NOSTALGIA: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE [1]

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Summary.—A survey was designed to assess nostalgia for 20 aspects of experience as well as relative judgments of the world past, present, and future. Surveys were completed by 648 respondents, 268 males and 380 females, ranging in age from 4 to 80 years old. Split-half reliability was .78. Test-retest reliability over a 1-wk. interval on a separate sample of 50 respondents was .84. Nostalgia was related to the judgment of the past relative to the present. Gender differences were not significant, but significant differences across age groups were obtained for most items. The intensity of nostalgic sentiment varied across objects, situations, aspects of society, and people. Factor analysis suggested that nostalgia is comprised of a number of factors reflecting different spheres and levels of experience. For nostalgia, conceptualized as a multifaceted, composite construct, results were discussed with respect to four approaches—generational, developmental, personality, and transient mood state. Suggestions were made for further development of the survey and for research exploring relationships among nostalgia, motivation, emotion, and behavior.

Considerable attention is currently being focused on posited characteristics of recent generations in America. Of particular interest has been the contrast between those individuals born between 1961 and 1981, dubbed the 13ers by Howe and Strauss (1993), and those born between 1946 and 1964, commonly referred to as the baby boomers (Roof, 1993). The construct of generations as coherent social groups entails acceptance of premises regarding perceptions, feelings, and memories engendered by shared social events and experiences (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Assuming that generations may differ with respect to economic prosperity and social stability leads one to speculate that the nostalgia one feels at any point in life may depend in part upon how pleasant the past had been relative to how pleasant the present is perceived to be. Davis (1979) argued that nostalgia "always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties" (pp. 34-35) as an attempt to help the individual to adapt to discontinuity in life. On the other hand, nostalgia may be more closely related to life stage, with nostalgia developing as part of the normal aging process. Davis (1979) noted that older people are especially likely to be nostalgic.

However, it is not clear how the sentiment of nostalgia should be operationally defined. Best and Nelson (1985) analyzed data from four national sample surveys, each of which contained one or two items they accepted as measures of nostalgic feelings. The National Senior Citizens Survey in 1968

(see Best & Nelson, 1985, p. 232) asked respondents to say yes or no to the statements, "You are as happy now as you were when you were younger" and "People had it better in the old days".

The National Council on Aging's 1974 study (see Best & Nelson, 1985, p. 232) asked respondents to agree or disagree with the statements, "I am just as happy as when I was younger" and "These are the best years of my life." The third survey, "Americans View Their Mental Health" in 1976 (see Best & Nelson, 1985, p. 232) asked "What do you think of as the happiest time in your life?" Respondents were labelled nostalgic if they selected a period in the past.

The 1980 General Social Survey (see Best & Nelson, 1985, p. 232) had subjects agree or disagree with the item, "In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better." Although Best and Nelson's analyses yielded consistent results on the principal variables across the six items, they did not show support for Davis' (1979) discontinuity hypothesis. An important concern was articulated by Best and Nelson (1985) themselves, "Do the items used in this analysis measure nostalgia?" (p. 230).

The American Heritage Dictionary (1972) defines nostalgia as "A longing for things, persons, or situations that are not present" and offers "homesickness" (p. 485) as a second meaning. However, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1974) gives homesickness as the first meaning and "a wistful yearning for something past or irrecoverable" (p. 479) as the second meaning. Strictly speaking, therefore, nostalgia might occur at any age and does not necessarily imply a rejection of those things, etc. which are present.

The current study represents an initial effort to explore nostalgia as a multifaceted construct and to examine the experience of nostalgia among various age groups.

METHOD

Subjects

Surveys were completed by 648 respondents, 268 males and 380 females, ranging in age from 4 years old to 80 years old (median age = 20 yr.; see Table 1 below). Data were collected by undergraduates enrolled in a cognition course at a private, four-year college among their relatives and friends and were not intended to constitute a representative national sample.

Procedure

Students were instructed to follow a uniform, simple set of directions and were provided with responses to be given to anticipated questions from respondents. Surveys were completed individually by respondents, and young children had items read to them. Any child who experienced difficulty in understanding any items or the use of the scale was not included in the sample. All survey data remained anonymous.

The Survey

Part 1 of the survey included three questions conceptually similar to the item included on the 1980 General Social Survey cited above, "In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better." In the present survey, respondents used a 5-point scale in Likert format to evaluate the world as it is now (1 = Pretty Bad; 5 = Great), as it will be 20 years from now (1 = A Lot Worse; 5 = A Lot Better), and as it was when they were younger (1 = A Lot Worse; 5 = A Lot Better).

Part 2 of the survey was designed to explore the extent to which nostalgia might vary across different aspects of everyday life and to what extent it might be associated more powerfully with specific items than with vague aspects of the past. Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point scale (1 = Not at all; 5 = Very much) how much they missed each of 20 items from when they were younger. Items ranged from concrete categories such as toys, TV shows/movies, pets, friends, and family to abstract categories such as the way society was, the way people were, and not knowing sad or evil things. The selection of items was exploratory and was intended to sample broadly across facets of ordinary experience.

Reliability Sample

A preliminary estimate of test-retest reliability was obtained from surveys completed by an additional sample of 50 respondents. As with the primary sample, these participants were relatives and friends of students enrolled in a course on cognition. The process of data collection was the same as that for the large sample, but the 50 respondents completed the survey a second time one week after their initial survey. On the second occasion, respondents were instructed to complete the survey without regard to their replies the week before.

<center>RESULTS</center>

Reliability

Assessment of the reliability of a measure of nostalgia poses interesting conceptual issues. The appropriateness of the split-half method of measurement depends upon one's assumptions concerning the homogeneity of nostalgia across various objects of the sentiment. If one assumes that nostalgia may vary substantially across aspects of experience, the split-half method may be inappropriate. The question of whether nostalgia differs across aspects and the identification of those aspects are empirical questions which have not yet been answered. However, if the survey items are split such that each half contains items representative of the different spheres of experience, the halves should be fairly comparable.

An estimate of split-half was obtained from the large sample of surveys ($N = 648$) by averaging the ratings across each half of the 20 nostalgia items. One half included the items, friends, school, holidays, pets, places, heroes/

heroines, someone you loved, things you did, feelings you had, and the way society was. The other half included the items, family, church, toys, TV shows/movies, your house, music, not having to worry, the way people were, having someone to depend on, and not knowing sad or evil things. The correlation between the average ratings of the two halves was significant ($r = .78, p < .01$).

The appropriateness of the test-retest estimate of reliability of a nostalgia measure is also debatable. If nostalgia is a transient mood state, there is no reason to expect the measurement to remain stable over any but brief intervals. On the other hand, if nostalgia, as measured by this type of survey, is akin to a personality trait, one would expect the measurement to remain fairly stable. The choice of retest interval is itself of interest. For the purpose of this initial exploration, a one-week interval was selected to reduce the effects of memory of the first session's responses without introducing substantial risk of change due to intervening events. This estimate of test-retest reliability was based upon a new sample of 50 respondents. Although much smaller, this group, including 23 men and 27 women and ranging in age from 14 to 62 years old (*Mdn* age = 27 yr.), was reasonably comparable to the main sample.

The average of the ratings across the 20 nostalgia items was used as a nostalgia score for each administration of the survey for each subject. The correlation of the two nostalgia scores one week apart was significant and encouraging ($r = .84, p < .01$). The one-week reliability of individual items ranged from .55 for the item "feelings you had" to .86 for the item "your house." In general, more concrete items were more consistent, e.g., TV shows/movies, $r = .84$; toys, $r = .81$; school, $r = .81$; music, $r = .81$, than were more abstract items, e.g., the way people were, $r = .57$; the way society was, $r = .58$; not having to worry, $r = .60$.

The test-retest reliability of this measure of nostalgia compares well with the one-week consistency of responses to the three items requesting a perception of the world as it is now ($r = .71$) as it was when the respondent was younger ($r = .67$), and as it will be 20 years from now ($r = .85$).

Survey Findings

The first part of the survey asked respondents to rate the world in the past ("when you were younger"), present ("now"), and future ("twenty years from now"). Mean ratings of the world indicate that, over-all, respondents ($N = 648$) perceive the world as having been better in the past ($M = 3.6; SD = 0.8; 1 = $ A lot worse, $5 = $ A lot better) than the present ($M = 2.7; SD = 0.8; 1 = $ Pretty bad, $5 = $ Great), and not likely to improve in the future ($M = 2.9; SD = 1.0; 1 = $ A lot worse, $5 = $ A lot better). This pattern is consistent with the responses of a national sample of 1,500 people age 18 and older to a related item on the 1980 General Social Survey (Best & Nelson,

1985). Asked to agree or disagree with the opinion that "the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better," a majority of men (66%) and women (71%) agreed.

Each of the three ratings of the world, past, present, and future, was analyzed in a separate 2 × 6 analysis of variance, with gender and age as between-subjects factors. The six age categories were selected to represent childhood (4—11 years, $n = 39$), adolescence (12—17 years, $n = 73$), traditional college (18—21 years, $n = 299$), early career (22—33 years, $n = 97$), mid-career (34—49 years, $n = 87$), and late career (50 years and older, $n = 53$). These age groups also allow identification of the 13th generation (age 12—33 years) and the baby boomers (age 34—49 years). To control for Type I errors, the .01 alpha level was chosen as the criterion for significance. With the conservative criterion, none of the main effects or interactions in the three analyses reached significance.

The second part of the survey asked respondents to rate how much they miss each of 20 aspects of life from their youth (Table 1). Each of the 20 ratings was analyzed in a 2 × 6 analysis of variance, with gender and age as between-subjects variables. Again, alpha was set at .01 to control for Type I errors.

The main effect of gender was not significant in any of the analyses, and it did not interact significantly with age, except for the item "not knowing sad or evil things" ($F_{5,635} = 3.92$, $p < .01$). The sole interaction appeared to be the result primarily of a lower mean rating by girls younger than 12 years ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 1.6$) than by boys ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 1.5$). The absence of significant differences between men and women is interesting given that, "The belief that females are more emotional than males is one of the most consistent findings in research on gender stereotypes" (Fabes & Martin, 1991, p. 532).

As expected, rated nostalgia varied significantly across the age groups for most of the items (Table 1). Main effect of age group reached the .01 level of significance for friends, family, school, house, music, heroes/heroines, feelings, having someone to depend on, and not knowing sad or evil things. Levene's test for equality of variances indicated unequal variances across age groups for holidays ($F_{5,634} = 5.71$, $p < .0001$), toys ($F_{5,634} = 3.05$, $p < .01$), pets ($F_{5,629} = 3.39$, $p < .01$), not having to worry ($F_{5,633} = 16.17$, $p < .0001$), and the way people were ($F_{5,636} = 3.89$, $p < .01$). Therefore, the Brown-Forsythe statistic, which does not assume equal variances, was used to test effects for those five items, and the main effect of age group was significant for all five items.

The main effect of age was not significant for places, someone you loved, and things you did. Unequal variances across age groups were indicated by Levene's test for church/religion ($F_{5,634} = 5.23$, $p < .0001$), the way

TABLE 1
MEAN RATINGS OF NOSTALGIA FOR INDIVIDUAL SURVEY ITEMS

Item	Age in Years						F [a]
	4–11	12–17	18–21	22–33	34–49	50 +	
Family							5.02†
M	3.4	3.0	3.5	3.4	3.4	4.1	
SD	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2	
n	39	73	299	97	86	53	
Heroes/Heroines							4.83†
M	1.8	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.1	
SD	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	
n	39	72	297	97	87	53	
Not having to worry							10.42‡
M	2.8	3.8	4.4	4.1	3.8	3.3	
SD	1.7	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.5	
n	38	73	297	97	87	53	
Places							1.85
M	3.0	3.1	3.4	3.3	2.9	3.2	
SD	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4	
n	39	73	299	97	87	53	
Music							9.92‡
M	1.7	2.1	2.6	2.8	3.0	3.2	
SD	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.5	
n	39	73	299	97	87	53	
Someone you loved							1.62
M	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.7	4.2	
SD	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4	
n	39	73	297	97	87	53	
Friends							3.20*
M	2.7	3.0	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.1	
SD	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.4	
n	38	73	299	97	87	52	
Things you did							2.19
M	3.4	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.8	
SD	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	
n	39	73	297	97	87	53	
Toys							12.92‡
M	3.3	3.2	3.5	2.9	2.2	2.0	
SD	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	
n	39	73	298	97	87	52	
The way people were							4.07*
M	2.5	3.2	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.1	
SD	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.5	
n	39	73	299	97	87	53	
Feelings you had							3.58*
M	2.4	2.8	3.2	2.9	2.7	2.9	
SD	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.4	
n	38	73	297	95	87	53	

(continued on next page)

Note.—1 = Not at all; 5 = Very much. [a] F ratio for main effect of age group.
*$p < .01$. †$p < .001$. ‡$p < .0001$.

TABLE 1 (CONT'D)
MEAN RATINGS OF NOSTALGIA FOR INDIVIDUAL SURVEY ITEMS

Item	Age in Years						F^a
	4–11	12–17	18–21	22–33	34–49	50 +	
TV shows, movies							1.57
M	2.8	2.7	3.1	2.8	2.5	2.5	
SD	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.5	
n	39	73	299	97	87	53	
School							5.96‡
M	2.0	2.5	2.9	2.8	2.4	2.5	
SD	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4	
n	39	72	299	97	87	52	
Having someone to depend on							5.18‡
M	3.0	3.1	3.4	2.9	2.6	2.8	
SD	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	
n	39	73	298	97	87	53	
Holidays							4.77†
M	3.4	3.9	4.0	3.6	3.3	3.1	
SD	1.4	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.4	
n	38	73	298	97	87	53	
The way society was							2.61
M	2.8	2.7	3.0	2.8	3.2	3.3	
SD	1.7	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.4	
n	38	73	298	95	87	53	
Pets							10.88‡
M	3.6	3.2	3.1	3.0	2.4	1.9	
SD	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.2	
n	38	71	298	97	86	51	
Not knowing sad or evil things							6.75‡
M	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.1	2.8	2.5	
SD	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	
n	39	73	299	96	87	53	
Church/religion							2.22
M	2.5	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.7	
SD	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.4	
n	38	73	298	97	87	53	
Your house							5.71‡
M	2.8	2.6	3.2	3.2	2.4	2.8	
SD	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.7	
n	38	73	299	97	87	53	
Average							4.07*
M	2.8	3.0	3.3	3.1	2.9	2.9	
SD	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.9	
n	39	73	299	97	87	53	

Note.—1 = Not all all; 5 = Very much. $^a F$ ratio for main effect of age group.
*$p < .01$. †$p < .001$. ‡$p < .0001$.

society was ($F_{5,632} = 6.58$, $p < .0001$), and TV shows/movies ($F_{5,636} = 5.52$, $p < .001$). The Brown-Forsythe statistic indicated that the effect of age group was not significant for any of the three items.

The Newman-Keuls procedure for $k = 6$ means, 640 df, and alpha set at .01 was used to explore pairwise comparisons across age groups for the items with significant age-group effects. Several types of patterns of age differences were obtained (Table 1).

Nostalgia for pets, toys, and holidays declined with increasing age. For holidays and toys, the decline began after the 18- to 21-year age period, while for pets, the decline was more gradual with the sharpest decline after age 33 years. Nostalgia for music showed an opposite pattern with gradually increasing nostalgia from a low in childhood to a peak in the later years. Nostalgia for family was relatively stable across the age groups until a significant increase after age 50.

The most typical age pattern indicated increasing nostalgia to a peak during the college years, followed by a decline. This pattern was present for not knowing sad or evil things, not having to worry, having someone to depend on, school, one's house, heroes/heroines, feelings, the way people were, and friends.

The average of the ratings for each of the 20 aspects was used as an index of over-all nostalgia. Average nostalgia ratings were examined in a 2×6 analysis of variance with gender and age group as between-subjects variables. Since Levene's test indicated unequal variances across age groups ($F_{5,636} = 5.65$, $p < .0001$), the Brown-Forsythe statistic was used to test effects. The main effect of gender was not significant ($F_{1,216} = 0.04$, $p > .05$), and it did not interact with age group ($F_{5,213} = 0.52$, $p > .05$). The main effect of age group was significant (Table 1), and the Newman-Keuls procedure for $k = 6$ means, 642 df, and alpha set at .01 was used to explore pairwise comparisons across age groups. As expected, the pattern of age differences for this index was similar to the typical pattern for individual aspects, with a peak during the college years. This measure of average ratings looks promising as an index of nostalgia. Intercorrelations among the 20 items ranged from .01 to .50, suggesting some independence and some moderate interrelationships.

An exploratory factor analysis (Dixon, 1992) was performed on the ratings for 617 subjects who completed all 20 nostalgia items. Five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 were extracted. Factor loadings for each item after varimax rotation are displayed in Table 2. Although these exploratory results must be interpreted cautiously, an interesting pattern emerges. The first factor appears to include items which are relatively abstract and which may reflect cognitive-emotional aspects of nostalgia (the way people were, not having to worry, things you did, having someone to depend on, not knowing sad or evil things, feelings, and the way society was).

The second factor, including music, heroes/heroines, TV shows/movies, and places, may reflect aspects of experience associated more closely with the social-cultural context. The third factor included concrete aspects of individ-

ual experience, pets, toys, and holidays, which may be most closely associated with childhood. The fourth factor, someone you loved, family, and your house, seems to relate to an individual's immediate social circle, while the fifth factor, including friends, school, and church, appears to involve social elements but within a broader realm of experience.

TABLE 2
ROTATED LOADINGS FOR NOSTALGIA ITEMS FOR FIVE FACTORS

Item	1	2	3	4	5
Family	.143	.024	−.045	.668	.295
Heroes/Heroines	.142	.535	.319	−.093	.296
Not having to worry	.682	.060	.229	−.138	.187
Places	.317	.547	.120	.270	−.149
Music	.038	.755	−.062	.143	.189
Someone you loved	.068	.072	.073	.711	.016
Friends	.263	.139	.102	.371	.429
Things you did	.644	.303	.078	.124	.080
Toys	.259	.167	.740	−.164	.123
The way people were	.709	.296	−.038	.052	.162
Feelings you had	.521	.281	.124	.178	.210
TV shows, movies	.365	.534	.299	.007	−.029
School	.254	.018	.141	.014	.743
Someone to depend on	.612	−.042	.148	.293	.065
Holidays	.340	−.007	.519	.200	.220
The way society was	.475	.319	−.128	.181	.165
Pets	−.088	.130	.707	.225	−.007
Not knowing sad/evil	.558	−.094	.430	.107	−.066
Church/religion	.024	.156	.008	.243	.691
Your house	.128	.328	.253	.484	.106
Variance explained	3.185	2.017	1.927	1.801	1.669

An index of each factor was obtained for each subject by averaging across the ratings for the items delineated above for the factors. The five factors were intercorrelated, but to different degrees (Table 3). Of the five factors, only the child factor was correlated significantly with age and, as anticipated, the correlation was negative ($r = -.37$; $N = 648$).

The over-all nostalgia index was used to identify respondents high in nostalgia and those low in nostalgia by selecting scores obtained by the top 25% of the sample (above 3.6) and by the bottom 25% of the sample (under 2.65). Judgments of the past, present, and future from Part 1 of the survey were each analyzed in a separate one-way analysis of variance, with nostalgia (high/low) as the between-subjects factor. A main effect of nostalgia group indicated a significant difference in ratings of the past by high and low nostalgic groups ($F_{1,304} = 69.82$, $p < .0001$), with more nostalgic individuals rating the world when they were younger as better than did less nostalgic individuals (Table 4).

TABLE 3
PEARSON INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG FACTORS AND AGE ($N = 648$)

Factor	Age	Factor			
		1	2	3	4
1	−.10				
2	.02	.54			
3	−.37	.42	.40		
4	.06	.39	.38	.27	
5	.00	.43	.36	.29	.43

Note.—Critical value, $p < .01$, for $r_{500} = .12$.

High and low nostalgia groups did not differ significantly in their rat-
ings of the world as it is now ($F_{1,307} = 3.63$, $p > .05$) or in their view of the
world 20 years from now ($F_{1,306} = 0.05$, $p > .05$).

TABLE 4
MEAN RATINGS OF PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE BY NOSTALGIA

Time	Nostalgia Group			
	High[a]		Low[b]	
	M	SD	M	SD
Past[c]	4.0	0.7	3.3	0.7
Present[d]	2.6	0.9	2.8	0.9
Future[c]	2.9	1.0	2.9	1.0

[a]$n = 154$. [b]$n = 154$. [c]1 = A lot worse; 5 = A lot better. [d]1 = Pretty bad; 5 = Great.

Two categories of world view were formed according to the relative
ratings of the past and future. The perception of respondents who rated the
future as more favorable than the past was referred to as an optimistic world
view. The pessimistic view was attributed to those who rated the future as
less favorable than the past. The relationship between nostalgia and world
view was confirmed in a chi-squared analysis, including two levels of nostal-
gia (high and low) and two categories of world view, optimistic and pessi-
mistic [$\chi_1^2(N = 230) = 17.64$, $p < .0001$]. Whereas 87% of the nostalgic indi-
viduals held a pessimistic world view, only 63% of those respondents scor-
ing low on nostalgia held a pessimistic view.

Although world view and nostalgia are interrelated, it does not appear
that they are redundant. The percentage of nostalgic individuals varies sig-
nificantly across the age groups [$\chi_5^2(N = 311) = 40.70$, $p < .0001$], with as few
as 20% nostalgic individuals in the youngest group and as many as 69% nos-
talgic individuals in the 18- to 21-yr. group. World view, however, did not
vary significantly across the age groups [$\chi_5^2(N = 478) = 9.81$, $p > .05$].

The data obtained in this study suggest that pessimists are more likely
to be nostalgic. One might expect that a happy childhood might facilitate the

development of an optimistic outlook and, conversely, that a less happy childhood might promote a pessimistic view. In the above analyses, world view was operationalized as the judgment of the future relative to the past. In fact, whereas the over-all nostalgia score was not correlated with judgments of the present ($r = -.10$) or the future ($r = -.03$), it was significantly correlated with evaluations of the past ($r_{639} = .32$, $p < .01$).

To explore the relative contributions of the component judgments involved in world view, over-all nostalgia was analyzed in an analysis of covariance with world view (optimists/pessimists) between subjects and age and ratings of past, present, and future covariates. Adjusting for age and time perceptions, the effect of world view was not significant ($F_{1,472} = 0.99$, $p > .05$). The covariates of age ($F_{1,472} = 6.07$, $p < .01$) and view of the past ($F_{1,472} = 17.18$, $p < .0001$) were significant. The regression coefficient for nostalgia on age was negative ($-.01$, $p < .01$), indicating that older respondents tended to display less nostalgia. The regression coefficient for nostalgia on judgment of the past, however, was positive (0.22, $p < .0001$), suggesting that nostalgia increases as the past is perceived more favorably. It is important to note that the survey item assesses a relative view of the past by using the scale descriptors "better" and "worse."

It is interesting that nostalgia is related to an individual's relative judgment of the past without respect to his view of the world at present or in the future. In this sample, therefore, nostalgia was associated with the view that the past was better and not necessarily with substantial dissatisfaction with the present or anxieties concerning the future.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show promise for the development of a survey to assess nostalgia. Although multifaceted, nostalgia may be conceptualized as a composite construct. Factor analysis on this sample suggests that nostalgia may vary across different spheres or levels of experience. For example, people may feel different degrees of nostalgia for generalized facets of society, for states of knowledge or innocence of an earlier life stage, or for concrete events or objects.

Research on nostalgia can be generated within four general approaches. A generational perspective may posit differences in sentiment across age cohorts assumed to have shared important common experiences. A developmental approach would explore changes across critical periods throughout the life-span. A third perspective conceptualizes nostalgia as a relatively stable personality dimension or as a sentiment which may be felt more intensely or pervasively by individuals with certain personality traits. Finally, as a transient mood state, nostalgia should be researched with a focus on factors which enhance or inhibit its occurrence.

Not mutually exclusive, these approaches may represent interrelated di-

mensions of reality. Factors which promote the development of nostalgia may be more prevalent or more intense in certain time periods, leading to generational differences, or in certain individuals' lives, increasing the probability of the development of a "nostalgic" personality, i.e., an openness or susceptibility to becoming nostalgic.

The present sample is not adequate to yield definitive conclusions concerning generational differences. It is interesting, however, that the pattern of age differences for over-all nostalgia as well as for many of the individual items was not consistent with expectations based upon the conceptualization of a silent (born 1925—1942), baby boom, and 13th generation.

Based upon Strauss and Howe's characterizations (1991), individuals of the silent generation "have been keen on manufacturing points of lifecycle references around personal (rather than historical) markers. Whatever phase of life they occupy is fraught with . . . transitions bearing little or no relation to the larger flow of public events" (p. 282). Strauss and Howe also cite a 1985 study which "found the fiftyish Silent preferring 'the twenties' over any other decade of life" (p. 285). Therefore, despite youth during an era of depression and war, the silent generation might be expected to experience considerable nostalgia, especially now as they enter their later years.

According to Strauss and Howe (p. 296), while boomers celebrated their memories of the Woodstock festival, to the alienated and emotionally detached 13ers, "rehashing Woodstock was a waste of time." With the boomers having been nurtured in a child-focused society and the 13ers in one of the most "virulently anti-child periods in American history" (p. 328), one might expect greater nostalgia among boomers than among 13ers. The typical age pattern obtained in the present sample, however, indicated stronger nostalgic sentiment among the 13ers than either the boomers or the silent generation.

More importantly, the finding of different age patterns for different items suggests that nostalgia waxes and wanes for various spheres of experience as their salience shifts across age groups and as different demands are imposed on individuals.

Of particular interest was the finding of peak nostalgia for many items during the college years, rather than among the elderly. On the one hand, the college years represent a period of major developmental transitions, including for many college students some degree of homesickness. On the other hand, this finding contradicts the stereotype of nostalgia as primarily characteristic of aging (Davis, 1979). Concerns for further research include a survey of a larger sample of individuals over 50 years of age and examination of the choice of content for the 20 items to assess nostalgia.

The finding of an association between nostalgia and world view also merits further study. It is not clear to what extent the measures in this study were assessing different underlying constructs. Relative judgments of the past

were correlated with nostalgia, but it is not clear what factors govern those judgments. Objective social and economic indicators would suggest a more favorable environment for the childhood days of the boomer generation than for the 13ers (Bennett, 1994). The boomers, however, did not exhibit greater over-all nostalgia than the 13ers.

Issues raised here include the question of whether an individual's world view reflects a relatively stable personality attribute. An obvious possibility is that world view is generated by an individual's general level of optimism. Related questions surround the concept of nostalgia. Are nostalgic individuals pessimistic, emotional, conservative, etc.? An investigation of such questions has been initiated and the first stage is now in progress.

Ultimately, an understanding of nostalgia may encourage new approaches to important concerns. For example, the effects of nostalgia on motivation, emotional state, career aspirations, and behavioral choices in a variety of contexts might be explored. This psychological perspective can enrich the knowledge-base on nostalgia achieved to date primarily via a sociological perspective.

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