



# National nostalgia: A group-based emotion that benefits the in-group but hampers intergroup relations



Anouk Smeekes\*

ERCOMER, Utrecht University, Padualaan 14, P.O. Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 10 February 2015

Received in revised form 24 June 2015

Accepted 6 July 2015

### Keywords:

Group-based nostalgia

National identity

Prejudice

Ethnic

Essentialism

Continuity

## ABSTRACT

Social psychological research on nostalgia has mainly considered this emotion at the individual level rather than the group level. The current paper proposes that group-based nostalgia for the nation (i.e., national nostalgia) is likely to be related to a positive in-group orientation and a negative out-group orientation, because it fosters an exclusionary and essentialist sense of national identity that is based on ancestry and common descent (i.e., ethnic national identity). This prediction was tested in three survey studies. Study 1 was conducted among a broad sample of the native Dutch population, and demonstrated that national (and not personal) nostalgia is positively related to national in-group identification and out-group prejudice. Study 2 replicated the findings of Study 1 among a nationally representative sample of the native Dutch population, and provided support for the mediation by ethnic national identity. Study 3 replicated the findings of Study 2 and additionally demonstrated that national nostalgia positively predicts tendencies to protect national in-group identity, via a stronger sense of ethnic national identity. These findings demonstrate the potential of group-based nostalgia to have positive and negative consequences for group dynamics at the same time.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

In various Western European countries, public debates on immigration and cultural diversity have become increasingly nostalgic. Both right and left wing politicians have claimed that, as a consequence of the growing cultural and religious diversification of Western European societies, native majority members no longer feel at home in their country and neighborhoods and increasingly long for the good old days of when it was “just us” (Duyvendak, 2011). Scholars suggest that group-based nostalgia for the nation emerges in times of social change and transformation, and makes nationals more aware of the values and symbols that bind them as a national community (e.g., Boym, 2001; Hewison, 1987). However, as longing for the national past makes clear what constitutes a country’s unique cultural heritage, it also emphasizes how “we” are different from other groups. This means that while national nostalgia is likely to provide a sense of attachment to fellow national in-group members, it may mark group boundaries and hamper positive intergroup relations.

The current research examines the consequences of group-based nostalgia for the nation (i.e., national nostalgia) for group dynamics. Specifically, it is proposed that national nostalgia is likely to have positive consequences for the national in-group but negative consequences for the evaluation of immigrant out-groups. In social psychology, most work on nostalgia has

\* Fax: +31 30 253 4733.

E-mail address: [A.N.Smeekes@uu.nl](mailto:A.N.Smeekes@uu.nl)

focused on the individual level of analysis. That is, studies have looked at nostalgia that is experienced for things related to one's individual biography (i.e., personal nostalgia) and how this affects individual-level outcomes, such as self-esteem (Hepper, Ritchie, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2012) and social connectedness (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006). Recently, research by Wildschut, Bruder, Robertson, Tilburg, and Sedikides (2014) has introduced nostalgia as a group-level emotion (i.e., group-based nostalgia), and demonstrated that it has positive consequences for the in-group. Furthermore, other recent work by Smeekes, Verkuyten, and Martinovic (2014) has shown that national nostalgia has negative consequences for natives' acceptance of expressive rights for Muslim immigrants. The current research extends this work by examining how national nostalgia differentially affects in-group attachment and out-group prejudice, and whether these relationships can be explained by the endorsement of an exclusionary group identity representation.

### 1.1. Group-based nostalgia: a bittersweet group-level emotion

The nature of nostalgia (from the Greek words *nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing/suffering) has been the subject of much debate. While some scholars describe nostalgia as a predominantly negative emotion, characterized by feelings of loss and mourning for a past that no longer exists (e.g., Best & Nelson, 1985; Holbrook, 1993), others view it as primarily positive, typically involving happy memories of the past (Batcho, 1998; Davis, 1979; Sedikides, Wildschut, & Baden, 2004). Still others, including Frijda (2007), have described nostalgia as an ambivalent emotion, involving both positive and negative affect. According to Frijda (2007, pp. 87–88), nostalgia is: “a true bittersweet emotion: pain because of pleasures past, or pleasure because of pleasures that have gone. The pleasure is not full; the pain not pungent”. Research in social psychology confirms this ambivalent nature of nostalgia, by showing that, for lay persons, nostalgia most often involves fond memories of a certain time or person(s), for which they long or which they miss (Hepper et al., 2012). Although these and other findings (Wildschut et al., 2006) support the notion that nostalgia is affectively mixed, most research in social psychology has emphasized the positive aspects and consequences of nostalgia (for an overview see Batcho, 2013).

However, during the last few years studies have emerged showing that nostalgia may not always have positive implications for individual well-being. For instance, research in the context of life transitions, found that nostalgia had positive consequences to deal with present challenges when identity continuity was high, but had negative consequences for individual functioning when identity continuity was low (Iyer & Jetten, 2011). These scholars propose that when individuals feel that they are no longer connected to who they were in the past, a nostalgic longing for this past mainly serves as a painful reminder of the good things that are left behind, which hampers individual's capacity to move on and face current challenges. Yet, like most research in social psychology, this study focused on personal nostalgia and studied its consequences for individual level outcomes. More recently, studies emerged that studied the consequences of nostalgia for intergroup relations (Turner, Wildschut, & Sedikides, 2012; Turner, Wildschut, Sedikides, & Gheorghiu, 2013). These studies showed that nostalgia for an encounter with an out-group member improved attitudes towards this out-group. However, these studies focused on interpersonal nostalgia and did not look at the feelings of nostalgia that people may experience in relation to their in-group membership.

As people derive part of their sense of self from their memberships in groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), they can also experience emotions on behalf of their group membership. While there is an extensive body of research in social psychology on group-based emotions, such as guilt (e.g., Branscombe & Doosje, 2004), group-based nostalgia has been introduced in the field only recently (see Smeekes et al., 2014; Wildschut et al., 2014). Following the criteria for identifying a group-level emotion as postulated by intergroup emotions theory (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Mackie & Smith, 1998), Wildschut et al. (2014) showed that group-based nostalgia qualifies as a group-level emotion. Specifically, they found that group-based nostalgia can be differentiated from personal nostalgia and that it motivates and regulates positive attitudes and behaviors towards the in-group.

The current research builds on this line of work by examining how group-based nostalgia affects orientations towards the in-group as well as towards out-groups. Specifically, it focuses on group-based nostalgia for the nation (i.e., national nostalgia) among native majority members in the Netherlands. In line with earlier definitions of group-level emotions (Mackie et al., 2000) and group-based nostalgia (Wildschut et al., 2014), I define national nostalgia as the feelings of nostalgia that are experienced on the basis of one's national in-group membership. Specifically, I propose that in culturally diverse settings in Western Europe, the feeling of national nostalgia that is experienced by native majority members refers to a combined sense of loss and longing for their (fondly remembered) national homes of the past.

### 1.2. Group-based nostalgia, social categorization and moral community

Theoretical work on group-based nostalgia has proposed that it often emerges in times of social change and transition, because it serves to restore a sense of identity continuity (Boym, 2001; Davis, 1979; Hewison, 1987; Milligan, 2003). When the social environment changes, in-group members may get the feeling that they are losing their connection to “who we were” in the past, which results in a feeling of identity discontinuity. Social psychological research has shown that that identity discontinuity is associated with psychological discomfort and distress (e.g., Jetten, Haslam, Pugliese, Tonks, & Haslam, 2010), and that it forms an important psychological basis for both individual and collective identities (Sani, 2008; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2013, 2014). It is suggested that group-based nostalgia can repair this sense of identity discontinuity by creating a shared social identity to mend the lost one (Hewison, 1987; Milligan, 2003). Specifically, group-based nostalgia is proposed

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7323836>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7323836>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)