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### The Effects of Stock Photos on Autobiographical Memories of Physically and Emotionally Painful Experiences

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# The Effects of Stock Photos on Autobiographical Memories of Physically and Emotionally Painful Experiences

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## Introduction

Previous research has demonstrated that memories and beliefs of autobiographical experiences may be subject to bias by multiple factors, including photos (Blandón-Gitlin & Gerkens, 2010, Henkel, 2011, Lindsay, Hagen, Read, Wade, & Garry, 2004, Wade, Garry, Read, & Lindsay, 2002). There is little research to date on memories of physically and emotionally painful experiences and their potential susceptibility for similar biases.

The aim of the current study was to investigate how the presentation of stock photos that portray physically and emotionally painful experiences may impact memories of previously experienced events. We were looking at whether images may influence the way that participants rate the severity of their experiences.

Our hypothesis was that the participants would be more likely to rate their previous experience as being more severe when they were exposed to images depicting more intense experiences (negative) rather than milder experiences (positive).

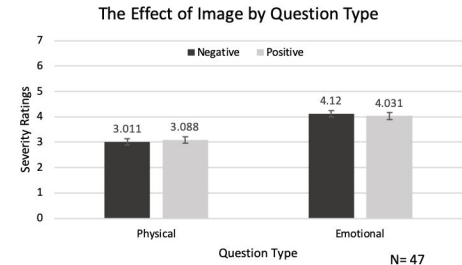
## Methods

The experiment was presented as a survey on Qualtrics. The order of the question type- physical and emotional -were randomized and the questions were randomized within each block. The 52 experiences that we used were chosen based on their frequency and severity as determined by a pilot study. Half of each question type were presented with negative and positive images, this was also counterbalanced. N=47

## Stimuli

	Negative Condition	Positive Condition
<b>Physically Painful</b>	 How severe was the pain you experienced the last time you had a shot? 1= Not at all 7= Very Severe	 How severe was the pain you experienced the last time you had a shot? 1= Not at all 7= Very Severe
<b>Emotionally Painful</b>	 How upset were you the last time you experienced an argument with a friend? 1= Not at all 7= Extremely Upset	 How upset were you the last time you experienced an argument with a friend? 1= Not at all 7= Extremely Upset

## Results



There was a main effect found for question type, ( $p < 0.001$ ) but there was no main effect of photo or interaction, ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## Conclusion

We failed to find support for our main hypothesis that photos would influence the way that participants rated the severity of painful events. This should be interpreted with caution due to low power. As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, we were unable to conduct this experiment in the laboratory under controlled conditions. The study was completed online which precipitated the small sample size and non-optimal testing conditions (e.g., multitasking or images and questions were not presented at the same time). Excluding such participants, results in a low sample size,  $n=19$ . Greater experimental control and a larger sample size would be necessary for future work.

## References

Blandón-Gitlin, I. & Gerkens, D. (2010). The effects of photographs and event plausibility in creating false beliefs. *Acta Psychologica*, 135, 330-334.  
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