



Trait nostalgia

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Nostalgia
Trait nostalgia
Emotion
Psychological benefits
Buffer

ABSTRACT

We define trait nostalgia as the proclivity to bring to mind, and reflect wistfully upon, fond and meaningful experiences from one's personal past. The affective structure of nostalgic experiences is blended, but predominantly positive. Their content is acutely social, and their trajectory is redemptive rather than contaminative. Further, nostalgic experiences are appraised as pleasant, entailing irretrievable loss, being unique and distant, and being approach-oriented, positive, and low arousal. Valid scales designed to assess trait nostalgia are highly correlated (showing convergent validity), and nostalgia emerges as a latent variable in relevant confirmatory factor analysis, while evincing moderate rank-order stability. Moreover, nostalgia is distinct from other past-oriented traits or trait-like modes of thinking about one's past (i.e., homesickness, life longing, rumination, counterfactual thinking, reminiscence, autobiographical memory). Lastly, nostalgia is associated with or conduces to psychological benefits such as viewing the past and future positively (bearing motivational consequences), feeling imbued with sociality and behaving prosocially, and enjoying psychological well-being, while it buffers against adversity (e.g., losses in meaning, sociality, and psychological well-being). Trait nostalgia is rich in emotional content, distinct, stable, and functional.

1. Introduction

Interest in nostalgia has been gathering pace in the last 20 years. Long considered a brain disease, a clinical disorder, or an affliction restricted to certain, rather marginalized, populations (e.g., soldiers, seafarers, immigrants; [Batcho, 2013a](#); [Sedikides et al., 2004](#)), nostalgia has now been rehabilitated as a universal, valued, and consequential emotional experience. We sketch out in this article its rehabilitation.

Nostalgia can be conceptualized as a state or trait. A state is one's experience in a particular situation, whereas a trait is one's base-rate proclivity toward (or away from) this experience ([Endler et al., 1991](#); [Fleeson, 2001](#)). Compared to states, traits are longer-lived and less uniform across time ([Fridhandler, 1986](#)). Furthermore, traits, as abstract entities, are less discernible and more likely to require inference than states ([Fridhandler, 1986](#)). Relatedly, traits are often considered an accumulation of state episodes, that is, they can be predicted from a sample of state episodes rather than a single episode ([Nezlek, 2007](#)). In all, we are concerned with nostalgia as a normally distributed trait. We define it as the propensity to bring to mind, and reflect wistfully upon, fond and meaningful experiences from one's personal past.

We start by defining the experience of nostalgia: its affective structure, content, narrative trajectory, and comparative status to other

emotional experiences. Then, we discuss nostalgia as an individual difference, highlighting its convergent validity and stability. Subsequently, we distinguish nostalgia from other related and trait-like emotional experiences. Lastly, we emphasize its psychological utility.

2. Defining the experience of nostalgia

We cover in this section the affective structure, content, and trajectory of nostalgic accounts.

2.1. Affective structure of nostalgic accounts

Theorists described the experience of nostalgia as “a positively toned evocation of a lived past” ([Davis, 1979](#), p. 18), a “warm feeling about the past, a past that is imbued with happy memories, pleasures, and joy” ([Kaplan, 1987](#), p. 465), and a “wistful pleasure, a joy tinged with sadness” ([Werman, 1977](#), p. 393). [The New Oxford Dictionary of English \(1998\)](#) defines nostalgia as “a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past ...” (p. 1266).

Empirical evidence has largely corroborated these insights. Nostalgia is bittersweet, but more sweet than bitter. In particular, nostalgic accounts are more affectively positive than negative, as two studies by

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Wildschut et al. (2006) revealed. In Study 1, coders rated the degree to which each of 20 adjectives of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988) was expressed in 42 nostalgic accounts published in the periodical *Nostalgia*. The accounts contained more positive than negative affect. In Study 2, coders similarly rated nostalgic accounts generated by undergraduate students. The accounts were also characterized by more positive than negative affect. Other content analyses of nostalgic accounts likewise validated the ambivalent, but predominantly positive, nature of nostalgic experiences. For example, in Holak and Havlena (1998), nostalgic accounts entailed primarily positive affect (i.e., affection, warmth, tenderness, serenity, innocence, gratitude, joy) and secondarily negative affect (i.e., sadness, loss, fear). More important, prototype studies across cultures (Hepper et al., 2012, 2014) indicate that lay people think of nostalgia mostly in positive terms (e.g., fond memories, personal meaning, rose-tinted memory, happiness), but also in negative terms (e.g., longing/yearning, missing).

Many nostalgic memories are formed during participants' late adolescence and early adulthood (i.e., reminiscence bump; Rubin et al., 1986) and, to some extent, are rose-colored. The fading affect bias (Skowronski et al., 2013) provides an explanation for this sanguine introspection. The negative affect associated with unpleasant autobiographical memories fades faster across time than the positive affect associated with pleasant autobiographical memories. That is, an event's positive affect lingers longer than its negative affect. In the case of nostalgia, the positive affect of an event substantially offsets its negative affect, giving credence to Caen's (1975) quip that "Nostalgia is memory with the pain removed."

2.2. Content of nostalgic accounts

When people nostalgize, what do they nostalgize about? According to *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998), nostalgia refers to "... a period or place with happy personal associations" (p. 1266). Content analyses (Wildschut et al., 2006, Studies 1 and 2) indicate that nostalgic accounts refer to close others (e.g., family, friends, romantic partners), momentous events shared with close others (e.g., picnics or Thanksgiving dinners, weddings, graduations), periods in one's life (e.g., childhood, adolescence), pets, tangibles (e.g., a coat), and settings (e.g., a lake). Other content analyses (Holak & Havlena, 1992) similarly show that nostalgic accounts refer to important persons (i.e., family members, friends, partners, co-workers, neighbors), momentous occasions (e.g., holidays, birthdays, reunions), tangibles (e.g., toys, books, one's first car), clothing, jewelry, and antiques. The results of prototype studies (Hepper et al., 2012, 2014) paralleled these findings. Laypersons think that nostalgia refers to social relationships, childhood/youth, memorabilia/keepsakes, and sensory triggers (e.g., scents, tastes).

The theme of sociality is prevalent in nostalgic accounts. Abeyta et al. (2015) and Madoglou et al. (2017) reported that such accounts pertained mostly to close others (and, on a smaller scale, to life periods, leisure, and places). Moreover, using manual coding, Wildschut et al. (2018) found that nostalgic accounts made frequent mentions of companionship and social interaction, whereas, using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (Pennebaker et al., 2007), these authors found that nostalgic (compared to ordinary autobiographical) accounts (1) mentioned commonly social processes and social content (e.g., family, friends), and (2) featured more first-person plural pronouns, indicating an emphasis on social interactions, and fewer first-person singular pronouns, indicating decreases in self-focus.

2.3. Narrative trajectory of nostalgic accounts

McAdams et al. (2001) described two narrative sequences. In redemption, the narrative progresses from an affectively negative or personally unfavorable scene to an affectively positive or personally favorable one ("The bad is redeemed, salvaged, mitigated, or made better in light of the ensuing good;" p. 474). In contamination, the

narrative advances from an affectively positive or personally favorable situation to an affectively negative or personally unfavorable one ("The good is spoiled, ruined, contaminated, or undermined by what follows it;" p. 474).

Davis (1977) theorized about the narrative trajectory of nostalgia in terms of the juxtaposition of positive and negative affective states. He opined that, when a nostalgic experience has negative parts, these "hurts, annoyances, disappointments, and irritations ... are filtered forgivingly through an 'it was all for the best' attitude" (p. 418). Davis, then, appeared to privilege redemption over contamination. Wildschut et al. (2006) used McAdams et al.'s (2001) classification to content-analyze the trajectory of nostalgic accounts either from stories submitted to the periodical *Nostalgia* (Study 1) or events narrated by undergraduates (Study 2). In both instances, redemption outweighed contamination. Hence, nostalgic accounts are mostly redemptive, a phenomenon in synchrony with the fading affect bias (Skowronski et al., 2013). In nostalgizing, the individual is typically thankful for having had the opportunity for the experience.

2.4. Nostalgia in the context of other emotional experiences

Van Tilburg et al. (2019) attempted to identify the appraisal profile of nostalgia in comparison to other emotions. Participants narrated a personally-relevant autobiographical event, rated it on 11 appraisals, and indicated the degree to which they experienced 32 emotions (including nostalgia) as part of that event. The researchers reduced, through factor analysis, the 11 appraisals to five: pleasantness, irretrievable loss, temporal distance, uniqueness, and reflection. That is, nostalgic events were pleasant, encompassed irretrievable loss, were felt as temporally distant, were regarded as unique, and involved reflection.

Further, Van Tilburg et al. (2018) compared nostalgia with 10 self-conscious emotions. Participants rated the extent to which they considered 55 emotions pairs (e.g., nostalgia-embarrassment, nostalgia-gratitude, guilt-pride) similar or different. The researchers subjected the ratings to multidimensional scaling analysis. Participants perceived nostalgia as approach-oriented, positive, and low arousal. That is, they considered nostalgia most similar to self-compassion, pride, and gratitude (characterized by social approach, positivity, and low arousal), and least similar to shame, guilt, and embarrassment (characterized by social avoidance, negativity, and high arousal).

2.5. Summary

The experience of nostalgia is blended, albeit more positive than negative, its content acutely social, and its narrative trajectory redemptive. Nostalgic experiences are appraised as pleasant, as comprising irretrievable loss, and as being temporally distant and unique. Further, nostalgic experiences are seen as approach-oriented, positive, and low arousal.

In nostalgizing, then, one brings to mind and reflects upon fond and unique memories from their personal past. The individual feels warm and contented while often missing the past (Hepper et al., 2012; Leunissen, 2023). Nostalgia is experienced frequently (several times a week; Hepper et al., 2021; Wildschut et al., 2006) and across ages (Juhl et al., 2020; Madoglou et al., 2017) and cultures (Hepper et al., 2014; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2022). It is a self-relevant emotion, given that the remembered events are personally meaningful (Abeyta & Pillarisetty, 2023; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). It is also profoundly social, as the self is almost always surrounded by close others (Juhl & Biskas, 2023; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019).

3. Individual differences in nostalgizing

Recent research has established nostalgia as a trait. We offer a synopsis of this research below.

3.1. Nostalgia as a latent variable

Several researchers have conceptualized nostalgia as an individual difference or a trait. Reliable nostalgia scales have emerged. The four most widely used ones, in chronological order of development, are the Nostalgia Inventory, the Southampton Nostalgia Scale, the Nostalgia Prototype Scale, and the Personal Inventory of Nostalgic Experiences.

The *Nostalgia Inventory* (Batcho, 1995) measures the extent to which participants miss 20 items from their past, selected to cover a range of common experiences. Some items are tangible (e.g., “pets,” “toys,” “family”) and others are abstract (e.g., “not having to worry,” “the way people were,” “the way society was”). The *Southampton Nostalgia Scale* (Barrett et al., 2010; Routledge et al., 2008; Wildschut & Sedikides, 2022) consists of seven items. Three of them measure the personal relevance of nostalgia (i.e., how important, valuable, and significant it is), and four the proclivity to nostalgize (e.g., “How prone are you to feeling nostalgic?”) or frequency of nostalgizing (e.g., “Generally speaking, how often do you bring to mind nostalgic experiences?”). The *Nostalgia Prototype Scale* (Cheung et al., 2017) consists of five centrally prototypical features of the construct “nostalgia” (e.g., “I bring to mind rose-tinted memories”). Participants rate each feature on frequency and importance, generating 10 ratings. Finally, the *Personal Inventory of Nostalgic Experiences* (Newman et al., 2020) measures the degree to which participants feel generally nostalgic. It has four items (e.g., “How nostalgic do you feel?”).

In one study (Kelley et al., 2022), all four scales were administered concurrently to U.S. and Chinese participants. Wildschut et al. (2023) re-analyzed the relevant data. They found that the four scales were highly and significantly intercorrelated in both samples. This constitutes evidence for convergent validity, namely, agreement among multiple assessments of the same trait via distinct methods (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Wildschut et al. also found, through confirmatory factor analysis, that the scores of the four scales were indicators of a single latent variable: A one-factor model described adequately the scale interrelations. Additionally, these researchers established measurement invariance across the U.S. and Chinese samples.

3.2. Stability of nostalgia

Rank-order stability describes how stable a trait is over time. Traits vary in their degree of rank-order stability from higher (e.g., intelligence; Deary, 2014) to lower (e.g., life satisfaction; Lucas & Donnellan, 2007), with high-stability traits being more likely to be influenced by genetics (Fraleigh & Roberts, 2005), and thus less amenable to intervention (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1986), than low-stability traits. Nostalgia is shaped by both genetic and environmental influences (Luo et al., 2016, 2022) that are rather enduring. As such, nostalgia would likely manifest moderate stability.

This is what the scant literature on the topic has revealed. Mallory et al. (2018) assessed relational nostalgia (i.e., nostalgia about one's past relationships) three times, with intervals being two weeks apart, and found autoregressive paths ranging from 0.44 to 0.70, which are higher than those of relationship satisfaction reported in the same study. Newman et al. (2020) assessed general nostalgia twice (with a 10 week-interval), and found a test-retest correlation of $r = 0.64$, which is comparable to those between life satisfaction and affect ($r = 0.49$ – 0.58 , involving an 8-week interval; Anusic et al., 2012). However, raw test-retest correlations weaken as the time interval between measurements increases (Anusic et al., 2012), obfuscating a direct comparison. Also, psychological processes consist of both traits and states (Hertzog & Nesselroade, 1987), but test-retest correlations provide no information about each component's contribution to the observed pattern.

To address these issues, Wang, Wildschut, et al. (2023) partitioned the sources of stability into: (1) a stable trait component that is time-invariant or stable across all timepoints, (2) a slow-changing trait component, as indicated by autoregression that varies orderly with time,

and (3) a state component that includes time-varying or specific variation and measurement error (i.e., the Trait-State-Occasion model; Cole et al., 2005; Kenny & Zautra, 2001). In particular, Wang, Wildschut, et al. tested Chinese undergraduate students six times: at the beginning of their first, second, third, and fourth year, halfway through their first year, and halfway through their fourth year. At each time, participants completed a nostalgia scale (along with a distress scale), that is, a 5-item version of the Southampton Nostalgia Scale (Routledge et al., 2008). Consistent with prior findings (Mallory et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2020), Wang Wildschut, et al. reported moderate rank-order stability of nostalgia, which was partly due to its stable trait component.

3.3. Summary

Nostalgia is a trait. Reliable scales designed to measure it are highly correlated. Also, nostalgia emerges as a latent variable in confirmatory factor analysis of those scales, and relevant instruments are culturally invariant. Further, nostalgia is genetically influenced and manifests moderate rank-order stability.

4. Distinguishing nostalgia from related traits

There are several traits that refer to habitual or chronic ways of thinking about one's past. Below, we differentiate nostalgia from these past-oriented traits or trait-like modes.

One such trait is *homesickness*. In an early investigation (Davis, 1979), participants associated such words as “warm,” “old times,” and “yearning” more frequently with nostalgia than with homesickness. Consistent with this finding, in a prototype study (Hepper et al., 2012), homesickness was perceived by laypersons as just one of 17 peripheral features of the construct “nostalgia.” Homesickness refers to adjustment difficulties (e.g., separation anxiety) that accompany transitions, especially of university students, away from home (Fisher et al., 1985; Stroebe et al., 2002; Thurber & Walton, 2007). Another past-oriented trait is *life longing* (or *Sehnsucht*), defined as “intense desire for alternative states and realizations of life” (Scheibe et al., 2007, p. 778). Although life longing is bittersweet, unlike nostalgia, it can refer to present and future objects and entails feeling incomplete (Scheibe et al., 2011). Also, in the abovementioned prototype study (Hepper et al.), longing was regarded by laypersons as just one of 18 central features of nostalgia.

Further, nostalgia is distinct from *ruminat*ion (“thoughts and behaviors that focus the individual's attention on the negative mood, the causes and consequences of this mood, and self-evaluations related to the mood”; Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998, p. 790) and *counterfactual thinking* (“mental representations of alternatives to the past and produce consequences that are both beneficial and aversive to the individual”; Roesse, 1997). In contrast to these two past-oriented traits, nostalgia is positively associated with the following self-reported functions of autobiographical memory (Washington, 2009): Intimacy maintenance (drawing on memories to reach symbolic proximity to absent close others), teach/inform (sharing memories to convey insights), and self-regard (using memory to clarify one's identity and guide action). Moreover, in contrast to those two past-oriented traits, nostalgia is only weakly associated with bitterness revival (turning to memories to rekindle resentment for perceived harm by others), which is “negatively related to almost all aspects of mental health that have been studied” (Westerhof et al., 2010, p. 706).

Finally, nostalgia is distinct from *reminiscence* (“process of recollecting memories of one's self in the past”; Bluck & Levine, 1998, p. 188) and *autobiographical memory* (the recall of diverse experiences from one's life; Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). Both reminiscence (ranked 4th) and autobiographical memory (i.e., remembering; ranked 5th) are perceived by laypersons as centrally prototypical features of nostalgia (Hepper et al., 2012). However, reminiscence is generally ineffective in interventions and increases anxiety for carers of persons with

Alzheimer's disease (Woods et al., 2016). Also, neither reminiscence nor autobiographical memory necessarily involve emotionality.

4.1. Summary

Nostalgia is distinct from various past-oriented traits or trait-like modes of thinking about one's past (i.e., homesickness, life longing, rumination, counterfactual thinking, reminiscence, autobiographical memory). In particular, nostalgia pertains to fond, personally meaningful experiences; its affective signature is ambivalent, but mostly positive; it is keenly social; and it is associated with beneficial outcomes. We turn to such outcomes next.

5. The utility of trait nostalgia

5.1. Nostalgia as a purveyor of psychological benefits

Nostalgia is associated with or conduces to psychological benefits. We review representative findings below. In all of the studies, nostalgia was assessed with a validated nostalgia scale, typically the Southampton Nostalgia Scale. The outcome were also assessed with validated scales.

People appraise nostalgia as approach oriented (Van Tilburg et al., 2018). Stephan et al. (2014) asked whether it is indeed so. They measured trait nostalgia and also measured approach motivation with the 13-item Behavioral Activation System (BAS) subscale of the BIS/BAS Scales (Carver & White, 1994) comprising the Fun Seeking subscale (e.g., "I will often do things for no other reason than that they might be fun"), the Drive subscale (e.g., "I go out of my way to get things I want," and the Reward Responsiveness subscale (e.g., "It would excite me to win a contest"). Nostalgia was positively associated with all BAS subscales. Nostalgia is linked to higher approach motivation. This is a fundamental attribute of nostalgia that likely underlies many of its benefits, such as views of the past, sociality and psychological well-being.

5.1.1. Views of the past and the future

Persons high on trait nostalgia (or high nostalgics) rate their past as more satisfying (Batcho, 1998) and report more favorable childhood experiences (Batcho, 2013b) compared to low nostalgics. In addition, high (relative to low) nostalgics prefer happy than sad lyrics (Batcho, 2007). Moreover, high (vs. low) nostalgics feel more inspired (Stephan et al., 2015) and optimistic (Cheung et al., 2013). Positive view of the past or future have motivational potential (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2020). For example, persons who are high (vs. low) on nostalgia for a specific referent (e.g., Barack Obama), express more favorable attitudes for this referent, are more likely to take action (i.e., vote), and do take such action (Fetterman et al., 2021).

5.1.2. Sociality

High (vs. low) nostalgics prefer other-directed to solitary lyrical themes (Batcho, 2007), and evince a stronger preference for social activities (Batcho, 1998) and social interactions (Abeyta et al., 2015). They also feel more embedded within their dyadic relationships and their ingroup (Abakoumkin et al., 2020), more engaged with them (Green et al., 2021), more socially supported (Zhou et al., 2008), and more prone to collective effervescence (Naidu et al., 2023) defined as a sense of strong connection to surrounding others and a sensation of transcendence (Durkheim, 1912). Further, high (vs. low) nostalgics are more empathetic (Juhl et al., 2020), and are more likely to donate to charity due to their higher empathy (Juhl et al., 2020; Zhang & Tao, 2022) or perhaps because nostalgia weakens the desire for money (Lasaleta et al., 2014). In addition, high (vs. low) nostalgics are more likely to report reduced prejudice toward minorities due to their higher empathy and concern with acting prejudiced (Cheung et al., 2017).

5.1.3. Psychological well-being

High (vs. low) nostalgics report greater meaning in life (Routledge et al., 2012) and eudaimonic well-being (Hepper & Dennis, 2023; Kelley et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2022). They are also better able to use momentary nostalgia for gaining well-being benefits such as higher optimism (Cheung et al., 2016) or lower death anxiety (Juhl et al., 2010). They enjoy higher well-being, in part, due to their increased sociality (Naidu et al., 2023). Further, a multi-week intervention showed that nostalgia conduces to psychological well-being. High (relative to low) nostalgics benefitted more from a momentary nostalgia induction, evincing higher well-being (i.e., positive affect, life satisfaction, subjective vitality, eudaimonia) after six weeks and at a one-month follow-up (Layous et al., 2022).

5.2. Nostalgia as a buffer against adversity

Nostalgic memories are valued and cut to the core of one's identity (Sedikides et al., 2015; Zauberman et al., 2009). As such, they are likely to act in a manner similar to self-affirmation (McQueen & Klein, 2006; Sherman & Hartson, 2011), buffering the individual against adversity. The literature is consistent with this assertion. We review illustrative findings.

5.2.1. Buffering loss of meaning

Meaning is defined in terms of the sense that one's life is coherent, purposeful, and significant (King et al., 2016; Martela & Steger, 2016). Adversities such as boredom or bereavement are associated with loss of meaning (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Van Tilburg & Igou, 2012). Trait nostalgia buffers such a loss. In particular, high (vs. low) nostalgics cope better with boredom (Van Tilburg et al., 2013) and bereavement (Reid et al., 2021; Zhang & Tao, 2022). As Saul Bellow (1970) put it, nostalgic memories "... keep the wolf of insignificance from the door" (p. 190).

5.2.2. Buffering loss of sociality

High (vs. low) nostalgics cope better with deficits in belongingness (Seehusen et al., 2013), loneliness (Abeyta et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2022), and fear of isolation in nostalgic media use (Wulf et al., 2022). Additionally, trait nostalgia protects against social exclusion (i.e., feeling alone, being treated in an unloving way, being disliked; Abakoumkin et al., 2017). Moreover, trait nostalgia counteracts deficits in cooperation. Van Dijke et al. (2015) assessed procedural injustice (i.e., whether an employer is granted voice in decisions made by the manager), nostalgia, and organizational citizenship behavior (e.g., volunteering to cooperate with colleagues). Procedural injustice was strongly associated with decreased organizational citizenship behavior among low nostalgics, but not among high nostalgics. Trait nostalgia thwarts the pernicious influence of procedural injustice on cooperation.

5.2.3. Buffering distress

Hepper et al. (2021) assessed nostalgia and psychological well-being in a community sample. High (vs. low) nostalgic individuals maintained or increased their wellbeing with age. Further, in a longitudinal study, Wang, Sedikides, et al. (2023) clarified the direction between distress and nostalgia. Psychological (depression) and physical (somatization) distress at Time 1 predicted higher nostalgia at Time 2 (six months later), and not the other way around.

5.3. Summary

Nostalgia is associated with, or confer, psychological benefits. The benefits include more positive views of one's past and future, increased sociality, and higher psychological well-being. In addition, nostalgia buffers against adversity. Specifically, it countervails losses in meaning, sociality, and psychological well-being.

6. Epilogue

We considered trait nostalgia and its implications. We reviewed research that establishes nostalgia as an individual difference. We also reviewed research showcasing the utility of nostalgia for psychological functioning. Traits nostalgia is positively associated with Big Five personality (i.e., higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience; Luo et al., 2016; Seehussen et al., 2013; Stephan et al., 2014; Tullett et al., 2015; Newman et al., 2020), but relevant studies have found that the nostalgia outcomes are independent of Big Five personality (Cheung et al., 2017; Hart et al., 2011; Stephan et al., 2014).

Several empirical directions await trait nostalgia. One involves the interplay between it and other individual difference variables or state nostalgia. For example, do high nostalgics derive more psychological outcomes when they are low (than high) on attachment avoidance (Muise et al., 2020; Wildschut et al., 2010), low (than high) on narcissism (Bialobrzaska et al., 2023; Hart et al., 2011)? Are they more capable of coping with adversity when they are low (than high) on neuroticism (Frankenbach et al., 2021), and high (than low) on resilience (Wildschut et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2008)? And do high nostalgics reap more psychological benefits, or withstand adversity, when state nostalgia (induced experimentally or assessed in daily life) is stronger than weaker?

Another empirical direction involves the relevance of trait nostalgia for vulnerable populations. For example, is trait nostalgia functional for persons who have undergone forceful displacement (e.g., refugees; Wildschut et al., 2019)? Also, is trait nostalgia effective among persons with depressive symptoms (Hussain & Alhabash, 2022) or living with Alzheimer's disease (Ismail et al., 2022)?

A final empirical direction pertains to the association between trait nostalgia and behavior. Preliminary findings are encouraging. We have discussed research showing that trait nostalgia predicts voting (Fetterman et al., 2021) and charitable donations (Juhl et al., 2020; Zhang & Tao, 2022). Other work links trait nostalgia with cultural perpetuation. In particular, trait nostalgia is related and conduces longitudinally to the transfer of cultural traditions (i.e., beliefs and rituals originating and carried out in the past; Yin et al., 2023).

In closing, the construct of trait nostalgia is rich in emotional content, valid, distinct, and stable. More important, it is linked to vital psychological functions. Nostalgia is not the malfunction that scholars in the last few hundred years thought it was (Dodman, 2023), but rather it is a fundamental, normally-distributed trait and a generative experience.

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