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# 21 Buffering Acculturative Stress and Facilitating Cultural Adaptation *Nostalgia as a Psychological Resource*

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Immigration and migration, albeit a steady force throughout human history, are reaching unprecedented proportions. There were 191 million immigrants in 2005, projected to reach 350 million by the year 2025 (United Nations, 2002, 2006). Adding to this statistic are the short-term migrants: assorted sojourners or expatriates, approximately one million international students each year (Open Doors, 1996/1997), and 874 million tourists in 2005, projected to reach 1.6 billion by 2020 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2006, 2008).

Our focus in this chapter is on immigrants, although our discussion is also relevant to migrants—especially sojourners, expatriates, and international students. We first discuss the negative experiences or stressors facing immigrants as they strive to adjust in their host country (also referred to as recipient society or society of settlement). We proceed with a consideration of a crucial psychological consequence of these stressors: acculturative stress. Next, we introduce the construct of nostalgia, elaborate on its properties and triggers, and highlight its functions as a psychological resource. In the ensuing section, we offer and develop the central claim of this chapter. Specifically, we emphasize the role of nostalgia as a coping strategy for alleviating acculturative stress and for contributing to successful acculturation patterns (e.g., integration).

## IMMIGRANT STRESSORS

Immigrants typically flee their home country to find relief from unfavorable conditions such as poverty, human rights violations, famine, natural disasters, or wars (*push factors*; Sam, 2006). They may also be motivated by conditions that promise a better financial future or guarantee personal and civic liberties in the host country (*pull factors*; Richmond, 1993). Regardless, immigrants are likely to be vulnerable from the get-go. Moreover, they encounter in the host country unrelenting economic, cultural, and social obstacles (i.e., stressors) that may exacerbate their vulnerability to the risks involved. Let us elaborate on this point.

According to Pettigrew's (1997) model of personality and social structure and its adaptation by Deaux (2006), immigrants' experiences (attitudes, values, expectations, motivations, identities, memories) are subject both to macro-level and meso-level influences. The former influences refer to social structures (e.g., immigration policy, demographic patterns). The latter influences refer to social interactions (e.g., intergroup attitudes and behaviors, stereotypes, social networks).

Macro-level influences can have a direct effect on the individual immigrant (e.g., visas denied or granted, family class immigration restricted or expanded), but many such effects are filtered through the meso-level. For the purposes of this chapter, we will concentrate on meso-level consequences, and in particular on perceptions of and behavior toward immigrants.

Despite the rhetoric about globalization, interdependence, and multiculturalism, immigrants are largely seen as a threat to receiving societies (Pettigrew, 1998; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Thalhammer, Zucha, Enzenshofer, Salfinger, & Ogris, 2000). The threat can be classified as symbolic or material (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001). *Symbolic threat* refers to perceived challenges to the collective identity of the majority (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Immigrant groups are viewed as potentially altering the homogenous and positively distinct identity of the dominant group. They are perceived as diluting the national identity. This perception may contribute to negative attitudes toward immigrants and to attempts to deprive them of opportunities (i.e., discriminatory behavior; Stephan & Renfro, 2002; Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005). *Material threat* refers to perceived challenges to the financial and status well-being (e.g., economic advantages, political power, social prestige) of the majority. Immigrant groups are seen as laying competitive claims to resources, something that is presumed to be to the detriment of the majority. This perception increases resource competition and may contribute to the restriction of immigrant access to resources, if not the "removal" of the source of competition (Campbell, 1965; Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Such inclinations are considered to be more pronounced in times of economic recession (Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996), when the majority holds zero-sum beliefs (i.e., gains for immigrants come at the expense of losses for nonimmigrants; Stephan, Ybarra, Martinez, Schwarzwald, & Tur-Kaspa, 1998), and when the majority is prone to an ideology that advocates unequal resource distribution or group dominance (Social Dominance Orientation; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994).

Research, both correlational and experimental, has been consistent with the threat perspective on immigration (Esses, Jackson, Nolan, & Armstrong, 1999; Jackson & Esses, 2000). For example, members of the receiving society perceive negatively those immigrants who are ostensibly poor and relatively unintegrated into the "mainstream," as they are considered a drain on social services (e.g., healthcare, unemployment benefits) and a threat to national identity (Johnson, Farrell, & Guinn, 1997). Paradoxically, members of the receiving society also perceive negatively those immigrants who are ostensibly well-off. Their economic and social success is viewed as depriving the majority of resources and as a status threat to the national identity (Johnson et al., 1997). These negative perceptions are exacerbated when economic conditions are poor (Zagefka, Brown, Broquard, & Martin, 2007), unemployment rates are high (Palmer, 1996), and immigrant numbers are large (Quillian, 1995). Furthermore, majority members who are high on Social Dominance Orientation or endorse strongly zero-sum beliefs are more likely to perceive immigrants as competing for scarce resources and, thus, to hold more negative attitudes toward them (Esses et al., 2001; Pratto & Lemieux, 2001). Finally, the more "foreign" or distinct an immigrant group is from the dominant group, the more likely it is for the immigrant group to stand out as a potential competitor and to be the target of national stereotypes or ethnocentrism (i.e., ethnic slurs; Mullen, 2001; Rothmann, Piontkowski, & van Randenborgh, 2008; Zagefka et al., 2007).

Immigrants, then, are required to cope not only with adverse economic circumstances and the unfamiliarity of language, policies, customs, and norms of the receiving society, but also with "social hardships" such as stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination (Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977; Davis & Smith, 1994; Mizrahi, 2005; Thalhammer et al., 2000). These social hardships are rather universal: immigrants report being victims of prejudice and discrimination in virtually all countries where research on the topic has been conducted (e.g., Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, United States; for a review, see Ward & Leong, 2006). Prejudice is sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant. The former involves the promulgation of traditional values or the exaggeration of cultural

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stuff" (Dovidio, Meertens, & Johnson, 2004). Immigrants from western countries often experience discrimination or skill

## ACCULTURATION

The concept of acculturation refers to the process by which individuals from one culture adopt the values, behaviors, and customs of another culture. This process is often associated with immigration and is a key factor in the success of immigrants in a new society. Several factors influence the rate of acculturation, including the individual's personality, the social context, and the degree of contact with the host culture. Intrapersonal factors, such as self-esteem and anxiety, may also play a role.

Also, research has shown that acculturation is not a linear process and that individuals may experience different levels of acculturation at different stages of their lives. For example, immigrants may experience a period of initial acculturation, followed by a period of assimilation, and finally a period of integration. The process of acculturation is also influenced by the degree of contact with the host culture. Immigrants who live in areas with a high concentration of immigrants may experience a slower rate of acculturation compared to those who live in areas with a low concentration of immigrants. Additionally, the degree of contact with the host culture may vary across different domains, such as language, religion, and social norms.

What is clear is that acculturation is a complex process that is influenced by a variety of factors. Understanding the factors that influence acculturation can help us better understand the experiences of immigrants and develop strategies to support their successful integration into a new society.

differences. The latter involves face-to-face and hostile communication, such as an American restaurant manager telling a Mexican employee: "I know how you Spanish boys are about stealing stuff" (Greenhouse, 2005). Furthermore, discrimination is sometimes indirect, sometimes direct (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Indirect discrimination involves earlier decisions that set the stage for subsequent discriminatory consequences. An example is policies about the rights of immigrants, which render long-term upward mobility virtually impossible. As an Argentinean immigrant in the U.S. put it, "Once you reach a certain level, you realize that the next job up is only for Americans" (Javier, 2004). Direct discrimination involves easily observable and inferior work or living conditions for immigrants. For example, immigrants suffer from a higher unemployment rate than natives in every western European country (Pettigrew, 1998) and newly arrived immigrants are highly likely to experience downward occupational mobility (e.g., working on jobs that are below their educational or skill level) in the U.S. (Foner, 1979). These factors contribute to acculturative stress.

### ACCULTURATIVE STRESS

The construct of acculturative stress was coined by Berry (1970). It is defined as an immigrant's "response ... to life events that are rooted in intercultural contact" (Berry, 2006, p. 43). Acculturative stress is due to the cumulative nature of economic, cultural, and social predicaments encountered in the host country, although these stressors can be exacerbated by conditions inherent in the immigrant's society of origin (e.g., lack of education). More generally, the stress stems from the joint and often conflicting requirements of participation in two cultures.

Several factors moderate the degree of acculturative stress (Berry, 2006). Some factors are intrapersonal. For example, migration motivation plays a role (Richmond, 1993): push motivation may be associated with higher levels of stress than pull motivation (Kim, 1988).

Also, immigrants who perceive the intersection of their two cultural worlds as dissociated rather than overlapping and as inherently conflictual rather than harmonious are likely to experience more acculturative stress (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Other factors pertain to the society of origin. For example, the more culturally distant this society is from the host society, the higher the stress level will be (Dunbar, 1992; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Still other factors pertain to the society of settlement (Murphy, 1965). For example, societies that endorse a multicultural ideology (and thus accept cultural pluralism and value cultural diversity as a communal resource) are conducive to lower levels of acculturative stress than societies that seek either to reduce immigration through assimilation policies or to marginalize, if not segregate, diverse populations. Yet, even multicultural societies differ in their stereotypical beliefs, prejudicial attitudes, and discriminatory practices about immigrants of various ethnic, racial, or religious groups. In particular, host societies have a hierarchy of immigrant group acceptance (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Hagendoorn, 1993). Unsurprisingly, members of groups low in this hierarchy are more likely to be targets of hostility, exclusion, and discrimination (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999). A final set of factors pertains to the interplay between intrapersonal and social contextual factors. Examples involve the personality characteristics of conformity values (i.e., politeness, self-discipline, honoring of parents and elders, obedience) and need for closure ("desire for a definitive answer to a question, any firm answer, rather than uncertainty, confusion, or ambiguity"; Kosic, Kruglanski, Pierro, & Mannetti, 2004, p. 797). Immigrants who endorse conformity as a value experience a relatively high level of acculturative stress (e.g., low well-being) when they perceive high rather than low pressures to assimilate (Roccas, Horenczyk, & Schwartz, 2000), and immigrants high in need for closure likely experience more stress when they socialize exclusively with members of their own ethnic group rather than with members of the host culture (Kosic et al., 2004).

What does acculturative stress entail? It entails negative affectivity (Beiser, Johnson, & Turner, 1993; Berry, 2006; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Specifically, it involves bad moods and anxiety, due to uncertainty about how one should lead their daily lives in the new society. It also

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involves heightened levels of depression, due to felt loss of the original culture. This may be especially likely to the extent that the original culture provided an important pillar of meaning. Without such foundations of meaning, depression may be more likely to follow (Simon, Arndt, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1998). Finally, acculturative stress involves loneliness due to the relative lack of social networks and support systems. How, then, can the immigrating individual combat this situation that threatens to erode psychological equanimity? What psychological defenses can be marshaled for protection? We argue that immigrants can counter this constellation of negative affectivity symptoms by resorting to nostalgia (Brown & Humphreys, 2002; Volkan, 1999). Thus, perhaps ironically, we suggest that turning to nostalgic memories of their past cultural heritage might offer resources for staving off a seemingly uninspiring present and future in the host country. We elaborate on this idea below.

## NOSTALGIA AND ITS FUNCTIONS

In this section, we offer our conceptual definition of nostalgia, present empirical support for this conceptualization, examine some triggers of nostalgia, and highlight the pivotal psychological functions of nostalgia. Before proceeding, however, we would like to clarify two definitional issues.

First, we note that our interest is in personal nostalgia, defined as "a sentimental longing for the past" (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1998, p. 1266). Hence, our discussion excludes other types of nostalgia, such as historical nostalgia defined as a sentimental longing for a historical period of which one may or may not have been a part.

Second, we differentiate between nostalgia and homesickness (Fisher, Frazer, & Murray, 1984; Fisher & Hood, 1987; van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & van Heck, 1996). Nostalgia, as we discuss below, is a predominantly positive emotion, whereas homesickness is a predominantly negative emotion. In an early demonstration of this point, Davis (1979) reported that participants associate the words *warm*, *childhood*, *old times*, and *yearning* more frequently with nostalgia than with homesickness. More generally, homesickness refers to psychological problems (e.g., separation anxiety, rumination, distress) that accompany transitions to new environments (e.g., boarding school, university, armed forces) rather than sentimental longing about aspects of one's past. In addition, nostalgia pertains to many more objects than homesickness (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006, Studies 1–2). Specifically, nostalgic accounts refer to close others (family members, partners, friends), momentous occasions (vacations, birthdays, family reunions), picturesque settings (lakes, mountains, sunsets), tangibles (watches, coats, cars), and pets; however, homesickness accounts refer only to one's place of origin. Finally, homesickness is short-lived (Brewin, Furnham, & Howes, 1989; Stroebe, van Vliet, Hewstone, & Willis, 2002), whereas nostalgia occurs frequently (e.g., at least once a week in 79% of respondents: Wildschut et al., 2008, Study 2) and is pervasive across the life span (Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, & Arndt, 2008; Zhou, Sedikides, Wildschut, & Gao, in press).

## NOSTALGIA AS A SELF-RELEVANT, SOCIAL, AND POSITIVE EMOTION

In our early theoretical work, we conceptualized nostalgia as a self-relevant, social, and positive emotion (Sedikides, Wildschut, & Baden, 2004), and we proceeded to conduct research to examine whether there is empirical evidence for this conceptualization. In the initial set of studies by Wildschut et al. (2006), Study 1 reported a content analysis of reader narratives published in the American periodical *Nostalgia*. Study 2 reported a content analysis of British university undergraduates' nostalgic experience. The results of these two studies converged and are summarized below.

The self was almost always the main character in the nostalgic narrative. The self, however, was almost invariably surrounded by close relationships. These findings illustrate that nostalgia is a self-relevant and social emotion.

Nostalgia is also a positive emotion. Although there was evidence of bittersweetness (i.e., some narratives featured themes of disappointment, loss, and separation), expressions of positive affect far exceeded expressions of negative affect. Moreover, nostalgic (vs. ordinary) events induced higher levels of happiness than of sadness. Finally, the structure of the nostalgia narratives was positive. That is, this structure followed a redemptive sequence (where negative life scenes turn into positive ones) rather than a contamination sequence (where positive life scenes turn into negative ones; McAdams, 2001).

### TRIGGERS OF NOSTALGIA

Negative affectivity, as mentioned above, is the hallmark of acculturative stress. Is nostalgia triggered by negative affectivity, such as sad mood or loneliness? We carried out several studies to find out.

In a laboratory experiment (Wildschut et al., 2006, Study 3), we placed British undergraduates in either a bad mood (when they read about the recent tsunami in Asian and African coastal regions), a neutral mood (when they read about a recent landing of the Huygens probe on Titan), or a good mood (when they read about a recent birth of a polar bear at a zoo). Subsequently, we asked participants to complete a nostalgia measure (i.e., the extent to which they missed aspects of their past, such as "someone I loved," "holidays I celebrated," "my pets," and "past TV shows"; Batcho, 1995). Participants reported higher levels of nostalgia when in a bad mood than when in a neutral or good mood. Bad mood, then, induces nostalgia.

But how about loneliness? We (Zhou et al., in press, Study 1) first addressed this question in a correlational and field study, involving migrant Chinese children between ages 9 and 15. The children had migrated to the city of Guangzhou (with their parents) from rural areas. The children filled out dispositional measures of loneliness and nostalgia. As expected, the lonelier the children were, the more nostalgic they felt. We replicated these results in a correlational and field study involving a sample of Chinese factory workers (Zhou et al., Study 4). Furthermore, we sought to replicate these findings in the laboratory (Zhou et al., Study 2). Thus, we experimentally induced high versus low loneliness in Chinese undergraduate students. In particular, we provided participants with bogus feedback about their performance on a "loneliness test." Some participants learned that they scored high, and others that they scored low, on loneliness. Subsequently, all participants completed a state nostalgia measure. Replicating an earlier experiment with British undergraduate students (Wildschut et al., 2006, Study 4), participants in the "high loneliness" condition reported being more nostalgic than participants in the "low loneliness" condition.

Subjective reports are congruent with these correlational and experimental results. British undergraduates state that they become nostalgic when they feel sad or lonely (Wildschut et al., 2006, Study 2). Together, then, these findings suggest that nostalgia can be recruited, either spontaneously or intentionally, to serve a palliative function. The psychological significance of nostalgia for immigrants may lie in its capacity to counteract negative affectivity and restore psychological health. We discuss next how nostalgia might confer these benefits.

### FUNCTIONS OF NOSTALGIA

In our research, we established five nostalgia functions. These are (1) elevating positive affect, (2) boosting self-regard, (3) providing a sense of meaning, (4) fostering self-continuity, and (5) strengthening relational bonds and perceptions of social support. We highlight these functions below. In a subsequent section, we will discuss how these functions can aid coping with acculturative stress.

*Elevating positive affect.* We proposed (Sedikides et al., 2004) that nostalgia is a reservoir of positive affect. We carried out two studies among British undergraduates to test this proposition. In one study (Wildschut et al., 2006, Study 5), participants brought to mind either a nostalgic or ordinary event, and then wrote four relevant keywords capturing the experience. Next, they indicated the extent to which they felt "content" and "happy." Nostalgic participants reported feeling more

content and happy than control participants. In another study (Wildschut et al., 2006, Study 6), participants in the nostalgia condition were provided with the dictionary definition of the construct and were then asked to spend a few minutes writing about a nostalgic event in their life. Participants in the control condition wrote about an ordinary event in their life. Next, all participants completed the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Nostalgic participants reported more positive (but not more negative) affect than control participants. In all, nostalgia is a pathway through which people generate positive affect.

*Boosting self-regard.* We (Sedikides et al., 2004) also proposed that nostalgia boosts self-regard. We initially tested this proposition in two studies. In Wildschut et al. (2006, Study 5), nostalgic and control participants indicated the extent to which they felt "significant" and had "high self-esteem." In Wildschut et al. (Study 6), nostalgic and control participants completed a measure of self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). In both studies, nostalgic participants reported higher levels of self-regard than their counterparts. More recently, we found direct evidence that nostalgia enhances the positivity of implicit self-associations and, in providing such resources, allows people to face threats to self-esteem with reduced defensiveness (Vess, Arndt, Routledge, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2008). Specifically, Study 1 of this research used a standard technique of assessing, outside of a person's conscious awareness, how quickly they associate themselves with positive characteristics. Participants who engaged in nostalgia did so more quickly than participants who thought about a positive event in the future. In Study 2, participants who were given the opportunity to engage in nostalgia showed a reduced self-serving attribution bias after receiving negative performance feedback. Such a biased tendency to take credit for success but deflect responsibility for failure has been well established as a mechanism for maintaining self-esteem (Weary, 1978). These findings suggest that nostalgia helped to maintain self-esteem in the face of negative feedback, thus obviating the need to make self-serving attributions. Thus, in all, nostalgia is a benign mechanism through which people attain positive self-regard.

*Providing a sense of meaning.* Moreover, we (Sedikides et al., 2004; Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006) proposed that nostalgia imbues life with meaning. This proposition received empirical backing in several studies, using samples of American and British undergraduates (Routledge, Arndt, Sedikides, Wildschut et al., 2008). The more participants perceived the present as meaningless, the more they longed nostalgically for the past (Studies 1 & 2). In addition, an experimental induction of nostalgia resulted in higher perceptions of meaning (Studies 3 & 4). An experimental induction of nostalgia also decreased defensiveness against a threat to meaning (i.e., an essay ostensibly written by an authority and advocating that life is meaningless; Study 5).

Another line of research further demonstrated a meaning function by showing that nostalgia facilitates coping with existential threat by buffering the effects of mortality salience (Routledge, Arndt, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2008). Following reminders of their mortality, a condition that motivates efforts to affirm a sense of meaning in life (versus reminders of an aversive dental procedure), the more nostalgic participants felt, the more meaningful they perceived their life to be (Study 1). Several studies have demonstrated that the psychological structures that provide meaning reduce the accessibility of death-related thoughts after mortality is made salient (Arndt, Cook, & Routledge, 2004). Consistent with such findings, in our studies, following mortality reminders (versus dental procedure reminders), nostalgic-prone participants (Study 2) or those who had been subjected to an experimental induction of nostalgia (Study 3) expressed fewer death-related thoughts. In all, nostalgia enhanced perceptions of life as meaningful and assuaged existential fear.

*Fostering self-continuity.* We (Sedikides, Wildschut, Gaertner, Routledge, & Arndt, 2008) further proposed that nostalgia fosters perceptions of self-continuity between past and present. We (Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, Arndt, & Gaertner, 2008) obtained support for this proposition in five studies, using samples of British and American undergraduates. Nostalgia was positively associated with the need for continuity in one's life (Study 1). Also, induced reflection about a nostalgic event (in a manner identical to that of Wildschut et al., 2006, Study 5) led to higher perceptions of continuity in one's life compared to induced reflection about an ordinary event (Study 2) or

about an autobiographical memory event (Study 3). Furthermore, actual discontinuity in one's life (e.g., disrupting events such as relocation, divorce, or new employment) was positively associated with proclivity toward nostalgic engagement (Study 4). The final study established that the cause of a nostalgic state is negative discontinuity (where being cut off from one's past was described as painful and disintegrating) rather than positive discontinuity (where being cut off from one's past was described as pleasant and opportunistic) or neutral discontinuity (where being cut off from one's past was described as inconsequential) (Study 5). In all, nostalgia fosters perceptions of self-continuity, and it is also deployed to ward off perceptions of self-discontinuity.

*Strengthening relational bonds and perceptions of social support.* Finally, we (Sedikides et al., 2004) proposed that nostalgia strengthens relational, or belongingness, bonds. We tested this proposition in three studies. In Wildschut et al. (2006, Study 5), nostalgic and control participants stated the extent to which they felt "protected" and "loved." In Wildschut et al. (Study 6), nostalgic and control participants completed the Revised Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000), which assesses attachment anxiety (e.g., "I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them") and attachment avoidance (e.g., "I am very uncomfortable with being close to romantic partners"). Finally, in Wildschut et al. (2006, Study 7), nostalgic and control participants completed three subscales of the Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire (Buhrmeister, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988), assessing the social skills of initiating interactions, self-disclosing, and providing emotional support. In all three studies, nostalgia strengthened relational bonds. Nostalgic participants reported feeling more protected and loved, reported reduced attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, and reported being more likely to initiate interactions, self-disclose, and provide emotional support to others.

A marker of good interpersonal relationships is the availability of social support from members of one's attachment network (House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990). Does nostalgia strengthen perceptions of received social support? We addressed this question in a sample of Chinese undergraduates (Zhou et al., in press, Study 3). We induced nostalgia in the same manner as in Wildschut et al. (2006, Study 5), and we then assessed subjective perceptions of social support. Compared to their control counterparts, nostalgic participants perceived higher levels of social support and also listed a greater number of persons who would be willing to help them in times of need. Indeed, nostalgia strengthens perceptions of social support.

## NOSTALGIA AS A COPING AID IN ALLEVIATING ACCULTURATIVE STRESS AND FACILITATING ADAPTATION

The above-mentioned functions of nostalgia are relevant to navigating successfully the challenges encountered during the immigrant experience. In the backdrop of economic disadvantages, cultural obstacles, and social hardships, immigrants are confronted with the ominous task of negotiating two cultures: the society of origin and the society of settlement. This negotiation can result in any of four distinct acculturation patterns (Berry, 1974, 1994). One is *integration*, in which the immigrant wants both to maintain cultural identity and to develop relationships with members of the host culture. Another is *assimilation*, in which the immigrant wants to develop relationships with members of the host culture but not to maintain cultural identity. The third pattern is *separation*, in which the immigrant wants to maintain cultural identity but not develop relationships with host culture members. The final acculturation pattern is *marginalization*, in which the immigrant wants neither to maintain cultural identity nor to develop relationships with host culture members.

Integration is the most favored acculturation pattern among immigrants and also migrants (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Dona & Berry, 1994; Georgas & Papastylianou, 1998; Roccas et al., 2000). Moreover, integration confers the highest levels of psychological health and sociocultural adaptation, followed by assimilation, segregation, and marginalization (Berry, 1997; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson,

1992; for an alternative view, see Rudmin, 2003). Immigrants who endorse the integration strategy may be either high or low on bicultural identity integration, referring to the extent to which ethnic cultural identities and the mainstream culture are perceived as compatible and integrated or incompatible and dissociated (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez, Lee, & Leu, 2006). Immigrants high on bicultural identity integration show better psychological adjustment (e.g., less stress; reduced loneliness, depression, and anxiety; increased self-esteem and self-efficacy; increased satisfaction with life and happiness) than those low on bicultural identity integration (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008). Of course, immigrants do not always have the freedom to pursue their acculturation pattern of choice. The acculturation expectations of the receiving society are also relevant (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997). Indeed, immigrants are more likely to pursue separation and marginalization, and least likely to pursue assimilation, when the receiving society tolerates or favors conditions of discrimination (Barry & Grilo, 2003). In general, immigrants are most likely to select and successfully pursue integration when the receiving society endorses a cultural diversity framework (Berry, 1991).

Evidence (Berry & Sam, 1997; Chen et al., 2008; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Hansel, 2005; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Milstein, 2005; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997) suggests that two primary factors constitute the signatures of successful integration strategies: psychological health and interpersonal adequacy. Psychological health refers to the absence of negative affectivity (e.g., bad mood, loneliness) and the presence of positive affectivity (e.g., good mood, self-regard, meaning in life, continuity in life). Interpersonal adequacy refers to good interpersonal relationships, cultural learning, and the reception of social support. We maintain that nostalgia can contribute substantially to successful integration by promoting psychological health and bolstering interpersonal adequacy. Immigrants can draw from their rich repository of nostalgic experiences (e.g., persons, occasions, settings) that used to compose the fabric of daily life in their society of origin. These experiences are likely to be both personally and culturally meaningful. In turn, these experiences will help the immigrant navigate more smoothly the troubled waters of existence in a new society.

#### NOSTALGIA PROMOTES PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

As illustrated above, nostalgia elevates positive affect. Positive affectivity, in turn, broadens both the scope of an individual's attention and her or his thought-action repertoires (e.g., exploration, savoring, play). These broadened behavioral repertoires can contribute to the building up of intellectual resources (e.g., executive control, cognitive complexity, knowledge) and psychological resources (e.g., optimism, creativity, resilience) (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001).

Also as illustrated above, nostalgia boosts self-regard. Self-regard (or self-esteem) buffers anxiety and predicts psychological health (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004; Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007). For example, self-esteem predicts depression (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Roberts, Gotlib, & Kassel, 1996), anxiety (Donnellan et al., 2005), and quality of adult adaptation (Werner & Smith, 1992) over a long period and even when various confounds (e.g., neuroticism, depression; Donnellan et al., 2005) are controlled (Trzesniewski et al., 2006).

Furthermore, we reviewed evidence that nostalgia provides a sense of meaning. Perceptions of meaning in life constitute a marker of healthy psychological functioning. Such perceptions are associated with subjective well-being (King & Napa, 1998), quality of life (Krause, 2007), and successful coping (Debats, Drost, & Hansen, 1995). In addition, perceptions of meaning in life form a buffer against existential anxiety (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). Conversely, lack of meaning in life is a precursor to depression (Wong, 1998).

Finally, we showed that nostalgia fosters perceptions of self-continuity. Such perceptions have been considered central to self-knowledge and self-stability (James, 1890/1981; Neisser, 1988) and also conducive to creativity, vitality, and self-esteem (Kohut, 1977). More importantly, perceptions

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of self-continuity are associated with well-being (Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003) and with increased control of one's life (Fivush, Bohanek, & Duke, 2008) among adolescents, whereas perceptions of self-discontinuity are associated with anxiety and alienation (Milligan, 2003) as well as with dissociative experiences (Lampinen, Odegard, & Leding, 2004).

In sum, we maintain that by elevating positive affect, boosting self-regard, providing a sense of meaning, and fostering perceptions of continuity, nostalgia promotes psychological health. Better psychological adjustment will further facilitate the lofty task of cultural integration. The relative absence of negative health symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression, alienation) and the presence of adjustment indicators (e.g., well-being, quality of life, self-esteem, perceptions of control, optimism) are likely to provide the energy and outlook needed to pursue the tasks of daily life, to cope successfully with challenges, to begin endorsing new norms, and to identify with one's group (i.e., high bicultural identity integration; Chen et al., 2008; Tropp & Wright, 2001). In addition, a healthy psychological profile is more likely to be associated with social acceptance and inclusion (Abrams, Hogg, & Marques, 2005; Sedikides & Skowronski, 2000).

We (Stephan, Wildschut, Sedikides, Routledge, & Arndt, 2008) have provided some evidence in support of the point that nostalgia has energizing or motivational consequences. In Study 1, nostalgia was positively correlated with the frequency and intensity of inspiration. In Study 2, an experimental induction of nostalgia resulted in increases in inspiration. Importantly, in Study 3, the effect of nostalgia on inspiration was mediated by positive affect and self-esteem. Nostalgia, then, inspires, and it does so through positive affect and high self-esteem.

#### **NOSTALGIA BOLSTERS INTERPERSONAL ADEQUACY**

Nostalgia bolsters interpersonal adequacy indirectly. Nostalgia may do so by elevating positive affect, boosting self-regard, providing a sense of meaning, and fostering self-continuity. First, we argued above that positive affect, through a broadening of behavioral repertoires (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001), builds intellectual and psychological resources. In addition, positive affect builds social resources such as friendships and social support (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006). Second, we argued that self-esteem predicts psychological outcomes. It also predicts social outcomes. For example, low self-esteem measured at Time 1 is associated with antisocial behavior and delinquency problems (i.e., criminal convictions, school dropout, money and work difficulties, tobacco dependence) measured at Time 2 (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). Third, we argued that a sense of meaning in life is a marker of healthy psychological functioning. It is also a marker of healthy interpersonal functioning. Lack of meaning, for example, is associated with maladaptive or self-defeating behaviors such as excessive drinking (Waisberg & Porter, 1994), drug abuse (Padelford, 1974), and even suicide (Marsh, Smith, Piek, & Saunders, 2003). Finally, we argued that self-continuity is positively related to psychological health. It may be negatively related to antisocial behavior and social adjustment, as low levels of self-continuity are linked to group schism and even suicide (Chandler et al., 2003; Sani, 2005). Clearly, these positive social behaviors are likely to enable integration, whereas negative social behaviors are likely to impede it.

Importantly, nostalgia bolsters interpersonal adequacy directly. We illustrated that nostalgia increases relational bonds and perceptions of social support and, in so doing, soothes and reinforces the security of the attachment system. Secure attachment is associated with, or leads to, forbearance of aversive social feedback (Kumashiro & Sedikides, 2005), cognitive openness (Green-Hennessy & Reis, 1998), and an exploratory orientation (Green & Campbell, 2000). Shrugging off negativity, being open to new experiences, and adopting an exploratory orientation are all conducive to the pursuit and formation of new relationships with members of the receiving society, thus facilitating integration (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Ward & Rzoska, 1994). Relatedly, in the Stephan et al. (2008) research mentioned above, the effect of nostalgia on inspiration was also mediated by a strengthening of affiliative bonds (Study 3).

We wondered what might be the specific mechanisms through which nostalgia contributes to interpersonal adequacy. Loneliness, a prototypical immigrant experience (Berry, 2006; Beiser et al., 1993), spontaneously instigates nostalgia (Wildschut et al., 2006, Study 4). But can nostalgia serve a coping function? We (Zhou et al., in press) addressed this question in four studies, testing Chinese children, university students, and factory workers. We found that loneliness is associated with, or triggers, perceptions of lack of social support (Studies 1, 2, 4). At the same time, as we have previously noted, loneliness is associated with, or triggers, nostalgia (Studies 1, 2, 4). Interestingly, nostalgia is associated with, or triggers, perceptions of social support (Studies 1-4). This complex (i.e., statistical suppression) pattern can be simplified as follows: although loneliness directly reduces perceptions of social support, it indirectly increases such perceptions through nostalgia. Stated otherwise, nostalgia magnifies perceptions of social support, thus counteracting the effect of loneliness. Nostalgia buffers the impact of loneliness on social support and, in so doing, establishes psychological equanimity.

### CAVEATS AND IMPLICATIONS

Immigration is becoming increasingly prevalent and a worldwide phenomenon. In their attempts for integration in their host society, immigrants face economic obstacles, cultural barriers, and social hardships (i.e., stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination). An ensuing psychological consequence of these adversities is acculturative stress, which entails negative affectivity (e.g., bad mood, loneliness, anxiety, depression).

We argued that nostalgia constitutes a resource in coping with acculturative stress. Nostalgia alleviates acculturative stress by elevating positive affect, boosting self-regard, providing a sense of meaning, fostering self-continuity, and strengthening relational bonds as well as perceptions of social support. In so doing, nostalgia promotes psychological health and bolsters interpersonal adequacy, both of which are key ingredients to successful integration.

We would like to consider a few caveats and implications pertinent to our reported findings and claims. Arguably, nostalgia can be thought of as providing indulgence and comfort rather than a permanent solution to acculturation problems. From this viewpoint, nostalgia is an "aspirin," treating the symptoms of acculturative stress rather than its causes. Nostalgia is an ephemeral state rather than a way of being. This argument, though, can be countered on two grounds. First, nostalgia can be evoked quite frequently, and (as we have already mentioned) it has reportedly been evoked at least once a week in 79 percent of a nonimmigrant sample (Wildschut et al., 2006, Study 2). Thus, nostalgia can have cumulative remedial effects on stress. Second, and more importantly, dispositional nostalgia has been found to be associated with nostalgia functions (Routledge, Wildschut, Sedikides, Amdt, Rithie, & Blankchart, 2008). For example, individuals who are dispositionally high on nostalgia also derive more positive mood, self-regard, sense of meaning in life, and relatedness from engaging in nostalgic reverie. Hence, nostalgia can be a potent state and trait antidote against acculturative stress.

Of course, too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. Waxing nostalgic repeatedly over the course of the day can be an unhealthy response to acculturative stress. Such a pattern may keep an immigrant tethered to his or her culture and may thus foster separation rather than integration. This might be apt to occur when the nostalgic reflection loses its focus on the people, settings, and occasions of one's original culture and instead dwells only on the place of origin. In this case, feelings of homesickness may be more likely to emerge. In addition, under certain conditions or for certain people, it is also possible that nostalgia can invoke a contrast effect between the glories of the past relative to the comparative despair of the present (or future), leading to a restriction in its palliative benefits. Although we have not observed such contrast effects in our studies to date, this is certainly an important topic for future research. In either case, though, it stands to reason that one would need to deploy nostalgia strategically and in moderation, reaping the benefits of the host culture and using it as a springboard for a new beginning. In all, nostalgia would need to be one of several means of

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combating acculturative stress. To be sure, the capacity of nostalgia to serve as a springboard for future engagement versus a shackling to the past that constricts future engagement is an important direction for future research. Studying immigrant populations might be a particularly useful way to explore such issues.

We referred to immigrant acculturation as a unitary process. Theorizing, however, has suggested that acculturation is a process consisting of four stages: euphoria, crisis, recovery, and equilibrium. The temporal variation of these stages is unclear, and several permutations have been proposed, with the available evidence being inconclusive (Adler, 1975; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960; Ward et al., 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1996). Regardless, future research would need to find out at which acculturation stage is nostalgia a most potent aid in coping with acculturative stress.

We have concentrated on the potential of nostalgia to contribute to a successful acculturation pattern, which we identified as integration. As we have discussed, however, acculturation patterns also include assimilation, segregation, and marginalization. Can nostalgia also facilitate the transition from assimilation, segregation, or marginalization to integration? At the very least, can nostalgia lessen the impact of acculturative stress among immigrants who already manifest an assimilation, segregation, or marginalization pattern? These are certainly questions worthy of empirical attention.

Nostalgia constitutes an individual integration strategy for coping with social hardships. Such strategies are concerned primarily with personal mobility. In contrast, collective strategies are primarily concerned with the maintenance of cultural heritage, and they include reliance upon the support of the immigrant cultural organizations and the broader immigrant community for collective gains. There is evidence that immigrants prefer collective over individual strategies (Lalonde & Cameron, 1993). Also, those who adopt collective strategies are more willing to remain in the host country and have stronger beliefs in the fairness of the institutions of the host country (Moghaddam, Taylor, & Lalonde, 1987). At the same time, those who adopt collective strategies report higher levels of group (versus personal) discrimination (Moghaddam & Perreault, 1991). Regardless, there are seemingly good reasons to adopt collective integration strategies. However, such strategies are not incompatible with individual ones. A person concerned with the maintenance of cultural heritage and social advancement can also be concerned with psychological health, interpersonal adequacy, and personal mobility. There is clearly a place for nostalgia in the arsenal of an immigrant's integration strategies. Indeed, it may be useful to consider how the more individual strategy of nostalgia could be integrated with a collective orientation. Finding shared cultural memories among the immigrant community that embrace the culture heritage, for example, may enable an individual to reap the benefits of both approaches.

We have argued that nostalgia is a psychological asset for the immigrant. It is possible, however, that individuals high in dispositional nostalgia are more likely to become immigrants. Nostalgia-prone persons may be particularly adept at using nostalgia as a "portable" repository of social support, which they can take with them on their travels. Future research will need to test this proposition.

In this chapter, we focused on obstacles faced by immigrants. A more complete picture of the immigration experience would also emphasize positivity and agency: opportunities, growth, choices, and accomplishments (Berry 2003; Higgins, 1998; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Goldenberg, 2003). Whether immigrants will encounter or orient themselves toward defending against threat versus embracing challenge will depend on several factors such as the motives for migration, the political conditions in the host society, the cultural differences or similarities between the sending and receiving societies, and the immigrant's dispositional qualities (Berry, 2003).

Although the literature in this area is somewhat limited, findings have begun to identify traits that are conducive to successful acculturation (i.e., integration). One is an external self-orientation: those with an excessive self-orientation and cultural awareness are prone to depression (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Other traits include (high) self-esteem (Valentine, 2001), an internal locus of control (Ward, Chang, & Lopez-Nerney, 1999), as well as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and low neuroticism (Ward, Leong, & Low, 2004). Motivation is also relevant. Individuals high

on achievement and power motivation but low on affiliation motivation (Boneva & Hanzon Frieze, 2001), as well as individuals high on preservation (i.e., psychological, social, and physical security), self-development (i.e., desire for growth in skills), and materialism (i.e., concern with financial well-being) (Tartakovsky & Schwartz, 2001), make relatively more successful immigrants.

Another trait that has received ample empirical attention is resilience, defined as the capacity to resist being affected by (or to recover from) disturbance, insult, or shock (Rutter, 1987). In the face of a traumatic event, resilient persons go through an initial period of distress but then show a "stable trajectory of healthy functioning across time" (Bonanno, 2005, p. 136). We (Zhou et al., in press, Study 4) found that resilience moderated the association between loneliness and nostalgia. Both resilient and nonresilient participants (i.e., Chinese factory workers) derived social support from nostalgia. However, only resilient participants actively recruited nostalgia to counteract loneliness. Extrapolating from these findings to argue that resilient immigrants will acculturate better than nonresilient ones may not be a mere leap of faith: The adaptive value of resilience has been demonstrated in a variety of immigrant and refugee settings (Ehrensaft & Tousignant, 2006).

In summary, we highlighted in this chapter the potential of nostalgia as a resource in coping with and alleviating acculturative stress. Nostalgia should be considered an asset, not a liability, in the acculturation process, as it is likely to facilitate integration. We hope that we have laid the foundation for more research on how nostalgia serves to benefit cultural adaptation, under what conditions, and for whom.

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