RELATIONSHIP-CENTERED NOSTALGIA AIDS COMMITMENT AND MAINTENANCE WITHIN CONFLICTUAL ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

by

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Relationship-Centered Nostalgia Aids Commitment and Maintenance within Conflictual Romantic Relationships

Empirical research has uncovered how nostalgia, or a sentimental longing for the past, offers several psychological benefits, including positive emotion, a sense of belonging, and life meaning (see e.g., Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018 for a review). More recent studies have explored the associations between nostalgic reflection and relationship satisfaction (Juhl et al., 2012; Mallory et al., 2018). To the extent that a sentimental longing for the past leads people to pursue attachments to close others, individuals may engage in greater nostalgic reverie when problems in a relationship arise (e.g., conflict). In support, Swets and Cox (2020) found that relationship conflict was positively correlated with nostalgic thoughts about a romantic other. An increased sentimental longing for the relationship was also associated with heightened commitment but did not extend to other measures of relationship well-being (i.e., satisfaction, optimism). Building on these findings, and utilizing the investment model of commitment (Rusbult, 1980; 1983), the proposed studies examined the specific mechanisms (i.e., satisfaction, investment, & quality of alternatives) accounting for heightened commitment following conflict and initiated nostalgia (i.e., Study 1), along with exploring carryover effects to relationship maintenance intentions (e.g., partner forgiveness, cognitive interdependence; Study 2).

Nostalgia

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Western European soldiers who spent long periods of time away from home exhibited symptoms of sadness, lack of appetite, and general physical weakness. These soldiers were assumed to have a neurological disorder that required medical attention. Swiss physician Johannes Hofer coined a term for this syndrome: *nostalgia*, based on *nostos*, Greek for “returning to home,” and *algos*, Greek for “suffering.” By the 19th

century, the concept of nostalgia had come to describe a type of depression or melancholia, demonstrating its similarities with a sense of homesickness (Batcho, 2013). In recent years, however, empirical research has shown that nostalgia is a widely experienced emotion disconnected from disease and psychopathology. It is instead considered a sentimental longing for one's past and, contrary to popular and historical belief, associated with numerous positive outcomes (Batcho, 1998; Wildschut et al., 2006).

Given nostalgia's multifaceted profile, much work has been done to understand the features and functions of nostalgic reflection. Wildschut and colleagues (2006), for example, coded nostalgic narratives and found that the most frequently discussed topics centered on momentous life events (e.g., graduation, family reunion, the birth of a child) and/or interactions with important others (e.g., friends, family, romantic partners). Not only is nostalgia highly social in nature, but the self also often serves as a salient protagonist in people's sentimental past longings. This was demonstrated in Wildschut et al.'s work, showing that individuals were more likely to take a major role in their nostalgic recollections (about 87% of the time), compared to being a sole actor (about 5%), taking a minor role (about 6%), or being an outside observer (about 2%). These findings are consistent with the idea that nostalgia is a self-relevant emotion. In other words, its emotional tone, self-prominence, and various psychological functions differentiate it from other mental processes, such as autobiographical memory recall and rumination, and from other emotions, such as homesickness (Sedikides et al., 2004).

Nostalgia is affectively mixed or "bittersweet" as it includes both positive (e.g., love, joy) and negative emotions (e.g., sadness, disappointment; Wildschut et al., 2006). Researchers have found that participants in a state of nostalgia are more likely to express feelings of happiness rather than sadness, and nostalgically induced persons (compared to control participants thinking

about an ordinary event), report increased positive but not negative mood. These results may be explained by the redemptive nature of nostalgia, such that initial negative aspects of a memory (e.g., pain, loss) become more positive, revealing features of love, devotion, etc. (McAdams et al., 2001; Wildschut et al.). Despite its overlap with other emotions, nostalgia is conceptually distinct, characterized by appraisals of pleasantness, uniqueness, and psychological distance that are not shared by other emotions (van Tilburg et al., 2019). Nostalgia is also a common emotion; in one study, it was reported that almost 80% of people experience it at least once per week, and 16% experience it at least once per day (Wildschut et al.).

When measured as a trait (i.e., "How often do you experience nostalgia?") or induced as a state (i.e., instructed to ''bring to mind a nostalgic event in your life"), 15 years of research has demonstrated nostalgia's functional role in enhancing psychological well-being and happiness. For instance, persons who regularly utilize nostalgia as a resource benefit from increased self-esteem and optimism (Cheung et al., 2013; 2016), and recalling nostalgic memories can heighten positive affect, self-worth, and connectedness with others (Barrett et al., 2010; Hepper et al., 2012). Other research has shown that nostalgically prone persons report higher baseline levels of meaning and purpose in life (Routledge et al., 2011). Importantly, these findings are not specific to college populations, as Leunissen and colleagues (2016) found that prompting thoughts of organizational nostalgia (i.e., "Think about a past event in your organization that makes you feel nostalgic"), as compared to an everyday activity, increased positive affect and meaning at work for various employees. As an extension of this, recalling nostalgic narratives encourages motivation for goal pursuit via augmented presence of meaning in life (Sedikides, Cheung, et al., 2018). Because of nostalgic memories' highly social nature, they often encourage the pursuit of

social goals, including strengthening current friendships and forming new relationships (Abeyta et al., 2015).

Not only does nostalgia increase happiness and well-being, but a fundamental value is its propensity to counteract adverse events, such as loneliness (Zhou et al., 2008), existential threats (e.g., Routledge et al., 2011), and boredom (van Tilburg et al., 2013). For example, Zhou et al. (Study 2) found that participants in a manipulated high-loneliness condition reported more state-level nostalgia than those in the low-loneliness condition. Persons in a condition with induced nostalgia, compared to a control group, also reported higher perceived social support (Study 3). Nostalgic reverie additionally has demonstrated existential functions for individuals. From the perspective of terror management theory (Greenberg et al., 1986), people can mitigate the threat of mortality by imbuing their lives with meaning and value. Given that nostalgia is associated with greater life purpose (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018), Routledge et al. (2008) showed that a nostalgic writing task reduced participants' uncertainty about life's meaning (Study 1) and diminished their fear of death (i.e., death-thought accessibility; Study 2). In another study, when individuals were primed with thoughts of meaninglessness (i.e., "Our contribution to the world is pointless"), they were more likely to engage in nostalgic reflection as a psychological resource in response to this threat (Routledge et al., 2011, Study 3). A sentimental longing for the past can also be an antidote to boredom, a state that hinders the discovery and enjoyment of life meaning (van Tilburg et al.). Despite several indications of nostalgia's capacity to counteract psychological and existential threats, there is little evidence about the role of nostalgia when managing interpersonal conflict.

Nostalgia and Close Relationships

There is much psychological work demonstrating that humans have a fundamental need to belong (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby 1969/1982; Maslow, 1954). This is evidenced by people's ability to form relationships quickly (e.g., Festinger et al., 1950), along with the effort put forth to maintain important connections (Rusbult et al., 2001). Persons also turn to close others when under threat (e.g., stress, anxiety), with implications of attachment-need fulfillment on health and well-being (see e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016 for a review). In Wildschut and colleagues' (2006) work on nostalgia, it was found that a sentimental longing for the past increases a sense of social connectedness, as participants were more likely to write about positive memories with friends, family, and romantic partners than memories of important locations or occasions. Other studies have found that nostalgia enhances the motivation to initiate and strengthen relationships with others, improves perceived bonding with current relations, and increases optimism to overcome relationship obstacles (Abeyta et al., 2015; Wildschut et al.). Specifically, Abeyta et al. assigned participants to a nostalgia or control condition, then instructed them to imagine a disagreement with a close friend. Those in the nostalgia condition reported significantly higher optimism that the hypothetical conflict could be overcome and greater self-efficacy in solving the problem.

Based on research showing that nostalgia bolsters social motivations and helps satisfy the need to belong, some attention has been given to romantic relationship outcomes (i.e., satisfaction). For example, Juhl et al. (2012) explored the extent to which participants' attachment orientation influenced their relationship satisfaction in response to a nostalgia manipulation. The results of two experiments found that low (vs. high) avoidant individuals were more satisfied with their romantic partnerships when thoughts of nostalgia were primed.

Whereas Juhl and colleagues focused on more general feelings of nostalgia, Mallory et al. (2018) took a relationship-centered approach to understand a sentimental longing for the past. Specifically, researchers used Batcho's (1995) nostalgia inventory - a general measure of nostalgia for past experiences (e.g., family, TV shows) - to create a scale assessing nostalgic memories about romantic relationships (e.g., places visited together, intimate experiences). Using this domain-specific scale for relationship nostalgia, Mallory and colleagues measured associations between relationship nostalgia and partner satisfaction and found the two to be positively related. These results suggest that utilizing the history of a relationship to promote recollections of the past may foster bonding among the couple. Collectively, when combined with the findings of Juhl et al., there is evidence to suggest that nostalgia, either general or partner-specific, may promote romantic relationships.

What happens, however, when there are problems in the relationship? There is some indication that *relational savoring* is associated with reduced partner stress. According to Borelli and colleagues (2015), savoring occurs when people intensely focus on and/or prolong positive emotions associated with experiences. These memories can be personal or relationship-centered (e.g., an emotional connection with another), with the latter being the most commonly reported elicitor of savoring (Bryant et al., 2005). To explore this idea within the context of close relationships, Borelli et al. randomly assigned participants to a reflection task in which they recalled either their morning routine (i.e., neutral condition), a personal positive experience (i.e., personal savoring), or a positive experience with their partner (i.e., relationship savoring). All participants then responded to a vignette of a hypothetical relationship stressor (i.e., a partner failing to call after a work party). In comparison to the other conditions, participants who mentally revisited memories with their romantic partner responded to the vignette with more

positivity. These findings suggest that nostalgic thinking may help an individual overcome a relationship stressor by inducing a positive mood. This is consistent with the idea of nostalgia as a moderator of psychological equilibrium in response to social threats (Sedikides et al., 2015).

To more directly investigate the association between romantic relationship problems and nostalgia, Swets and Cox (2020) explored whether participants exhibited a heightened sentimental longing for the past, personal and/or relationship-centered, in response to partner conflict. Specifically, individuals completed the Relationship Conflict Scale (RCS; Gordon & Chen, 2016), along with measures of self-oriented nostalgia proneness (Southampton Nostalgia Scale [SNS]; Barrett et al., 2010) and relationship-centered nostalgia (Relationship Nostalgia Inventory [RNI]; Mallory et al., 2018). Utilizing mediational analyses, we also examined whether nostalgia helps to hamper the conflictual distress people may experience, thus improving the quality of their romantic partnerships. Participants were then asked to complete measures of relationship satisfaction (Relationship Quality Scale; Norton, 1983), optimism (i.e., Positive Relationship Beliefs Index; Helgeson, 1994), and commitment (i.e., Investment Model Scale; Rusbult et al., 1998).

The results of correlational analyses, as well as a significant *a*-path in our mediational results (i.e., regression analysis), demonstrated that persons are more likely to utilize nostalgia the more they experience conflict in their relationships. The findings were specific to relationship nostalgia, in that non-significant effects emerged for a more general sentimental longing for the past (i.e., personal nostalgia). Additionally, mediational results showed that when conflict was high, engaging in nostalgic thought about a partner led to greater relationship commitment but non-significant effects for optimism and satisfaction. These findings are consistent with Mallory and colleagues' (2018) claim that nostalgia, when adapted to romantic experiences, mimics a

relationship history, a therapeutic tool that allows individuals to feel psychologically closer to their partner and resume emotional balance. Unlike Mallory et al., however, findings for Swets and Cox (2020) were specific to partner commitment and did not generalize to other relationship outcomes. Building on these results, the proposed studies were designed to better understand the facets of commitment (i.e., satisfaction, quality of alternatives, investment) that become activated in response to conflict-induced nostalgia (Study 1). Study 2, in turn, explored whether a nostalgia manipulation increases pro-relationship maintenance activities (e.g., partner forgiveness, cognitive interdependence). These ideas are based on Rusbult's (1980; 1983) investment model of commitment in close relationships, which is discussed below.

Relationship Conflict and Commitment

Conflict in romantic relationships is frequent and numerous in topic (e.g., communication, sexuality, respect, trust, finances; Reese-Weber et al., 2015; Zacchilli et al., 2009). While common, conflict with one's romantic partner presents a threat to the relationship's survival and gratification. Disagreements are linked to lower relationship satisfaction (Cramer, 2002) and reduced mental, physical, and family health (see e.g., Fincham & Beach, 1999 for a review). Much evidence has found that it is not conflict *per se*, but the ways couples resolve conflict that accompany relationship outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment), including higher rates of relationship termination (e.g., Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Rusbult et al., 1982). One perspective useful in understanding the argumentative nature of people's partnerships is Rusbult's (1980, 1983) investment model, which explains *why* people persist in close relationships despite waning satisfaction levels.

The investment model is built on interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), which posits that persons engage in cost-benefit analyses when making decisions about their

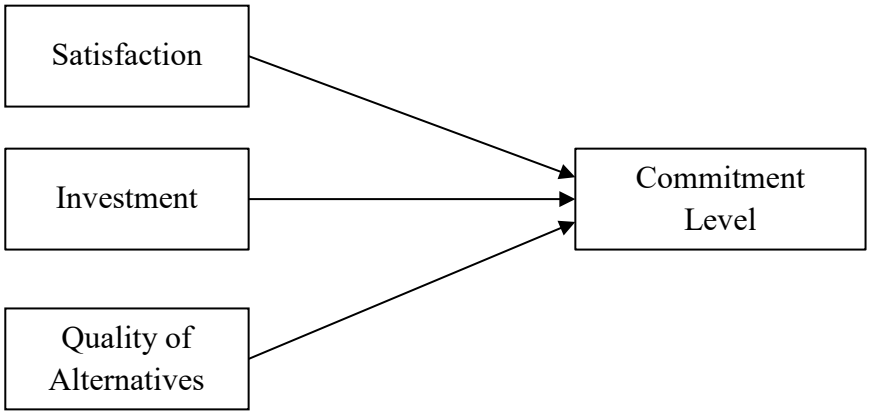
partnerships. Importantly, the investment model distinguishes between relationship satisfaction, which entails positive feelings for and attraction to a partner, and commitment, which entails an attachment to the relationship and motivation to maintain it. This conceptual distinction is supported by a meta-analysis assessing predictors of relationship dissolution: Across 137 studies conducted from 1973 to 2006, commitment was found to be the strongest predictor of relationship termination, above satisfaction, love, intimacy, and a variety of personality variables (Le et al., 2010).

Fundamental to the investment model, relationships survive because of partner commitment, which is driven by (a) satisfaction, (b) investment, and (c) quality of alternatives (see Figure 1 for a depiction of Rusbult's investment model). *Satisfaction* is the level of positive relative to negative affect experienced in a relationship (Rusbult et al., 1998). This can include attraction to a romantic partner, as well as the partner's ability to fulfill the needs of intimacy and belonging (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992). *Investment* describes the resources entrusted in the relationship - both tangible and intangible, such as marital status (e.g., casually dating vs. married), having children, prolonged emotional effort, etc., all of which bind partners together (Rusbult, 1983). Finally, *quality of alternatives* refers to the quality of the relationship in comparison to relational rivals; physical and psychological needs may be better fulfilled by a different romantic partner, who is, for example, more attractive, attentive, or wealthy. Also possible is that a person feels more fulfilled independently or by family or friends (Hadden et al., 2015). Overall, when relationship satisfaction and investments are high and/or the value of potential alternatives is low, the investment model predicts that commitment to and dependence on the relationship increase (Wieselquist et al., 1999). Each component thus contributes to the level of motivation to continue (or discontinue) a relationship (Rusbult, 1983; Wieselquist et al.),

and therefore mediates the decision to stay with or leave a romantic partner (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992).

In the years since its inception, Rusbult's (1980, 1983) model has been applied to several demographic variables (e.g., sexuality; Greene & Britton, 2015) and a variety of non-romantic

Figure 1.
Components of the investment model.



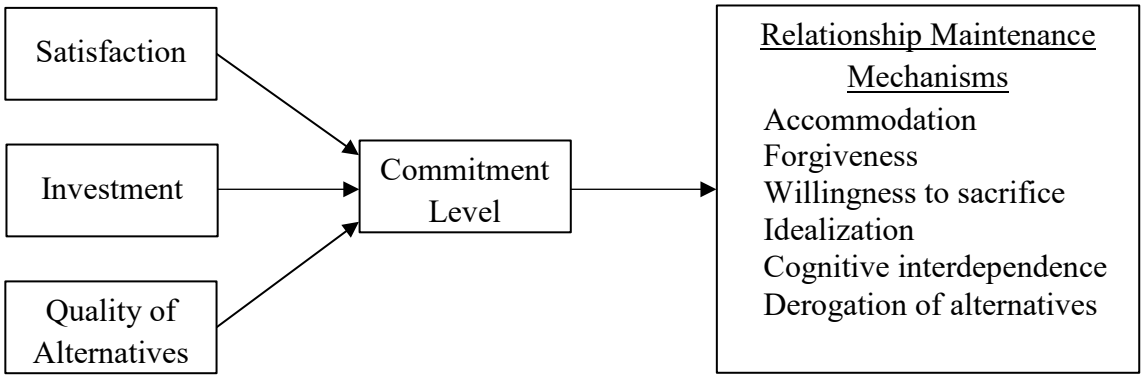
relationships, such as friendships (Branje et al., 2007) and employment (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983), to predict their stability. Both experimental and non-experimental approaches have found support for this framework (e.g., Hadden et al., 2015a; Johnson & Rusbult, 1989), along with various measurement techniques, especially self-report (Rusbult et al., 1998). Utilizing the Investment Model Scale (IMS; Rusbult et al., 1998), participants' higher ratings on subscales of satisfaction, investment, and commitment and lower ratings of alternative quality demonstrate greater allegiance to one's partner. Longitudinal analyses also have been employed to establish the predictive value of the investment model on relationship longevity. For example, Rusbult (1983) conducted a study of heterosexual relationships across the course of an academic year. Participants were provided with self-report measures at 13 different time points to assess the variables (i.e., satisfaction, alternatives, investment) of the investment model. Utilizing growth

curve analyses for linear trends, Rusbult (1983) found that greater feelings of relationship satisfaction, higher magnitude of investments, and declines in the perceived quality of alternatives were significant predictors of relationship commitment over time. Interestingly, the same pattern of results emerged for persons whose relationships were intact at the end of the 9 months, as well as for participants whose partner ended the relationship. In contrast, individuals who decided to break up with their significant others showed the exact opposite results: They were less committed to their partners over time due to declines in satisfaction and investments plus higher quality alternatives. More recently, Hadden and colleagues (2019) questioned whether the investment model could apply to progressions in relationship categorization over time (i.e., from casual dating to exclusive dating, engagement, or marriage). They found that higher satisfaction, investment, and commitment and lower alternative quality scores strongly predicted the likelihood that individuals reported a more serious relationship type 1 year later. Again, the strongest predictor of people's relationship duration was the extent to which they were committed to their romantic partner.

Beyond explaining why people commit in a romantic relationship, the investment model helps to explain the thoughts and behaviors that individuals may engage in to maintain this partnership (see Figure 2 for a graphical depiction, based on the investment model, of relationship-promoting mechanisms as a function of commitment). For example, committed persons are more likely to sacrifice their self-interests to maintain the relationship, in other words, utilizing accommodative and self-sacrificial behavior. Van Lange et al. (1997) found that more committed participants were willing to forego important activities in their life (e.g., playing soccer, watching TV). Likewise, Finkel and colleagues (2002) studied forgiveness in response to a partner's betrayal (e.g., being lied to, flirting with someone else). In the first part of the

experiment, participants were randomly assigned to answer questions based on either a lack of commitment (e.g., “Describe two ways in which you are independent of your partner”) or its presence (e.g., “Describe two ways in which you feel that your life has become ‘linked to’ your romantic partner”). This was followed by a series of items about hypothetical partner betrayals, in which individuals indicated the likelihood that they would forgive their partner and employ accommodative behaviors (e.g., discussion of the problem). Results showed that experimentally activating thoughts of commitment (vs. non-commitment) led to (a) greater forgiveness and (b) an increased likelihood of constructive rather than destructive responses to relationship troubles.

Figure 2.
Cognitive and behavioral predictions of the investment model.



Individuals may also engage in certain cognitive processes (e.g., positive illusions, derogation of alternatives, cognitive interdependence) as a function of greater relationship commitment. For example, based on a positive illusion perspective, people tend to evaluate themselves highly, hold optimistic beliefs about the future, and believe they have control over uncontrollable events (see e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1988). This is also true for close relationships, as intimate partners are likely to see each other in an increasingly positive light (Murray et al., 1996) and become idealistic about the longevity of their partnership (Murray & Holmes, 1997). Additionally, as couples’ commitment to each other increases, they often see themselves as part

of a collective unit (e.g., a feeling of "we-ness," or a tendency to include the other as part of the self; Aron et al., 1992). Finally, increased relationship commitment should lead to a derogation of alternative partners. Rodrigues and colleagues (2017, Study 3), for instance, manipulated commitment by asking participants to generate several shared goals with their romantic partner (i.e., high commitment) versus own independent goals (i.e., low commitment). When presented with pictures of opposite-sex individuals, participants primed with high commitment rated the pictures as less attractive. Collectively, relationship maintenance cognitions and actions (e.g., sacrifice, positive illusions, derogation of alternatives, etc.) demonstrate trust and commitment to the partner, who is then supported to commit to and maintain the relationship as well (Wieselquist et al., 1999).

The Present Research

A great deal of evidence from an investment model perspective (Rusbult 1980; 1983) suggests that commitment is the key to understanding why partnerships persist even in the face of adversity (i.e., betrayal, abuse; see e.g., General Discussion). Utilizing this framework, and building on the preliminary findings of Swets and Cox (2020), the two current studies explored the associations between conflict, relationship-centered nostalgia, and partner-benefiting outcomes. These studies aimed to accomplish three goals. First, although Swets and Cox originally found that commitment (but not relationship optimism or satisfaction) was related to nostalgia, the investment model scale in its entirety was not included. For this reason, the present Study 1 included the 22-item measure that assesses commitment along with its three sub-components -- satisfaction, investment, and alternative quality.

Second, the primary purpose of Swets and Cox's work was to explore whether relationship nostalgia increases as a function of conflict by using associative analyses (i.e.,

correlation, mediation). To make the case that nostalgia serves as a psychological resource to buffer against relationship problems, it is important to manipulate nostalgia to see whether parallel effects are obtained. Utilizing moderated regressions (i.e., Studies 1-2), it was hypothesized that when relationship problems are high, participants should report greater commitment, satisfaction, and investment and lower alternative quality following a nostalgia manipulation compared to a positive event prime or a control prime (i.e., a daily event).

Third, returning to the investment model, heightened commitment to one's partner should lead to carryover effects on relationship maintenance (see Figure 2). For instance, to the extent that nostalgia ameliorates the threat of conflict to increase relationship commitment, greater commitment should lead people to perceive their relationships as more intimate (i.e., more "we-ness") and idealistic, and they should act in the best interests of their partner. As a result of these predictions, Study 2 tested how nostalgic reverie about one's relationship can affect not only self-reported commitment after conflict, but also intentions to benefit the relationship more specifically. Following Study 1, participants were asked to complete a measure of relationship conflict followed by a nostalgia manipulation. However, in addition to commitment, persons answered questions about cognitive (e.g., cognitive interdependence, positive illusions) and behavioral intentions (e.g., sacrificial behavior, accommodation, forgiveness, derogation of alternatives) toward their romantic relationship. Utilizing first-stage moderated mediation models, I hypothesized that high-conflict participants would engage in greater relationship maintenance attitudes and behaviors to the extent that nostalgia-enhanced commitment was high.

Study 1

In Swets and Cox's (2020) study, we examined links between relationship-centered nostalgic reflection and conflict. These results provided further evidence that individuals are

likely to utilize nostalgia as a psychological resource in response to threat (e.g., Sedikides et al., 2015; Wildschut et al., 2014). One goal of this first study was to test if a nostalgia prime can buffer the effects of relationship conflict to increase partner commitment. Following Swets and Cox, Study 1 participants completed the Relationship Conflict Scale (RCS; Gordon & Chen, 2016) followed by a manipulation, created for the purposes of this research, to activate thoughts of relationship nostalgia (i.e., experimental condition), a positive past event, or an ordinary event (i.e., control conditions). An additional goal of this work was to expand on the commitment measure utilized by Swets and Cox. Specifically, due to space and time limitations, Rusbult's (1980, 1983) scale could not be examined in its entirety. The current research thus included the complete 22-item measure to assess commitment and its three related subscales (i.e., relationship satisfaction, quality of alternatives, & investment). Utilizing moderated regression analyses, it was hypothesized that individuals experiencing more relationship conflict would report greater commitment, satisfaction, and investment but lower interest in alternatives following thoughts of partner nostalgia compared to one of two control primes. I had less definite hypotheses regarding participants scoring low on partner conflict.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to complete the study in exchange for $2.00 and from an undergraduate sample in exchange for partial course credit. For the MTurk sample, the HIT was restricted to workers in the United States with approval greater than 90% and fewer than 100 HITs approved. For both samples, participants had to be at least 18 years old and currently in a romantic relationship (i.e., casually dating, in a committed relationship, in a domestic partnership, engaged, or married). Although data was

collected from 375 participants, I removed 130 MTurk participants from analysis if the same worker ID was used multiple times, if their essay responses were nonsensical/did not follow instructions, or if they indicated not paying careful attention during the study. I removed six TCU participants for indicating at the end of the survey that they were romantically single. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 239 participants. Twenty-nine participants were from TCU, and 210 were from MTurk. See Table 1 for demographic information.

Table 1.
Sample demographic characteristics (Study 1; N = 239)

	Mean (*SD*)	Range
Age	30.67 (*10.01*)	18-67
	n	%
Ethnicity		
White/non-Hispanic	161	67.4
Hispanic/Latino(a)	29	12.1
Black/African American	26	10.9
Asian	10	4.2
American Indian/Native American	5	2.1
Other	8	3.3
Relationship Status		
Married	106	44.4
In a committed relationship	98	41.0
Casually dating someone	18	7.5
In a domestic partnership	9	3.8
Engaged	8	3.3
Gender Identity		
Female	135	56.5
Male	97	40.6
Nonbinary or other	4	1.7
No response	3	1.3
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	199	83.3
Bisexual	18	7.5
Lesbian/gay	8	3.4
Other	12	4.9
No response	2	0.8

Procedure

MTurk workers were directed to a Qualtrics survey pertaining to "personality and relationships." Undergraduate students who signed up online to participate reported to a computer lab and completed the study under supervision of a trained research assistant. The study design was identical for both samples. After providing informed consent, participants completed a measure of relationship conflict. Following this, they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which they recalled either (a) a recent nostalgic experience with their romantic partner, (b) a recent positive experience (i.e., positive control condition), or (c) a recent ordinary event (i.e., neutral control condition). All participants then completed a nostalgia manipulation check and Rusbult et al.'s (1998) Investment Model Scale, provided demographic information, and were debriefed. All study materials are in Appendix A.

Materials

Conflict. Based on our previous work (Swets & Cox, 2020), the Relationship Conflict Scale (RCS; Gordon & Chen, 2016) measured perceptions of disagreements and/or arguments in relationships. The 6-item RCS was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*; "My partner and I have a lot of disagreements"). Higher scores on the RCS suggest a more conflictual relationship. This measure was reliable (α = .85; M = 2.91, SD = 1.31).

Nostalgia Manipulation. Participants in the experimental condition responded to a nostalgia writing prompt, which has been used extensively in past research to induce nostalgic thought (e.g., Routledge et al., 2008; Wildschut et al., 2006). The original instructions were modified for relevance to relationship-centered memories (modifications in italics):

> Please think of a past event that has meaning *for your relationship with your romantic partner*. This should be an event that you shared with your partner and that you think about in a nostalgic way. Specifically, please try to think of an important part of your relationship's past (e.g., event or episode) that makes you feel most nostalgic. Please bring this nostalgic experience to mind and think it through. Now, write about this experience in all its vivid detail, and be as thorough and descriptive as possible.

Participants in the positive-event control condition responded to the following prompt:

> Please bring to mind a positive event in your life. This should be an event that you think about in a positive or happy way. Specifically, try to think of an important part of your past (e.g., event or episode) that makes you feel most positive. Please bring this positive experience to mind and think it through. Now, write about this experience in all its vivid detail, and be as thorough and descriptive as possible.

Participants in the true control group responded to the following prompt: (Wildschut et al., 2006):

> Please think of an ordinary event in your daily life that took place in the last week. Try to bring this event to mind and think it through as though you were an observer of the event, rather than directly involved. Imagine the event as though you were an historian recording factual details (e.g., I got on the number 37 bus). Then, please write about this everyday event in the space below. Write a purely factual and detailed account (e.g., like in a court of law, avoiding emotionally expressive words).

Manipulation Check. To ensure the nostalgia manipulation's effectiveness, three items assessed participants' state nostalgia (i.e., "Right now, I am feeling quite nostalgic *for my partner*," "Right now, I am having nostalgic thoughts *about my relationship*," and "I feel

nostalgic at the moment *for my partner or relationship*"). Participants responded based on how they are feeling *right now*. Following Wildschut et al. (2006), items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = *strongly agree*). This measure was reliable, (α = .97; M = 4.06, SD = 1.43).

Commitment. Rusbult et al.'s (1998) Investment Model Scale (IMS) measured commitment. The IMS includes items for relationship satisfaction (5 items; e.g., "I feel satisfied with our relationship"), investment size (5 items; e.g., "I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end"), quality of alternatives (5 items; e.g., "The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved are very appealing"), and global commitment level (7 items; "I want our relationship to last for a very long time"). Each of these four subscales was measured on a 9-point Likert-type scale (0 = *don't agree at all*; 8 = *agree completely*), with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction, investment, evaluation of relationship alternatives, and commitment, respectively (see Appendix A). All four subscales were reliable (satisfaction: α = .92; M = 6.28, SD = 1.58; investment: α = .78; M = 5.60, SD = 1.58; alternatives: α = .88; M = 3.15, SD = 2.06; commitment: α = .87; M = 6.61, SD = 1.49).

Data Analysis Plan

Results were analyzed using SPSS Version 26 and Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Macro Version 3.3 for moderation (Model 1). Assumption tests were conducted prior to running each analysis. Given the continuous nature of Rusbult and colleagues' (1998) investment model scale (IMS), along with the responses being independent, these two assumptions were met. Durbin-Watson tests via SPSS showed no violation of the assumption of independence of errors (i.e., scores between 1 and 3). SPSS-produced scatterplots showed linear relationships between the

continuous predictor variable (conflict) and each of the continuous outcomes (satisfaction, investment, alternatives, commitment). Additionally, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were all less than 10, indicating no problems with multicollinearity between predictor variables. I used Shapiro-Wilk's tests and inspected histograms to determine whether regression residuals were normally distributed. Whereas there were some normality violations in some conditions (ps $\leq .05$), the large sample size ($N = 239$) was enough to proceed with analyses (i.e., Central Limit Theorem).

I used four separate moderated hierarchical regressions to match the number of relationship outcomes (i.e., satisfaction, investment, alternatives, & commitment). For each regression analysis, 10,000 bootstrap samples were performed with 95% confidence intervals (CI) and p-values $\leq .05$ determining statistical significance. Relationship conflict scores were mean centered, and the nostalgia conditions were dummy-coded (nostalgia = 0). For each analysis, condition and conflict were entered in Block 1, and the interactions were entered in Block 2. Follow-up tests for significant interactions included an examination of the simple slopes of conflict (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1985) within each level of the categorical variable (nostalgia vs. control conditions). Additionally, regions of significance tests (Aiken & West, 1991) explored differences between nostalgia and control conditions on relationship outcomes (e.g., commitment) at the mean, above the mean (+1SD), and below the mean (-1SD) of conflict. All effects are interpreted while controlling for all other predictors in the regression models.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Sample and Demographic Differences. An independent samples t-test examined differences between the TCU and MTurk samples on satisfaction, investment, alternative quality,

and commitment scores. The samples did not differ on investment, alternative quality, or commitment. However, TCU participants reported significantly higher satisfaction than did MTurk workers. Further, results of a one-way ANOVA and post-hoc Bonferroni corrections revealed that males reported higher alternative quality than did gender-diverse participants. See Tables 2 and 3 for descriptive and inferential statistics. Because of this, the following results were performed while controlling for sample and gender in each model.

Table 2

Descriptive and inferential statistics for sample differences on outcome variables (Study 1)

	Mean (*SD*)				
	TCU (n = 29)	MTurk (n = 210)	t	df	p
Satisfaction	6.98 *(1.14)*	6.19 *(1.61)*	3.32	237	.002
Investment	5.28 *(1.56)*	5.64 *(1.58)*	1.16	237	.255
Alternative Quality	3.61 *(2.03)*	3.09 *(2.06)*	1.30	237	.201
Commitment	6.76 *(1.50)*	6.59 *(1.49)*	0.56	237	.580

Table 3

Descriptive and inferential statistics among gender identity on outcome measures (Study 1)

	Mean (*SD*)					
	Female (n = 135)[a]	Male (n = 97)[b]	Gender diverse (n = 7)[c]	F	df	p
Satisfaction	6.17 (*1.65*)	6.39 (*1.50*)	6.89 (*1.27*)	1.09	236	.338
Investment	5.42 *(1.75)*	5.84 *(1.29)*	5.60 *(1.67)*	1.96	236	.143
Alt. Quality[bc]	2.97 *(1.99)*	3.55 *(2.09)*	1.17 *(1.40)*	5.80	236	.003
Commitment	6.61 *(1.55)*	6.53 *(1.43)*	7.78 *(0.42)*	2.30	236	.103

Note. Measure with [bc] superscript significantly different at $p \leq .05$.

Manipulation Check. Results of a between-subjects one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) demonstrated significant differences between conditions (nostalgia, positive, vs. control) on state relationship nostalgia scores, $F(2, 236) = 33.93$, $p \leq .001$, $\eta^2_p = .223$. Post-hoc

tests using a Bonferroni adjustment revealed that participants in the nostalgia condition reported more nostalgia (M = 4.82, SD = 1.17) compared to those in the positive condition (M = 4.11, SD = 1.26), p = .001, and the control condition (M = 3.18, SD = 1.35), $p \leq .001$. The positive condition also reported more nostalgia than the control, $p \leq .001$. The nostalgia manipulation appeared to be effective.[1]

Satisfaction. A two-way moderated regression examined the interaction between condition (nostalgia = 0) and conflict on relationship satisfaction. The interactions were not significant when comparing the nostalgia and positive conditions, b = -0.10 (SE = 0.16), t = 0.66, p = .509, $R^2 < .01$, the nostalgia and control conditions, b = 0.13 (SE = 0.15), t = 0.87, p = .385, $R^2 < .01$, or the positive and control conditions, b = -0.23 (SE = 0.16), t = 1.42, p = .156, $R^2 <$ .01. There were no main effects of nostalgia, positive, or control condition, ps $\geq .228$. The only significant effect to emerge was a main effect of conflict, b = -0.74 (SE = 0.06), t = 11.72, $p \leq$ .001, R^2 = .36, such that higher conflict scores predicted lower relationship satisfaction. See Figure 3. This suggests that engaging in relationship nostalgia was not effective at reducing the detrimental impact of conflict on partner satisfaction.

Investment. A two-way moderated regression examined the interaction between nostalgia condition (nostalgia = 0) and conflict on investment. The interactions were not significant when comparing the nostalgia and positive conditions, b = 0.07 (SE = 0.20), t = 0.36, p = .716, $R^2 < .01$, the nostalgia and control conditions, b = 0.21 (SE = 0.19), t = 0.11, p = .911, $R^2 < .01$, or the positive and control conditions, b = 0.05 (SE = 0.21), t = 0.25, p = 8022, $R^2 < .01$. There were no main effects of condition, ps $\geq .095$, or conflict, b = -0.05 (SE = 0.08), t = 0.56, p = .577, $R^2 < .01$. See Figure 4. This – plus the non-significant correlation between conflict and

[1] In this and in Study 2, there were no significant demographic differences (e.g., age, gender) among the groups, ps $\geq .05$, showing that random assignment to condition was successful.

investment – suggests that evaluation of romantic investment may not be an important outcome of conflict or nostalgic reverie.

Alternative Quality. A two-way moderated regression examined the interaction between nostalgia condition (nostalgia = 0) and conflict on ratings of relationship alternatives. There were no significant main effects of condition, *p*s ≥ .622, but there was a main effect of conflict, b = 0.49 (SE = 0.10), t = 4.95, $p \leq .001$, R^2 = .09, with higher scores on conflict predicting greater evaluation of relationship alternatives. When comparing the nostalgia and positive conditions, however, these effects were qualified by a significant interaction, b = 0.81 (SE = 0.22), t = 3.61, $p \leq .001$, R^2 = .05. When comparing the nostalgia and control conditions, this interaction was also significant, b = 0.64 (SE = 0.24), t = 2.66, p = .008, R^2 = .03. There was no significant interaction between the positive and control conditions, b = -0.17 (SE = 0.25), t = 0.70, p = .485, $R^2 < .01$. See Figure 5.

Regions of significance tests explored differences in alternative quality ratings between the nostalgia, positive, and control conditions. At low conflict, the nostalgia condition rated their relationship alternatives significantly higher compared to the positive condition, b = -1.00 (SE = 0.44), t = 2.29, p = .023, R^2 = .02, and compared to the control condition b = -0.91 (SE = 0.42), t = 2.14, p = .034, R^2 = .02,. There was no difference between the positive and control conditions, b = 0.17 (SE =0 .43), t = 0.40, p = .687, $R^2 < .01$. At mean conflict, there was no significant difference between nostalgia and positive conditions, b = 0.03 (SE = 0.30), t = 0.07, p = .944, $R^2 < .01$, nostalgia and control conditions, b = -0.07 (SE = 0.31), t = 0.23, p = .821, $R^2 < .01$, or positive and control conditions, b = 0.09 (SE = 0.31), t = 0.29, p = .771, R^2 = .01. At high conflict, alternative quality ratings were significantly lower in the nostalgia condition compared to the positive condition, b = 1.11 (SE = 0.40), t = 2.67 p = .006, R^2 = .03, and compared to the

control condition, $b = 0.76$ ($SE = 0.45$), $t = 1.67$, $p = .096$, $R^2 = .01$. The positive and control conditions did not differ, $b = -0.36$ ($SE = 0.47$), $t = 0.76$, $p = .447$, $R^2 < .01$.

I also examined simple slopes between conflict and alternative quality for each condition. In the nostalgia condition, there was no significant relationship between conflict and alternative quality, $b = 0.05$ ($SE = 0.15$), $t = 0.35$, $p = .723$, $R^2 < .01$, but in the positive condition, there was a significant positive relationship, $b = 0.86$ ($SE = 0.17$), $t = 5.19$, $p \leq .001$, $R^2 = .10$, as well as in the control condition, $b = 0.69$ ($SE = 0.19$), $t = 3.71$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = .05$.

Commitment. A two-way moderated regression examined the interaction between nostalgia condition (nostalgia = 0) and conflict on commitment. There were no main effects of condition, ps $\geq .111$. There was a significant effect of conflict, $b = -0.55$ ($SE = 0.07$), $t = 8.25$, $p \leq .001$, $R^2 = .22$, with more conflict predicting lower commitment. This effect was qualified by a significant interaction. Whereas there was no interaction between nostalgia and control conditions, $b = -0.24$ ($SE = 0.16$), $t = 1.39$, $p = .167$, $R^2 = .01$, or between positive and control conditions, $b = 0.10$ ($SE = 0.17$), $t = 0.60$, $p = .549$, $R^2 < .01$, there was a significant interaction between nostalgia and positive conditions, $b = -0.33$ ($SE = 0.15$), $t = 2.14$, $p = .033$, $R^2 = .01$. See Figure 6.

Regions of significance tests explored differences in commitment scores between the nostalgia and positive conditions. There was no difference at low conflict, $b = 0.14$ ($SE = 0.30$), $t = 0.46$, $p = .646$, $R^2 < .01$, or at mean conflict, $b = -0.29$ ($SE = 0.20$), $t = 1.42$, $p = .158$, $R^2 < .01$. At high conflict, however, commitment was significantly higher in the nostalgia condition than in the positive condition, $b = -0.72$ ($SE = 0.27$), $t = 2.62$, $p = .009$, $R^2 = .02$.

I also examined simple slopes between conflict and commitment for both conditions. There were significant negative relationships for both conditions (nostalgia: $b = -0.38$ [$SE =$

0.10], $t = 3.66$, $p \leq .001$, $R^2 = .04$; positive: $b = -0.70$ [$SE = .11$], $t = 6.23$, $p \leq .001$, $R^2 = .13$). These findings indicate that regardless of the condition, greater conflict predicted reports of lower commitment. Overall, when conflict was high, partner commitment was higher among those who recalled a nostalgic memory compared to those who recalled a positive memory.

Figure 3.

Satisfaction scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

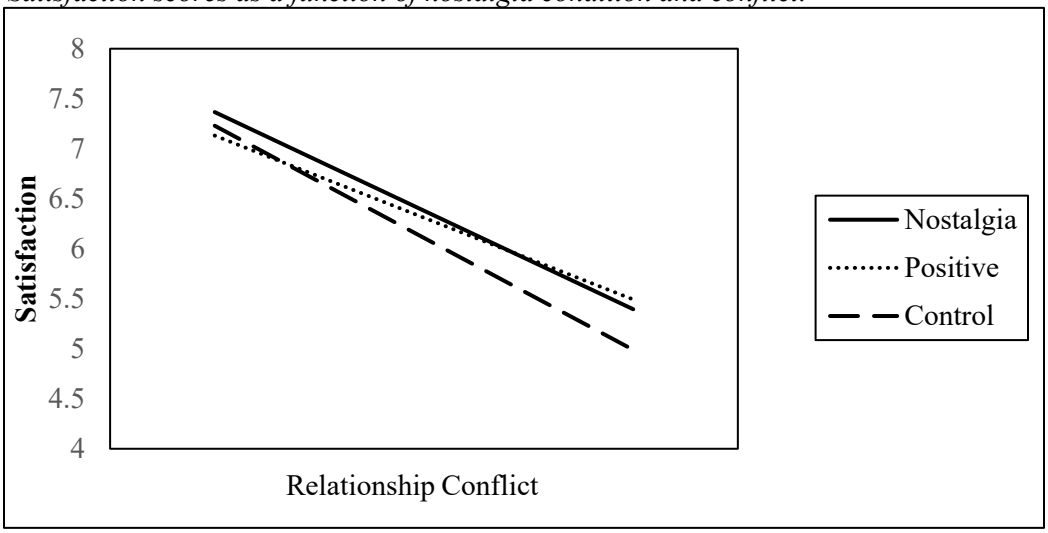


Figure 4.

Investment scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

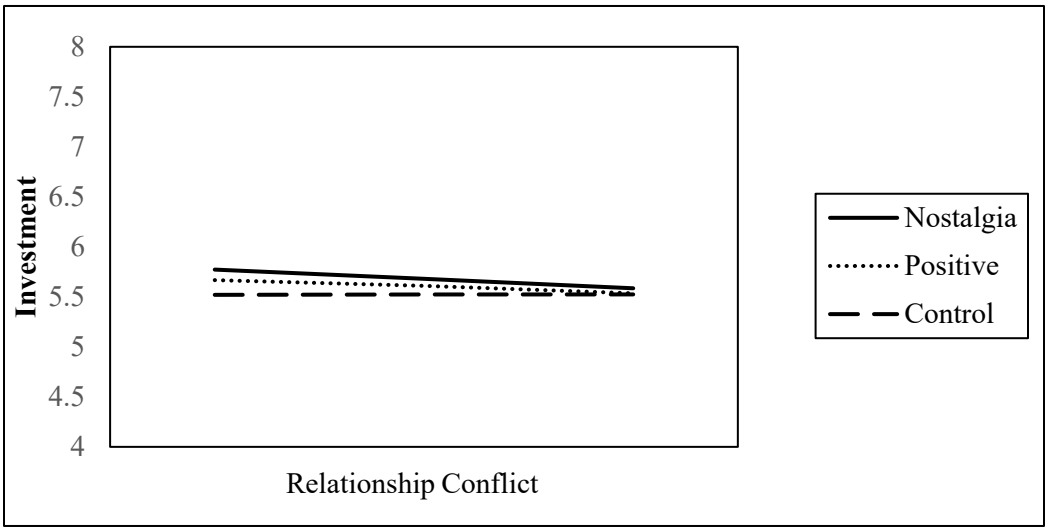


Figure 5.
Alternative quality scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

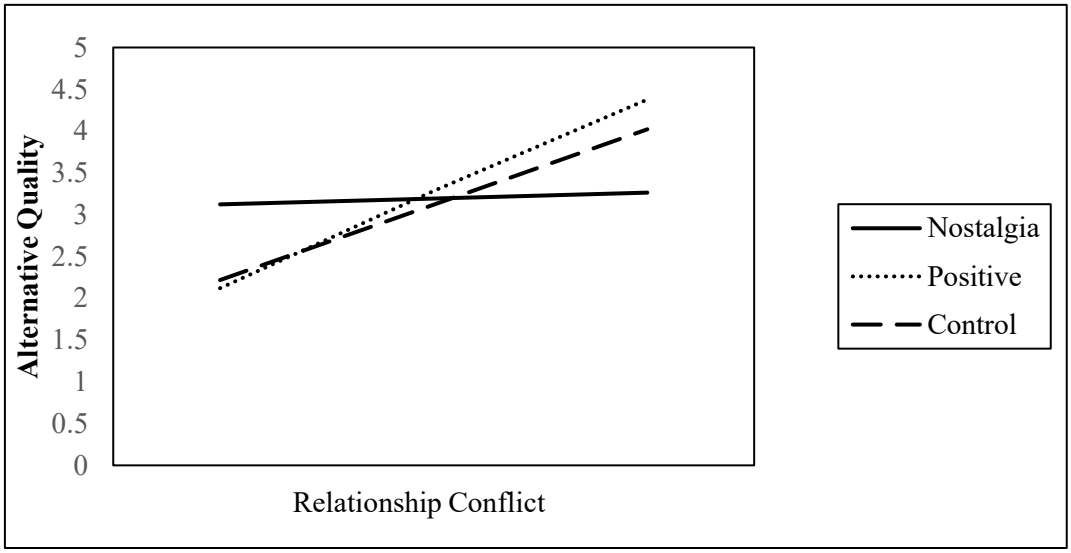
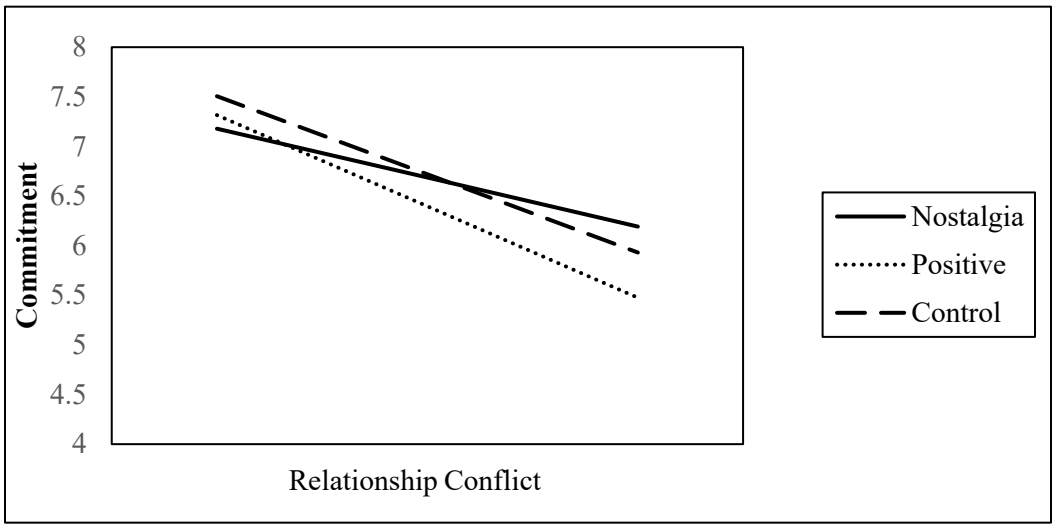


Figure 6.
Commitment scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.



Discussion

Study 1 showed that participants endorsed higher partner commitment and lower interest in alternatives following thoughts of relationship nostalgia compared to one of two control primes. Similar results were not found when predicting relationship satisfaction or investment.

Replicating and extending Swets and Cox (2020), participants who were given the opportunity to reminisce about a memory with their partner reported higher commitment in response to greater conflict. This finding coincides with empirical knowledge about general personal nostalgia, as it suggests that a sentimental longing for the past serves as a resource for overcoming psychological threats. Consistent with Abeyta et al., (2015), nostalgia improved relationship outcomes even when conflict was salient. In terms of relationship-specific nostalgia, the non-significant findings for partner satisfaction were not consistent with that of Mallory et al. (2018), who found that relationship nostalgia and satisfaction were positively associated. However, Study 1 provides further support for Swets and Cox's work, demonstrating that commitment, but not satisfaction, as the central outcome of increased partner nostalgia. Dovetailing with a wealth of literature from an investment model perspective, this suggests that the key product of nostalgia is an increased intent to persist in a relationship. Overall, having demonstrated that nostalgia buffers the effect of conflict to increase commitment and reduce interest in alternatives, the following experiment was designed to replicate the results of Study 1, while also exploring carryover effects to six different relationship maintenance mechanisms.

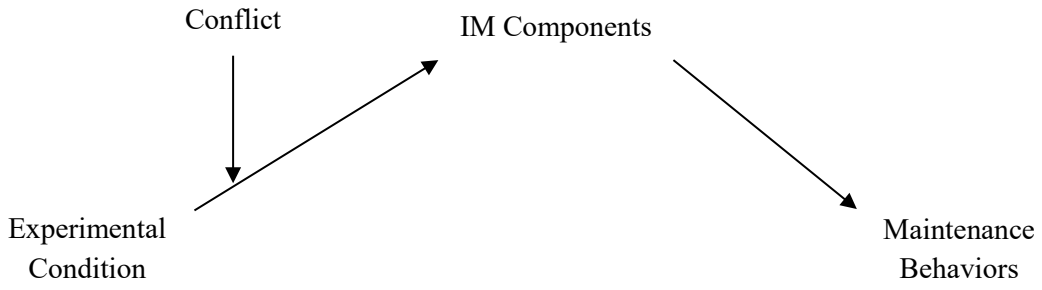
Study 2

Rusbult and colleagues (e.g., 1983; 2001) argued that individuals engage in relationship maintenance behaviors (e.g., forgiveness, positive illusions) to the extent that they are committed to their romantic partner. This suggests that if people are more devoted as a function of the ameliorating effects of nostalgia on conflict, then an increase in commitment should carryover to relationship maintenance activities. To test this, as in Study 1, participants completed a measure of partner conflict followed by a relationship nostalgia prime (vs. one of two control conditions). They then completed Rusbult et al.'s (1998) investment model scale and six measures of

relationship maintenance (i.e., accommodation, forgiveness, sacrifice, positive illusions, devaluation of alternatives, & interdependence; Aron et al., 1992; Cialdini et al., 1997; Finkel et al., 2002; Neff & Greer, 2013; Rusbult et al., 1982; Rydell et al., 2004; Van Lange et al., 1997). First-stage moderated-mediation models (Hayes, 2018) were used to examine the influence of commitment, satisfaction, investment, and quality of alternatives on the two-way interaction between conflict and nostalgia condition on relationship maintenance.

Consistent with the first study, it was hypothesized that high conflict individuals would be more committed to their partners following thoughts of nostalgia (i.e., statistically significant

Figure 7.
Depiction of moderated mediation model for Study 2.



a-paths on commitment & quality of alternatives). Further, as people become more committed to their partner, they should exhibit greater relationship maintenance behaviors (i.e., forgiveness, accommodation, etc.) to maintain the partnership (i.e., *b*-paths). This prediction is consistent with Rusbult's investment model of close relationships. Finally, in regard to the indirect effects, it was hypothesized that the increase in commitment (e.g., satisfaction, investment, etc.) as a function of nostalgic reverie should lead participants to increase pro-relationship behaviors – specifically, accommodation, forgiveness, willingness to sacrifice, idealization, cognitive interdependence, and derogation of alternative love interests. The links between nostalgia condition and

maintenance behaviors were believed to be stronger for persons experiencing more conflict (vs. less conflict). See Figure 7 for the proposed model.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited from MTurk and TCU in a similar method to Study 1. Initially the sample consisted of 1,558 individuals, but I removed 832 participants (15 from TCU) who completed the experiment multiple times, indicated not paying attention, and/or entered nonsensical or off-topic responses in the essay portion. Similar to Study 1, I read all open-ended responses and removed participants whose responses were inappropriate for the condition (i.e., in the positive condition but predominantly nostalgic). The final sample consisted of 726 participants. Ninety-four participants were from TCU, and 632 were from MTurk. See Table 4 for demographic information. Power analyses were informed partially by the results of Study 1. To obtain a small to medium effect size ($f = .15$) at .80 power ($p \leq .05$), approximately 732 participants were needed (*G*Power*; Faul et al., 2008).[2] The procedure was similar to Study 1 with the addition of maintenance behavior scales, which were counterbalanced. (See Appendix.)

Materials

Conflict. As with the first experiment, the RCS scale was included to measure conflict ($\alpha = .82$; $M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.26$).

Nostalgia Manipulation. The nostalgia writing manipulation and two controls were identical to Study 1, followed by the same manipulation check ($\alpha = .95$; $M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.40$).

[2] With no concrete procedure for *a priori* power analysis for moderated-mediation, I used *G*Power* to predict the power of an ANCOVA with seven groups and three covariates. Past investment model research has used these with as few as 200 participants (Webster et al., 2015). Also, the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic during Study 2 data collection caused a rapid decline in quality among online participants, lending to the large proportion of excluded participants.

Commitment. Following Experiment 1, the IMS measured satisfaction (α = .93; M = 6.23, SD = 1.68), investment (α = .82; M = 5.74, SD = 1.70), quality of alternatives (α = .89; M = 2.98, SD = 2.19), and commitment (α = .86; M = 6.63, SD = 1.50). The four subscales were counterbalanced.

Relationship Maintenance Behaviors. Following Rusbult et al. (1986), participants completed a measure assessing accommodative behaviors based on four categories, which represent Rusbult and colleagues' (1982) four general responses to relationship dissatisfaction.

Table 4.
Sample demographic characteristics (Study 2; N = 726)

	Mean (*SD*)	Range
Age	30.44 (*9.42*)	18-72
	n	%
Ethnicity		
White/non-Hispanic	510	70.2
Black/African American	83	11.4
Hispanic/Latino(a)	71	9.8
Asian	40	5.5
American Indian/Native American	7	1.0
Other	15	2.1
Relationship Status		
Married	351	48.3
In a committed relationship	260	35.8
Casually dating someone	55	7.6
In a domestic partnership	35	4.8
Engaged	25	3.4
Gender Identity		
Female	428	59.0
Male	288	39.7
Nonbinary or other	10	1.4
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	618	85.1
Bisexual	90	12.4
Lesbian/gay	18	2.5

The Accommodative Behaviors Scale (ABS) measured *exit* (formally ending the relationship; e.g., "If I become unhappy with my partner, I will consider breaking up"), *voice* (discussing, seeking compromise; e.g., "If I get unhappy with my partner, I will probably tell him/her what's bothering me"), *loyalty* (hoping for improvement; e.g., "If we face problems in our relationship, I will patiently wait for things to improve"), and *neglect* (ignoring the partner and the problem; e.g., "If I become angry at my partner, I will probably spend less time with him/her"). Each of the four subscales consisted of 7 items. Participants rated how often they would choose each response (9-point Likert-type scale; 1 = *will never do this*; 9 = *will always do this*). Higher scores on voice and loyalty (i.e., constructive responses) and lower scores on exit and neglect (i.e., destructive responses) indicate more partner-accommodative behavior and higher commitment (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986; Rusbult et al., 1982). All four subscales demonstrated good reliability (exit: $\alpha = .93$; $M = 3.46$, $SD = 2.09$; voice: $\alpha = .90$; $M = 7.06$, $SD = 1.53$; loyalty: $\alpha = .80$; $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.52$; neglect: $\alpha = .90$; $M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.94$).

Measurement of partner forgiveness was derived from Finkel et al. (2002), in which participants read 12 hypothetical scenarios of their partner's betrayal (e.g., "Your partner lies to you about something important"). Participants responded with the likelihood that they would respond to each betrayal with exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect. For example, "I would tell my partner that I'd like us to try and resolve the situation" exemplifies a "voice" response, whereas "I would feel angry that my partner can't be honest with me" exemplifies a "neglect" response (9-point Likert-type scale; 0 = *not at all likely to react this way*; 8 = *extremely likely to react this way*). In total, there were 48 responses, with higher scores on voice and loyalty (i.e., forgiving), and lower scores on exit and neglect (i.e., unforgiving), demonstrating a greater tendency to forgive partner betrayal. Reliabilities were good for all subscales (exit: $\alpha = .90$; $M = 3.62$, $SD =$

1.80; voice: α = .79; M = 5.97, SD = 1.35; loyalty: α = .82; M = 5.09, SD = 1.47; neglect: α = .76; M = 4.94, SD = 1.33).

Willingness to sacrifice was measured based on Van Lange et al.'s (1997) method. First, participants were instructed to provide the three most important parts of their life besides their romantic relationship. Then, for each item listed, participants were asked the following: "Imagine that it was not possible to engage in Activity 1 [2; 3] and maintain your relationship with your partner. To what extent would you consider giving up this activity for the good of your relationship?" (Van Lange et al.). Responses were scaled on a 9-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*definitely would not give up this activity*) to 8 (*would definitely give up this activity*). The mean of the three ratings composed the willingness to sacrifice score (α = .74; M = 3.71, SD = 2.29). Higher scores indicate a greater willingness to sacrifice one's own interests for the relationship and are associated with greater commitment.

Positive illusions about the relationship were measured with Neff and Geers' (2013) measure of relationship-specific optimism, which consists of eight items on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). An example item is "I expect my partner and I will always communicate well," with higher scores suggesting a more idealistic bias toward the relationship (α = .87; M = 5.45; SD = 1.13).

Devaluation of alternatives was measured following Rydell et al.'s (2004) work, in which participants were instructed to imagine they were dating their ideal (but not current) romantic partner. This was shown to effectively manipulate the perceived attractiveness of relationship alternatives. In this study, I presented this same prompt. Afterward participants were asked six questions about the likelihood of pursuing this relationship alternative (e.g., "I would leave my current partner for this ideal partner."). These six items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type

scale (0 = *not at all likely*; 6 = *extremely likely*). *Lower* scores suggest greater derogation of relationship alternatives (α = .91; M = 3.18, SD = 1.79).

Cognitive interdependence, the extent to which individuals perceive emotional closeness with their partner, was measured using a virtual version of the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS Scale; Aron et al., 1992), following Agnew et al. (1998). This single-item visual scale consists of two circles, one representing the self and one representing the partner. Participants received the following instructions: "This diagram is designed to represent your romantic relationship and how much you feel like you 'overlap' with your partner. Please click and drag the smaller 'Me' circle to the position that best captures your relationship." Higher overlap (on a scale of 0 = *no overlap* to 100 = *complete overlap*) indicated more interdependence or "cognitive fusion" (Agnew et al.; Aron et al.; Myers & Hodges, 2012). In addition to the IOS scale, participants completed the "We Scale" (Cialdini et al., 1997). This is one item: "To what extent would you use the term 'WE' to characterize your relationship with your partner?" Responses were measured on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 100 (*very much so*) with higher scores indicating more "oneness" or closeness. The mean of these two measures composed each participant's cognitive interdependence score (α = .79; M = 73.67, SD = 22.58).

Overall, all maintenance behavior measures were counterbalanced to eliminate any order effects. Participants were then debriefed and compensated for their participation.

Data Analytic Plan

Results were analyzed using SPSS Version 26 and Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Macro Version 3.3 for first-stage moderated mediation (Model 8). As in Study 1, assumption tests were conducted prior to running each analysis. Given the continuous nature of Rusbult and colleagues' (1998) investment model scale (IMS), along with the responses being independent, these two

assumptions were met. Durbin-Watson tests via SPSS showed no violation of the assumption of independence of errors (i.e., scores between 1 and 3). SPSS-produced scatterplots showed linear relationships between the continuous predictor variable (conflict) and each of the continuous outcomes (i.e., satisfaction, investment, alternative quality, commitment). Additionally, Variance Inflation Factor values all less than 10 signaled no problems with multicollinearity between predictor variables. I used Shapiro-Wilk's tests and inspected histograms to determine whether regression residuals were normally distributed. Whereas there were some normality violations for some conditions ($ps \leq .05$), the large sample size ($N = 726$) was sufficient to proceed with analyses (i.e., Central Limit Theorem).

Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Macro (Model 8) was utilized for the first stage moderated-mediation analyses. First, I initially examined the two-way interaction between the independent variables (i.e., nostalgia prime & conflict) on the dependent variables (i.e., six relationship maintenance activities; *c* paths). Second, the predictor variable, the moderator, and their interaction were regressed onto each mediator (*a* paths). Only models with significant *a*-paths were explored further with analyses. Third, while controlling for all these effects, the *b* path was determined by the regression of the mediator onto each outcome variable. Finally, each model computes an index of first stage moderated mediation -- a bootstrapped confidence interval that quantifies the effect of the moderator on each indirect effect (Hayes, 2015). For each regression analysis, 10,000 bootstrap samples were performed with 95% CI and *p*-values $\leq .05$ determining statistical significance. Relationship conflict scores were mean centered, and condition was dummy-coded (nostalgia = 0). Follow-up tests for significant interactions included an examination of the simple slopes of conflict (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1985) within each level of the categorical variable (nostalgia vs. positive control vs. true control conditions). Additionally,

regions of significance tests (Aiken & West, 1991) explored differences between nostalgia and control conditions on relationship outcomes (mediators) at the mean, above the mean (+1*SD*), and below the mean (-1*SD*) of conflict. All effects are interpreted while controlling for all other predictors in the regression models.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Sample and Demographic Differences. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine differences between the undergraduate and MTurk samples on all mediating and outcome variables. MTurk workers reported significantly higher investment, constructive and destructive accommodation and forgiveness, willingness to sacrifice, and interdependence. See Table 5 for descriptive and inferential statistics.

In regard to demographic characteristics (relationship status [e.g., married vs. not married], relationship duration [in months], & gender), correlational results revealed significant effects for relationship duration with both mediating and outcome variables. Aside from investment, with married persons reporting greater partner investment ($M = 6.04$, $SD = 1.57$) compared to non-married participants ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.76$; $t = 4.68$, $p \leq .001$), all other effects were non-significant, $ps \geq .085$. Finally, results of a one-way ANOVA and post-hoc Bonferroni corrections revealed several significant differences between men and women on variables of interest. See Tables 6-7 for descriptive and inferential statistics. Because of this, and to remain consistent with the first experiment, the following results were performed while controlling for sample (undergraduate vs. MTurk), relationship duration, and gender in each model.

Table 5.
Descriptive and inferential statistics for sample differences on mediating and outcome measures (Study 2).

	Mean (*SD*)				
	TCU (*n* = 94)	MTurk (*n* = 632)	*t*	*df*	*p*
Satisfaction	6.37 (*1.39)*	6.21 (*1.72)*	1.03	724	.305
Investment	5.04 *(1.53)*	5.84 *(1.70)*	4.68	724	≤ .001
Alt. Quality	2.82 *(1.87)*	3.00 *(2.23)*	0.84	724	.401
Commitment	6.83 *(1.19)*	6.61 *(1.54)*	1.61	724	.110
Cons. Accommodation	6.16 *(0.72)*	6.34 *(1.13)*	2.04	724	.043
Des. Accommodation	3.08 *(1.29)*	3.64 *(1.91)*	3.68	724	≤ .001
Cons. Forgiveness	5.14 *(1.00)*	5.60 *(1.30)*	3.97	724	≤ .001
Des. Forgiveness	3.77 *(1.11)*	4.36 *(1.52)*	4.52	724	≤ .001
Idealization	5.64 *(1.02)*	5.42 *(1.15)*	1.93	724	.056
Sacrifice	2.50 *(1.83)*	3.89 *(2.30)*	6.63	724	≤ .001
Alt. Devaluation	3.51 *(1.77)*	3.13 *(1.79)*	1.96	724	.052
Interdependence	68.85 *(20.20)*	74.34 *(22.84)*	2.44	724	.016

Table 6.

Descriptive and inferential statistics among gender identity on mediating and outcome measures (Study 2).

	Mean (*SD*)					
	Female (*n* = 428)[a]	Male (*n* = 287)[b]	Gender diverse (*n* = 10)[c]	*F*	*df*	*p*
Satisfaction	6.19 (*1.68)*	6.30 (*1.67)*	5.76 (*1.78)*	0.79	(2,723)	.455
Investment[ab]	5.52 *(1.77)*	6.06 *(1.53)*	6.14 *(1.41)*	9.43	(2,723)	≤ .001
Alt. Quality[ab]	2.70 *(2.12)*	3.41 *(2.22)*	2.66 *(2.50)*	9.29	(2,723)	≤ .001
Commitment	6.74 *(1.45)*	6.49 *(1.57)*	6.20 *(1.70)*	2.97	(2,723)	.052
Cons. Accommodation	6.28 *(1.03)*	6.38 *(1.18)*	6.26 *(0.80)*	0.83	(2,723)	.435
Des. Accommodation[ab]	3.38 *(1.65)*	3.85 *(2.10)*	3.85 *(1.81)*	5.87	(2,723)	.003
Cons. Forgiveness[ab]	5.37 *(1.20)*	5.77 *(1.36)*	6.09 *(1.05)*	9.90	(2,723)	≤ .001
Des. Forgiveness	4.21 *(1.35)*	4.40 *(1.67)*	3.78 *(1.09)*	1.91	(2,723)	.149
Idealization	5.42 *(1.18)*	5.50 *(1.05)*	5.61 *(1.31)*	0.53	(2,723)	.587
Sacrifice[ab]	3.48 *(2.24)*	4.09 *(2.34)*	2.90 *(1.50)*	6.84	(2,723)	.001
Alt. Devaluation	3.13 *(1.82)*	3.25 *(1.77)*	3.48 *(0.99)*	0.54	(2,723)	.581
Interdependence	72.69 *(23.55)*	75.26 *(20.72)*	69.65 *(30.43)*	1.27	(2,723)	.282

Note. Measures with [ab] superscripts were significantly different at $p \leq .05$.

Table 7.
Bivariate correlations among key variables (Study 2)

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. RCS	1	**-.537****	-.049	**.384****	**-.488****	**-.176****	**.532****	-.044	**.539****	**-.373****	**.205****	**.251****	**-.182****	.002
2. Satisfaction		1	**.384****	**-.255****	**.576****	**.420****	**-.270****	**.361****	**-.108***	**.637****	**.092**$^{\pm}$**	**-.330****	**.541****	-.018
3. Investment			1	**-.206****	**.389****	**.284****	**-.112***	**.266****	.058	**.263****	**.149****	**-.181****	**.390****	**.188****
4. Alt. Quality				1	**-.598****	-.068	**.628****	**.143****	**.493****	**-.138****	**.212****	**.500****	**-.174****	**-.124****
5. Commitment					1	**.304****	**-.627****	**.077**$^{\pm}$**	**-.404****	**.398****	**-.174****	**-.418****	**.343****	**.156****
6. Con. Accom.						1	**-.073***	**.567****	.022	**.436****	**.107***	-.057	**.238****	-.061
7. Des. Accom.							1	**.130****	**.749****	**-.221****	**.329****	**.447****	**-.093**$^{\pm}$**	**-.104***
8. Con. Forgive.								1	**.226****	**.361****	**.274****	.039	**.244****	-.066
9. Des. Forgive.									1	-.054	**.363****	**.283****	.028	**-.081**$^{\pm}$**
10. Idealization										1	.045	**-.216****	**.363****	**-.116***
11. Sacrifice											1	**.086**$^{\pm}$**	**.244****	-.031
12. Alt. Devalue												1	**-.282****	**-.131****
13. IOS/We													1	.023
14. Rel. Duration														1

Note. $^{**}p \leq .001$, $^{*}p \leq .01$, $^{\pm}p \leq .05$

Manipulation Check. Results of a between-subjects one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) demonstrated significant differences between conditions (nostalgia, positive, control) on state relationship nostalgia scores, $F(2, 722) = 61.45$, $p \leq .001$, $\eta^2_p = .15$. Post-hoc tests using a Bonferroni adjustment revealed that participants in the nostalgia condition reported more nostalgia ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.10$) compared to those in the positive condition ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.36$), $p \leq .001$, and the control condition ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.42$), $p \leq .001$. The positive and control conditions were not significantly different, $p = .082$.

Main Analyses

Moderated Regressions on Maintenance Behaviors (i.e., *c*-paths). To begin, six moderated regressions were conducted to examine the interaction between condition (dummy coded; nostalgia = 0) and conflict (centered) on the different maintenance behavior scales. As seen in Tables 8a-8f, the only marginally significant interactions to emerge were for idealization ($p = .071$) and interdependence ($p = .052$).

I next conducted follow-up tests to explore the nature of these interactions. For idealization, the trend of this interaction was driven by the negative simple slopes in all three conditions; that is, higher conflict predicted lower idealization (ps $\leq .001$), but there were no group differences at low, average, or high conflict. For interdependence, whereas the simple slope for the nostalgia group was non-significant, there were negative slopes for the other two conditions (ps $\leq .001$). Higher conflict predicted lower interdependence for persons who did not retrieve a nostalgic memory. Regions of significance tests revealed no differences between conditions at low conflict; at mean conflict, interdependence was higher in the nostalgia than the control condition ($p = .047$), and at high conflict, it was higher in the nostalgia than both other conditions (ps $\leq .024$), with no difference between the two controls ($p = .930$).

Table 8a.

Interdependence scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

Interdependence			*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	n^2_p
	Conflict		-3.51	0.66	5.29	≤ .001	.04
	Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-2.49	2.03	1.23	.220	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-3.68	1.99	1.84	.064	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	-1.30	2.06	0.63	.528	< .01
	2-way interaction	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-3.11	1.60	1.94	.052	.01
		Nostalgia Slope	-1.75	1.14	1.53	.126	< .01
		Positive Slope	-4.85	1.13	4.29	≤ .001	.02
		Low Conflict	1.34	2.85	0.47	.637	< .01
		High Conflict	-6.46	2.86	2.26	.024	.01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-2.00	1.63	1.23	.175	< .01
		Ordinary Slope	-3.94	1.15	3.42	.001	.01
		Low Conflict	-1.18	2.76	0.42	.669	< .01
		High Conflict	-6.71	2.92	2.30	.022	.01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.91	1.61	0.57	.572	< .01
		Low Conflict	-2.63	2.99	0.88	.379	< .01
		High Conflict	-0.34	2.80	0.12	.902	< .01

Table 8b.

Idealization scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

Idealization			*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	n^2_p
	Conflict		-0.34	0.31	10.89	≤ .001	.14
	Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	0.01	0.10	0.07	.949	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.02	0.09	0.23	.821	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.02	0.10	0.16	.877	< .01
	2-way interaction	Nostalgia vs. Positive	0.14	0.08	0.74	.071	< .01
		Nostalgia Slope	-0.40	0.05	7.49	≤ .001	.07
		Positive Slope	-0.27	0.05	5.01	≤ .001	.03
		Low Conflict	-0.17	0.14	1.24	.217	< .01
		High Conflict	.018	0.14	1.31	.192	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.06	0.08	0.74	.459	< .01
		Ordinary Slope	-0.35	0.05	6.40	≤ .001	.05
		Low Conflict	-0.04	0.13	0.31	.758	< .01
		High Conflict	0.10	0.14	0.74	.148	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.80	0.08	1.05	.293	< .01
		Low Conflict	0.13	0.14	0.90	.367	< .01
		High Conflict	-0.07	0.13	0.56	.573	< .01

Table 8c.

Constructive accommodation scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

Constructive Accommodation			*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	n^2_p
	Conflict		-0.15	0.03	4.71	≤ .001	.03
	Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.15	0.10	1.47	.142	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.07	0.10	0.76	.449	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.02	0.10	0.16	.877	< .01
	2-way interaction	Nostalgia vs. Positive	< 0.01	0.08	0.02	.981	< .01
		Nostalgia Slope	-0.19	0.06	3.51	≤ .001	.02
		Positive Slope	-0.20	0.06	3.59	≤ .001	.02
		Low Conflict	-0.13	0.14	0.93	.352	< .01
		High Conflict	-0.13	0.14	0.96	.335	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.14	0.08	1.73	.084	< .01
		Ordinary Slope	-0.06	0.06	1.04	.298	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.24	0.13	1.78	.076	< .01
		High Conflict	0.10	0.14	0.72	.470	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.14	0.09	1.76	.079	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.11	0.15	0.76	.447	< .01
		High Conflict	0.24	0.14	1.75	.081	< .01

Table 8d.

Destructive accommodation scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

Destructive Accommodation			*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	n^2_p
	Conflict		0.77	0.46	16.71	≤ .001	.27
	Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	0.19	0.14	1.35	.178	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.07	0.14	0.48	.629	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.13	0.14	0.87	.386	< .01
	2-way interaction	Nostalgia vs. Positive	0.02	0.11	0.14	.887	< .01
		Nostalgia Slope	0.71	0.08	8.94	≤ .001	.08
		Positive Slope	0.73	0.08	9.26	≤ .001	.08
		Low Conflict	0.19	0.20	0.93	.354	< .01
		High Conflict	0.23	0.20	1.13	.260	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.16	0.06	1.36	.173	< .01
		Ordinary Slope	0.87	0.08	10.78	≤ .001	.11
		Low Conflict	-0.12	0.19	0.62	.533	< .01
		High Conflict	0.27	0.21	1.31	.190	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.14	0.11	1.23	.218	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.31	0.21	1.47	.141	< .01
		High Conflict	0.04	0.20	0.22	.828	< .01

Table 8e.

Constructive forgiveness scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

Constructive Forgiveness			*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	n^2_p
	Conflict		-0.05	0.04	1.29	.196	< .01
	Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.12	0.04	1.00	.320	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.16	0.11	1.40	.161	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.04	0.12	0.38	.708	< .01
	2-way interaction	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.04	0.09	0.45	.652	< .01
		Nostalgia Slope	-0.07	0.07	1.11	.266	< .01
		Positive Slope	-0.11	0.06	1.77	.078	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.05	0.16	0.31	.757	< .01
		High Conflict	-0.13	0.14	0.96	.335	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.12	0.09	1.25	.212	< .01
		Ordinary Slope	0.04	0.07	0.66	.511	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.30	0.16	1.91	.056	< .01
		High Conflict	0.10	0.14	0.72	.470	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.16	0.09	1.71	.089	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.25	0.17	1.48	.138	< .01
		High Conflict	0.24	0.14	1.75	.081	< .01

Table 8f.

Destructive forgiveness scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

Destructive Forgiveness			*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	n^2_p
	Conflict		0.64	0.04	17.14	≤ .001	.29
	Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.06	0.12	0.51	.608	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.10	0.11	0.87	.387	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.04	0.12	0.33	.740	< .01
	2-way interaction	Nostalgia vs. Positive	0.52	0.09	0.57	.310	< .01
		Nostalgia Slope	0.57	0.07	8.85	≤ .001	.08
		Positive Slope	0.62	0.06	9.76	≤ .001	.09
		Low Conflict	-0.11	0.16	0.69	.491	< .01
		High Conflict	0.20	0.16	8.85	.908	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.15	0.09	1.68	.094	< .01
		Ordinary Slope	0.73	0.07	11.10	≤ .001	.12
		Low Conflict	-0.28	0.16	1.80	.073	< .01
		High Conflict	0.10	0.17	0.63	.529	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.10	0.09	1.12	.265	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.17	0.17	1.01	.313	< .01
		High Conflict	0.09	0.16	9.76	.589	< .01

Table 8g.

Willingness to sacrifice scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

Willingness to Sacrifice			*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	n^2_p
	Conflict		0.34	0.07	5.49	≤ .001	.04
	Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.05	0.21	0.23	.818	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.04	0.20	0.19	.852	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.01	0.20	0.05	.962	< .01
	2-way interaction	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.08	0.16	0.50	.310	< .01
		Nostalgia Slope	0.35	0.19	3.03	.003	.01
		Positive Slope	0.27	0.11	2.35	.019	.01
		Low Conflict	0.07	0.29	0.25	.806	< .01
		High Conflict	-0.13	0.29	0.46	.649	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.13	0.16	0.82	.413	< .01
		Ordinary Slope	0.48	0.12	4.15	≤ .001	.02
		Low Conflict	-0.21	0.28	0.73	.463	< .01
		High Conflict	0.13	0.30	0.45	.655	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.08	0.16	1.31	.188	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.28	0.30	0.92	.359	< .01
		High Conflict	0.26	0.28	0.93	.350	< .01

Table 8h.

Alternative devaluation scores as a function of nostalgia condition and conflict.

Alternative Devaluation			*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	n^2_p
	Conflict		0.34	0.05	6.80	≤ .001	.06
	Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	0.28	0.16	1.78	.075	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.26	0.15	1.67	.096	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.02	0.16	0.15	.879	< .01
	2-way interaction	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.04	0.13	0.29	.771	< .01
		Nostalgia Slope	0.35	0.09	3.97	≤ .001	.02
		Positive Slope	0.32	0.09	3.61	≤ .001	.02
		Low Conflict	0.33	0.22	1.49	.138	< .01
		Low Conflict	0.24	0.22	1.08	.282	< .01
		Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.02	0.13	0.17	.866	< .01
		Ordinary Slope	0.38	0.09	4.19	≤ .001	.02
		Low Conflict	0.23	0.22	1.06	.289	< .01
		High Conflict	0.28	0.23	1.25	.214	< .01
		Positive vs. Ordinary	0.06	0.13	0.46	.646	< .01
		Low Conflict	-0.10	0.23	0.44	.660	< .01
		High Conflict	0.04	0.22	0.20	.843	< .01

First-stage Moderated Mediation Models (i.e., *a*-paths). The first step in first-stage moderated mediation is to explore the relationship between the predictor, moderator, and their interaction on the mediating variables of interest. Thus, I examined the effect of the nostalgia prime, conflict, and their 2-way interaction on relationship satisfaction, investment, alternative quality, and commitment (see inferential statistics in Tables 9-12). The results revealed non-significant effects for investment and alternative quality. Because the first stage of moderated mediation was not met, these variables were excluded from further analyses. However, there was a significant effect for commitment and a marginally significant effect for satisfaction.

Commitment. As seen in Table 9, a significant interaction emerged between conflict and condition on satisfaction when comparing the nostalgia and control conditions ($p = .038$), but not when comparing the nostalgia and positive conditions. Simple slope analyses indicated that in all three conditions, greater conflict predicted significantly less satisfaction. Looked at differently, the nostalgia condition was not significantly different from the positive or the ordinary condition at low or mean conflict. At high conflict, commitment in the nostalgia condition was significantly higher than in the ordinary condition.

The second step in moderated mediation is to look at the *b*-paths between commitment and maintenance behaviors. These relationships were positive for constructive accommodation[3], constructive forgiveness[4], idealization, and interdependence. Responses were higher when persons felt more committed to their partner. The third step is to examine indirect effects for each condition. For each of the aforementioned outcomes, the same pattern emerged: In all three conditions, the indirect effects were significant in a negative direction. This suggests that with

[3]The same pattern emerged when the difference between constructive and destructive accommodation was used as an outcome.

[4]The same pattern emerged when the difference between constructive and destructive forgiveness was used as an outcome.

more conflict, there was less commitment, and therefore less constructive accommodation and forgiveness, less idealization, and lower interdependence. However, at low, mean, and high levels of conflict, there were no significant indirect effects when comparing the nostalgia condition to the positive or to the control condition. As well, the indices of moderated mediation were not significant.

Conversely, the *b*-paths between commitment and maintenance behaviors were negative for destructive accommodation, destructive forgiveness, willingness to sacrifice, and evaluation of alternative partners. These findings suggest that responses are lower when persons feel more committed to their partner. For each of these outcomes, the same pattern emerged: In all three conditions, the indirect effects were significant in a positive direction. This suggests that with more conflict, there was less commitment, and therefore more destructive accommodation and forgiveness, greater willingness to sacrifice, and higher interest in alternative partners. However, at low, mean, and high levels of conflict, there were no significant indirect effects when comparing the nostalgia condition to the positive or to the control condition (see Tables 9-10 for inferential statistics). As well, the indices of moderated mediation were not significant.

Table 9.
Moderated mediation pathways with commitment as a mediator.

		Mediating Variable Outcomes: Commitment			
		b	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Conflict		-0.48	0.07	7.20	≤ .001
Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.13	0.11	1.07	.284
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.13	0.12	1.12	.262
	Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.08	0.13	0.63	.527
2-way interaction (*a* path)	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.09	0.09	1.01	.312
	Nostalgia Slope	-0.48	0.07	7.20	≤ .001
	Positive Slope	-0.57	0.07	8.68	≤ .001
	Low Conflict	-0.01	0.17	0.05	.960
	High Conflict	-0.25	0.17	1.47	.142
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.20	0.09	2.09	.037
	Ordinary Slope	-0.68	0.07	10.01	≤ .001
	Low Conflict	0.12	0.16	0.73	.464
	High Conflict	-0.38	0.17	2.22	.027
	Positive vs. Ordinary	0.10	0.09	1.10	.273
	Low Conflict	-0.13	0.17	0.73	.466
	High Conflict	0.13	0.16	0.81	.415
		Dependent Variable Outcomes			
		b	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Commitment (*b* paths)	Constructive Accommodation	0.23	0.03	7.80	≤ .001
	Destructive Accommodation	-0.58	0.04	14.86	≤ .001
	Constructive Forgiveness	0.09	0.04	2.46	.014
	Destructive Forgiveness	-0.17	0.04	4.79	≤ .001
	Idealization	0.25	0.03	8.61	≤ .001
	Sacrifice	-0.13	0.06	2.08	.038
	Devaluation of Alternatives	-0.44	0.05	9.43	≤ .001
	Interdependence	5.10	0.61	8.36	≤ .001

Table 10.

Indirect Effects for Outcome Variables with Commitment as Mediator

Conditional Indirect Effects	*b*	*SE*	*95% CI*
	Constructive Accommodation		
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-0.02	0.03	(-.072, .065)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.03	(-.072, .065)
High Conflict	-0.06	0.05	(-.159, .035)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-0.05	0.03	(-.099, .005)
Low Conflict	0.03	0.03	(-.038, .092)
High Conflict	-0.09	0.05	(-.192, .009)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	0.02	0.03	(-.027, .075)
Low Conflict	-0.03	0.04	(-.010, .040)
High Conflict	0.03	0.05	(-.066, .129)
	Destructive Accommodation		
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	0.06	0.06	(-.067, .181)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.09	(-.163, .170)
High Conflict	0.14	0.12	(-.090, .380)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	0.12	0.06	(-.010, .238)
Low Conflict	-0.07	0.08	(-.237, .094)
High Conflict	0.22	0.12	(-.022, .457)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.06	0.06	(-.182, .063)
Low Conflict	0.07	0.09	(-.092, .254)
High Conflict	-0.08	0.12	(-.309, .164)
	Constructive Forgiveness		
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-0.01	0.01	(-.034, .011)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.01	(-.032, .023)
High Conflict	-0.02	0.03	(-.076, .014)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-0.02	0.01	(-.048, .002)
Low Conflict	0.01	0.01	(-.016, .041)
High Conflict	-0.03	0.03	(-.095, .004)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	0.01	0.01	(-.010, .036)
Low Conflict	-0.01	0.02	(-.045, .016)
High Conflict	0.01	0.02	(-.025, .062)

Table 10 cont.

Destructive Forgiveness			
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	0.02	0.02	(-.020, .055)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.03	(-.068, .062)
High Conflict	-0.11	0.05	(-.223, -.012)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	0.04	0.02	(-.003, .073)
Low Conflict	-0.02	0.03	(-.073, .028)
High Conflict	0.06	0.04	(-.007, .138)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.02	0.02	(-.054, .020)
Low Conflict	0.02	0.03	(-.027, .073)
High Conflict	-0.06	0.04	(-.139, .008)
Idealization			
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-0.02	0.03	(-.080, .029)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.04	(-.077, .067)
High Conflict	-0.06	0.05	(-.170, .038)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-0.05	0.03	(-.108, .002)
Low Conflict	0.04	0.04	(-.039, .103)
High Conflict	-0.10	0.05	(-.212, .002)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	0.03	0.03	(-.025, .081)
Low Conflict	-0.03	0.03	(-.109, .039)
High Conflict	0.04	0.05	(-.063, .140)
Willingness to Sacrifice			
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	0.01	0.02	(-.016, .053)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.02	(-.043, .048)
High Conflict	0.04	0.03	(-.020, .112)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	0.02	0.02	(-.004, .072)
Low Conflict	-0.02	0.02	(-.069, .022)
High Conflict	0.05	0.04	(-.008, .136)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.01	0.02	(-.052, .017)
Low Conflict	0.02	0.02	(-.025, .074)
High Conflict	-0.02	0.03	(-.085, .044)
Devaluation of Alternatives			

Table 10 cont.

Nostalgia vs. Positive*	0.04	0.05	(-.048, .144)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.06	(-.125, .127)
High Conflict	0.11	0.09	(-.064, .302)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	0.09	0.05	(-.001, .190)
Low Conflict	-0.06	0.06	(-.179, .067)
High Conflict	0.18	0.09	(-.002, .366)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.05	0.05	(-.141, .045)
Low Conflict	0.06	0.07	(-.074, .185)
High Conflict	-0.07	0.09	(-.243, .119)
Interdependence			
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-0.48	0.56	(-1.647, .557)
Low Conflict	-0.04	0.75	(-1.536, 1.435)
High Conflict	-1.25	1.08	(-3.526, .738)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-1.05	0.57	(-2.212, .032)
Low Conflict	0.62	0.73	(-.833, 2.036)
High Conflict	-2.02	1.12	(-4.328, .030)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	0.57	0.55	(-.536, 1.667)
Low Conflict	-0.62	0.77	(-2.211, .820)
High Conflict	0.76	1.07	(-1.374, 2.889)

Note. *Indicates index of moderated mediation for each comparison.

Table 11.
Moderated mediation pathways with satisfaction as a mediator.

		Mediating Variable Outcomes: Satisfaction			
		b	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Conflict		-0.60	0.07	8.22	≤ .001
Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.26	0.13	1.98	.048
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.17	0.13	1.37	.170
	Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.08	0.13	0.63	.527
2-way interaction (*a* path)	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.19	0.10	1.90	.058
	Nostalgia Slope	-0.60	0.07	8.22	≤ .001
	Positive Slope	-0.79	0.07	10.97	≤ .001
	Low Conflict	-0.13	0.18	0.07	.943
	High Conflict	-0.39	0.19	2.74	.006
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.17	0.10	1.64	.101
	Ordinary Slope	-0.77	0.07	10.39	≤ .001
	Low Conflict	0.04	0.18	0.22	.823
	High Conflict	-0.39	0.19	2.08	.038
	Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.02	0.10	0.23	.815
	Low Conflict	-0.05	0.19	0.28	.782
	High Conflict	-0.11	0.18	0.64	.525
		Dependent Variable Outcomes			
		b	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Satisfaction (*b* paths)	Constructive Accommodation	0.29	0.03	11.19	≤ .001
	Destructive Accommodation	0.01	0.04	0.23	.817
	Constructive Forgiveness	0.29	0.03	11.20	≤ .001
	Destructive Forgiveness	0.22	0.03	6.94	≤ .001
	Idealization	0.42	0.23	18.44	≤ .001
	Sacrifice	0.36	0.06	6.37	≤ .001
	Devaluation of Alternatives	-0.29	0.04	6.65	≤ .001
	Interdependence	8.24	0.50	16.57	≤ .001

Table 12.
Indirect Effects for Outcome Variables with Satisfaction as Mediator

Conditional Indirect Effects		*b*	*SE*	*95% CI*
		Constructive Accommodation		
	Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-.057	0.03	(-.122, .010)
	Low Conflict	< .01	0.04	(-.092, .078)
	High Conflict	-0.15	0.07	(-.277, -.017)
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-0.05	0.03	(-.118, .020)
	Low Conflict	0.01	0.04	(-.073, .089)
	High Conflict	-0.11	0.07	(-.253, .022)
	Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.01	0.05	(-.082, .071)
	Low Conflict	-0.02	0.05	(-.110, .081)
	High Conflict	-0.03	0.08	(-.178, .119)
		Destructive Accommodation		
	Nostalgia vs. Positive*	< .01	0.01	(-.025, .020)
	Low Conflict	< .01	0.01	(-.030, .024)
	High Conflict	< .01	0.03	(-.059, .048)
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	< .01	0.01	(-.022, .019)
	Low Conflict	< .01	0.01	(-.014, .016)
	High Conflict	< .01	0.02	(-.048, .042)
	Positive vs. Ordinary*	< .01	0.01	(-.016, .012)
	Low Conflict	< .01	0.01	(-.018, .017)
	High Conflict	< .01	0.01	(-.033, .023)
		Constructive Forgiveness		
	Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-0.07	0.04	(-.143, .010)
	Low Conflict	-0.01	0.04	(-.176, -.006)
	High Conflict	-0.18	0.08	(-.329, -.019)
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-0.06	0.04	(-.140, .021)
	Low Conflict	0.01	0.05	(-.085, .106)
	High Conflict	-0.06	0.08	(-.301, .024)
	Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.01	0.05	(-.101, .082)
	Low Conflict	-0.02	0.06	(-.132, .095)
	High Conflict	-0.04	0.09	(-.214, .135)

Table 12 cont.

Destructive Forgiveness			
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-0.04	0.03	(-.100, .007)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.03	(-.068, .062)
High Conflict	-0.11	0.05	(-.223, -.012)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-0.04	0.03	(-.091, .013)
Low Conflict	0.01	0.04	(-.053, .073)
High Conflict	-0.09	0.05	(-.194, .015)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.01	0.03	(-.065, .052)
Low Conflict	-0.01	0.04	(-.087, .062)
High Conflict	-0.03	0.06	(-.140, .084)
Idealization			
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-0.08	0.05	(-.178, .014)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.05	(-.128, .114)
High Conflict	-0.21	0.10	(-.406, -.021)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-0.08	0.03	(-.167, .024)
Low Conflict	0.02	0.06	(-.102, .132)
High Conflict	-0.17	0.10	(-.358, .023)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.01	0.06	(-.117, .102)
Low Conflict	-0.03	0.07	(-.162, .113)
High Conflict	-0.04	0.11	(-.255, .164)
Willingness to Sacrifice			
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-0.07	0.04	(-.157, .012)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.05	(-.113, .098)
High Conflict	-0.18	0.08	(-.358, -.017)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-0.06	0.04	(-.147, .023)
Low Conflict	0.02	0.06	(-.102, .132)
High Conflict	-0.14	0.09	(-.311, .024)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.01	0.05	(-.102, .086)
Low Conflict	-0.02	0.06	(-.143, .097)
High Conflict	-0.04	0.09	(-.226, .140)
Devaluation of Alternatives			

Table 12 cont.

Nostalgia vs. Positive*	0.06	0.03	(-.101, .129)
Low Conflict	< .01	0.04	(-.085, .091)
High Conflict	0.15	0.08	(.011, .300)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	0.06	0.04	(-.016, .127)
Low Conflict	-0.02	0.04	(-.097, .069)
High Conflict	0.12	0.07	(-.013, .266)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	0.01	0.04	(-.074, .083)
Low Conflict	0.02	0.05	(-.078, .116)
High Conflict	0.03	0.08	(-.122, .180)
	Interdependence		
Nostalgia vs. Positive*	-1.60	0.96	(-3.440, .312)
Low Conflict	-0.11	1.21	(-2.514, 2.208)
High Conflict	-4.14	1.91	(-7.850, -.373)
Nostalgia vs. Ordinary*	-1.46	0.97	(-3.336, .471)
Low Conflict	0.38	1.51	(-1.939, 2.589)
High Conflict	-3.31	1.92	(-7.003, .515)
Positive vs. Ordinary*	-0.14	1.09	(-2.281, 1.987)
Low Conflict	-0.47	1.35	(-3.103, 2.166)
High Conflict	-0.83	2.11	(-5.041, 3.272)

Note. *Indicates index of moderated mediation for each comparison.

Table 13.
Moderated mediation pathways with investment as a mediator.

		Mediating Variable Outcomes: Investment			
		b	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Conflict		-0.10	0.08	1.13	.258
Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.48	0.15	3.21	.001
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	-0.27	0.15	1.84	.066
	Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.21	0.15	1.39	.165
2-way interaction (*a* path)	Nostalgia vs. Positive	0.02	0.12	0.20	.842
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.01	0.12	0.09	.926
	Positive vs. Ordinary	0.01	0.12	0.11	.916

Table 14.
Moderated mediation pathways with alternative quality as a mediator.

		Mediating Variable Outcomes: Alternative Quality			
		b	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Conflict		0.67	0.10	6.56	≤ .001
Condition	Nostalgia vs. Positive	0.10	0.18	0.55	.579
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.11	0.18	0.63	.527
	Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.01	0.19	0.06	.950
2-way interaction (*a* path)	Nostalgia vs. Positive	-0.08	0.14	0.54	.590
	Nostalgia vs. Ordinary	0.05	0.15	0.36	.723
	Positive vs. Ordinary	-0.13	0.15	0.89	.372

Satisfaction. As seen in Table 10, there was no significant interaction when comparing the nostalgia and ordinary control conditions or the positive and ordinary conditions, but a marginally significant interaction (p = .058) when comparing the nostalgia and positive conditions. Simple slope analyses indicated that in all three conditions, greater conflict predicted less satisfaction. Looking at this interaction differently, at low conflict, the nostalgia condition was not significantly different from either condition. At mean conflict, satisfaction was higher in the nostalgia versus the positive condition. At high conflict, satisfaction was higher in the nostalgia condition versus the positive and the control conditions, which did not differ.

I next looked at the *b*-paths between satisfaction and maintenance behaviors. These relationships were positive for constructive accommodation, constructive and destructive forgiveness, idealization, willingness to sacrifice, and interdependence. These results suggest that responses are higher when persons are more satisfied with their relationship. I then examined indirect effects in each condition. For all outcomes, in all three conditions, the indirect effects were significant in a negative direction. This suggests that with more conflict, there was less satisfaction, and therefore lower scores on these outcomes. For idealization and interdependence, at low, mean, and high levels of conflict, there were no significant indirect effects when comparing nostalgia to the positive or control conditions.

For constructive accommodation, constructive *and* destructive forgiveness, and willingness to sacrifice, at high conflict, the indirect effects were negative. This suggests that constructive accommodation, both types of forgiveness, and willingness to sacrifice (through higher satisfaction) were higher in the nostalgia versus the positive condition, only when conflict was high. However, the indices of moderated mediation were not significant (see Tables 10-11 for inferential statistics).

The *b*-path between satisfaction and interest in alternatives was negative, with satisfied persons expressing less interest in romantic others. Further, the indirect effects were significant and positive for all three conditions. This suggests that with more conflict, there is less satisfaction, and therefore higher interest in alternatives. When comparing the nostalgia and positive conditions, at high conflict, there was a significant positive indirect effect. This suggests more interest in partner alternatives in the positive versus the nostalgia condition, only when conflict was high. None of the indices of moderated mediation were significant.

There was no significant relationship between satisfaction and destructive accommodation (*b*-path). This indicates that when controlling for conflict, there was no relationship between satisfaction and destructive accommodation.

Discussion

The current study had two goals in mind. First, following Study 1, one aim was to further examine the links between nostalgia, conflict, and commitment (e.g., satisfaction, investment, & alternatives). The results of regression analyses on the *a*-paths showed that participants with high relational conflict endorsed increased commitment following thoughts of partner nostalgia compared to one of two control primes. This outcome replicates the associative findings of Swets and Cox (2020) and the experimental findings of Study 1, both of which found that when conflict was high, persons who were more nostalgic reported higher commitment. This pattern was consistent with hypotheses based on Rusbult's (1980; 1983) investment model of commitment; reflecting on sentimental memories with a partner boosted the intent to persist in the relationship. This finding is also consistent with research on nostalgia, in that it provided a relationship-benefitting response (commitment) when faced with threat (conflict). Another consistency in

Studies 1-2 was that investment was not a significant outcome of nostalgic thought. Although this was counter to hypotheses, this does not diminish nostalgia's effects on commitment overall.

One lack of consistency between the two experiments, however, was in the conditions being compared. Whereas Study 1 found significant differences in commitment between nostalgia and positive conditions, the current results were specific to the neutral prime and a sentimental recollection of a romantic partner. Why would recalling a significant, nostalgic event or a mundane, uninteresting event have similar effects? As argued in past literature, nostalgia is a *bittersweet* emotion – it is primarily positive but includes details of irrecoverable loss and longing. Because of this, some nostalgic memories may have tilted more negative than rosy, making the average tone on par with the ordinary condition. This may also explain the inconsistencies between the two studies regarding alternative quality and satisfaction: Study 1 found that nostalgia encouraged devaluation of romantic alternatives, whereas Study 2 did not. And, Study 1 found that nostalgia had no effect on relationship satisfaction whereas Study 2 found satisfaction was improved, although this interaction was only marginally significant. When I read these responses, the nostalgic memories as a whole did appear predominantly positive; however, content coding the qualitative writing responses would inform future work as to what particular emotions or thoughts are being activated.

A second aim was to explore how nostalgia might carry over to influence relationship maintenance intentions. In light of Rusbult's (1983; 2001) model of close relationships, these behaviors should become more common when partners are more committed. I hypothesized that participants would engage in more relationship-promoting activities (e.g., forgiveness, perceived regard) to the extent that nostalgia buffers conflict to heighten feelings of devotion. The results of eight moderated-mediation models revealed non-significant results when extending the

interactive effect of nostalgia to relationship maintenance. This was also the case for almost all interactions predicting maintenance behaviors directly (without mediation) except interdependence and idealization, where higher conflict led to lower interdependence and idealization when nostalgia was not available. This might suggest that nostalgia helped to buffer the influence of conflict on evaluations of partner-self overlap. The lack of significance may have stemmed from including conflict as a variable of interest; although nostalgia has some alleviative effect on relationship commitment, the strong negative consequences of conflict appeared to be overwhelming. This is evident in the indirect effects from experimental condition to maintenance behaviors: Regardless of the condition, conflict consistently produced strong detrimental effects. If this is the case, perhaps a stronger nostalgia manipulation is needed. For example, given that nostalgia repeatedly produced improvement in commitment, perhaps the writing manipulation should be geared toward past instances of partner commitment.

Despite the moderated-mediation models not meeting overall statistical significance, some important trends and findings emerged. Specifically, there were some differences in maintenance behavior scores at high levels of conflict after receiving a nostalgia prime (conditional indirect effects). High-conflict relationships are those who most need the relief of nostalgia, so this trend is important. Second, nearly all bootstrapped confidence intervals were trending in the hypothesized direction. Re-analysis of the data using SEM or other techniques may better discover different effects that are statistically significant. Third, moderated regressions that predicted interdependence and idealization from conflict and nostalgia (without mediation) revealed that nostalgia might help buffer the negative impact of conflict on these. Finally, in terms of relationship-specific nostalgia, no research to my knowledge has explored its effects outside of relationship satisfaction, adding novelty and value to the current work.

Although an accumulating body of research shows the interpersonal benefits of nostalgia, this study is valuable in exploring *about what* people are nostalgic, especially those in intimate relationships.

General Discussion

Relationship conflict, when unsuccessfully resolved, is a difficult problem that can escalate into intimate partner violence (Jewkes, 2002), harm children's adjustment outcomes (Katz & Gottman, 1993), and end in relationship termination (Ha et al., 2013). The purpose of these two studies was to determine how inducing partner-centered nostalgia would counteract romantic conflict and impact relationship satisfaction, investment, alternatives, and commitment. Swets and Cox (2020) first began exploring this idea in an associative model and found that commitment was a key outcome. Presently, this pathway was examined in two studies that primed a relationship-specific sentimental longing for the past. Whereas Study 1 uncovered that results were specific to commitment and partner alternative quality, Study 2, showed results were specific to commitment and perhaps satisfaction. Additionally, in Study 2, the carryover effects of nostalgia on maintenance behavior intentions were explored using first-stage moderated mediation models. Investment model variables did mediate the links between conflict and maintenance behaviors; however, there were few comparisons in which nostalgia appeared to moderate this relationship.

There were a few differences between studies regarding the interactive effect of conflict and nostalgia on the investment model variables. For satisfaction, Study 1 found nostalgia did not predict satisfaction, but Study 2 found a marginally significant interaction, such that nostalgia aided satisfaction ratings when conflict was high. Past work (Mallory et al., 2018) found a positive link between satisfaction and heightened nostalgia proneness, while other work

(Swets & Cox, 2020) has not. Results regarding alternative quality are also mixed, in that in Study 1, conflict and nostalgia interacted in the hypothesized directions, but not in Study 2. It is important to remember that variation in investment model subcomponent scores lead to different possible outcomes. The model is additive, meaning that if one of the commitment dimensions is weak, the others can compensate, and commitment can be maintained. From the results of the two studies at hand, what is noteworthy is that the measures combined demonstrate an increase in partner commitment after nostalgia when conflict is high.

It is not immediately clear why the current nostalgia manipulation produced many significant effects compared to the positive but not ordinary control condition, but sample differences could account for this. While not tested in the current studies, Study 1 participants in the nostalgic condition could have felt *more* nostalgia versus Study 2 participants, leading them to more strongly reject the idea of partner alternatives. Or, Study 2 participants could have been in more conflictual relationships, implying that the nostalgia prime was not strong enough for the later sample. Including a personally-relevant prime might also be valuable, as there was a tendency for individuals in the positive and ordinary control conditions to write about romantic past events, many of them bordering on nostalgic. This is not surprising, given that the study was limited to persons in romantic relationships, and the study began by priming partner conflict.

As hypothesized, both studies showed commitment was enhanced for persons in high-conflict relationships when they engaged in nostalgia for their shared past. This provides further evidence for nostalgia as a useful resource to overcome struggles and promote romantic relationships' persistence. This is an improvement on Swets and Cox's (2020) and Mallory et al.'s (2018) work, which measured relationship-nostalgia proneness as a trait rather than a manipulated state. This is also a useful extension of past work that has considered the highly

social nature of nostalgic memories. For example, Abeyta and colleagues (2015) found that the dimensions of nostalgia that are highly social (e.g., enhanced social goal strivings) are associated with relationship-focused outcomes. From an investment model standpoint then, commitment -- the intent to continue in a close relationship -- should be an outcome of nostalgia, even when conflict is high. What is interesting, however, is that commitment may be affected by nostalgia, yet not all of its components are. This possibility prompts reiteration of the idea that, although satisfaction, investment, and alternative quality contribute to a sense of commitment, they are all conceptually distinct. Future work with a similar paradigm could prompt participants to recall a nostalgic moment specifically pertaining to commitment -- a time when they felt strongly linked to or oriented toward a long-term attachment with their partner.

Investment does not appear to be altered by thoughts of a shared romantic past. One possibility is that investment might be too past-focused and less likely to be malleable (e.g., "I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end"), as opposed to the more present- or future-oriented components of satisfaction, alternative quality, and commitment. On the other hand, some research has re-conceptualized the idea of relationship investment: Spending time and resources on a relationship, whether it is intrinsic (e.g., shared time, emotional intimacy) or extrinsic (e.g., children, marital status), may feel more like barriers to leaving the relationship, as opposed to motivation to remain in it (e.g., Rodrigues & Lopes, 2015). If this is the case, then thinking fondly or meaningfully about the relationship's past may not necessarily alter perceptions of investment. Furthermore, past research has found that the highly social emotion of nostalgia augments social goal striving and affiliative desire (Abeyta et al., 2015; Wildschut et al., 2006). Perhaps, the concept of "investment" is too self-oriented (e.g., "I feel very involved in our relationship"). In other words, its nature is not

sufficiently social or relationship-oriented, as it focuses on the past actions of one individual. However, the failure of nostalgia to impact perceived relationship investment does not lessen its ability to impact commitment or maintenance.

The second aim of this work was to examine carryover effects of commitment to maintenance behaviors. This was explored in Study 2, using first-stage moderated mediation to predict that as people become more committed to their partner, they should exhibit greater relationship maintenance behaviors (e.g., accommodation, interdependence). None of the moderated-mediation models in their totality were significant. This shows the abundant impact of conflict on relationship outcomes. The way couples view and resolve conflict is strongly associated with relationship outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment), which is related to likelihood of relationship termination (e.g., Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Rusbult, et al., 1982; Scott et al., 2013). The current work suggests that more substantial interventions may be required to overturn this. It is important to note, however, that the value of the index of moderated mediation is a quantification of the difference of effects *between* the given conditions. That is, it does not indicate that nostalgia is *not helpful* in reversing effects of conflict; it indicates that in the current study, participants in the nostalgia condition did not endorse maintenance behaviors significantly differently from participants in the other conditions. During actual conflict, however, couples use a number of methods to try to solve it (e.g., Haydon et al., 2017). A sentimental longing for the relationship's past may, in fact, be more beneficial than many of these methods, a question for future work.

There are some limitations to these studies that should be considered amid interpretations. One concern has to do with the generalizability of the findings. A portion of each sample were comprised of college-aged students, who do not represent the population at large.

Additionally, MTurk workers completed the study online, potentially reducing the quality of their responses. Gender and relationship differences were also found to affect the results, as samples in both studies consisted of a variety of relationship types, from casually dating to married for decades. This variation in sample could have produced unreliable results, which could be addressed in future work by focusing on one particular relationship type or recruiting a larger sample of participants to see if such variables continue to affect the findings. Statistically, as well, moderated mediation may not be the most accurate way to measure the interactions between these variables. Instead, as previously mentioned, using SEM might add beneficial insight. Specifically, multiple maintenance behavior/outcomes could be combined into a latent variable and measured simultaneously, and/or commitment could be measured as latent variable composed of satisfaction, investment, and alternative quality.

Even with the maintenance mechanisms tested herein, an inherent limitation is the use of self-report questionnaires, subject to socially desirable responding and other biases. These pro-relationship intentions can be tested in other ways. For example, Johnson and Rusbult (1989) showed participants online dating profiles of highly attractive, likable individuals; more committed participants devalued more attractive (vs. less attractive) profiles to a greater extent. Linguistic analysis can also be used as a proxy for feelings of partner interdependence. Agnew and colleagues (1998) found that greater commitment predicted more use of plural pronouns (e.g., we, us) in participants' open-ended descriptions about their relationships. Using a similar method, it would be interesting to test whether more (vs. less) committed couples used more plural nouns when asked to recall shared nostalgic memories. Another way to overcome the self-report limitations of the current studies, and to better understand the dyadic interplay of conflict, commitment, and a shared past, is to involve both partners. Some work has shown that people

read nostalgic narratives written by others, even the readers experience psychological benefits (Wildschut et al., 2018). In extension, preliminary data from our lab shows that reading nostalgic accounts written by a romantic partner boosts the reader's positive mood (Swets & Cox, 2020). Future work might see if reading a partner's narrative of ongoing conflict produces a sense of nostalgia, or if reading a nostalgic narrative enhances commitment or pro-relationship intentions. Similarly, having couples simultaneously engage in conflict and/or share romantic reverie (via videotaped conversation, e.g., Tran & Simpson, 2009) would provide insight into the consequences of these variables in real-time.

Despite these limitations, this work provides numerous directions for future research. In Study 2, the relationship maintenance mechanisms were based on past work demonstrating their validity of commitment aftereffects (e.g., Agnew et al., 1998; Etcheverry et al., 2013; Finkel et al., 2002). In addition to these outcomes of boosted partner commitment, there may be others that could also be tested in future work. Research has found that higher commitment predicts more positive attitudes toward one's sexual relationship (de Jong & Reis, 2015), lower risk of aggression (Slotter et al., 2012), and stronger mutual trust (Weiselquist et al., 1999). Another crucial dependent variable to study over time is relationship termination. According to the investment model, commitment is fundamental to relationship preservation; therefore, multiple exposures to nostalgia primes and tracking relationship longevity over time would be an invaluable supplement to this experimental research. Mallory and colleagues (2018) measured associations between relationship nostalgia and satisfaction over the course of 6 weeks, but they (a) did not find meaningful connections after 2 weeks, (b) did not measure commitment, and (c) did not report any differences between couples who did and did not stay together during this time (i.e., longevity). These are all points that could be addressed in future work using daily diary

and/or ecological momentary assessment (EMA) techniques, both of which have been used to probe the emotional complexity of nostalgia in a more ecologically valid way (Newman et al., 2020).

Future research should also consider additional moderators that affect the way people respond to relationship alternatives. One of these is attachment style: People high on attachment avoidance (vs. low) generally prefer more emotional distance in relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). As a result, these people experience greater attraction to relevant partner alternatives (Overall & Sibley, 2008), report more positive attitudes toward meeting other potential romantic interests, and are more likely to actually engage in infidelity (DeWall et al., 2011). Research on nostalgia, too, shows that the efficacy of nostalgic reverie often depends on attachment style. For example, work on personal nostalgia has shown that avoidant attachment actually decreases the attraction for personal connection (Abeyta et al., 2019), romantic relationship satisfaction among partnered individuals, and single people's desire for a relationship (Juhl et al., 2012). Finally, nostalgia for past sexual experiences is neither helpful nor common for avoidant individuals (Muise et al., 2020). Given the highly social nature of nostalgia, it makes sense that more avoidantly-attached people may not benefit as much from a nostalgic approach to their close relationships. Future work should examine how attachment style may help or hinder people from garnering the benefits of relationship nostalgia.

Other moderating variables could be also be acknowledged when studying romantic nostalgia, as past research has revealed personality and contextual factors that vary people's responses to nostalgia. One such variable is continuity. Personal nostalgia increases self-continuity -- a sense of connectedness between one's past, present, and future, which is beneficial for the self (e.g., Sedikides et al., 2015). Building on this idea, Iyer and Jetten (2011)

primed undergraduates with identity continuity (feeling like "very much the same people as they were back at home") or discontinuity (feeling like "very different people at university") before recalling nostalgic memories. Students primed to think about nostalgic times as discontinuous reported greater perceived obstacles, less interest in new activities, and more sadness about being away from home. This pattern may translate into romantic partner-centered nostalgia. If intimate partners view memories of their past as significantly different from (and better than) their present, retrieving these memories may cause more harm than good. Therefore, more work should determine the effects of framing relationship nostalgia as continuous versus not.

Population-level differences should also be considered. In the two current studies, controlling for demographic variables did not significantly alter the main outcomes, but it would still be useful to tailor this research to specific populations. For example, literature from an investment model perspective has shown that among cohabiting gay men, satisfaction and investment positively predicted commitment, yet these effects were suppressed by heightened internalized homophobia (Greene & Britton, 2015). Slightly differently, Lehmiller and Agnew (2006) found that persons in marginalized (e.g., same-sex, interracial, age-gap) relationships reported less investment in their partnerships relative to non-marginalized, but they reported even higher commitment due to attenuated evaluations of partner alternatives. In the nostalgia literature, however, there is little knowledge about how it may function for marginalized, understudied groups like LGBT, ethnic-minority, or low-socioeconomic status couples. The social disapproval and struggles that these individuals face could be partially eased internally by using shared nostalgia as a resource.

Overall, research has elaborated on nostalgia as a social emotion – one that is heavily influenced by social relationships and goals. As well, nostalgia has shown to be an effective

rehabilitator to counteract psychological threats, ranging from boredom to existential concerns of meaningless and death (see e.g., Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018 for a review). The outcomes of these two studies add to the growing literature on nostalgia. In particular, they pair with those of Abeyta and colleagues (2015), who demonstrated explicitly the social-motivational aspects of a sentimental longing for the past. In those studies, a nostalgia prime caused participants to report greater optimism to resolve an imagined conflict with a close friend. The studies at hand are similar in that a nostalgia prime caused participants to report a greater intent to persist with their partner, especially when relationship struggles were salient. Little work has examined how a sentimental longing for the past can actually apply in specific domains, especially in intimate relationships, but it is a beneficial tactic. However, much more research is needed to understand what other relationship factors are important to study from a nostalgia perspective and how they can be implemented.

Likewise, the two current studies add to the body of literature on Rusbult's (1980; 1983) investment model. Specifically, results suggest that commitment is a key outcome of recalling nostalgic memories, which is substantial, given that committing to a relationship is what makes it last. Unfortunately, the maintenance behaviors included here (accommodation, etc.) were not clear outcomes of heightened nostalgia. As previously discussed, these null results were hindered by the extreme negative effect of conflict. Returning to earlier investment model research is also informative here. Agnew and colleagues (1998), in studying how interdependence is an outcome of increased commitment, argued that the process of the investment model is cyclical and develops over time – that is, for example, satisfaction may increase commitment, which drives relationship maintenance, which in turn influences future investment, and so on. And, this process is inherently dyadic, in that persons express more relationship-benefitting activities to

the extent that their partners reciprocate (Wieselquist et al., 1999). Nostalgia has the potential to be an accessible, constantly developing resource for partnerships – as they persist, the repository of sentimental memories grows. Despite decades of research highlighting the importance of commitment in relationships, little research has examined methods to actually improve it, at least in the experimental psychology literature. Relationship-centered nostalgia can be one of these methods. Results of the current studies necessitate future work that seeks to combine nostalgia and investment model processes and explore how they function cooperatively over time.

In sum, these two studies offer results congruent with past work on nostalgia, demonstrating its effectiveness as a resource for interpersonal struggles in a romantic environment. The findings also add to knowledge about the investment model of commitment to suggest a practical way to improve the likelihood of a partnership's persistence. Whereas it may not affect immediate evaluations of satisfaction or past investments, it buffers relationship struggles to boost commitment and maintain a sense of partner interdependence and positivity. As previously suggested by Mallory and colleagues (2018), relationship-centered nostalgia may be an important, bond-promoting resource for romantic couples who face significant conflict. Using nostalgia, romantic couples may call on their shared past to nurture their future.

Appendix A: Materials

Relationship Conflict Scale (Studies 1-2; Gordon & Chen, 2016)

7-point Likert-type scale 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*)

1. My partner and I have a lot of disagreements.
2. I feel like all my partner and I do is fight.
3. There is a lot of conflict in my relationship.
4. I am often irritated by my partner.
5. My partner and I are always in agreement on major issues. (R)
6. It is rare that my partner and I get in a big argument. (R)

Investment Model Scale (Studies 1-2; Rusbult et al., 1998)

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your current relationship.

9-point Likert-type scale: 0 (*Do not agree at all*) to 8 (*Agree completely*)

Satisfaction

a) I feel satisfied with our relationship

b) My relationship is much better than others' relationships.

c) My relationship is close to ideal.

d) Our relationship makes me very happy.

e) Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

Quality of Alternatives

a) The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved are very appealing

b) My alternatives to our relationship are close to ideal (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.

c) If I weren't dating my partner, I would do fine-I would find another appealing person to date.

d) My alternatives are attractive to me (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.

e) My needs for intimacy, companionship, etc., could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship

Investment Size

a) I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end

b) Many aspects of my life have become linked to my partner (recreational activities, etc.), and I would lose all of this if we were to break up.

c) I feel very involved in our relationship-like I have put a great deal into it

d) My relationships with friends and family members would be complicated if my partner and I were to break up (e.g., partner is friends with people I care about).

e) Compared to other people I know, I have invested a great deal in my relationship with my partner.

Commitment

1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.

2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.

3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.

4. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.

5. I feel very attached to our relationship-very strongly linked to my partner.

6. I want our relationship to last forever.

7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

Accommodation Scale (Study 2; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986)

9-point Likert-type scale: 1 = *never do this;* 9 = *always do this*

Exit

1. If I become unhappy with my partner, I will consider breaking up.
2. If I become angry at my partner, I will probably talk to him/her about breaking up.
3. If we face serious problems in our relationship, I will probably take action to end the relationship.
4. If I get irritated with my partner, I will think about ending our relationship.
5. If we face problems, I will discuss ending our relationship.
6. If things go really poorly between us, I will likely do things to drive my partner away.
7. If I become dissatisfied with our relationship, I will consider dating other people.

Voice

1. If my partner says or does things I don't like, I will talk to him/her about what's upsetting me.
2. If my partner and I have problems, I will discuss things with him/her.
3. If I am unhappy with my partner, I will tell him/her what's bothering me.
4. If things aren't going well between us, I will likely suggest changing things in the relationship in order to solve the problem.
5. If my partner and I get angry with one another, I will suggest a compromise solution.
6. If we have an argument, I will work things out with my partner right away.
7. If we have serious problems in our relationship, I will consider getting advice from someone else (friends, parents, minister, or counselor).

Loyalty

1. If we face problems in our relationship, I will patiently wait for things to improve.
2. If I'm upset about something in our relationship, I will wait awhile before saying anything to see if things will improve on their own.
3. If my partner hurts me, I will probably say nothing and simply forgive him/her.
4. If my partner and I get angry with each other, I will give things some time to cool off on their own rather than take action.
5. If I learn things about my partner that I don't like, I will accept his/her faults and weaknesses and won’t try to change him/her.

6. If my partner is inconsiderate, I will give him/her the benefit of the doubt and forget about it.
7. If we have troubles, no matter how bad things get, I will be loyal to my partner.

Neglect

1. If I become upset with my partner, I will probably sulk rather than confront the issue.
2. If I'm really bothered about something my partner is doing, I will likely criticize him/her for things that are unrelated to the real problem.
3. If I get upset with my partner, I will probably ignore him/her for awhile.
4. If I get really angry, I will treat my partner badly (for example, by ignoring him/her or saying cruel things).
5. If we have a problem in our relationship, I will ignore the whole thing and forget about it.
6. If I get angry at my partner, I'll spend less time with him/her (for example, spend more time with my friends, watch a lot of television, work longer hours, etc.).
7. If my partner and I have problems, I will refuse to talk to him/her about it.

Forgiveness Measure (Study 2; Finkel et al., 2002; Cheung et al., 2016)

9 point Likert scale: 0 = *not at all likely to react this way*; 8 = *extremely likely to react this way*

1. Your partner talks to friends about private issues in your relationship.

I would tell my partner that it will take a long time to make it up to me. (E)

I would calmly tell my partner why I'd prefer that our private life remain private. (V)

I would assume that my partner probably didn't mean to expose our private life. (L)

I would dwell on how angry I feel, but wouldn't talk to my partner about it. (N)

2. Your partner makes fun of you when you talk about your deepest fears.

I would assume that my partner must feel very uncomfortable about the issue underlying my fears. (L)

I would imagine ways to obtain revenge in the future. (N)

I would make fun of my partner at the next available opportunity. (E)

I would talk about how important it is that we understand each other's weaknesses. (V)

3. Your partner becomes sexually intimate with another person.

I would retaliate, becoming sexually intimate with someone myself. (E)

I would imagine breaking up because there are "other fish in the sea." (N)

I would suggest that we have a positive talk about sexual monogamy. (V)

I would remind myself that in general, my partner treats me very well. (L)

4. Your partner deliberately says something that hurts you badly.

I would ask my partner why he/she had hurt my feelings. (V)

I would say something equally mean right back to my partner. (E)

I would try to understand that my partner may not have intended to hurt me. (L)

I would give my partner the cold shoulder for awhile. (N)

5. Your partner tells friends about an embarrassing secret from your past.

I would imagine ways to get revenge. (N)

I would yell at my partner not to do that again. (E)

I would assume that my partner didn't mean to embarrass me in front of friends. (L)

I would nicely explain that I'd prefer that we keep embarrassing events to ourselves. (V)

6. Your partner forgets your birthday.

I would calmly remind my partner that it's my birthday. (V)

I would keep my anger bottled up inside me. (N)

I would assume that my partner would eventually remember. (L)

I would consider ending the relationship. (E)

7. You find out that your partner kissed someone else at a party.

I would understand that things got out of hand, and that my partner behaved in a very unusual manner on that occasion. (L)

I would yell at my partner about how horrible he/she has behaved. (E)

I would tell my partner I'm glad things didn't go further than "just kissing." (V)

I would feel irritated at my partner for awhile. (N)

8. Your partner fails to support you when you're really upset.

I would recognize that my partner's life is busy, and deal with the situation myself. (L)

I would decide to quit supporting my partner so much in the future. (N)

I would ask if my partner is upset about something, and whether that caused him/her to let me down. (V)

I would tell my partner I'm going to cut off the relationship unless things improve fast. (E)

9. Your partner flirts with a classmate.

I would insist that my partner apologize to me over and over again. (E)

I would suggest that we go out to dinner and have a constructive talk about flirting. (V)

I would recognize that I sometimes flirt, so I shouldn't be too hard on my partner. (L)

I would behave in a cold manner toward my partner for awhile. (N)

10. Your partner lies to you about something important.

I would feel angry that my partner can't be honest with me. (N)

I would tell my partner that I'd like us to try and resolve the situation. (V)

I would try to understand the situation from my partner's point of view. (L)

I would come up with ways to get even with my partner. (E)

11. In a disagreement with a third person, your partner takes the other person's side.

I would quit arguing, but would feel angry that my partner didn't take my side. (N)

I would imagine that my partner has strong feelings about this issue, because usually he/she is on my side. (L)

I would do the same thing to my partner the next chance I had. (E)

I would exert extra effort to understand my partner's perspective on the issue at hand. (V)

12. Your partner says something bad about you behind your back.

I would feel so irritated that I wouldn't be able to deal with the situation. (N)

I would forgive my partner because I've done similar things in the past. (L)

I would tell my partner that I hope we can work out this problem. (V)

I would get even by saying bad things about my partner behind his/her back. (E)

Note. E = exit; N = neglect; L = loyalty; V = voice

Willingness to Sacrifice (Study 2; Van Lange et al., 1997)

Please list the three parts of your life--the three activities, relationships, etc.--that are most important to you other than your romantic relationship.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Imagine that it was not possible to engage in Activity 1 [Activity 2; 3] and maintain your relationship (impossible for reasons unrelated to your partner's needs or wishes; that is, it wasn't your partner's fault). To what extent would you consider giving up Activity 1 [2; 3]?

9-point Likert-type scale: 0 (*Definitely would not consider giving up activity*); 4 *(Might consider giving up activity*); 8 (*Would definitely consider giving up activity*)

Relationship-Specific Optimism (Study 2; Neff & Geers; 2013)

7-point Likert-type scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*)

I expect that…

1. My partner and I will always communicate well.
2. My partner will always be interested in how my day went.
3. My partner will always be attractive to me.
4. My sexual relationship with my partner will always be satisfying.
5. My partner and I will always be able to resolve our disagreements.
6. My partner will never intentionally hurt me.
7. My partner and I will always agree about family issues.
8. My partner will always be affectionate.

Quality of Relationship Alternatives (Study 2; Rydell, McConnell, & Bringle, 2004)

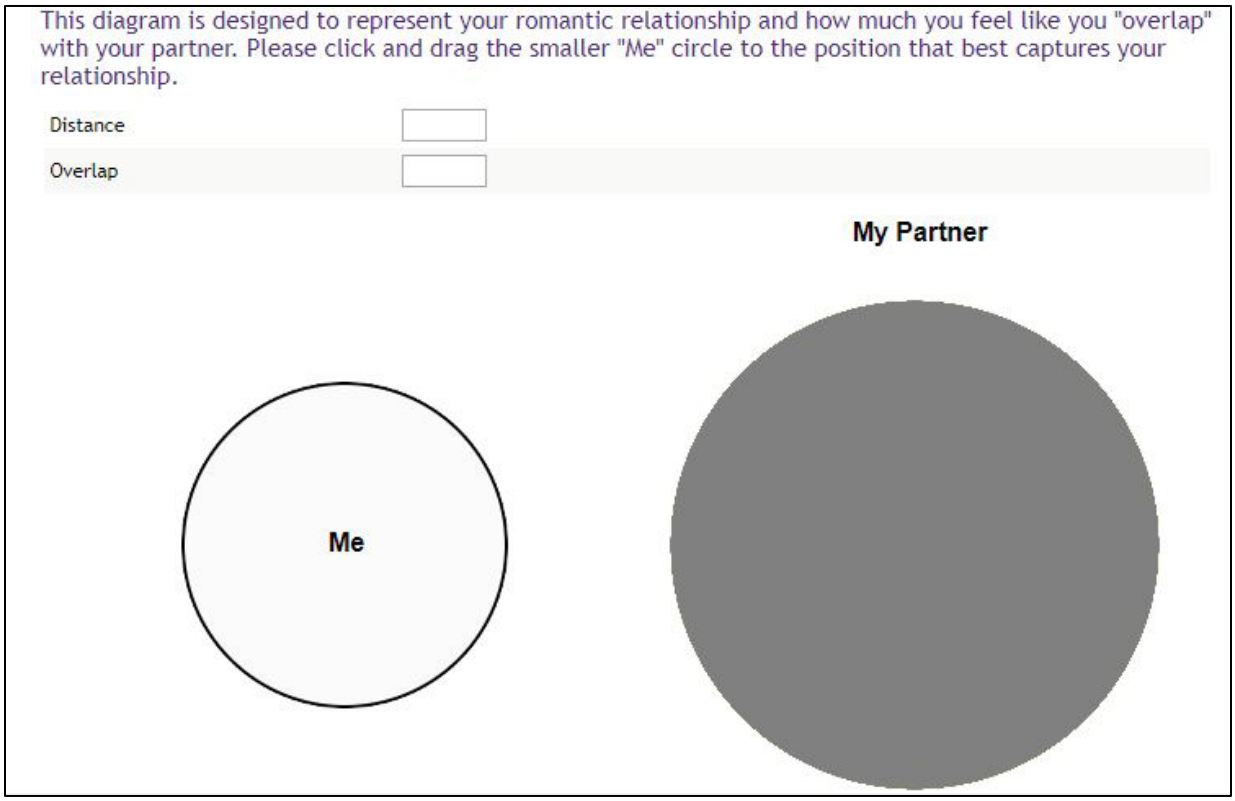
Instructions: “Imagine that you are dating your ideal romantic relationship partner (but not your current partner). This person epitomizes everything that you have been looking for in a partner. This partner could be real or fictitious, what is important is that they are the person you feel would be the best partner for you in a romantic relationship. They would be perfect for you in every way.”

7-point Likert-type scale: 0 = *not at all likely*; 6 = *extremely likely*

1. I would be interested in dating this person.
2. I would leave my current partner for this person.
3. I would find this person to be very attractive.
4. I would like to connect with this person.
5. I wish I could date this person in real life.
6. I wish I could meet this person in real life.

Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Study 2; Cognitive Interdependence; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

This diagram is designed to represent your romantic relationship and how much you feel like you "overlap" with your partner. Please click and drag the smaller "Me" circle to the position that best captures your relationship.



"We-ness" Scale (Study 2; Cognitive Interdependence; Cialdini et al., 1997)

To what extent would you use the term "WE" to characterize your relationship with your partner?

(0 = *not at all*; 100 = *very much so*)

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VITA

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ABSTRACT

RELATIONSHIP-CENTERED NOSTALGIA AIDS COMMITMENT AND MAINTENANCE WITHIN CONFLICTUAL ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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Nostalgia – a sentimental longing for the past – increases well-being, especially in response to psychological imbalance, such as meaninglessness or loneliness. Recent work has examined how nostalgia specifically for romantic partners (e.g., places visited together, intimate experiences) has positive implications for these relationships. The two current studies explored whether relationship nostalgia buffers the effect of partner conflict on relationship commitment and maintenance. In Study 1, a relationship nostalgia writing prompt offset conflict to heighten commitment and reduce interest in alternatives (but with no significant effects on satisfaction or investment). In Study 2, first-stage moderated mediation models tested whether a nostalgia manipulation increased pro-relationship intentions (e.g., forgiveness, interdependence) as a function of commitment when conflict was high. Results were trending in the hypothesized direction, but there was insufficient evidence for moderated mediation. Nonetheless, the present results are useful in conceptualizing how nostalgia for a relationship's past may benefit partner commitment.