Research Article

Sentimentality and Nostalgia in Elderly People: Psychometric Properties of a New Questionnaire

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Abstract

A new questionnaire measuring sentimentality and nostalgia in elderly people was developed based on the scale Sentimentality from HEXACO Personality Inventory – Revised (Lee & Ashton, 2013), the scale Sentimentality from Psychological Inventory of Criminal-Thinking Styles (PICTS) (Walters, 2002; Walters & Geyer, 2005); the subscale Sentimentality from Temperament and Character Inventory-Revised (TCI-R) (Cloninger, Svrakic, & Przybeck, 1993). A sample of 121 Bulgarian elderly people was studied. The results revealed the importance of the past for the elderly people. The questionnaire had good psychometric properties. Four factors were extracted - Past emotions continue in the present; Nostalgia of the Past; Sentimental compensation; and One's past perceived by the others. Comparison of the average values on the factors divided into the number of the items in the factor indicated that nostalgia of the past was the most strongly expressed among the elderly people, followed by the experiences related to one's past perceived by the other people, past emotions continuing in the present, and the attempts for sentimental compensation of some past bad deeds.

Keywords: sentimentality, nostalgia, past, elderly people

Introduction

Sentimentality is a mental phenomenon that has been relatively neglected from the scientific and research point of view. Sentimentality could be identified semantically with sensitivity and emotionality (Sentimental, 2009; Sentimental, 2013). Sentiment untested by experience is sentimentality (Hamilton, 2008, p. 9). In the everyday life, the term "sentimentality" expresses mainly a positive attitude towards the past (Yaybob, 2008). The phrases like "I am very sentimental", "Don't be sentimental" are an unchanging part of oral speech related to the present and the past. Sentimentality has also a nostalgic aspect.

Nostalgic thoughts feature a person we are close to, a significant event or a place important to us. In addition, we play a starring role in our nostalgic scenes, although we are generally surrounded by family and friends. Nostalgia provides a link between our past and present selves — that is, nostalgia may provide us with a positive view of the past and this could help to give us a greater sense of continuity and meaning to our lives. Nostalgia is related to weeping, depression, but it has also some positive aspects, such as higher self-esteem and an increase in the feeling of being loved and protected by others. Nostalgia counteracts effects of loneliness, by increasing perceptions

of social support, but loneliness can trigger nostalgia. Nostalgia occurs in all cultures and among all age groups, especially among first year boarding students, immigrants, and in old age—elderly adults are especially vulnerable to social isolation and nostalgia may help them overcome feelings of loneliness (Association for Psychological Science, 2008).

Fiction also deals with sentimentality, but its focus is not especially on elderly people. The term "sentimental novel" is first applied to eighteenth century texts emphasizing feeling. Feeling is valued over reason and sentimental is used in the sense of sensibility. Sentimental fiction uses didactic authorial interventions. The emphasis is on inducing specific responses in the reader (these include psycho-physiological responses such as crying and a resolve to do cultural work for causes such as temperance, anti-slavery, female education, and labor rights); readers do not expect to be surprised, but to build the expected response (Horton, Taylor, Yu, & Xiang, 2006, p. 81).

Mental commitment to the past is typical for all age groups and for all individuals. Advance in age changes intensity with events of personal life as quantity and content. This process changes the attitude towards the self and the social reality. Leaning to re-estimate own life increases during the old age (Petrov, 1978). This re-estimation is not passive, neither partial. It is an active and purposeful activity aiming to harmonize personality and its surrounding. It forwards re-valorization (increase of worth) of personal experience, concordance of valuable norms with the life activities, and personal re-integration. In this sense, sentimentality is especially typical for the third age. As Gradev (1987) states, the elderly people estimate more realistically the past events. They soberly estimate in what degree these events have influenced on their life course and to what extent they had the possibility to act upon their progress.

Mental interaction with the past could be discussed in two aspects. On the one hand, the present exerts a kind of pressure on the past. The findings from a study reveal that about 70% of the subjects indicated that the past events that were very important for them had lost their initial importance (Gradev, 1987). A possible explanation proposed by the researcher was related to loss of initial emotional intensity and loss of pathos, passion, enthusiasm. The events turn pale also when some situations appear in the present requiring a full re-estimation of the past. Then the memories about the past are re-structured consciously and several facts and events that do not correspond to the new life concept are suppressed, turned out.

There is also another aspect of the interaction past-present (Gradev, 1987). The present life becomes a source of enrichment of the memories. People have immanent propensity to search an explanation for their important life events. In this way, sometimes unconsciously, some interpretations and estimations are imposed on a "pale" memory and the initial event becomes changed beyond recognition.

These interactions have a cognitive explanation. Idealization is a typical phenomenon for the elderly people (Madolev, 2007). They are more inclined to exaggerate and generally they exaggerate the beauty, harmony and elegance of the objects that they had perceived as younger. Parallel to this phenomenon, there is a trend to minimize the degree of expression of ugliness and unharmonious image. The mental picture is conservative manifesting a bias towards some images and their difficult change. The elderly people often have an unchanged mental picture of oneself and of their partner, instead of the changes coming with the years.

There are several specificities of memory. Elderly people's long-term memory is characterized by increased selectivity of its content. They remember such things that are interesting for them and that could be applied in their

life. This peculiarity permits them to maintain at high level their skills and abilities (Lerner, 1990). The elderly people forget faster the recent events than the past events happened a long time before. An old person could speak in details about some past events in his/her life, but s/he often forgets the recent events (Manev, 1982, p. 10).

The best developed kind of memory in elderly people is their autobiographic memory related to the particular situations long time ago in the past. They often reproduce some historic events better than youth, especially if they had participated in them (Birren, 1964; Ros, Latorre, & Serrano, 2009). Stoetzel (1963) indicates that for long-term memory the personal significance, importance of the content is crucial.

In this sense, sentiment could be provoked only by the events that are subjectively perceived as important and that bear positive store. According to Georgiev (2003), ones of the most emotionally coloured events in human life are graduating, creating of own family, childbirth, career success. It is logical to be supposed that nostalgia would be the strongest in relation to these life events. Remembering and experiencing again and again these events is a source of self-esteem and a factor for mental stabilization of personality.

Stamatov (2010) has a slightly different point of view. He also notices that people inherit from their past a lot of self-determinations that create them security and sense for being accepted. However, these self-determinations determine also their present life. In this case, a person takes the risk to fell into the pitfall of the past. The past could create impenetrability expressed in a tenacious inclination to return to the same fragments without understanding their uselessness. Continuous nostalgic regret for the past damages the hope for a better present. Past is transformed into "a lost paradise".

The study of elderly people' sentimentality and nostalgia is essential for revealing the importance of past for the present life in old age. The theoretical review indicated that sentimentality has been studied *as a dimension of Emotionality* in HEXACO model of personality (de Vries, Lee, & Ashton, 2008; Lee & Ashton, 2013), *as related to criminal thinking* (Boduszek & Hyland, 2012; Bulten, Nijman, & van der Staak, 2009; McCoy et al., 2006; Megreya, 2013; Palmer & Hollin, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Taxman, Rhodes, & Dumenci, 2011; Walters, 2002, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Walters & Geyer, 2005) *or as a part of human temperament* (Aluja, Blanch, Gallart, & Dolcet, 2010; Cloninger, Svrakic, & Przybeck, 1993; Etter, Pélissolo, Pomerleau, & De Saint-Hilaire, 2003; Hansenne, Delhez, & Cloninger, 2005; Kalinov, 2005; Kiss, 2005; Zhablenski, Kalinov, & Milanova, 2005).

The individuals characterized by sentimentality exhibit good empathy, compassion, and social acceptance (Hansenne, Delhez, & Cloninger, 2005, p. 48). The trait of sentimentality is associated positively with Big Five Agreeableness, because one has a positive opinion about oneself: honest, altruistic, cooperative, trustful, and sympathetic (Bulten, Nijman, & van der Staak, 2009, p. 46; de Vries, Lee, & Ashton, 2008, p. 142). Sentimentality is associated negatively with Psychopathy and callous affect (de Vries et al., 2008, pp. 149-150). Individuals with low reward dependence are characterised by low levels of sentimentality (van Berkel, 2009, p. 17). Technicians disdain sentimentality that they relate to emotional part of team-building (Pellerin, 2009, p. 14). Sentimentality does not correlate with emotional intelligence (Megreya, 2013, pp. 63, 65). There are even research findings that motivation to quit smoking is positively associated with sentimentality (Etter et al., 2003, p. 401).

Sentimentality could be expressed in compensating for past behaviors with good deeds (McCoy et al., 2006, p. 1174; Taxman et al., 2011, p. 177; Walters & Geyer, 2005, p. 255), good deeds to recompense past criminal acts and to offset depressing feelings about committed crime (Boduszek & Hyland, 2012, pp. 29-30). Sentimentality

is the attempt to atone for negative feelings following criminal behaviour by performing good deeds (Megreya, 2013, p. 57). Sentimentality is related to the belief that one is a 'good person', despite the destructive consequences caused by involvement in criminal behavior (Palmer & Hollin, 2003, p. 178, 2004a, p. 60); sense of being a 'nice guy' despite one's criminality, a lack of realistic views of the impact of one's own criminal behaviour on other people, and the belief that one is a good person despite the criminal behaviour (Bulten, Nijman, & van der Staak, 2009, pp. 38, 44). Sentimentality is related to willful hostility reflecting offenders' justifications for offending (Palmer & Hollin, 2004b, pp. 254, 259). Sentimentality is related with denial of harm (Walters, 2005, p. 274), with malevolence (Walters, 2007a, p. 186).

The males in the violent crimes against people score significantly higher on sentimentality when compared with males in the status offense group (McCoy et al., 2006, p. 1175). Sentimentality correlates with criminal history in females and it predicts females' recidivism and release outcome (Palmer & Hollin, 2003, p. 176, 2004a, p. 58; Walters, 2002, pp. 74, 83). No significant cross-cultural differences were found between English and American prisoners in their sentimentality (Palmer & Hollin, 2003, p. 184). Sentimentality in criminal thinking slightly decreases with age advance (Palmer & Hollin, 2003, p. 179), so some social-demographic differences in sentimentality should be expected.

The *aim* of the study was to be created a questionnaire measuring sentimentality and nostalgia in elderly people, because literature review did not reveal the existence of such a questionnaire. The existing questionnaires do not measure sentimentality related to the elderly people's past. No questionnaires measuring nostalgia were found. A new measure of sentimentality and nostalgia would enrich the existing methods for data collection and would permit more aspects of these phenomena to be studied among a special category of people who becomes bigger in number with the demographic processes of population's aging and pursuing the goal of stimulating well-being by means of the study of the factors that contribute to it in personal life.

The *hypothesis* was that the elderly people would be very sentimental and the past would be of big importance for their presence. The influence of the past is expected, because the research findings reveal that the attitudes of older people change in response to their personal experiences that supports the lifelong openness model of attitude change (Tyler & Schuller, 1991).

Method

A new original questionnaire measuring Sentimentality and Nostalgia in elderly people was created, based on three other questionnaires in order to be covered the different aspects of sentimentality and nostalgia related to the elderly people's life that were not measured by the existing questionnaires and scales. No other questionnaire was found whose focus was sentimentality and nostalgia in elderly people. Some already existing items were used or re-formulated to serve for the study purposes and to be understood better by the sample, as well as new eleven items were created. Item generation was the result not only from a creative process, but also from literature review and it was founded on the relevant properties of the existing questionnaires measuring different aspects of sentimentality.

One of the questionnaires used as a source of one item was HEXACO Personality Inventory – Revised (Lee & Ashton, 2013). Both forms with 100 items and 60 items were used. The answer scale was from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The items that related sentimentality more to empathy, feelings, compassion and helping behaviour were considered as not enough relevant for this study.

Item 10 from the new questionnaire (*In the past, I have remained unemotional even in situations where most people get very sentimental*) was constructed similar to the original reverse-coded item 59 from the form with 60 items (Ashton & Lee, 2009) that is the same as item 95 from the form with 100 items (*I remain unemotional even in situations where most people get very sentimental;* Lee & Ashton, 2004).

Another questionnaire that was used as a clue for item generation was Psychological Inventory of Criminal-Thinking Styles (PICTS). The answer scale was 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = uncertain; 4 = disagree (Walters, 2002, p. 75, 2005, pp. 282-283, 2007b, p. 72). The same scale, but reverse-coded was used in the new questionnaire. The authors strived to choose the possible minimum of degrees of answer to facilitate the elderly respondents. Item 11 from the new questionnaire (*I think that in a certain degree by means of good deeds now I could recompense my past negative acts*) was based on the description of Scale Sentimentality in PICTS (Boduszek & Hyland, 2012, pp. 29-30; McCoy et al., 2006, p. 1174; Walters & Geyer, 2005, p. 255).

The third questionnaire that was used as a basis for item generating in the new scale Sentimentality was Temperament and Character Inventory-Revised (TCI-R) (Hansenne, Delhez, & Cloninger, 2005). The subscale of Sentimentality is a part of Reward Dependence dimension of TCI (Cloninger, Svrakic, & Przybeck, 1993, p. 983). The items could be answered on a 5-point scale from 1 = definitely false to 5 = definitely true (van Berkel, 2009, pp. 28, 98). Item 12 from the new questionnaire (*I am more sentimental than most people*) was equivalent to item 31 from TCI (van Berkel, 2009, p. 100).

Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 (see Appendix) were created by the authors of the new questionnaire based on literature review on sentimentality and nostalgia.

Items 13 and 14 were suggested by one psychologist – expert in Developmental Psychology and Psychology of third age, when asked to estimate the content validity of the new questionnaire in order to be measured in more details the inclination to reveal own past to the other people, feelings regarding own past and own past evaluation.

Sample

121 elderly Bulgarians (age range: 60-92 years, *M* = 73, *SD* = 9) were studied in 2013, 44 (36.4%) men, 77 (63.6%) women. "Young elders" are people between 60–75 years old, and "the oldest old" are above 76 years old (Lambert-Shute & Fruhauf, 2011, p. 32). According to this typology, 70 (57.9%) of the participants were young elders, and the other 51 (42.1%) were in the age group of the oldest old.

The majority lived with their families (*n* = 62; 51.2%). The others lived alone (*n* = 39; 32.2%) or in institutions (*n* = 20; 16.6%). The biggest part lived in cities or towns (*n* = 103; 85.1%). A small part lived in villages (*n* = 18; 14.9%).

The sample consisted of personally acquaintances of the researchers, as well as volunteers to participate met down the streets of the towns, and the inhabitants of an institution for elderly people in Northern Bulgaria.

During data collection, one respondent asked what "sentimental" do mean (as reading item 12). The answer was that such a person got excited by a lot of experiences.

Results

Data were statistically processed by means of SPSS 16 using different statistical methods.

Item Properties

The coefficients of skewness and kurtosis of all items were in the range [-2; +2], in fact from -1.345 to 0.911.

The alternative 1 of the items 2, 6, 7, 13 was selected by less than 5% of the participants in the study. All of the items will keep their four alternatives of answer in order to be in the same item format.

The weak group had the scores 30-35. The strong group had the score 47-56. All the items had good discriminative power (see Table 1).

Table 1

Item Discriminative Power

Statistic	Item													
	q1	q2	q3	q4	q5	q6	q7	q8	q9	q10	q11	q12	q13	q14
Mann-Whitney U	20.5	263.5	59.5	115.5	138.5	198.5	33.0	65.5	35.0	327.5	390.0	462.0	332.0	203.5
p	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001

The past is very important for the elderly people, because the majority of them often thought about the past and considered the past as a source of pride and inspiration, a factor of big importance for the present feelings (see Table 2). In the same time, the participants preferred to hide some aspects of their past personal life, because everyone has a need for privacy and intimacy.

Table 2

Frequency of Agreement With the Items of the Scale Sentimentality and Nostalgia Related to the Past in Elderly People

Item	agree		uncertain		disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
3. I often think about the past.	105	86.7	10	8.3	6	5.0
7. I am proud of my past.	103	85.1	13	10.7	5	4.1
2. The past in a great degree determines my present and my future.	91	75.2	30	24.8	0	0.0
1. The past is very important for me.	89	73.6	24	19.8	8	6.6
6. I think that the biggest part of the important events in my life have happened in the past.	86	71.1	32	26.4	3	2.5
8. I would live again my life in the same way.	84	69.4	30	24.8	7	5.8
9. The past inspires me for the future.	82	67.8	27	22.3	12	9.9
5. The emotions related to the past are a big deal of my present feelings.	76	62.8	34	28.1	11	9.1
4. When I think about the past, I become full of positive emotions.	74	61.1	41	33.9	6	5.0
11. I think that in a certain degree by means of good deeds now I could recompense my past negative acts.	70	57.8	45	37.2	6	5.0
12. I am more sentimental than most people.	73	60.3	40	33.1	8	6.6
10. In the past, I have remained unemotional even in situations where most people get very sentimental.	68	56.2	43	35.5	10	8.3
14. I want the others to know my past	31	25.6	45	37.2	45	37.2
13. If the people know my past, they estimate me positively	3	2.5	74	61.1	44	36.4

Reliability and Norms of the Total Scale "Sentimentality and Nostalgia in Elderly People"

The reliability of the total scale was alpha = .871. Alpha would be .872 without item 10, but this increase was not big enough and there was no negative correlation between the items in the scale (see Table 3), so the item 10 would be kept in the scale.

Table 3

Mean, Minimum and Maximum Item Correlations in the Scale of Nostalgia and Sentimentality

	M	*Min*	*Max*
Inter-Item Correlations	.33	.06	.66

The total score on the scale varied from 30 to 56 (*M* = 42.09; *SD* = 7.75). High scores on Sentimentality and Nostalgia in elderly people mean that such a person is sentimental. S/he considers the past as very important, determining and inspiring the present and the future. S/he is disposed to think frequently about the past that is a source of positive emotions and proud, otherwise the past negative acts should be recompensed by the present good deeds, so one cannot be sure how the other people estimate own past.

Low scores on Sentimentality and Nostalgia in elderly people mean that such a person is not sentimental. S/he considers the past as not important enough for the present and the future. S/he thinks rarely about the past that is not a frequent source of the emotions in the present, including of positive emotions and proud. The opinion is that the past negative acts cannot be recompensed by the present good deeds, and one cannot live own life in the same way again, but there is no reason for shame from own past and the others probably estimate the person positively.

The elderly respondents with medium levels of sentimentality and nostalgia prevailed (59.5%), followed by the respondents with high (21.5%) and low (19.0%) levels ($\chi^2(2)$ = 37.41; *p* < .001).

Factor Analysis, Reliability and Norms of the Sub-Scales

Factor analysis was acceptable (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .698; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 808.528; *df* = 91; *p* < .001). Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation extracted four factors that explained together 67.10% of the variance of the variables. Each of them explained more than 10% of the variance of the variables.

Several items (8, 9, 4, 3, 7, 11, and 6) had high factor loads on more than one item, but they were distributed to the factor on which they had the highest factor load (see Table 4).

The first extracted factor explained 24.95% the variance of the variables. It included the items 5, 8, 9, 2, 4. Its alpha = .836. There was no negative correlation between the items in the factor. The minimum correlation between the items was .402. There was no item whose deletion would increase alpha of the scale. This factor could be named "Past emotions continue in the present" (*M* = 14.88; *SD* = 3.63). High scores mean that the past emotions are very persistent in the present. Low scores mean that the emotions related to the past are left in the past and they do not influence the present.

The second extracted factor explained 17.76% the variance of the variables. It included the items 1, 3, 10, 7. Its alpha = .754. There was no negative correlation between the items in the factor. The minimum correlation between

Table 4

Factor Loads of the Items on the Factors After Rotation

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
q5	**.850**	-.072	.126	.068
q8	**.730**	.301	.177	.034
q9	**.720**	.421	-.096	.030
q2	**.677**	.028	.176	.225
q4	**.659**	.319	.058	.214
q1	.207	**.835**	.150	.138
q3	.436	**.621**	.051	.136
q10	.021	**.612**	.020	.215
q7	.495	**.587**	.349	-.021
q12	.229	-.103	**.885**	.080
q11	-.092	.434	**.689**	.110
q6	.486	.205	**.545**	.093
q13	.120	.186	-.029	**.858**
q14	.191	.182	.257	**.778**

Note. Rotation converged in 6 iterations. Factor loadings > .50 are in boldface.

the items was .27. If item 10 is deleted, alpha of the scale would be .795, but this item will be kept in the scale in order to be included more items that cover different aspects of the studied phenomenon, and because increase in reliability coefficient would not be so high. This factor could be named "Nostalgia of the Past" (M = 12.49; SD = 2.73). High scores mean a high degree of nostalgia of the past (frequent thoughts about the past that is a source of proud after rational re-estimation of the past situations). Low scores mean a low degree of nostalgia of the past.

The third extracted factor explained 13.28% the variance of the variables. It included the items 12, 11, 6. Its alpha = .678. There was no negative correlation between the items in the factor. The minimum correlation between the items was .327. There was no item whose deletion would increase alpha of the scale. This factor could be named "Sentimental compensation" (M = 8.74; SD = 2.09). High scores mean a high degree of sentimentality in the sense that the important events had happened in the past and the feelings related to them are a cause for the present attempts to compensate for some past negative acts. Low scores mean a low degree of sentimental compensation.

The forth extracted factor explained 11.11% the variance of the variables. It included the items 13, 14. Its alpha = .685. The correlation between the items is .522. This factor could be named "My past perceived by the others" (M = 5.99; SD = 1.52). High scores mean that the participant does not know how the other people perceive his/her past. Average scores mean an existing own opinion about negative perception of the own past by the other people. Low scores mean an existing own opinion about positive perception of the own past by the other people.

Validity

Construct validity of the questionnaire will be checked by means of comparing the different sub-groups of the participants in the study for social-demographic differences in the results on the total score and the sub-scales.

There were a lot of significant positive correlations between the age, the total score and the scores on four factors (see Table 5). The increase in age was related to increase of nostalgia and sentimentality.

Table 5

Correlations Between the Age, the Total Score and the Scores on Four Factors

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	—					
2. Total score	.510**	—				
3. Past emotions continue in the present	.462**	.861**	—			
4. Nostalgia of the Past	.327**	.832**	.589**	—		
5. Sentimental compensation	.223*	.694**	.430**	.455**	—	
6. My past perceived by the others	.604**	.596**	.357**	.417**	.320**	—

*p < .05, two-tailed. **p < .01, two-tailed.

The young elders (*M* = 39.46; *SD* = 6.92) were less sentimental than the oldest old (*M* = 45.71; *SD* = 7.42; *t*(119) = 4.757; *p* < .001). The past emotions were more persistent in the present among the oldest old (*M* = 16.41; *SD* = 3.67) compared to the young elders (*M* = 13.76; *SD* = 3.18; *t*(98) = 4.152; *p* < .001). The oldest old (*M* = 13.16; *SD* = 2.71) feel more nostalgia than the young elders (*M* = 12; *SD* = 2.66; *t*(119) = 2.345; *p* = .021). The oldest old (*M* = 9.27; *SD* = 2.29) strived more for sentimental compensation of some past negative acts than the young elders (*M* = 8.34; *SD* = 1.85; *t*(93) = 2.393; *p* = .019). The young elders (*M* = 5.36; *SD* = 1.32) considered that other people had more positive perception of their own past compared to the oldest old group (*M* = 6.86; *SD* = 1.34; *t*(119) = 6.155; *p* < .001).

There were found some significant gender differences only in the first factor "Past emotions continue in the present" (see Table 6). Females were more critical than the males towards own past[i], but for the women, their emotions related to the past were left in the past and they did not influence their present[ii]. For the men, their past emotions were very persistent in the present.

Table 6

Gender Differences in Nostalgia and Sentimentality

Measure	Gender	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Total score	Men	44	43.84	7.52	1.898	119	.06
	Women	77	41.09	7.75			
Past emotions continue in the present	Men	44	16.59	3.36	4.194	119	<.001
	Women	77	13.90	3.42			
Nostalgia of the Past	Men	44	12.82	2.81	1.007	119	.316
	Women	77	12.30	2.69			
Sentimental compensation	Men	44	8.57	1.69	0.721	111	.472
	Women	77	8.83	2.29			
My past perceived by the others	Men	44	5.86	1.75	0.656	74	.514
	Women	77	6.06	1.38			

Note. Concerning the factors "Sentimental compensation" and "My past perceived by the others", Levene's test indicated unequal variances (*F* = 11.081, *p* = .001 and *F* = 5.015, *p* = .027 respectively for both factors). A t-test not assuming homogeneity of variance was computed for both factors.

The findings from another study revealed that females scored higher in Sentimentality (as a part of TCI) than males (Aluja et al., 2010, p. 398), but this scale measured sentimentality more as empathy, sensitivity and striving for help the others, making good for them (van Berkel, 2009). In accordance with the previous research findings

were the gender differences in the answers of the different items as a part of the present study. The women (*n* = 51; 63.3% of the women) more often than the men (*n* = 22; 50% of the men) agreed that they were more sentimental than most people ($\chi^2(3)$ = 15.88; *p* = .001).

No statistically significant differences were found between the participants living alone, with their families or in institutions in their Nostalgia and Sentimentality (see Table 7). However, the respondents who lived in some institutions for elderly people were too small in number.

Table 7

"Living With" Differences in Nostalgia and Sentimentality

Measure	Living	*n*	Mean rank	Kruskal Wallis H(2)	*p*
Total score	Alone	39	60.46	4.033	.133
	With family	62	56.85		
	In institutions	20	74.90		
Past emotions continue in the present	Alone	39	60.63	3.132	.209
	With family	62	57.33		
	In institutions	20	73.10		
Nostalgia of the Past	Alone	39	59.94	1.859	.395
	With family	62	58.59		
	In institutions	20	70.55		
Sentimental compensation	Alone	39	59.54	2.391	.303
	With family	62	58.42		
	In institutions	20	71.85		
My past perceived by the others	Alone	39	61.28	2.361	.307
	With family	62	57.58		
	In institutions	20	71.05		

Only respondents living with their family considered that if the other people knew their past, they would estimate them positively (*n* = 3, 4.8% of the 62 respondents living with family). 48.7% of the respondents living alone, 37.1% of the respondents living with family and 10% of the respondents living in institutions considered that if the other people knew their past, they would estimate them negatively ($\chi^2(6)$ = 14.09; *p* = .029).

No statistically significant differences were found between the participants living in towns or in villages in their Nostalgia and Sentimentality (see Table 8). However, the sample of subjects living in villages (*n* = 18) was too small.

Table 8

"Place of Living" Differences in Nostalgia and Sentimentality

Measure	Place	*n*	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	*p*
Total score	Town	103	62.03	6389.00	821.0	992.0	.439
	Village	18	55.11	992.00			
Past emotions continue in the present	Town	103	60.67	6248.50	892.5	624.8	.799
	Village	18	62.92	1132.50			
Nostalgia of the Past	Town	103	62.70	6458.50	751.5	922.5	.195
	Village	18	51.25	922.50			
Sentimental compensation	Town	103	62.35	6422.00	788.0	959.0	.304
	Village	18	53.28	959.00			
My past perceived by the others	Town	103	62.94	6483.00	727.0	898.0	.134
	Village	18	49.89	898.00			

Discussion

The new questionnaire has good psychometrical properties. The findings from its use contribute to enriching the knowledge about the factors that influence the elderly people's life.

The hypothesis was proved. The elderly people were very sentimental and the past was of big importance for their presence as they indicated in their answers to the items in the questionnaire.

A typical view of the elderly people is that their attitudes are mainly influenced by TV, because they are the most exposed to television (above 50 years old), especially to television news (Sears, 1981, pp. 198-199). The current research reveals the importance of past for the elderly people's present attitude and feelings.

Their sentimentality and nostalgia related to the past could be strengthen by the vulnerability from loss of social support, because they may lose their work companions through retirement and family and friend companions through death and mobility (Sears, 1981, pp. 198-199). Provision of instrumental and emotional support to others, and receipt of emotional support reduce the risk for mortality. Healthy adults who are well socially integrated (married, with close family and friends, belonging to social and religious groups) are more likely to still be living than their more isolated counterparts (Tay, Tan, Diener, & Gonzalez, 2013, p. 54). Lower affection predicts poorer quality of life in the elderly (Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010, p. 1041).

Research in the United States has found that married middle-aged and elderly people have better psychological well-being and quality partner relationships than the rest of elderly people (Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010, p. 1043). Older alone ill women are more likely to be taken care of by their children and other relatives (Kim, Choi, Chatterjee, & Kim, 2012, p. 388). Emotional intimacy with adult children of older parents is a crucial factor triggering social support for older parents (Kim et al., p. 376). Communication between elderly people and their families and friends often consists of sharing some memories about the past.

The results from this study confirmed the initial assumption about the place took by sentimentality and nostalgia in the elderly people's life. Their high values could be explained with the age specificity. The old age is a period related to a lot of deficits at all levels. Common involution of the organism is accompanied by some changes in

the mental status. They are due to the natural (humoral) processes related to the advance in age, as well as to the factors like ceasing of professional career, a drop in the life standard, a change in the social status, a role change, etc. The old age is related to the loss of a lot of close friends and relatives that reduces the possibilities for a direct emotional contact. This emotional contact is really important for the people from the third age who have been more and more looking for emotional support. This trend is especially expressed among the elderly people who live alone or in the social institutions (Gergov, 2011).

Age discrimination, prejudices and ageism reflect very negatively on the elderly people's mental life. The impossibility to be continued the labour activity, the stigma, the rude and mocking attitude make the old person perceive the old age as a trouble and undesired life period (Gergov & Asenova, 2012). Stigma related to the old age stimulates the personality to orientate one's thoughts at the better past.

In this way, social exclusion of the ageing person is facilitated. Left alone, the old person devotes oneself to the memories. They become a source of emotional experiences during the lack of the intensive emotions related to the present. The result is a fixation on the important positive past events. The past has been projected to some extent in the present and it is re-experienced again and again. A parallel reality is formed - the old person formally lives here and now, but mentally s/he lives in his/her past. An evidence for this conclusion gives the fact that the elderly people almost always speak affectionately and with enthusiasm about the past fragments of their life.

Another typical phenomenon for the old age is elaboration of a global life balance (Petrov, 1978). This is a process that requires retiring into oneself and re-estimation of all that is important from the past. If the result from this balance is not positive, then the person cannot achieve ego-integration and could desperate and lonely (Erikson, 1996). Namely loneliness is one of the possible explanations of the augmenting sentimentality and nostalgia with the advance in age. According to Association for Psychological Science (2008), nostalgia neutralizes the effects of loneliness by means of increasing the perceived social support, but loneliness could provoke nostalgia. In this sense, one unpublished recent research by Gergov specified increase of the feeling of loneliness with the age advance among the elderly. It could be expected that the more expressed loneliness in elderly people sets as a premise more nostalgia.

An existential explanation of the results from the study is also possible. The age advance changes the temporal prospective. A bigger part of the life road has been passed, so a relatively small part of it is left. The elderly people realize that they cannot live their life again and they cannot receive more from their life. Their time is expiring. A peculiar devaluation of the future at the expense of past is probable. The past consolidates a considerable part from the mental experiences.

In spite of inequality of the sample, there are only small in number statistically significant differences between the males and the females living in cities or in villages, alone, with their families or in institutions. These results indicate that sentimentality and nostalgia are some universal mental phenomena that are influenced in a small extent by the gender and environmental factors. Obviously, the elderly people have the abilities for estimation and integration of past experience into their present and future. Sentimentality and nostalgia take an important role in the elderly life and they contribute to revitalization of the mental status.

Notes

i) The women (n = 37; 48.1% of the women) more often than the men (n = 10; 22.7% of the men) disagreed that when they thought about the past, they became full of positive emotions ($\chi^2(3)$ = 10.15; p = .017). The women (n = 32; 41.6% of the women) more often than the men (n = 7; 15.9% of the men) disagreed that the past inspired them for the future ($\chi^2(3)$ = 12.54;

p = .006). The women (n = 31; 40.3% of the women) more often than the men (n = 6; 13.6% of the men) disagreed that they would live again their life in the same way (χ^2(3) = 17.52; p = .001). The women (n = 6; 7.8% of the women) more often than the men (n = 0 of the men) disagreed that in a certain degree by means of good deeds now they could recompense their past negative acts (χ^2(3) = 9.38; p = .025).

ii) The women (n = 39; 50.7% of the women) more often than the men (n = 6; 13.6% of the men) disagreed that the emotions related to the past were a big deal of their present feelings (χ^2(3) = 19.81; p < .001).

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Appendix

Questionnaire English Version (Questionnaire SNEP)

This questionnaire consists of several sentences concerning your attitude towards the past. Please, express the degree of your agreement with each statement by means of the scale:

4 – strongly agree; **3 – agree**; **2 – uncertain**; **1 – disagree**

Please, circle the selected answer of each statement. There are no wrong and correct answers. Please, express openly and sincerely your opinion. The research is anonymous.

1. The past is very important for me.	1	2	3	4
2. The past in a great degree determines my present and my future.	1	2	3	4
3. I often think about the past.	1	2	3	4
4. When I think about the past, I become full of positive emotions.	1	2	3	4
5. The emotions related to the past are a big deal of my present feelings.	1	2	3	4
6. I think that the biggest part of the important events in my life have happened in the past.	1	2	3	4
7. I am proud of my past.	1	2	3	4
8. I would live again my life in the same way.	1	2	3	4
9. The past inspires me for the future.	1	2	3	4
10. In the past, I have remained unemotional even in situations where most people get very sentimental.	1	2	3	4
11. I think that in a certain degree by means of good deeds now I could recompense my past negative acts.	1	2	3	4
12. I am more sentimental than most people.	1	2	3	4

13. If the people know your past, they estimate you:

   a positively – coded 1
   b I am not sure – coded 2
   c negatively – coded 3
   d the people do not know my past – coded 4

14. Do you want the others to know your past:

   a yes, there is no reason for shame – coded 1
   b only several things from my life – coded 2
   c no – coded 3
   d I am not sure – coded 4

Gender:
    male
    female

Age:

Who do you live with?
    alone
    with my family
    in an institution

Place of living:

Questionnaire Bulgarian Version (Въпросник СНСХ)

Инструкция: Въпросникът се състои от твърдения, касаещи Вашето отношение към миналото. За да оцените степента на Вашето съгласие или несъгласие с всяко от твърденията, използвайте следната скала:

4 – напълно съгласен; **3 – съгласен**; **2 – не съм сигурен**; **1 – несъгласен**

Оградете избрания от Вас отговор срещу номера на всяко твърдение. Няма правилни или неправилни отговори. Свободно и искрено изразявайте Вашето мнение. Изследването е анонимно.

	1	2	3	4
1. Миналото има голямо значение за мен.	1	2	3	4
2. Миналото в значителна степен предопределя настоящето и бъдещето ми.	1	2	3	4
3. Често се отдавам на размисли за миналото.	1	2	3	4
4. Когато мисля за миналото, се изпълвам с положителни емоции.	1	2	3	4
5. Емоциите, свързани с миналото, представляват голяма част от сегашните ми преживявания.	1	2	3	4
6. Смятам, че по-голяма част от значимите събития в живота ми принадлежат на миналото.	1	2	3	4
7. Гордея се с миналото си.	1	2	3	4
8. Бих изживял живота си по същия начин.	1	2	3	4
9. Миналото ме изпълва с вдъхновение за бъдещето.	1	2	3	4
10. В миналото съм оставал равнодушен дори в ситуации, където повечето хора са много емоционални.	1	2	3	4
11. Мисля, че в някаква степен посредством добри дела сега мога да компенсирам мои предишни лоши постъпки.	1	2	3	4
12. По-сантиментален съм от повечето хора.	1	2	3	4

13. Знаейки миналото Ви, хората Ви преценяват:

    а положително – кодирани 1
    б не съм сигурен – кодирани 2
    в отрицателно – кодирани 3
    г не са осведомени за миналото ми – кодирани 4

14. Желаете ли другите да знаят за миналото Ви:

а да, няма от какво да се срамувам – кодирани 1
б само за някои неща от живота ми – кодирани 2
б не – кодирани 3
в не съм сигурен – кодирани 4

Пол:
   мъж
   жена

Възраст:

С кого живеете:
   сам
   със семейството си
   в институция

Населено място:

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