

Nostalgia Reduces the Fear of Negative Evaluation

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Introduction

- Nostalgia is an emotional experience that involves reflecting on a fond memory that is typically self-focused and social in nature (Wildschut et al., 2006)
- Nostalgia increases social striving and promotes a sense of social connectedness (Abeyta et al., 2015; Cheung et al., 2013; Stephan et al., 2014)
- An important aspect of connecting with others involves overcoming social anxieties and fears
- Does nostalgia reduce fears or worries about connecting with others?
- **Hypothesis:** Reflecting on a nostalgic memory, relative to a non-nostalgic memory, will decrease fear of negative evaluation (FNE)

Method

Participants

- 229 undergraduate psychology students from Rutgers-Camden (183 female, 46 male, $M_{age} = 19.83$, $SD_{age} = 4.29$)

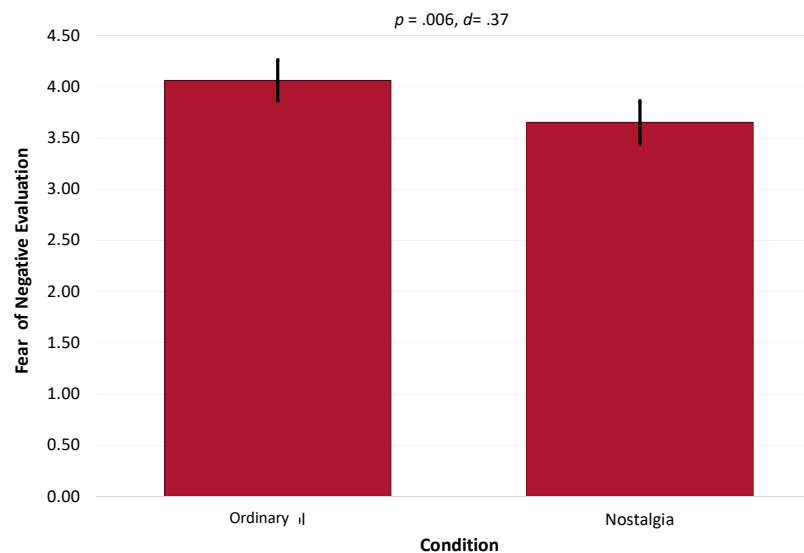
Procedure

- Online survey
- Participants were randomly assigned to a nostalgia condition or control condition writing task
- Participants then completed the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (BFNE; Leary, 1983)

Materials

- Writing task (Wildschut et al., 2006)
 - In the nostalgia condition, participants were provided a definition of nostalgia, and then asked to bring to mind and write about a nostalgic memory from their past
 - In the ordinary condition, participants were asked to bring to mind and write about an ordinary memory from the past week
- Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983)
 - Asks to what extent participants agree/disagree with 12 statements on a scale from 1, “strongly disagree”, to 6, “strongly agree” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$, $M_{FNE} = 3.85$, $SD_{FNE} = 1.13$)
 - Sample item: “I worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone.”

Results



Discussion

- **Hypothesis supported:** Nostalgia decreased FNE scores, relative to the ordinary condition
- This suggests that nostalgia has the ability to decrease fears and anxieties about social interactions
- These findings are important on both a research and an applied level
- Adds to the existing knowledge about nostalgia’s social benefits in a unique way
 - Previous research has focused on how nostalgia promotes positive social outcomes
 - Our study provides support for the related yet distinct idea that nostalgia has the ability to decrease negative social outcomes
- FNE is typically treated as part of social anxiety disorder (SAD); incorporating nostalgia into this treatment could help to further reduce worries about negative judgments from others
- Limitations:
 - Online study allows for less control over environment and distractions
 - Diversity of the sample (79.9% female, 44.5% White)
- **Key Take-Home:** In addition to promoting social connectedness, nostalgia appears to ease worries about being judged negatively by others

References

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