partner ? How do you manage those challenges within your relationship with [name]?
 - a. “One of the challenges is not being together; like when together you know, when exciting things happen, being able to actually celebrate those moments. Sometimes it is a lot of communication and that can be hard to keep up with. I guess a way to manage those challenges is making sure that we have things in place that we can look forward to; I guess those are the benefits. For example, when we finally get to see each other (we got to each other over spring break) we were looking forward to that, and he was also visiting his family too that lives here. It also sounds kind of cheesy, but we have virtual dates; we’ll put on a movie at the same time and we will text throughout it or FaceTime. We just make sure that we're doing things constantly that kind of make us excited to keep going.”

5. How have you maintained your relationship with [name] across the distance? What do you say or do?
- a. Follow up: What channels of communication do you use? What types of messages? How frequently?
 - b. Media prompt: How do you use smartphones, social media, or other mediated channels of communication to maintain or enhance your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “He is 2 hours ahead of me so he's usually up before I am; and so he'll text me usually in the morning when I wake up and he will already be doing things; he's already in class, so that's kind of like what I have come to find normal and we'll FaceTime a lot, and we talk on the phone a lot also instead of just texting.”
 - c. Savoring prompt: Do you find that social and digital media helps you recognize and appreciate enjoyable life experiences within your relationship with [name]?
 - i. “Definitely; when we're together I take pictures videos and stuff and so those are fun to use especially when, like this past week, he was really stressed about school; because he's trying to get his masters degree, it's nice to have social media and pictures or videos that I can send to him and he'll respond with ‘oh that just made my day’. Just making sure that we are capturing those moments because they are so special. Also, when we do get together it's even more special because we've spent so much time apart.”

6. What do you do to enhance your relationship with [name] through digital/social media communication?
- a. Prompt: Can you tell me about how you use positive types of talk in your relationship with [name]?
 - b. Prompt: Do you use compliments, expressions of gratitude, affirmations, offering of support or advice, affection, gifts, kind words, etc? Is any of this done through digital or social media?
 - i. “Definitely words of affirmation; that's one of my big things. I need some reassurance and I think he does too, and we both have talked about that before. Just learning from experiences in previous relationships; we're always kind of telling each other ‘I really like you...I see a future with us, this is going to work, etc’. I feel sometimes it’s so easy to focus on how tough it is; and it’s okay to feel that way and express that but it’s important to be positive and look forward to things.”
 - c. Do you think you share those words of affirmation more often over text or digital media more often than you do in person?
 - i. “Definitely; it's more often [when we’re long distance] because we need to reassure each other. When we’re together we’re just focusing on being happy that we’re physically with each other again.”
7. Can you describe one peak communication experience (What are the best communication moments you have had with [name] that involved a smartphone, laptop or other electronic device?) What was that moment like? When did that occur? How long into the relationship?

- a. What effect has digital/social media communication had on your peak communication moments?
 - i. “When he was here, it was the end of our spring break and the beginning of his, we went out for drinks or whatever and we were talking about family and what that means to us and we shared a lot of the same values and stuff and I was like ‘wow, this feels right’. It felt like we were raised the same way; even in his mannerisms, and how polite he was to the server; the little things. It was just that moment that I took a step back and thought how much I liked him and I could really see this working. Talking about family, values, and what’s important to us and what he’s passionate about too; he has goals. I was in a relationship in the past where the person didn’t have many goals; it’s cool to see that he has goals of his own that he wants to achieve.”
- b. How has geographic separation affected your peak communication moments? What role did digital/social media communication play in your peak communication moments while long distance?
 - i. “When we’re on FaceTime it happens a lot just like him telling me how much I mean to him, and even him telling me he misses me, him telling me “I wish you were here, this happened today and I wanted you to be there for it”...I think it occurs more over FaceTime than text because you can see the other person and it leads to more meaningful conversations.”

8. What milestones have you had in your relationship with [name]? How have you celebrated those and created lasting memories from those milestones? What role does digital media play?
 - a. “Definitely, I’d say when we were in [city]; we have those memories that we can talk about from videos from pictures and look back on how quickly time passes. It really feels like it's been so long since we started dating since we've known each other for so long; it's just crazy how life kind of works out and it's kind of cool that it happened in this way and it’s nice to reflect on that.”
9. Have you ever imagined a future interaction where you reunite with [name]? What does that look like in your mind? What do you say and do in that interaction?
 - a. “Yes, I'm hoping he’s going to visit for Formal at the end of April and I've imagined that since he’ll fly into [city], I’ll pick him up from the airport. I think about it a lot and we talk about it too. I also think about how we are building a relationship so sometimes when I’m planning these things it’s easy to think ‘oh it’s going to be so great’, but we’re also in a relationship and it’s okay if there’s times when we are together and it’s not an event or we don’t have anything big planned. I also really appreciate how he likes to plan things in advance.”
10. How do you identify, as it’s happening, a moment that you would like to savor or remember sometime in the future?
 - a. “I think definitely the first time that we say ‘I love you’, I feel like that's going to be a time that we're going to be a time that we’re going to want to remember; I think that’ll be really special. Obviously we have very strong feelings right now,

and it's almost like we want to say that to each other already but I know that when the time comes it'll be so much more special.”

- b. How do you identify a moment, after it's happened, that you would like to savor or remember better?
 - i. “Videos and photos are my big thing to remember certain things, so if a time comes that I realize is really special, I'll make sure I'm taking it all in and taking photos and videos of where we are and of our surroundings to remember it better. Even just using Snapchat, it's so nice to look back on the memories and remember how you felt in those moments”