



CHICAGO JOURNALS

Journal of Consumer Research Inc.

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Source: *Journal of Consumer Research*, (-Not available-), p. 000

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/662199>

Accessed: 06/10/2011 09:27

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Nostalgia: The Gift That Keeps on Giving

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Nostalgia, a sentimental longing for a personally experienced and valued past, is a social emotion. It refers to significant others in the context of momentous life events and fosters a sense of social connectedness. On this basis, the authors hypothesized that (1) nostalgia promotes charitable intentions and behavior, and (2) this effect is mediated by empathy with the charity's beneficiaries. Five studies assessed the effect of nostalgia on empathy, intentions to volunteer and donate, as well as tangible charitable behavior. Results were consistent with the hypotheses. Study 1 found that nostalgia increases charitable intentions. Study 2 showed that this salutary effect of nostalgia on charitable intentions is mediated by empathy (but not by personal distress). Studies 3 and 4 corroborated these findings for different charities and in diverse samples. Finally, study 5 demonstrated that nostalgia increases tangible charitable behavior. By virtue of its capacity to increase empathy, nostalgia facilitates prosocial reactions.

Nostalgia, a sentimental longing for the past, is a self-relevant and social emotion. Descriptions of nostalgic experiences typically feature the self as a protagonist interacting with close others in the context of momentous life events (Wildschut et al. 2006). Nostalgia serves vital relational functions: it bolsters social bonds and increases perceived social support (Sedikides et al. 2008). However, em-

pirical research linking nostalgia to consumer behavior remains relatively scarce and largely focused on accounting for the market success of certain products (Holak and Havlena 1998; Schindler and Holbrook 2003). Research in this tradition has demonstrated how product styles (e.g., of music, motion pictures, or automobiles) that were popular during one's youth influence one's lifelong preferences. In this article, we initiate a line of research on whether nostalgia promotes charitable giving.

Charitable giving is a form of prosocial behavior. Such behavior entails actions that intend to help and do help others (Taute and McQuitty 2004). Consumer research has been concerned with market-oriented prosocial behavior such as monetary donations (Burnett and Wood 1988) and volunteerism (Wymer, Riecken, and Yavas 1996). In the present article, we also focus on monetary donations and volunteerism, which we consider to be manifestations of charitable giving. According to the Giving USA Foundation (2008), American charitable donations reached a record high in 2007, totaling \$306.4 billion. The Center on Wealth and Philanthropy estimated that charitable donations will range between \$21.2 and \$55.4 trillion in the years 1998–2052 (Havens and Schervish 1999). Nonprofit organizations regard donation encouragement as their single most important challenge (West 2004). Thus, it is important to identify factors that promote charitable giving. Our objective in this research was to investigate whether nostalgia increases do-

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John Deighton served as editor and Gal Zauberman served as associate editor for this article.

Electronically published September 17, 2011

nation intentions and tangible donations to charity, as well as whether nostalgia can be incorporated in charity appeals.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Social Content of Nostalgia

Nostalgia refers to a personally experienced and valued past (Sedikides, Wildschut, and Baden 2004; Sedikides et al. 2006; Zauberger, Ratner, and Kim 2009). Content analyses of nostalgic narratives show that nostalgia is a social emotion. Nostalgic episodes typically involve interactions between the self and close others such as family members, friends, and romantic partners. These social interactions occur in the context of momentous life events such as reunions, vacations, anniversaries, graduations, weddings, and child-births (Holak and Havlena 1992; Wildschut et al. 2006). In nostalgic reverie, Hertz argued, "the mind is peopled." Figures of the past are brought to life and become part of one's present (Hertz 1990, 1995). Through nostalgia, one reestablishes a symbolic connection with significant others (Batcho 1998; Cavanaugh 1989; Sedikides et al. 2004). This reexperience of important social bonds satisfies one's need for interpersonal belongingness (Leary and Baumeister 2000) and affords the individual a sense of safety and security (Mikulincer, Florian, and Hirschberger 2003).

The Social Function of Nostalgia

Wildschut et al. (2006) asked British participants to list as many desirable and undesirable features of nostalgia as they could. The capacity to strengthen social connectedness emerged as a key desirable feature of nostalgia. By reigniting meaningful relationships, nostalgia bolsters social bonds and renders positive relational knowledge structures (i.e., working models of self and others in the context of relationships; Baldwin et al. 1996) cognitively accessible. Wildschut et al. (2006) examined directly the idea that nostalgia serves to strengthen social connectedness. Wildschut and colleagues randomly assigned participants to a nostalgia or ordinary event condition. Then, they instructed participants to think of a nostalgic (vs. ordinary) event from their lives, list four relevant keywords, and reflect briefly upon the event and how it made them feel. Following successful nostalgia manipulation checks, they assessed social connectedness with (1) the items "loved" and "protected"; (2) the Revised Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (Fraley, Waller, and Brennan 2000), which indexes attachment anxiety and avoidance; and (3) the Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire (Buhrmester et al. 1988), which focuses on perceived competence in initiating social interactions, self-disclosing, and providing emotional support. Nostalgic (vs. control) participants manifested stronger social connectedness: they felt more loved and protected, evinced reduced attachment anxiety and avoidance, and reported greater interpersonal competence. Zhou et al. (2008) replicated and extended these findings with several Chinese samples (e.g., university students, factory workers, high school students). Taken together,

research indicates that strengthened social connectedness is a vital psychological function of nostalgia (Wildschut et al. 2010). Might nostalgic recollections also promote charitable giving? This is the question with which our research was concerned.

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

Nostalgia and Helping

There is evidence that a sense of social connectedness increases willingness to help others. For instance, in research by Mikulincer et al. (2005, study 1), participants were primed with either names of people they had previously listed as security-enhancing attachment figures or names of nonattachment figures. Participants who were exposed to names of attachment figures (vs. control participants) reported greater willingness to help a distressed individual and more actual helping behavior.

Nostalgic reverie often revolves around important close relationships (e.g., family, friends, romantic partners) and strengthens feelings of social connectedness (Wildschut et al. 2006; Zhou et al. 2008). Given the potency of nostalgia to bolster social connectedness, we tested the hypothesis that nostalgic recollections promote intentions to help others and actual helping behavior, in the form of charitable intentions (studies 1–4) and tangible monetary donations (study 5).

H1: Nostalgia promotes charitable intentions and tangible giving.

Mediation of the Nostalgia-Helping Link: Empathy versus Personal Distress

What is the mechanism that links nostalgia with helping? Awareness of the misfortune or suffering of others can elicit two distinct, vicarious emotional responses: personal distress and empathy (Batson 1991; Batson et al. 1983). Personal distress is a self-oriented emotional response to the plight of another person and includes feeling upset, perturbed, distressed, or troubled. Empathy is an other-oriented emotional response and includes feeling sympathetic, softhearted, compassionate, or tender. Both personal distress and empathy can motivate helping but, whereas distress-based helping stems from an egoistic desire to reduce one's own discomfort, empathy-based helping stems from an altruistic desire to reduce the suffering of the person in need.

An important implication of this distinction is that these different forms of helping should be differentially affected by opportunities to escape awareness of the victim's suffering without helping. If the potential helper is concerned with minimizing personal distress, then an opportunity to escape should reduce helping because escape would offer a noncostly reduction in personal discomfort. However, if the potential helper is concerned with minimizing the victim's suffering, then an opportunity to escape should not reduce helping because escape would not reduce the victim's suffering (Batson and Coke 1981; Batson et al. 1983). Char-

itable intentions and giving should therefore be more robust when they stem from empathy with those in need than when they stem from personal distress at witnessing others' suffering.

Existing research strongly suggests that it is empathy, and not personal distress, that links nostalgia with helping. Research indicates that nostalgia has the capacity to increase social connectedness (Wildschut et al. 2006; Zhou et al. 2008). In turn, there is compelling evidence that social connectedness increases other-oriented empathy, but not self-oriented personal distress, in response to the suffering of another person (Mikulincer et al. 2001, 2005). Accordingly, we hypothesized that nostalgic recollections will promote empathy but not personal distress. We tested this hypothesis in studies 2–4.

H2: Nostalgia increases empathy toward those in need, which, in turn, increases charitable intentions and giving.

The Role of Positive Affect

Wildschut et al. (2006) found that, in addition to social connectedness, participants also identified the capacity to generate positive affect as a desirable feature of nostalgia. In subsequent experimental work, these authors tested the idea that nostalgia serves as a repository of positive affect. They found that participants who recalled a nostalgic (vs. ordinary) event from their lives reported more positive (but not more negative) affects than control participants. However, not all subsequent research has replicated this finding (Stephan et al. 2011). Recent evidence indicates that the prototypic nostalgic experience is characterized by a blend of positive and negative affects (Hepper et al., forthcoming). This “bittersweet” affective signature of nostalgia may explain why empirical support for an effect of nostalgia on positive affect is mixed. Still, in light of extensive evidence that people are more willing to help when they are in a positive mood (Baron 1997; Forgas and George 2001; Isen 1987; Isen and Levin 1972), it is prudent to address the possibility that positive affect mediates the effect of nostalgia on charitable giving. We did so consistently in studies 1–4.

STUDY 1

In study 1, we investigated the effect of nostalgia on charitable giving. We hypothesized that nostalgia would strengthen participants' concrete intentions to contribute time and money to charity. In addition, we examined the possibility that the effect of nostalgia on charitable giving can be explained simply in terms of positive affect.

Method

Participants and Design. Participants were 43 Chinese undergraduate students from Sun Yat-Sen University (24 females, 19 males). They ranged in age from 18 to 24 years

old ($M = 21.74$, $SD = 1.36$). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (nostalgia vs. control).

Procedure and Materials. We induced nostalgia with a manipulation introduced by Wildschut et al. (2006, study 5; see also Routledge et al. 2008, 2011; Zhou et al. 2008). In the nostalgia condition, participants read:

Bring to mind a nostalgic event in your life. Specifically, try to think of a past event that makes you feel most nostalgic. Take a few moments to think about the nostalgic event and how it makes you feel.

In the control condition, participants read:

Bring to mind an ordinary event in your daily life—an event that took place in the last week. Take a few moments to think about the ordinary event and how it makes you feel.

Participants then listed four event-relevant keywords and reflected briefly on the event and their feelings. Following this, they completed a validated manipulation check (Wildschut et al. 2006) consisting of two items: “Right now, I am feeling quite nostalgic” and “Right now, I am having nostalgic feelings” (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). We averaged responses to the two items ($r(43) = .92$, $p = .001$) to form a single index. As intended, participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 4.91$; $SD = 1.42$) reported feeling more nostalgic than did those in the control condition ($M = 2.69$; $SD = 1.21$, $F(1, 41) = 30.30$, $p = .001$, $d = 1.68$).

After completing the manipulation check, participants responded to several filler questionnaires, including the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988). The PANAS consists of 10 items assessing positive affect (PA; e.g., “interested,” “enthusiastic”; $\alpha = .87$) and 10 items assessing negative affect (NA; e.g., “distressed,” “upset”; $\alpha = .90$). Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = very slightly or not at all; 5 = extremely). Because no significant findings emerged for NA in this or any of the subsequent studies, we present only the findings for PA.

Next, participants were provided with a one-page description of a nonprofit organization, allegedly as part of an unrelated study. We called this fictitious organization “Half the Sky Foundation,” and the one-page description explained that its mission was to help young victims of the May 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. (After we completed this research, we learned that there is an actual charity named Half the Sky Foundation, which provides assistance to Chinese orphans. Although this may seem like an extraordinary coincidence, the phrase “half the sky” is, in the Chinese language, intimately linked with the concepts of interdependence, helping, and self-sacrifice. It is derived from the Chinese proverb “Women hold up half the sky.”) Participants were then asked to write down the number of hours that they planned to volunteer for this charity (“Please write down the number of hours you plan to volunteer for the charity”) and the amount of money that they planned to donate to this charity (“Please write down the actual amount of money you can

donate to this charity now"). The Chinese currency is denoted RMB (1 RMB = US\$0.15).

Results and Discussion

Charitable Giving. The items assessing intentions to donate time and money were significantly and substantially correlated ($r(43) = .50, p = .001$). We created a single index of charitable giving by first standardizing (z -scores) and then averaging these two items. Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 0.38; SD = 0.84$) scored significantly higher on this charity index than did those in the control condition ($M = -0.40; SD = 0.71, F(1, 41) = 10.96, p = .002, d = 1.03$). Separate tests of intentions to donate time and money were also statistically significant. After recalling a nostalgic event from their past, participants were more generous in contributing their time as well as their money to the charity than after recalling an ordinary event from their past.

Liu and Aaker (2008) found that prior requests for donations of time (time-asks) facilitated subsequent requests for monetary donations (money-asks), suggesting that time-asks and money-asks elicit different psychological processes. To examine if nostalgia differentially affected time-asks and money-asks, we entered the (standardized) time and money assessments into a 2 (nostalgia vs. control) \times 2 (time-ask vs. money-ask) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures on the second factor. The interaction between the nostalgia manipulation and the time-ask versus money-ask factor was not significant in this ($F(1, 41) = 1.37, p = .25, d = 0.37$) or any of the following studies ($F < 1.98, p > .16$). We therefore do not elaborate further on the distinction between time-asks and money-asks.

Positive Affect. Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 2.78; SD = 0.60$) reported significantly more PA than did those in the control condition ($M = 2.10; SD = 0.52, F(1, 41) = 15.51, p = .001, d = 1.23$). Furthermore, PA tended to be positively correlated with the charity index ($r(43) = .26, p = .09$). These results indicate that PA qualifies as a potential mediator of the nostalgia effect on charitable giving.

Testing Mediation by Positive Affect. To test whether PA mediated the nostalgia effect on charitable giving, we conducted an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the nostalgia manipulation and PA (covariate) as independent variables. The charity index was the dependent variable. Results showed that the association of PA with the charity index was not significant ($B = 0.03, SE = 0.22, F(1, 40) = 0.02, p = .88, d = 0.04$), and the effect of the nostalgia manipulation remained significant ($F(1, 40) = 7.32, p = .01, d = 0.86$). As a final step, we used a bootstrapping analysis (Preacher and Hayes 2004) to test the indirect nostalgia effect via PA. The indirect effect was not significant: mean bootstrap estimate = 0.02 (SE = 0.07), 95% con-

fidence interval = $-0.12/0.16$. Positive affect did not mediate the effect of nostalgia on charitable giving.

Summary. Study 1 produced preliminary evidence for the effect of nostalgia on charitable giving by implicating concrete assessments of participants' volunteering intentions. In particular, nostalgic (vs. control) participants intended to spend more time volunteering for charity and intended to donate more money to charity. Importantly, PA did not account for the beneficial effect of nostalgia on charitable giving.

STUDY 2

Study 1 showed that nostalgia augments intentions for volunteering and monetary donations and ruled out the possibility that PA mediated this effect. The objective of study 2 was to provide further corroborating evidence for the salutary nostalgia effect and, importantly, to shed direct light on the mediating mechanism(s) underlying the effect. We hypothesized that the effect of nostalgia on donation intentions will be mediated by empathy (but not by personal distress).

Method

Participants and Design. Participants were 71 Chinese undergraduate students from Sun Yat-Sen University (40 females, 31 males). They ranged in age from 17 to 24 years old ($M = 18.92; SD = 0.94$). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (nostalgia vs. control). The experimental manipulation of nostalgia and the manipulation check ($\alpha = .94$) were identical to study 1. As intended, participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 5.21; SD = 1.12$) reported feeling more nostalgic than did those in the control condition ($M = 2.67; SD = 1.14, F(1, 69) = 89.98, p = .001, d = 2.26$).

Procedure and Materials. After completing the manipulation check, participants responded to several filler questionnaires, including the PANAS. Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = very slightly or not at all, 5 = extremely). Next, participants were presented with a one-page description of the Half the Sky Foundation, allegedly as part of an unrelated study (see study 1). The description of the charity was followed by an assessment of possible mediators of the effect of nostalgia on charitable giving. Specifically, participants rated the extent to which they had experienced eight different emotional states while reading the description of the charity. Each emotional state was described by an adjective, and these adjectives were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). The list included four empathy-related adjectives (sympathetic, compassionate, softhearted, tender; $\alpha = .84$), and four personal distress adjectives (distressed, upset, perturbed, troubled; $\alpha = .85$). These empathy- and distress-related adjectives have been extensively validated (Batson and Coke 1981; Batson, Fultz, and Schoenrade 1987; Batson et al. 1983; Coke, Batson, and McDavis 1978).

Finally, we assessed intentions toward charitable giving

by instructing participants to rate their willingness to volunteer for, and donate money to, the charity (“How much would you like to volunteer in the Foundation?” and “How much would you like to donate to the Foundation?”). Contrary to study 1, in which participants gave concrete ratings of the number of hours and amount of money they would like to contribute, study 2 participants rated these items on a 15-point scale (1 = not at all, 15 = very much).

Results and Discussion

Testing Mediation by Empathy. As in study 1, we averaged the items assessing intentions to donate time and money ($r(71) = .67, p = .001$) to create a single index of charitable giving. Because items were rated on the same 15-point scale, no prior standardization was required. Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 11.33$; $SD = 2.94$) scored significantly higher on this charity index than did those in the control condition ($M = 9.58$; $SD = 3.67, F(1, 69) = 4.99, p = .029, d = 0.54$). These findings replicate those of study 1. (Separate tests of intentions to donate time and money were also statistically significant.)

Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 4.11$; $SD = 1.36$) also reported significantly more empathy than did those in the control condition ($M = 3.42$; $SD = 1.35, F(1, 69) = 4.57, p = .036, d = 0.52$). There was, however, no significant difference between participants in the nostalgia ($M = 2.89$; $SD = 1.06$) and control ($M = 2.66$; $SD = 1.39$) conditions on personal distress ($F(1, 69) = 0.62, p = .43, d = 0.19$). These results show that empathy (but not personal distress) qualifies as a potential mediator of the nostalgia effect on charitable giving.

When empathy was added to the model as a covariate, the positive association of empathy with the charity index was significant ($B = 1.40, SE = 0.24, F(1, 68) = 33.75, p = .001, d = 1.41$), and the effect of the nostalgia manipulation was no longer significant ($F(1, 68) = 1.39, p = .24, d = 0.29$). A bootstrapping analysis confirmed that the indirect nostalgia effect via empathy was significant: mean bootstrap estimate = 0.98 ($SE = 0.49$), 95% confidence interval = 0.10/2.01. These results are consistent with full mediation of the nostalgia effect on charitable giving by empathy.

Positive Affect. As in study 1, PA was positively correlated with the charity index ($r(71) = .24, p = .040$). However, participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 2.02$; $SD = 0.61$) did not report more PA than did those in the control condition ($M = 2.15$; $SD = 0.66, F(1, 69) = 0.75, p = .39, d = 0.21$). Therefore, PA did not qualify as a mediator.

Summary. Replicating study 1, nostalgia increased intentions for donating time and money to charity. More importantly, this effect of nostalgia on charitable intentions was mediated by feelings of empathy (but not personal distress) following exposure to the suffering of others. The findings were consistent with hypothesis 2.

STUDY 3

The key objective of study 3 was to address two potential limitations of studies 1 and 2 and, by so doing, fortify the evidence for hypotheses 1 and 2. In studies 1 and 2, we assessed participants’ responses toward a charity in aid of young victims of the May 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. In study 3, we examined if our findings generalize to another charitable cause. Therefore, participants read a one-page description of a (fictitious) nonprofit organization called “Lemon Field Foundation.” The description explained that the charity’s mission was to assist in the educational and developmental needs of children in the remote and rural Guangdong province of China.

Another potential limitation of studies 1 and 2 relates to the timing and phrasing of the manipulation check. Following previous research (Hepper et al., forthcoming; Routledge et al. 2011; Wildschut et al. 2006, 2010; Zhou et al. 2008), participants in these studies completed an assessment of state nostalgia (e.g., “Right now, I am feeling quite nostalgic”) immediately following the manipulation. Conceivably, the timing and phrasing of this manipulation check may have introduced experimental demand. Specifically, participants who were instructed to recall a nostalgic event from their past may have felt compelled to endorse the manipulation-check items even when they did not experience nostalgia. To address this issue, study 3 omitted the self-report ratings of state nostalgia. Instead, we instructed participants to provide a written narrative of the nostalgic or ordinary event they recalled (Wildschut et al. 2006, study 6). Two judges (unaware of the experimental condition) coded these participant-generated narratives for intensity of expressed nostalgia.

Method

Participants and Design. Participants were 40 Chinese undergraduate students from Sun Yat-Sen University (24 females, 16 males). They ranged in age from 19 to 33 years old ($M = 23.13$; $SD = 2.59$). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (nostalgia vs. control). The experimental manipulation of nostalgia was identical to studies 1 and 2, with the exception that participants also produced a written narrative of the nostalgic or ordinary event they recalled (Wildschut et al. 2006, study 6).

Procedure and Materials. Following the manipulation, participants responded to several filler questionnaires, including the PANAS (1 = very slightly or not at all, 5 = extremely). Next, participants were presented with a one-page description of the “Lemon Field Foundation,” allegedly as part of an unrelated study. The description of the charity was followed by the same assessments of empathy and personal distress as used in study 2. Next, we assessed intentions toward charitable giving with the same items as in study 2. Participants rated the items on an 11-point scale (1 = not at all, 11 = very much).

Results and Discussion

Testing Mediation by Empathy. As in the preceding studies, we averaged the items, assessing intentions to donate time and money ($r(40) = .65, p = .001$) in order to create a single index of charitable giving. Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 9.18; SD = 2.16$) scored significantly higher on this charity index than did those in the control condition ($M = 6.50; SD = 2.74, F(1, 38) = 11.74, p = .0015, d = 1.11$). (Separate tests of intentions to donate time and money were also statistically significant.)

Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 3.86; SD = 0.82$) also reported significantly more empathy (but not more personal distress, $F(1, 38) = 0.97, p = .33$) than did those in the control condition ($M = 3.06; SD = 1.06, F(1, 38) = 7.12, p = .011, d = 0.87$). Thus, empathy qualifies as a potential mediator of the nostalgia effect on charitable giving.

When empathy was added to the model as a covariate, the positive association of empathy with the charity index was significant ($B = 1.03, SE = 0.39, F(1, 37) = 6.82, p = .013, d = 0.86$), and the effect of the nostalgia manipulation was reduced but remained significant ($F(1, 37) = 5.47, p = .025, d = 0.77$). A bootstrapping analysis confirmed that the indirect nostalgia effect via empathy was significant: mean bootstrap estimate = 0.42 ($SE = 0.28$), 95% confidence interval = 0.02/1.11. These results are consistent with partial mediation of the nostalgia effect on charitable giving by empathy.

Positive Affect. Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 2.11; SD = 0.36$) did not report more PA than did those in the control condition ($M = 2.11; SD = 0.52, F(1, 38) = 0.00, p = 1.00, d = 0.00$). Furthermore, PA was not significantly correlated with the charity index ($r(40) = .09, p = .57$). Thus, PA did not qualify as a mediator.

Manipulation Check. We transcribed the participant-generated autobiographical narratives. Two judges (unaware of the experimental condition) coded these narratives for the intensity of expressed nostalgia ("How much nostalgia did the person who wrote this narrative experience?"; 1 = very little, 7 = very much). The judges' ratings were significantly and substantially correlated ($r(40) = .62, p = .001$). After applying the Spearman-Brown correction, interrater reliability was .77. As intended, narratives written by participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 4.40; SD = 1.82$) expressed more nostalgia than narratives written by participants in the control condition ($M = 3.30; SD = 1.56, F(1, 38) = 4.22, p = .047, d = 0.67$). This manipulation check did not rely on self-report, yet provided convergent evidence for the validity of the manipulation.

Summary. Study 3 extended studies 1 and 2 in two ways. First, we examined participants' responses to a different charity—"Lemon Field Foundation." Participants were told that the charity's mission is to assist in the educational and developmental needs of children in the remote and rural Guangdong province of China (compared to earthquake victims in studies 1 and 2). Second, we did not administer a

self-report assessment of state nostalgia following the experimental manipulation. Instead, we coded the participant-generated autobiographical narratives and found that more nostalgia was expressed in the narratives of participants in the nostalgia (compared to control) condition. Replicating study 2, nostalgia increased charitable intentions, and this salutary effect of nostalgia was mediated by feelings of empathy (but not personal distress) following exposure to the suffering of others. The findings further corroborated hypotheses 1 and 2.

STUDY 4

The three preceding studies (studies 1–3) provided compelling support for hypotheses 1 and 2. Nostalgia increases charitable giving (studies 1–3), and this beneficial effect of nostalgia is mediated by empathy (studies 2 and 3). A limitation of these studies, however, is that they were all conducted with Chinese undergraduate students. In study 4, we addressed this limitation by replicating study 3 with a diverse (in terms of nationality and age) sample of expatriates and overseas students residing in Sun Yat-Sen University and South China University of Technology.

Method

Participants were 64 expatriates and overseas students residing in Sun Yat-Sen University and South China University of Technology (22 females, 40 males, 2 unidentified) who completed the study for payment (30 RMB). We advertised the study on campus notice boards and actively recruited participants in overseas-student dormitories and meetings. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 62 years old ($M = 25.79; SD = 9.43$). On average, they had resided in China for 13.93 months ($SD = 14.92$). Twenty-six nationalities were represented in the sample (USA = 17%, Russia = 9%, all other nationalities <7%). The experimental manipulation of nostalgia, procedure, and materials was identical to study 3, with the exception that materials were presented in English (rather than in Chinese). We specified English-language comprehension as a prerequisite for entering the study.

Results and Discussion

Testing Mediation by Empathy. We again averaged the items assessing intentions to donate time and money ($r(64) = .68, p = .001$) in order to create a single index of charitable giving. Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 6.55; SD = 2.31$) scored significantly higher on this charity index than did those in the control condition ($M = 4.83; SD = 2.58, F(1, 62) = 7.81, p = .007, d = 0.71$). (Separate tests of intentions to donate time and money were also statistically significant.) Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 4.78; SD = 1.06$) also reported significantly more empathy (but not more personal distress, $F(1, 62) = 0.72, p = .40$) than did those in the control condition ($M = 4.10; SD = 0.91, F(1, 62) = 7.82, p = .007, d = 0.71$).

When empathy was added to the model as a covariate, the positive association of empathy with the charity index was significant ($B = 0.81$, $SE = 0.30$, $F(1, 61) = 7.20$, $p = .009$, $d = 0.69$), and the effect of the nostalgia manipulation became marginal ($F(1, 61) = 3.48$, $p = .067$, $d = 0.48$). A bootstrapping analysis confirmed that the indirect nostalgia effect via empathy was significant: mean bootstrap estimate = 0.29 ($SE = 0.15$), 95% confidence interval = 0.05/0.63. These results are consistent with full mediation of the nostalgia effect on charitable giving by empathy. (Exposure to Chinese culture, as assessed by duration of residence, was not correlated with either the charity index $r = .12$, $p = .47$ or empathy $r = -.11$, $p = .49$.)

Positive Affect. Participants in the nostalgia condition ($M = 3.30$; $SD = 0.68$) did not report more PA than did those in the control condition ($M = 3.15$; $SD = 0.61$, $F(1, 62) = 0.77$, $p = 0.38$, $d = 0.22$). Furthermore, PA was not significantly correlated with the charity index ($r(64) = .08$, $p = .53$). Positive affect therefore did not qualify as a mediator. (Exposure to Chinese culture was not correlated with PA, $r = -.04$, $p = .81$.)

Summary. Studies 1–3 found that nostalgia increases charitable intentions, independent of PA. Study 2 showed that this effect of nostalgia on charitable intentions is mediated by empathy (but not by personal distress). Study 3 corroborated these findings for a different charity. Study 4, in turn, demonstrated that these findings are not confined to Chinese undergraduates but were also obtained in a nationally diverse sample of expatriates and overseas students residing in China. Still, from a more pragmatic, socially relevant perspective, one might ask whether nostalgia can be utilized to increase tangible monetary donations to charity. We addressed this issue in study 5.

STUDY 5

The objective of study 5 was to test the value of nostalgia in promoting charitable giving by putting it to use. To achieve this, we introduced two critical changes. First, we developed a novel nostalgia induction by incorporating nostalgic elements in charity appeals. Second, we assessed actual monetary donations rather than intentions to donate. Assessing tangible donations is vital, because people may feel empathetic toward someone in need and may express willingness to help without actually helping (Batson 1991). In particular, we showed participants one of two charity appeals. The first appeal contained nostalgic cues, whereas the second appeal contained future-oriented cues. We hypothesized that participants who were exposed to the nostalgic appeal (compared to the non-nostalgic appeal) would contribute more of their own money to the charity.

Method

Participants and Design. Participants were 108 Chinese undergraduate and graduate students from Sun Yat-Sen University (60 females, 48 males). They ranged in age from 17

to 45 years old ($M = 20.79$; $SD = 5.53$). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (nostalgic charity appeal vs. non-nostalgic charity appeal).

Procedure and Materials. Participants first completed a series of laboratory tasks. These tasks were unrelated to the subsequent study but provided a pretext for paying participants a fee. Participants were told they would receive a fee for performing the laboratory tasks and then received 7 RMB in 1 RMB notes. When participants were preparing to leave the laboratory, another experimenter entered the room and showed them a printed charity appeal for the Half the Sky Foundation (see appendix fig. A1). This appeal either contained nostalgic cues (nostalgic appeal condition) or did not contain nostalgic cues (non-nostalgic appeal condition). To assess charitable giving, a collection box had been placed near the exit of the laboratory. The amount of money that participants placed in the box served as index of charitable giving. Participants were contacted after the study, and the money they had donated was returned to them. We calculated participants' total donations and then donated this amount to the real Half the Sky Foundation.

We developed several charity appeals for inclusion in this study. We made our final selections based on careful pre-testing designed to control for such factors as layout, color, illustrations, and word count. Although highly similar in appearance, these appeals differed in important ways. Whereas the nostalgic appeal included the headline: "Those Were the Days: Restoring the Past for Children in Wenchuan," the non-nostalgic appeal included the headline: "Now Is the Time: Build the Future for Children in Wenchuan." Furthermore, in the nostalgic appeal the photographs were captioned with the words "It was a time like no other . . . Remember?" In the non-nostalgic appeal the caption was "A moment just like this . . . in their future."

We conducted a pretest ($N = 20$) to validate these charity appeals. We showed Sun Yat-Sen University students either the nostalgic or the non-nostalgic appeal and then asked them, "Please indicate the extent to which you feel nostalgic right now" (1 = not at all, 15 = very much). The nostalgic appeal ($M = 11.10$; $SD = 1.85$) elicited significantly stronger feelings of nostalgia than did the non-nostalgic appeal ($M = 9.20$; $SD = 1.93$, $F(1, 18) = 5.04$, $p = .038$, $d = 1.01$).

Results and Discussion

The results were consistent with the hypothesis. Participants who were exposed to the nostalgic appeal ($M = 5.96$; $SD = 1.57$) contributed more money than did participants exposed to the non-nostalgic appeal ($M = 5.07$; $SD = 1.97$, $F(1, 106) = 6.74$, $p = .011$, $d = 0.51$). Nostalgic appeals increased tangible charitable behavior. A possible limitation of this study relates to the confounding of time perspective (past vs. future) with type of appeal (nostalgic vs. non-nostalgic). Future research on nostalgic charity appeals could address this issue by implementing a variety of nos-

talgia inductions, including inductions of music-evoked nostalgia (Barrett et al. 2010; Routledge et al. 2011).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Charity appeals employ a variety of strategies to motivate people to help. For example, behavioral-influence tactics such as the foot-in-the-door technique, the “even a penny will help” approach, and labeling (Fern, Monroe, and Avila 1986; Moore, Bearden, and Teel 1985; Reingen 1978) are commonly used. In addition, charities make use of social recognition as a technique to boost volunteerism (Fisher and Ackerman 1998) and rely on the effects of temporal framing and involvement to increase the persuasiveness of charity advertising (Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran 1992). Charity appeals also capitalize on emotions: they frequently show pictures of deprived children in need of help, accompanied by narratives that are designed to induce guilt or generate empathy on the part of viewers (Basil, Ridgway, and Basil 2008). Here, we were concerned with the impact of nostalgia, a discrete bittersweet emotion (Hepper et al., forthcoming), on charity appeals.

Nostalgia, a sentimental longing for a personally experienced and valued past, is a social emotion. It refers to significant others in the context of momentous life events. Nostalgia recreates the meaningful bonds one has with other persons and, in the process, fosters a renewed sense of social connectedness and secure attachment (Sedikides et al. 2008, 2009; Wildschut et al. 2006). Processes that increase social connectedness and secure attachment, in turn, provide the foundation for empathy, willingness to help others, and helping behavior (Mikulincer et al. 2001, 2005). Accordingly, we hypothesized that (1) nostalgia promotes charitable intentions and behavior, and (2) this effect is mediated by empathy. We tested these hypotheses in five studies.

To guard against threats to internal validity, we adopted the strategy of converging operations advocated by Campbell and Fiske (1959). Across the five studies, we implemented two different nostalgia manipulations. In studies 1–4, we induced nostalgia through a validated procedure (Routledge et al. 2008; Wildschut et al. 2006; Zhou et al. 2008). In particular, we instructed participants to bring to mind, list keywords, and immerse themselves in either a nostalgic autobiographical event or an ordinary autobiographical event. In study 5, we induced nostalgia through a charity appeal. In particular, we presented participants either with a nostalgic-oriented or a future-oriented charity appeal. To check whether our manipulations successfully induced nostalgia, we assessed the state of nostalgia after either the experimental manipulation (studies 1 and 2), the coded participant-generated autobiographical narratives for expressed nostalgia (study 3), or in a pilot study (study 5). In each case, these checks attested to the effectiveness of our procedures. We assessed empathy toward different targets. In studies 1 and 2, participants rated their empathy toward young earthquake victims. In studies 3 and 4, participants rated their empathy toward young children in a relatively deprived rural area of China. We measured char-

itable giving in different ways. In study 1, we focused on concrete intentions to volunteer (i.e., number of hours) and donate (i.e., amount of money). In studies 2–4, we were concerned with more global intentions for volunteerism and monetary donations. Finally, in study 5, we examined tangible charitable behavior.

The results converged in support of the hypotheses. We showed that nostalgia increased charitable intentions—both concrete and general ones (studies 1–4). Importantly, the effect of nostalgia on charitable intentions was mediated by empathy in samples of Chinese undergraduate students (studies 2 and 3) and in a nationally diverse sample of expatriates and overseas students residing in China (study 4). Furthermore, PA (studies 1–4) and personal distress (studies 2–4) were ruled out as potential mediators of the effect of nostalgia on charitable intentions. Finally, we demonstrated that nostalgia increased tangible charitable behavior (study 5).

Our findings are generative. To begin with, future research will do well to examine whether any social-connectedness prime can produce the results observed in the reported studies or if there is something unique about nostalgia. This is a challenging question, because many social-connectedness primes will also elicit nostalgia. Carnelley and Rowe (2010), for instance, found that participants who were instructed to visualize and then write about a relationship exemplifying secure attachment included more nostalgic words (e.g., “memories,” “nostalgic”) in their written narratives than did participants who visualized and then wrote about relationships exemplifying either avoidant or anxious attachment.

Nonetheless, we would like to point to a difference between a nostalgic event and a very recent social interaction with a friend (e.g., conversation, lunch). Presumably, nostalgia requires some passage of time and, hence, recalling a recent social interaction might increase social connectedness without also producing nostalgia. There are three key reasons why we think that recalling a nostalgic event (compared to a recent social interaction) will have a stronger impact on charitable giving. First, as Davis (1979, 47) argued, nostalgia “is an emotion that plays tricks on us (and) will continue to simplify, sentimentalize, prettify, and otherwise distort our past.” The passage of time, then, affords some degree of “artistic license” to sculpt nostalgic memories that epitomize social connectedness and secure attachment. Second, nostalgic charity appeals can capitalize on the known propensity for most individuals to engage in nostalgic reflection on a regular basis (i.e., several times a week; Wildschut et al. 2006). By comparison, encouraging individuals to recollect a recent interaction with friends may seem contrived. Third, nostalgia is a multifaceted emotion, and we suspect that there are other mechanisms, besides social connectedness, that are involved in the effect of nostalgia on charitable intentions or behavior. Note, in this respect, that, whereas empathy fully mediated the nostalgia effect on charitable giving in studies 2 and 4, empathy mediation was partial in study 3. We would single out self-esteem as a possible additional mediator. Nostalgia elevates

self-esteem (Vess et al., forthcoming; Wildschut et al. 2006). Self-esteem is related to confidence in one's skills and competences, control, self-efficacy, and, arguably, reduced pre-occupation with self-focused needs (Mikulincer et al. 2001, 2005; Sedikides and Gregg 2003). Reduced self-focused pre-occupation may, in turn, allow room for an other-focused orientation, including empathy toward distressed others. Thus, positive self-esteem may give a boost to altruistic reactions. In all, then, nostalgia may promote charitable intentions and behavior through positive self-esteem.

A further line of future research could focus on the potential role of individual differences. It would be prudent, in future research, to investigate systematically the possible moderating role of cultural background and associated individual differences in independent and interdependent self-construal with more representative samples. Another suitable target for future research is nostalgia proneness. Individuals differ in the extent to which they spontaneously engage in nostalgic recollections (Routledge et al. 2008; Zhou et al. 2008). Are nostalgia-prone participants more compassionate, willing to give, and giving than their counterparts? Are nostalgia-prone individuals more responsive to nostalgic charity appeals?

A further important issue has to do with the role of the content of nostalgic reverie. The content of the nostalgic episode may or may not match the target of charity. For example, individuals may wax nostalgic about the building in which their elementary school was housed versus the building in which their university department was housed. The charity appeal may refer to raising funds for renovating either the elementary school building or the university building. Will nostalgic engagement lead to higher empathy, stronger intentions to give, and increased monetary dona-

tions when nostalgia is linked to the particular charity in question? In this regard one might also ask whether it matters if nostalgia is elicited by the active recollection of a real and experienced event (e.g., playing football in the elementary school yard) or by passive exposure to nostalgic cues (e.g., a photograph of the elementary school).

A final question relates to whether the salutary effects of nostalgia are limited to causes that seek to reduce human suffering or generalize to other causes, such as environmental-conservation appeals or more instrumental causes like the renovation of a school building. We found evidence that nostalgia's strength resides in its capacity to promote empathy. This implies that nostalgic charity appeals should be used in conjunction with cues that highlight potential threats to human well-being. In the case of environmental conservation, for example, this might involve emphasizing the threat posed to children by environmental pollution.

CODA

For several hundred years, nostalgia has been regarded as negative emotion. It has been labeled as a medical disease, a brain affliction, and a psychiatric disorder (Sedikides et al. 2004, 2008). Recent empirical findings have rendered this view highly questionable. Nostalgia is a predominantly (albeit not exclusively) positive emotion that serves vital psychological functions. One of these functions is to facilitate socially beneficial reactions. We have demonstrated in this article that nostalgia augments empathy-based charitable intentions and behavior. We hope that our research will inspire future efforts to map the influence of nostalgia on consumer behavior and, more generally, social behavior.

APPENDIX

FIGURE A1

CHARITY APPEAL FOR THE HALF THE SKY FOUNDATION



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