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ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN NOSTALGIA AND
ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTIMATE
PARTNER VIOLENCE

by

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Abstract

This study explored the extent to which nostalgia proneness is associated with attitudes towards intimate partner violence, given that positivity is often linked with nostalgic reflection. It has been found that people with an optimistic bias are more likely to put themselves in relationship danger, while those who score high in empathy and hope are less likely to leave an abusive relationship (Sinclair et al., 2018). One-hundred and forty-five adult participants completed a questionnaire through MTurk containing measures of trait nostalgia, relationship nostalgia, social desirability, psychological and emotional well-being, and the revised Intimate Partner Violence Attitudes Scale. If nostalgia is related to positivity bias, then it may be possible that persons who are more nostalgically prone also report a greater acceptance of partner violence. The results showed a positive correlation between sentimental longing for the past and acceptance of intimate partner violence.

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Associations Between Nostalgia and Attitudes Towards Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) can exist in any relationship regardless of race, culture, age, socioeconomic status, or geographical limitation (CDC, 2019). It is a widespread issue in the United States, as one in four women and nearly 1 in 10 men have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner (Truman & Morgan, 2014). Further, over 43 million women and 38 million men report having experienced some form of psychological aggression by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Smith et al., 2018). Data retrieved from U.S. crime reports suggest that 16% of homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner, and that nearly half of female homicide victims are killed by a current or former intimate partner (Cooper & Smith, 2011). Additionally, the lifetime cost of medical services for IPV-related injuries, lost productivity from paid work, criminal justice, and other costs over a victim's lifetime is approximately \$103,767 for women and \$23,414 for men (CDC, 2019).

One perspective that may be useful in understanding why people may choose to stay in a relationship is nostalgia, or a sentimental longing for the past. Previous research has found that nostalgia for a relationship buffers the effect of conflict, with individuals expressing increased commitment to their romantic others (Swets & Cox, 2020). Building on this work, the current study explored variables associated with IPV to see if nostalgia for the relationship is correlated with higher levels of tolerance for an abusive relationship. It is expected that nostalgia proneness is associated with greater acceptance of IPV in individuals.

Nostalgia

Nostalgic thought, defined as a sentimental longing for one's past, is a universal human experience bittersweet in nature, possessing traces of positive and negative emotions (Leboe & Ansons, 2006). Nostalgic reflections are known to have a "positivity bias," meaning the retrieval

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of positive memories is greater than negative memories (Wildschut et al. 2006). Although a nostalgically prone individual can experience negative emotions relating to the passing of cherished moments, the absence of people significant to them, and a bygone way of life, he or she simultaneously feels positive emotion for having had the experience of sharing defining life events with those significant others (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2016). Thus, nostalgic thought provokes bittersweet emotions with an ultimately positive valence.

Feelings of nostalgia have been found to be positively associated with disruptive life events (e.g., divorce, health problems) in correlational research (Sedikides et al., 2008). Nostalgia is invoked by negative affect, particularly feelings of loneliness (Loveland, Smeesters, & Mandel, 2010; Wildschut et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2008), threats to feelings of value, purpose, and meaning in life (Routledge et al., 2011), feelings of insecurity (Zhou et al., 2013), awareness of one's own mortality (Juhl et al., 2010), and boredom (van Tilburg et al., 2013). Experimental findings confirm that nostalgic thought is triggered by experiences which are deemed personally distressing, as is characteristic of disruptive life events (Wildschut et al., 2006).

Nostalgic reverie offers many positive effects for overall well-being and positive affect for individuals experiencing distressing life events. Regular engagement in nostalgia bestows health benefits in the social, existential, and self-related domains of well-being (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2016). Regarding the social benefits, the evocation of nostalgia teems with social themes as it refers to significant events (e.g., traditions, milestones, anniversaries) or people (e.g., friends, relatives, romantic partners) from one's past (Wildschut et al., 2006). Moreover, nostalgia has been found to foster self-continuity, linking the present self with important life events and figures from one's past memories, thereby improving a sense of social connectedness (sense of acceptance) and belonging in the present moment (Sedikides et al., 2016; Wildschut et

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al., 2006). Nostalgic memories enhance motivation to strengthen relationships with others, increases the perception of bonding with current close social relations, and even promote optimism to overcome relationship obstacles (Abeyta et al., 2015; Wildschut et al., 2006). Because nostalgia is infused with social connectedness, it in turn has downstream consequences for inspiration, goal-pursuit, and well-being (Sedikides et al., 2019).

The experience of nostalgia has additionally been associated with numerous benefits stemming from a more positive outlook on life (Routledge et al. 2013; Wildschut et al. 2006). A large body of research has demonstrated that engaging in nostalgia increases psychological health and social well-being by enhancing positive affect, increasing positive self-regard, and promoting social connectedness (Hepper et al. 2012; Routledge et al. 2013; Vess et al. 2012; Wildschut et al. 2006, 2010; Zhou et al. 2008). Experimental studies show that nostalgia can also increase optimism, as nostalgic narratives contained significantly more references to optimism than control narratives (Cheung et al., 2013). Furthermore, research on nostalgic reverie indicates its ability to promote constructive behavior in individuals through a variety of mechanisms, including connectedness, sense of meaning, accessibility of positive self-attributes, and optimism (Sedikides et al., 2016; Vess et al., 2012; Wildschut et al., 2006).

There is an additional line of research which focuses on the potential of nostalgia as a psychological buffer protecting individuals from self-relevant threats such as negative affect and low self-esteem. Nostalgia can protect against the negative feelings associated social exclusion (Loveland et at., 2010) and alleviate feelings of loneliness by increasing one's perceptions of social support (Wildschut et al., 2010; X. Zhou et al., 2008). Additionally, nostalgia protects against threats to explicit self-esteem; the optimism engendered by nostalgia increases social connectedness, which in turn boosts self-esteem (Cheung et al., 2013; Wildschut et al., 2006).

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Experimental studies have found that participants asked to engage in nostalgic thought showed amplified accessibility of positive self-attributes as compared to a control condition. These self-affirming benefits of nostalgic reverie reinforce self-integrity and worth during negative life events (Vess et al., 2012).

Some recent studies have focused on the relational outcomes of nostalgia. Mallory et al. (2018) found a positive correlation between relationship-focused nostalgia and relationship satisfaction in the short-term. Similarly, nostalgia may increase relationship satisfaction among those low on avoidant attachment (Juhl et al., 2012). Mentally revisiting memories that include one's romantic partner may be helpful for overcoming relationship stressors by inducing a positive mood (Borelli et al., 2015). Considering work demonstrating that traits associated with positive psychology are associated with increased resilience and acceptance of domestic abuse (i.e., optimism, empathy, hope), this study is interested in examining the extent to which nostalgia is related to a greater acceptance of intimate partner violence.

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence, spousal abuse, or domestic violence is a global public health and human rights issue defined as "physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner" (CDC, 2019). The specific types of violence included within IPV are stalking, economic, emotional/psychological, sexual, neglect, Munchausen by proxy, and physical. Intimate partner violence is an issue which affects the victim, families, co-workers, and community. It causes diminished psychological and physical health, decreases the quality of life, and results in decreased productivity (Huecker & Smock, 2019).

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Because conflict is a universal human experience, populations of individuals with positive attitudes towards IPV are a highly applicable group to study as a means of measuring the associations between different traits that people who choose to stay in abusive relationships may possess. It is important to note that the true prevalence of IPV does not reflect the current statistics, as 46% of IPV cases are left unreported (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012). Studying individuals who view IPV positively may provide valuable insight into the role of nostalgia in improving one's perception of an abusive romantic partner. Additionally, deepening our understanding of victims' mentality in a way that incorporates attitudes towards coercive and controlling behavior that is characterized by harassment, psychological abuse, and physical violence is a critical step towards addressing the presence of IPV in society (Doyle & McWilliams, 2018).

Theoretical explanations of the persistence of abusive relationships has been studied in the context of three broad categories: psychological theories, sociological perspectives, and feminist perspectives. Psychological perspectives focus on the kinds of backgrounds and personality factors which put some individuals at heightened risk for finding themselves in situations of IPV (Bartholomew et al., 2015). Sociological perspectives assume that social structures (e.g., religious beliefs, adherence to the sanctity of marriage, the belief that victims have a social responsibility to help their abusers) have a strong influence on the occurrence of IPV. Sociological theories also examine the role of external social stressors, including unemployment, poverty, and access to drugs and alcohol on the occurrence of spousal abuse (Chernesky, 2000). Feminist perspectives emphasize that violence against women occurs in the patriarchal system, conceptualizing IPV as a means of maintaining domination over women (McPhail et al., 2007).

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Exposure to IPV can lead to psychological consequences for victims such as symptoms of depression and anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies. These mental health symptoms are found to be more pronounced when the severity and extent of IPV exposure is increased (Langdon et al., 2014). Violence inflicted by a romantic partner may cause more psychological harm to victims than violence inflicted by a stranger.

When comparing IPV experiences to alternative forms of trauma, IPV victims displayed greater PTSD symptoms (SharhabaniArzy, Amir, & Swisa, 2005). Given that the violence is inflicted by a person whom the victim trusts, IPV is proposed to have a greater effect on mental health than other forms of violence (Herman, 1992). Knowing the abuser may be more damaging to the victim because they cannot justify the encounter as a random attack as opposed to a purposeful intent to hurt. Alternative forms of trauma allow distance for the victim to process and cope with the incident, whereas IPV further aggravates mental health (Langdon et al., 2014).

Women possessing greater social support and more spirituality when exposed to IPV have been shown to display higher resilience in their relationships (Howell et al., 2018). Resilience is defined as the capacity of individuals facing adverse circumstances (such as intimate partner violence) to navigate their way to psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources which sustain their overall well-being (Ungar, 2013). Individuals in possession of strong coping mechanisms experience trauma with lower risk of significant wounding than do people with weaker coping strategies (Burke & Carruth, 2012). Additional variables which contribute to thriving under pressure are the feeling of being in control, a positive and proactive personality, possessing balance and perspective, and the perception of having social support (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2014).

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The conventional wisdom is that individuals demonstrate resilience in the face of IPV by choosing to leave the abusive relationship (Werner-Wilson et al., 2000). Some people, however, may follow a different pathway of resilience within a relationship by choosing to stay with an abusive partner. Resilient individuals are more likely to exhibit cognitive flexibility and view aversive situations as challenges rather than obstacles (Southwick & Charney, 2012). It has been found that women who chose to stay in an abusive relationships frequently used emotion-focused cognitive strategies for finding meaning in a seemingly unchangeable situation (Folkman et al., 1986). After retrospection on their relationships, these individuals set boundaries with their partner, focused their energies into certain roles, and reached out to sources of support including friends, family, and organizations within the community (Zink, et. al, 2006). High levels of social support have been found to be positively associated with greater resilience, which is related to positive affect (Mo et al., 2014). As a result of positive affect, traumatic events like IPV are less threatening when social connectedness is perceived (Bonanno, 2014). Other factors which have been found to play a role in the decision to stay in a relationship with IPV experiences include strong feelings of commitment to a partner and relationship adjustment (Rhoades et al., 2010).

Positive psychology has often been criticized due to its view on “rose-colored glasses” that can distort people’s views of reality (e.g., Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir, 2011), as is the case in situations of domestic violence. For instance, in a recent systematic review of the literature by Sinclair and colleagues (2018), researchers found evidence to suggest that a positive outlook on life may lead to denial or inaction within the context of domestic abuse. People with an optimistic bias are more likely to put themselves in relationship danger, while those who score high in empathy and hope are less likely to leave an abusive relationship (Sinclair et al., 2018).

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Thus, a nostalgia framework is particularly useful in understanding IPV due to the capacity of nostalgic reflection to increase positive affect, especially during distressing life events.

The Present Research

This study will build on previous research to examine the links between nostalgia proneness and attitudes towards IPV through a psychological perspective. IPV is a disruptive event which could potentially trigger nostalgic thought; if this is the case, then nostalgia's ability to invoke increased feelings of social connectedness may promote more positive feelings for an abusive partner. Thus, investigating nostalgia's relationship with tolerance for IPV could prove useful in understanding *why* individuals stay with partners who are prone to violent outbursts. These findings will serve as a foundation for future work to examine the existing correlational and causal connections between the positive affect (e.g., increased happiness, hope, empathy, and optimism) created by nostalgic reverie and relationship outcomes. Given the established correlation between nostalgic thought and positive affect, it is hypothesized that a positive correlation will exist between sentimental longing for the past and acceptance of IPV by victims.

Method

Participants

This study consisted of 145 adult participants recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online survey platform. The only exclusion criteria was that individuals needed to be 18 years or older and not have participated in a previous study run by Texas Christian University measuring nostalgia.

Procedure

MTurk is a website where researchers can pay individuals for their participation in research studies (Buhrmester et al., 2011). We paid all participants \$2.40 (U.S.) for their

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participation. After participants signed an informed consent form, they each completed a questionnaire on MTurk containing measures of trait nostalgia, relationship nostalgia, social desirability, psychological and emotional well-being, the revised IPV Attitudes Scale, and other demographic factors (i.e. gender, age, household income, etc.). A cover story was offered to participants to obscure a perceived connection between the materials participants completed. Upon completion of the survey, participants were debriefed on the true nature of the study.

Materials

Intimate partner violence attitude. The Intimate Partner Violence Attitude Scale (Fincham et al., 2008) is a 20-item scale that was used to measure participants' attitudes toward IPV in dating relationships. Example items include, "I would be flattered if my partner told me not to talk to someone of the other sex," "I would not stay with a partner who tried to keep me from doing things with other people," and "As long as my partner doesn't hurt me, 'threats' are excused." Items are scored on a 1-7 Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*) and reverse-coded during analysis so that higher scores indicated more positive attitudes and greater acceptance of IPV in their romantic relationships (scale reliability $\alpha = .91$). This is a well-validated scale that has been used in both college and adult populations.

Trait nostalgia. Participants completed the Southampton Nostalgia Scale (SNS), which is the most widely used measure for quantifying trait nostalgia in individuals (Barrett et al., 2010). The ability of the SNS to measure the frequency at which an individual engages in nostalgia makes it a direct measure of nostalgia proneness. Participants rated seven statements on how personally significant they found nostalgia to be (e.g., "How important is it for you to bring to mind nostalgic experiences?"). The first six responses were scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very rarely/not at all*; 7 = *very frequently/very much*). The final item (reverse coded in

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analysis) asked participants how often they bring nostalgic experiences to mind with responses ranging from “at least once a day” to “once or twice a year” on a 1-7 Likert scale. Higher scores on this scale indicate that the participant is more prone to nostalgic thought ($\alpha = .92$).

Relationship nostalgia. The Relationship Nostalgia Inventory is a 6-item scale that measures relationship-specific nostalgia by asking participants how much they miss different aspects of the early parts of their romantic relationships (Mallory et al., 2018). A few of these aspects include the quality time spent together, the feelings experienced when together, and the time spent talking with one another. These items are scored on a 1-5 Likert scale (1 = *do not miss at all*; 5 = *miss very much/very frequently*) with higher scores indicating greater nostalgia for the relationship. Scale reliability in the current study was high ($\alpha = .86$).

Positive and negative affect. Participants rated 10 different emotionally charged words (e.g., upset, inspired, attentive) from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) short form based on the extent to which they were experiencing that emotion while completing the questionnaire (Watson et al., 1988). Five of these words were associated with positive affect, and five with negative affect. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very slightly or not at all*; 5 = *extremely*). The PANAS has been found to be the most useful cross-cultural metric of affect and has been well validated and cited in over 2,000 scholarly papers. This short form is internationally reliable and minimizes problems of vagueness and ambiguity characteristic of the full 20-item version (Thompson, 2007). Scale reliabilities were high in the current study (α 's $\geq .77$).

Satisfaction with life. Participants rated five items on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) based on how much they agreed with each statement. Example items include “in most ways my life is close to my ideal,” “the conditions of my life are

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excellent,” and “so far I have gotten the important things I want in life.” Participants ranked each item on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*) with higher scores (calculated by the summation of scores for each item) indicating satisfaction with life and lower scores indicating dissatisfaction with life ($\alpha = .91$). Normative data shows that this measure has good convergent validity with other assessments of subjective well-being. Furthermore, the SWLS’s ability to operationalize the conscious evaluative judgement of an individual’s life through their own criteria makes it a recommended compliment to scales which focus on emotional well-being or psychopathology (Pavot & Diener, 1993).

Meaning in life. Participants answered the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006) consisting of five items measuring presence of meaning (e.g., “My life has a clear sense of purpose,” “I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful;” $\alpha = .83$). All statements were answered using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*absolutely untrue*) to 7 (*absolutely true*). Higher scores indicate that participants perceive themselves to have a stronger sense of meaning in life.

Relationship satisfaction. The scale of relationship quality and satisfaction employed in this study was an adapted version of the Quality Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983), with items generalized to apply to any romantic relationship rather than limiting the focus to only marital relationships. Examples of items included “my relationship with my partner is very stable,” “my relationship with my partner makes me happy,” and “my partner and I are really a team.” Items were scored on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *not true*; 4 = *mostly true*). Higher scores on this measure indicated higher levels of satisfaction with the relationship ($\alpha = .92$).

Relationship commitment. Five items from a relationship commitment inventory (Rusbult et al., 2009) were included in this study to measure the extent to which participants were committed to their current romantic partners. This measure incorporated items such as “I intend to do everything humanly possible to make our relationship persist” and “I want our relationship to last forever.” Participant responses were measured on a 0-8 Likert scale (0 = *do not agree at all*; 8 = *agree completely*) with higher scores indicating greater commitment to their relationship ($\alpha = .94$).

Relationship optimism. Participants filled out the Positive Relationship Beliefs Index (Helgeson, 1994) in order to measure their optimism for the future of their relationships. This is a 4-item measure scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). Example items included “in uncertain times, I usually expect the best for our relationship” and “I’m optimistic about the future of this relationship.” Higher scores on this index are indicative of higher levels of optimism about the relationship ($\alpha = .74$).

Social desirability. The Personal Attitudes Questionnaire (Reynolds, 1982) was a 13-item measure containing absolute statements concerning a variety of attitudes and traits (e.g., “no matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener”, “I’m always willing to admit it when I make a mistake”). It was included in this study as a means of ensuring that participant responses were honest and account for potential social desirability bias. Participants responded to all items with “true” or “false” depending on whether they felt each statement pertained to them (scale reliability $\alpha = .67$).

Results

All analyses for this study were run in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS version 18). Two-tailed bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to examine the

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relationship between variables using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. The relationship between trait nostalgia (as measured by the SNS) and IPV attitude (as measured by the Intimate Partner Violence Attitude Scale) had a small, positive association, $r = .262, N = 142, p = .002, R^2 = .069$, with high levels of trait nostalgia correlated with more positive attitudes towards IPV. There was also a small, positive correlation between relationship nostalgia (measured by the Relationship Nostalgia Inventory) and IPV attitude, $r = .173, N = 142, p = .039, R^2 = .030$.

A moderate, negative association was found between IPV attitude and relationship optimism (measured by the Positive Relationship Beliefs Index), $r = -.473, N = 142, p < .01, R^2 = .224$, with lower levels of relationship optimism correlating with more positive attitudes towards IPV. The association between relationship satisfaction (as measured by the adapted QMI) and IPV attitude was characterized by a small, negative relationship between the variables, $r = -.177, N = 142, p = .035, R^2 = .031$, indicating that lower levels of relationship satisfaction correlated with higher acceptance of IPV. No association was found between IPV attitude and relationship commitment.

The relationship between negative affect (measured by the PANAS short form) and IPV attitude was characterized by a strong, positive relationship, $r = .752, N = 142, p < .01, R^2 = .566$, with higher levels of negative affect correlating with more positive attitudes towards IPV. Alternatively, positive affect (measured by the PANAS short form) had a small, positive correlation with IPV attitude, $r = .205, N = 142, p = .014, R^2 = .042$. There was no correlation between the presence of meaning in life and IPV attitude. Finally, a small, positive correlation was found between IPV attitude and life satisfaction (measured by the SWLS), $r = .173, N = 142$,

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$p = .040$, $R^2 = .030$, indicating that greater satisfaction with life is associated with more positive attitudes towards IPV. Additional correlations between variables can be found in Table 1.

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Table 1

Pearson Correlations Among Attitude Towards IPV and Nostalgia-Related Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. IPV Attitude	...									
2. Trait Nostalgia	0.262**	...								
3. Relationship Nostalgia	0.173*	0.505**	...							
4. Positive Affect	0.205*	0.058	0.133	...						
5. Negative Affect	0.752**	0.207*	0.146	0.136	...					
6. Life Satisfaction	0.173*	0.128	0.026	0.271**	0.079	...				
7. Meaning in Life	-0.052	0.036	0.017	0.404**	-0.175*	0.592**	...			
8. Relationship Satisfaction	-0.177*	-0.034	0.021	0.186*	-0.192*	0.476**	0.451**	...		
9. Relationship Commitment	-0.161	-0.008	0.115	0.209*	-0.181*	0.292**	0.355**	0.645**	...	
10. Relationship Optimism	-0.473**	-0.198*	-0.181*	0.008	-0.466**	0.358**	0.322**	0.623**	0.536**	...

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 142$.

Discussion

On average, 24 people per minute become victims of rape, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner in the U.S., equaling over 12 million individuals annually (Black et al., 2011). Intimate partner violence can be a very debilitating experience as evidenced by the symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies of victims (Langdon et al., 2014). The high prevalence of this issue demands that more research be done to gain a better understanding of the conditions under which individuals choose to stay in relationships with IPV and eventually provide victims with the appropriate coping strategies and resources they need to successfully leave their abuser.

While literature has often focused on examining the factors which may cause an individual to behave violently towards their partner, little research has been conducted to understand the traits and cognitive mechanisms that may influence a victim to stay with an abusive partner. The present research sought to understand the factors that lead to an individual's acceptance of IPV by studying its correlation with nostalgia proneness and related traits. Because nostalgia is triggered by negative life experiences and can act as a buffer on the effects of conflict, with individuals expressing higher levels commitment to their romantic others (Swets & Cox, 2020), it was hypothesized that more frequent engagement in nostalgia would be associated with more positive attitudes towards IPV.

The central results of this study indicated that, to a small extent, more positive IPV attitudes were associated with both trait nostalgia and relationship nostalgia. This finding is supported by prior research on nostalgia identifying social relationships as a key focus of nostalgic thought (Hepper et al., 2012). Maintaining a sense of belonging in social relationships is an important component of mental well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Social belonging

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is fostered either through direct contact with other people, or through accessing memories which make meaningful social connections salient (Gardner et al., 2005). Because of its ability to invoke the reflection of meaningful social moments, roles, and relationships, nostalgia is known to satisfy the need for social belonging by increasing feelings of social connectedness in the present moment and also driving individuals to strengthen their existing relationships (Wildschut et al., 2010; Abeyta et al., 2015). Thus, it comes as no surprise that the current research would support the idea that individuals who are more prone to nostalgic thought may also express higher tolerance of IPV in their relationships as a means of maintaining a sense of social belonging derived from the relationship.

Regarding the impact of relationship attitudes on one's tolerance of IPV, individuals who had more accepting attitudes towards IPV were moderately less optimistic about their relationship and had lower levels of relationship satisfaction. A strong association was found between IPV attitude and negative affect, with higher negative affect directly related to more positive attitudes towards IPV. These findings seemingly contradict findings in previous literature which state that the decision to stay in a relationship characterized by IPV is influenced by factors such as strong feelings of commitment to a partner and relationship adjustment (Rhoades et al., 2010). However, higher tolerance of IPV in the present research may be accounted for by push factors in the environment rather than pull factors from the relationship. It has been found that alternative reasons why individuals would stay in abusive relationships include lack of community resources and support structures, negative self-perceptions, poverty, and fear of retaliation (Barnett, 2001).

Limitations

Although the results of the current work were in support of the hypotheses, there are some limitations that need to be addressed. First, all findings in the present research were derived from bivariate correlational analyses, and as such the relationships between variables are all purely associative in nature. Although it was established that there is an association between nostalgia and IPV attitude, we did not identify variables which may potentially moderate that relationship. Future research is needed in order to explore the potential causality between acceptance of intimate partner violence, nostalgia proneness, and relationship attitudes.

Second, while the current study focused specifically on the attitude individuals have towards IPV, participants in the sample were not necessarily exposed to IPV in their romantic relationships. Additional research can be conducted in order to explore the extent to which victims of IPV engage in nostalgic thought, feel negatively about their relationship, and demonstrate resilience in their situations. By observing the relationship between nostalgic thought and relationship attitudes in populations of individuals who have been personally exposed to IPV in their relationships, sampling errors would be reduced, and the results would be more reflective of the true population.

Finally, studies on IPV survivors in the context of nostalgia would benefit from using the Cultural Resilience Measure (CRM; Clauss-Ehlers, 2008) as an instrument for operationalizing the coping mechanisms that IPV victims use to buffer the psychological consequences of their living situations. The CRM provides data measuring adaptive, global, and maladaptive coping mechanisms in individuals as well as their perceived level of sociocultural support. Results from this particular line of research could prove invaluable in understanding how victims of abuse are

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able to endure abuse from an intimate partner for prolonged periods of time and also why they would choose to do so in the first place.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that more positive attitudes towards intimate partner violence are associated with an increased proneness to nostalgia in individuals, and also fewer positive attitudes towards the relationship. Despite the limitations of this study, the current research is the first to determine that individuals who are more prone to nostalgic thought may also express greater acceptance of IPV within their relationships in order to preserve a sense of social belonging derived from the relationship. Overall, the findings of this study provide substantial support for the need for additional research in order to examine the specific causal factors contributing to a person's choice to stay in an abusive relationship. Such work would provide counselors specializing in domestic abuse cases with specific information on how victims of IPV cope with their trauma in a sociocultural context. In turn, professionally recommended coping strategies and treatments would be developed to more effectively address the needs of IPV victims.

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