

ARTICLE

Collective UK nostalgia predicts a desire to leave the European Union

Jack Loughnane¹  | Jenny Roth¹ | Wijnand van Tilburg²¹University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland²University of Essex, Colchester, UK**Correspondence**

Jack Loughnane, Centre for Social Issues
Research, Department of Psychology, University
of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland.
Email: jack.loughnane@ul.ie

Funding information

Irish Research Council

Abstract

Collective nostalgia is an emotion experienced when one sentimentally recalls events or things related to a particular social identity. We investigated the relationship between collective nostalgia about the United Kingdom (UK) and UK citizens' desire to leave the European Union (EU). We collected data of UK citizens twice prior to the UK's official withdrawal from the European Union ($N=347$ and $N=240$) and once afterwards ($N=236$). Cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis, utilizing cross-lagged panel models, supported the hypothesis that collective UK nostalgia increased the desire to leave the European Union. We additionally hypothesized that the relationship between these variables would be mediated positively by ties to UK citizens and negatively by ties to EU citizens. Exploratory and longitudinal analysis, however, indicated that strength of ties to UK and EU citizens predicts levels of collective UK nostalgia which, in turn, predicts desire to leave the European Union. Specifically, ties to UK citizens were associated with increased collective nostalgia and a desire to leave the EU and ties to EU citizens were associated with reduced collective nostalgia and a desire to re-join the European Union. We discuss the implications of the findings as well as making suggestions for future studies.

KEYWORDS

Brexit, group attitudes, nostalgia, social identification, voting

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2024 The Authors. *British Journal of Social Psychology* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of British Psychological Society.

BACKGROUND

The United Kingdom's (UK) decision to withdraw from the European Union (EU) is one of the most dramatic moments in European democratic politics in the past decade. The slight majority 'Leave' vote coincided with the rise of right-wing populist conservatism across the world (Sandrin, 2021). Popular media have proposed the idea that rises in right-wing populist ideas are due to a collective longing for past times. A 2018 edition of *The Economist* reported that right-wing populism is driven by an 'orgy of reminiscence', while Campanella and Dassù (2019) similarly observed an 'epidemic of nostalgia' in which 'yesterday is associated with progress; tomorrow with stasis or regression'. In relation to the Brexit referendum, prominent Leave voter Nigel Farage campaigned on the slogan 'we want our country back' and in his first address to parliament as prime minister, Boris Johnson echoed this sentiment by stating that he would deliver Brexit and 'make Britain great again'. Since nationalist politics animated the campaigns for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (Wellings, 2021), it may be the case that many leave voters longed for a return to a time when it was 'just us' (Duyvendak, 2011). The present research aimed to empirically investigate whether collective nostalgia is driving the desire to leave the European Union.

Nostalgia – 'a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past' (Pearsall, 1998, p. 1266) – is a complex, self-relevant emotion involving high-level cognitive evaluations of the self and others (Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989; van Tilburg et al., 2018; Wildschut et al., 2006). Nostalgia experiences are characterized by both positive and negative sentiments, though, on balance, the positive ones outweigh the negative ones. A prototype analysis found that individuals perceive 'people and relationships' (friends, family and partners) as well as 'interpersonal elements or concepts' (belonging, cuddles, tender moments, warmth and love) as centrally defining features of nostalgia (Hepper et al., 2012). Additionally, research has found that the bulk of nostalgic referents are made up of close others and significant events involving close others (Wildschut et al., 2006). Resonating with these findings, people's lay conceptions of nostalgia and its cognitive appraisals resemble positive emotion (e.g. elation, joy, gratitude, self-compassion, pride, love, feeling loved) more than negative ones (Leunissen et al., 2021; van Tilburg et al., 2018; van Tilburg, Bruder, et al., 2019).

Research continues to emerge supporting the idea that nostalgic recollection of the past positively and powerfully affects how individuals perceive themselves (Leunissen et al., 2021). Nostalgia also affects how people feel about others, how connected they feel to others and how meaningful they perceive life to be (Maher et al., 2021; Routledge et al., 2012; Sedikides et al., 2008). As opposed to being a mere description of the past, nostalgia allows individuals to engage reflectively on the relationship between how their past was and how their present is (Stephan et al., 2012; Wildschut et al., 2011), fostering a sense of self-continuity between past and present selves (Sedikides et al., 2008, 2015; van Tilburg, Sedikides, et al., 2019). In so doing, nostalgia allows the individual to assimilate past sources of meaning, positive affect, social connectedness and other boons to well-being into the present self (Leunissen et al., 2021; Routledge et al., 2012; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019). In other words, nostalgia weaponizes cherished elements of the past to self-regulate in the present (Cheung et al., 2020; van Tilburg, 2023; Wildschut & Sedikides, 2023).

Collective nostalgia

A distinction is made in research between personal and collective nostalgia. Personal nostalgia refers to cases where one waxes nostalgic about events experienced as a unique individual. Collective nostalgia involves recalling events experienced with one's peers (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019). While personally nostalgic events may also (and indeed typically do) feature others (e.g. a past birthday celebration), the corresponding past events are primarily relevant to the individual self. This is different from collective nostalgia, which revolves around one's experience with an ingroup (e.g. a national celebration). Nostalgia, both personal and collective, aids self-regulation (Cheung et al., 2020; Wildschut & Sedikides, 2023). For personal nostalgia, this self-regulatory function appears mostly beneficial by counteracting loneliness, re-establishing self-continuity and buffering or mitigating against existential

threats (Sedikides et al., 2015; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018; van Tilburg et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2022). It has also been theorized that collective nostalgia serves a regulatory purpose, and one especially dedicated to the self in group context, specifically, to restore a sense of identity continuity. As such, it emerges in times of social change, social transition and displacement (Boym, 2001; Davis, 1979; Milligan, 2003). In line with the purpose of restoring identity continuity, collective nostalgia bolsters one's connection to a corresponding (in)group, evident from, for example, increased social identification (Wildschut et al., 2014). At the same time, it can cause derogation of outgroups; an issue that can be deeply problematic in context of collective nostalgia regarding national or ethnic groups.

As a case in point, Smeekes et al. (2015) found that collective nostalgia about a Dutch national history (but not personal nostalgia) predicted greater opposition to Muslim expressive rights among native (and presumably non-Muslim) Dutch individuals; an effect of collective nostalgia that could be attributed to these people's 'elevated belief in entitlements of the first inhabitants ('owners') of their country (p. 562). Consistently, Cheung et al. (2017) found that collective nostalgia among Hongkongers about the period of history in which Hong Kong had more political autonomy predicted anger, contempt and collective action towards the mainland Chinese outgroup. In addition, longitudinal research has shown that collective nostalgia about a national past predicts the desire to limit immigrant outgroups from being part of society (Smeekes et al., 2023). Overall, collective nostalgia drives a wedge between in- and outgroups by elevating the former and derogating the latter.

Collective UK nostalgia and Brexit voting

The evidence that collective nostalgia provides people with a sense of continuity may imply that people who are more nostalgic about their ingroup aim to resist change. In the context of the United Kingdom, those citizens who are nostalgic about the United Kingdom prior to EU membership may have felt the urge to reconnect to that past. Similarly, they may have aimed to distance themselves from the integration of the United Kingdom into the European Union because EU membership disconnects them from the time they are nostalgic about. Thus, for those UK citizens high in collective nostalgia, EU membership may have been perceived as a break with their ingroup's past. Previous research has, in fact, shown that people who perceive high continuity of their ingroup resist mergers with other groups (Jetten & Hutchison, 2011). Thus, for UK citizens', higher collective nostalgia may increase the wish to undo the break from their highly valued past. We, therefore, predicted that UK citizens' collective nostalgia drove a wish to leave the European Union. Specifically, we hypothesized that higher nostalgia is positively related to UK citizens' support of Brexit and thus, their current wish to leave the European Union. We also tested these relationships over time hypothesizing that higher nostalgia is driving people's wish to leave the European Union.

Nostalgia has been shown to be an overall positive emotion (Hepper et al., 2012). If people are nostalgic about their ingroup's past, then favourable feelings of the ingroup become salient. These salient positive group aspects may increase the ties to that group. In general, people strive to more strongly identify with ingroups that they perceive as positive (Tajfel et al., 1979). Previous research indeed found that collective national nostalgia is associated with higher national ingroup identification, higher approach tendencies towards ingroup members and increased out-group prejudice (Smeekes, 2015; Wildschut et al., 2014). The increased positivity of the social group brought by nostalgia may, thus, lead to stronger identification with that group. Similarly, the positive ingroup emotions brought by collective nostalgia may increase positive evaluations and approach intentions towards the group. In turn, the longing for the past implied in UK-based collective nostalgia may lead UK citizens to distance themselves from the European Union and thus, decrease EU identification, evaluations and approach tendencies. Thus, we hypothesized that collective UK nostalgia goes along with stronger ties to UK citizens and lower ties to EU citizens, as reflected in respective social identification, group evaluations and approach tendencies towards them, and that these indicators of group ties would, in part, explain the association between collective UK nostalgia and UK citizens' wish to leave the European Union.

Notably, previous research has shown that collective nostalgia is associated with political orientation (for a recent review, see Lammers, 2023), specifically Western conservatives experience stronger feelings of nostalgia for the past (Jost et al., 2018; Smeekes, 2015; Smeekes et al., 2023). Additionally, political orientation is associated with individual differences such as need for closure (Jost, 2017) and optimism (Schlenker et al., 2012). Since conservatives were more likely to vote leave than liberals (Zmigrod et al., 2018), we controlled for left–right political orientation, need for closure and optimism where possible in the analysis presented below to test our hypothesis that higher nostalgia predicts UK citizens' wish to leave the European Union. Since we did not collect these variables at Time 1, we instead controlled for which party participants would vote for in a future general election for Time 1 cross-sectional analyses.

METHOD

We pre-registered the hypotheses, sample size and exclusion criteria as well as the materials for the current research prior to data collection at Time 2 and Time 3 on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/vp6gs/?view_only=d8d4d7fde600462fac404b26b81cdc81, https://osf.io/wuch6/?view_only=db4ff93ef89e453f931c143cb0106917).¹ Data and code are also available (https://osf.io/42myv/?view_only=9a5f0ae87a16462f9939792c50068ed5).

Study design and participants

A slight majority of UK citizens voted to leave the European Union on the 23rd of June 2016. We collected data of UK citizens at three separate time points. We collected Time 1 data in January 2020 during the Brexit transition period. We collected Time 2 data in October 2020, shortly before the official withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, and Time 3 in January 2021, shortly after the official withdrawal. The first author's University research ethics committee granted ethical approval (ref: 2019_11_18_EHS).

We recruited UK citizens through the online participant recruitment platform Prolific.co. The invitation to take part stated that participants had to be a UK citizen with no other EU citizenships. A minimum of 200 participants are required to avoid a high rate of Type 1 error in structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis (Sideridis et al., 2014). To ensure 200 participants at Time 3, we aimed to recruit at least 400 participants at Time 1, allowing an attrition rate of up to 50%. The total sample at Time 1 comprised 421 participants. Only those participants who took part at Time 1 were invited to take part at subsequent time points. Of the 421 participants, 347 completed the entire questionnaire, met the pre-registered inclusion criteria of passing the attention check and indicated that they would vote either Remain or Leave in a hypothetical future Brexit referendum (70.9% female; mean age 35.29). At Time 2, a total of 240 respondents met these criteria (73.9% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.65$) and at Time 3, this sample was 236 (73.2% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 38.17$).

Measures

Collective UK nostalgia

We assessed collective UK nostalgia using five items adapted from Cheung et al. (2017) and Smeekes et al. (2015). Responses ranged from 1 = *Never* to 7 = *To a very large extent*. We prefaced items with the stem 'When thinking about the UK now, to what extent do you feel...'. The items were '...nostalgic about the

¹ We pre-registered hypothesis without accounting for the covariates but a reviewer made us aware that including the covariates is a better test of our hypothesis. Results without the covariates are the same and can be found in the [Supporting Information Appendix S1](#).

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations and within-subjects comparisons between time points.

	Time 1			Time 2			Time 3		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Nostalgia	3.31 ^a	1.79	.96	3.23 ^a	1.84	.96	3.17 ^a	1.73	.96
EU ID	4.73 ^a	1.26	.95	4.60 ^a	1.19	.94	4.58 ^a	1.16	.94
UK ID	4.99^a	1.28	.95	4.83^b	1.25	.96	4.79^b	1.29	.97
EU GE	5.25 ^a	0.90	.87	5.10 ^a	0.86	.89	5.14 ^a	0.79	.85
UK GE	4.79 ^a	0.97	.86	4.71 ^a	0.90	.89	4.75 ^a	0.89	.89
EU AT	5.67 ^a	0.98	.85	5.52 ^a	1.00	.87	5.51 ^a	1.05	.88
UK AT	5.51^a	1.09	.89	5.31^b	0.99	.86	5.26^b	1.07	.87
PO	–	–	–	4.07^a	2.17	–	3.90^b	2.06	–
NFC	–	–	–	5.97	1.17	.83	5.98	1.16	.82
Optimism	–	–	–	4.05^a	1.33	.91	4.20^b	1.39	.95

Note: PO, NFC and Optimism were only assessed at Time 2 and Time 3. ^{a,b}Within a row indicates mean scores differ significantly ($p < .05$).

Bold indicates that variables differ significantly over time. Complete within-subject analysis is in the [Supporting Information](#).

Abbreviations: AT, Approach Tendencies; GE, Group Evaluations; ID, Social Identification; NFC, Need For Closure; PO, Political Orientation.

way that the UK people were in the past', 'nostalgic about the values UK people had in the past', 'nostalgic about the way UK society was in the past', 'nostalgic about the UK of old', 'nostalgic about the sort of place the UK was before 1973². Higher scores indicate greater collective UK nostalgia. A within-subjects ANOVA indicated no significant difference in nostalgia scores between time points. Table 1 contains means, standard deviations, alpha levels and indication of statistical significance between time points.

Desire to leave the EU

We asked participants how they would vote in a hypothetical future Brexit referendum and had four response options 'Leave', 'Remain', 'Undecided' and 'Would not vote'. To test the current hypotheses, we only analysed the data of those participants who responded 'Leave' or 'Remain' at each time point. Table 2 displays participant's desire to leave the European Union at each time point. Chi-square analysis indicated no significant change in voting patterns.

Group ties

We assessed three indicators of participants' ties to UK citizens and EU citizens; social identification, trait-based group evaluations and approach tendencies towards the groups with all items assessed on 7-point rating scales. Table 1 contains all means, standard deviations, alpha levels and indication of statistical significance between time points.

Social identification

We assessed identification with EU citizens and UK citizens each using nine items that capture the breadth of social identification (Leach et al., 2008; for example, 'I feel solidarity with UK/EU citizens'). All social identification items were presented in random order. We calculated mean scores for EU identification and UK identification with higher scores representing stronger identification with the

²The UK joined the European Communities, which later became the European Union in 1973.

TABLE 2 Desire to leave the European Union.

Future Brexit vote	Leave	Remain
Time 1	80 (23.1%)	267 (76.9%)
Time 2	52 (21.7%)	188 (78.3%)
Time 3	63 (26.7%)	173 (73.3%)

Note: A Chi-square analysis revealed no significant difference between Brexit voting patterns at each of the three time points, $\chi^2(2, N = 823) = 1.80, p = .407$.

respective social group. Within-subjects ANOVA indicated no significant difference between EU identification scores between time points. UK identification significantly reduced over time.

Group evaluations

We assessed evaluations of the groups (Turner et al., 2012) using three positive (good, pleasant and warm) and three negative (bad, unpleasant and cold) adjectives that participants rated for both EU citizens and UK citizens. Items were presented in random order and negative items were reverse scored. We calculated mean scores for evaluations of EU citizens and UK citizens with higher scores indicating more positive group evaluations. Within-subjects ANOVA indicated no significant difference between EU group evaluation scores or UK trait rating scores between time points.

Approach tendencies

We assessed approach tendencies towards the groups with six items (see Turner et al., 2012; Wildschut et al., 2014). Participants were asked to rate their reactions towards EU and UK citizens (e.g. 'I want to talk to them'). The order in which participants reacted towards each group was randomized and items were presented in random order. Mean scores were calculated for approach tendencies towards EU citizens and UK citizens. Higher scores indicate more positive approach tendencies. Within-subjects ANOVA indicated no significant difference between EU approach tendencies scores between time points. UK approach tendencies scores significantly reduced over time.

Covariates

We also measured several likely predictors of Brexit voting intentions at Time 2 and Time 3 that we included as covariates in the analyses.

Left–right political orientation

We assessed political orientation using a single-item measure. Participants were asked 'How would you position yourself concerning political orientation on a scale from left to right'. Response options ranged from 1 = *most left* to 10 = *most right*.

Need for closure

We assessed the need for closure using six items (taken from Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). An example of an item is 'When I have made a decision, I feel relieved'. All items were scored on a 7-point scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. Mean scores were calculated. Higher scores indicate greater need for closure.

Optimism

We assessed the need for optimism using the revised life orientation test (LOT-R) of Scheier et al. (1994). An example of an item is 'In uncertain times, I usually expect the best'. All items were scored on a 7-point scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. Negatively polarized scores were reverse coded and mean scores were calculated. Higher scores indicate higher levels of optimism.

TABLE 3 Future general election vote Time 1.

	<i>n</i>	%
Conservative	65	18.7
Labour	150	43.2
Scottish National Party	22	6.3
Liberal Democrats	26	7.5
Plaid Cymru	0	0.0
Other	22	6.3
Undecided	57	16.4
Would not vote	5	1.4

Future general election vote

We asked participants to indicate which political party they intend to vote for at the next general election. They had the option to select *Conservative*, *Labour*, *Scottish National Party*, *Liberal Democrats*, *Plaid Cymru*, *Other*, *Undecided* or *Would not vote* (Table 3).

RESULTS

First, we present cross-sectional analyses for each time point before we present longitudinal findings.

Cross-sectional analysis

To test our main hypothesis, we conducted correlation analysis between nostalgia and desire to leave the European Union at each time point. This correlation analysis included each of the relevant control variables. Supporting our main hypothesis, higher levels of UK nostalgia were associated with a greater likelihood to vote *Leave* (vs. *Remain*) should another Brexit referendum be held in the future. This main finding held true across all three time points. Table 4 presents correlations between all variables at Times 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

Mediations

To test our second hypothesis, whether UK citizen's ties to the United Kingdom and the European Union mediated the association between UK nostalgia and how they would vote should a future Brexit referendum be held, we conducted parallel mediation analyses (Figure 1) using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017). The indirect effects were tested using 10,000 bootstrapped estimates. Continuous variables were mean-centred. Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented. In the mediation models presented below for Time 1, we controlled for which party participants indicated they would vote for in a future general election and at Time 2 and Time 3 analyses, we included left–right political orientation, need for closure and optimism as control variables. Though we only present the main variables of interest below, the effects of the control variables can be found in the Supporting Information.

Parallel mediation through group ties

In line with hypotheses, UK collective nostalgia was significantly positively associated with UK group ties, with the exception of group evaluations at Time 1 and Time 3. Also, in line with hypotheses, UK

TABLE 4 Correlations between all variables at Times 1, 2 and 3.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Nostalgia								
	-.23**							
2. EU ID	-.18*							
	-.31**							
	.30**	.06						
3. UK ID	.29**	.19**						
	.46**	.09						
	-.16**	.51**	.02					
4. EU GE	-.18**	.49**	.12					
	-.15*	.50**	.09					
	.08	.14**	.54**	.50**				
5. UK GE	.07	.20**	.49**	.56**				
	.15*	.26**	.52**	.52**				
	-.19**	.71**	.05	.54**	.17*			
6. EU AT	-.17**	.69**	.17**	.48**	.28**			
	-.35**	.71**	.06	.53**	.20**			
	.23**	.11	.75**	.10*	.53**	.32**		
7. UK AT	.17*	.14*	.64**	.20**	.44**	.43**		
	.24**	.14*	.69**	.17*	.55**	.30**		
	.40**	-.43**	.43**	-.24**	.10	-.35**	.15*	
8. Desire to leave the EU	.27**	-.36**	.10	-.28**	.07	-.38**	-.07	
	.55**	-.43**	.35**	-.22**	.10	-.43**	.14*	

Note: As desire to leave the European Union was a dichotomous variable with: 0 = Remain; 1 = Leave, for all correlations with this variable, Spearman's Rho coefficients are reported. Times 1, 2 and 3 time points are represented in respective lines, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Abbreviations: AT, Approach Tendencies; GE, Group Evaluations; ID, Social Identification.

collective nostalgia was significantly negatively associated with EU group ties, with the sole exception of group evaluations at Time 3. In turn, UK group ties were associated with an increased likelihood to vote Leave (except for group evaluations and approach tendencies at Time 2), and EU group ties were associated with an increased likelihood to vote Remain. Consistently across all three time points, the parallel mediation results indicated that EU group ties (except the mediation through group evaluations at Time 3) mediated the relationship between collective UK nostalgia and the desire to Leave the European Union. The mediations through UK citizens were less consistent. The 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects through both UK group ties and EU group ties are summarized in Table 5. The total and direct effects of UK nostalgia on desire to leave the EU as well as the direct effects between each of the variables in the parallel mediation models are summarized in Figure 1.

Interim summary

The results described so far consistently support our main hypotheses. Higher UK collective nostalgia was associated with an increased likelihood that participants would vote to Leave the European Union in a future Brexit referendum. In support of our second hypothesis, this relationship is at least partially explained by ties to UK citizens and EU citizens.

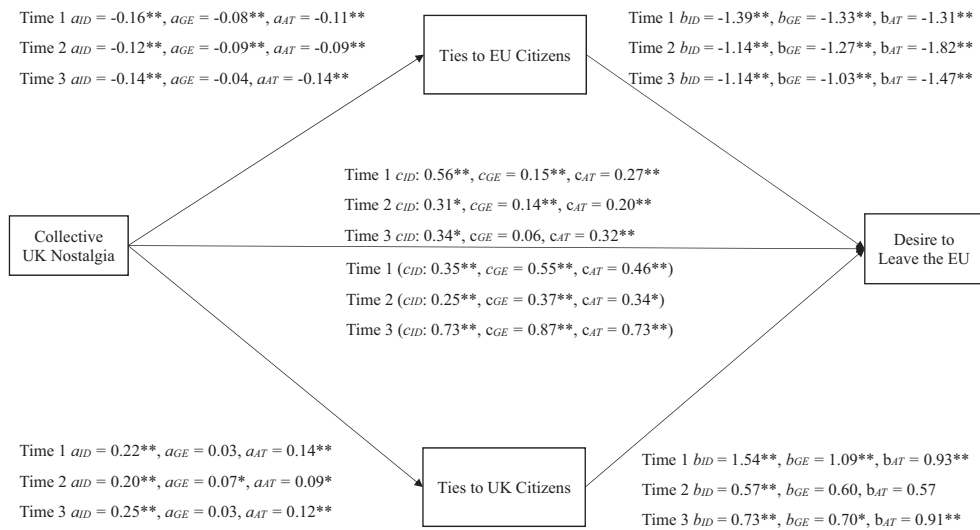


FIGURE 1 Parallel mediation models of the relationship between collective UK nostalgia and desire to leave the European Union via ties to UK citizens and ties to EU citizens (subscripts represent different tie measures; AT, Approach Tendencies; GE, Group Evaluations and ID, Social Identification); $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$. Desire to leave the EU Coding: 0 = Remain; 1 = Leave.

TABLE 5 Indirect effects of parallel mediation models presented in Figure 1.

	Mediators	Indirect effect via UK ties	Indirect effect via EU ties
Time 1	ID	$b = 0.31$, $SE = 0.09$, CI [0.18 to 0.52]	$b = 0.22$, $SE = 0.07$, CI [0.11 to 0.39]
	GE	$b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.04$, CI [-0.02 to 0.13]	$b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.05$, CI [0.03 to 0.22]
	AT	$b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.05$, CI [0.05 to 0.22]	$b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.05$, CI [0.05 to 0.25]
Time 2	ID	$b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.07$, CI [0.02 to 0.28]	$b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.07$, CI [0.03 to 0.31]
	GE	$b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.03$, CI [-0.03 to 0.11]	$b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.06$, CI [0.02 to 0.28]
	AT	$b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.05$, CI [-0.01 to 0.18]	$b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.08$, CI [0.03 to 0.33]
Time 3	ID	$b = 0.18$, $SE = 0.11$, CI [0.02 to 0.43]	$b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.08$, CI [0.04 to 0.35]
	GE	$b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.04$, CI [-0.04 to 0.11]	$b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.05$, CI [-0.03 to 0.16]
	AT	$b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.08$, CI [0.02 to 0.33]	$b = 0.21$, $SE = 0.11$, CI [0.07 to 0.50]

Note: Unstandardized indirect effects. Boldface indicates indirect effects that are significant based on 95% bias corrected confidence intervals. Abbreviations: AT, Approach Tendencies; GE, Group Evaluations; ID, Social Identification.

However, a potential alternative explanation is that people with stronger ties to the United Kingdom develop greater nostalgia for how the United Kingdom used to be and this, in turn, is related to a greater desire to leave the EU. Conversely, those participants with stronger ties to EU citizens may show reduced levels of nostalgia for how the United Kingdom used to be and in turn show a greater desire to remain within the European Union. To explore this alternative, plausible explanation of the relationship between these variables, we ran mediation models in which the predictor variable and mediators are reversed. This is in line with Fiedler et al.'s (2018) guidelines for best practice in assessing cross-sectional mediation models. Though we hypothesized a causal relationship whereby collective UK nostalgia predicted group ties which, in turn, predicted desire to leave the European Union, the reverse causality in which group ties predict nostalgia could be possible.

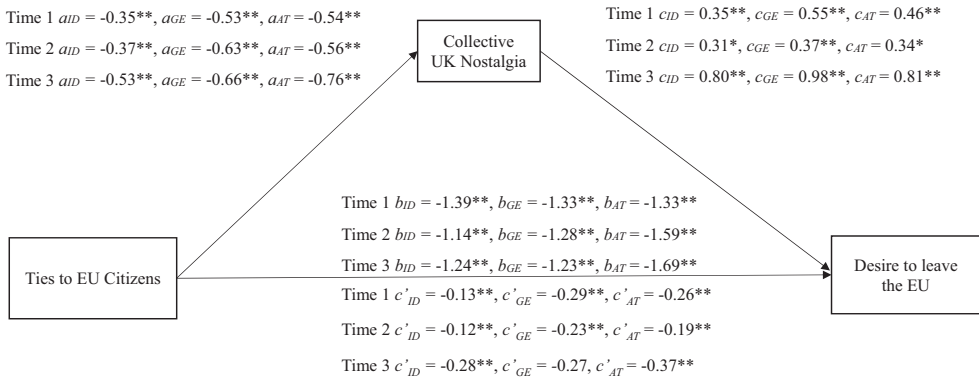


FIGURE 2 The mediation models of the relationship between ties to EU citizens (subscripts represent different tie measures; AT, Approach Tendencies; GE, Group Evaluations and ID, Social Identification) and desire to leave the European Union via collective UK nostalgia; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Future Vote Coding: 0 = Remain; 1 = Leave.

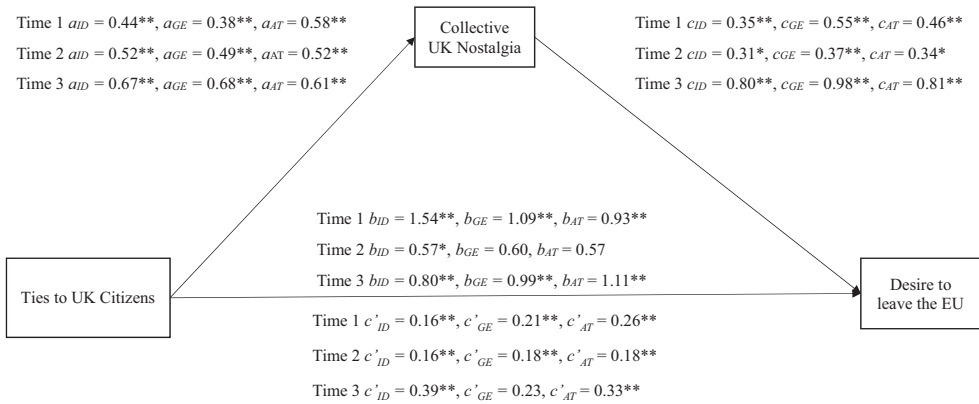


FIGURE 3 The mediation models of the relationship between ties to UK citizens (subscripts represent different tie measures; AT, Approach Tendencies; GE, Group Evaluations and ID, Social Identification) and desire to leave the European Union via collective UK nostalgia; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Future Vote Coding: 0 = Remain; 1 = Leave.

Exploratory analyses

We tested the alternative model in which EU and UK ties were the predictor variables, and collective UK nostalgia was the mediator at each of the three time points. Desire to leave the European Union remained the outcome variable and we again included voting in a future general election as a control variable at Time 1 and left–right political orientation, need for closure and optimism at Time 2 and Time 3. The findings of these models are summarized in Figures 2 and 3. Figure 2 presents the findings from the mediation model including ties to EU citizens, controlling for ties to UK citizens. Figure 3 presents the findings from the mediation model with ties to the UK citizens as the predictor variable, controlling for ties to EU citizens. Both models were tested with PROCESS.³

Most direct effects in these models were significant (except for group evaluations and approach tendencies of UK citizens on voting intentions at Time 2). Additionally, 16 of the 18 indirect effects tested were significant. Thus, the plausible competing model where group ties are driving

³For each model, we conducted a simple mediation with the respective indicator for EU ties as the predictor and the respective indicator for UK ties as a covariate and vice versa. This allowed us to obtain indirect effects for each model and all the relevant direct effects.

UK nostalgia which, in turn, explains the desire to leave the EU is as least as well supported as our hypothesized model that suggested that UK nostalgia is driving group ties (in this previously tested hypothesized model, 13 out of 18 indirect effects were significant). To further explore whether group ties drive UK nostalgia or vice versa, we tested the relationships between the variables over time utilizing cross-lagged panel models.

Longitudinal analysis

The cross-sectional data analysis consistently supported our hypothesis that stronger UK nostalgia goes along with a higher likelihood that participants would vote to leave the European Union in a future Brexit referendum, and this holds true when controlling for indicators and correlates of political ideology. However, the cross-sectional analysis does not provide any information about whether, as hypothesized, UK nostalgia is driving UK citizen's wish to leave the European Union or vice versa. Furthermore, cross-sectional data analysis supported our hypothesized mediation model that UK nostalgia affects desire to leave the European Union via group ties to both UK and EU citizens. However, data also (and more consistently) supported a mediation model where group ties are driving UK nostalgia which, in turn, explains desire to leave the European Union. Therefore, we conducted cross-lagged panel model analyses to investigate the relationship between UK collective nostalgia, UK ties and EU ties and desire to leave the EU over time, to help understand the directionality of the relationships between the variables. For these analyses, we employed weighted least squares mean and variance estimation in R using the Lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012). Three separate cross-lagged panel models were conducted, one including identification measures, one including group evaluation measures and one including approach tendencies measures. To assist the interpretation of each of the models, the paths from Time 1 to Time 2 were constrained to be equal to the corresponding paths from Time 2 to Time 3.⁴ Like the cross-sectional analyses, we included left-right political orientation, need for closure and optimism measured at Time 2 and Time 3 in the cross-lagged panel models. To maintain easy interpretation of the findings, these control variables are omitted from the figures presented below. Effects of the control variables can be found in the [Supporting Information](#).

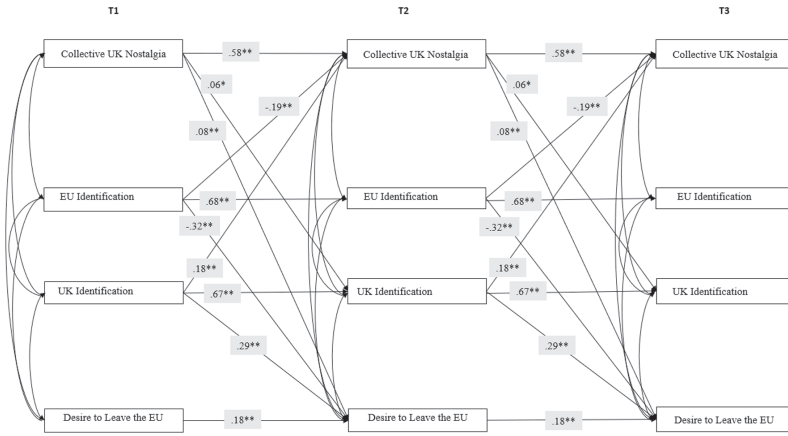
Each of these three cross-lagged panel models showed good fit to the data, social identification: $\chi^2(52) = 49.14, p = .587, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000, SRMR = .041$ (see [Figure 4a](#))⁵; group evaluations: $\chi^2(52) = 54.93, p = .364, CFI = .999, RMSEA = .017, SRMR = .048$ (see [Figure 4b](#)); approach tendencies: $\chi^2(52) = 56.40, p = .314, CFI = .999, RMSEA = .021, SRMR = .055$ (see [Figure 4c](#)). In line with our main hypothesis, in each of the models, collective UK nostalgia predicted the desire to leave the European Union ($b = -0.06, p < .001$).

Effects of collective nostalgia on ties to UK citizens were inconsistent (social identification: $b = 0.06, p = .009$; group evaluations: $b = 0.03, p = .162$; approach tendencies: $b = -0.03, p = .479$). Collective UK nostalgia did not predict ties to EU citizens (social identification: $b = -0.01, p = .625$; group evaluations: $b = 0.03, p = .162$; approach tendencies: $b = -0.03, p = .479$).

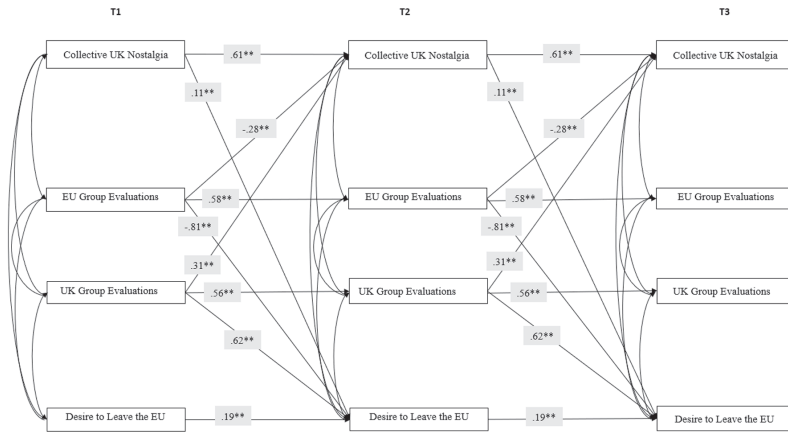
FIGURE 4 Full longitudinal bidirectional model with identification with EU citizens and identification with UK citizens (Panel a), respective evaluations (Panel b) and respective approach tendencies (Panel c). All models with paths from Time 1 to Time 2 are constrained to be equal to paths from Time 2 to Time 3. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Straight lines in the figure indicate significant relationships; lines are omitted when relationships did not reach the $p < .05$ statistical significance level. Desire to leave the EU Coding: 0 = Remain; 1 = Leave.

⁴We conducted cross-lagged panel models with the mediators constrained to be equal also in an attempt to reduce the number of effects to be reported; however, these models differed significantly from the unconstrained models (see [Supporting Information](#)).

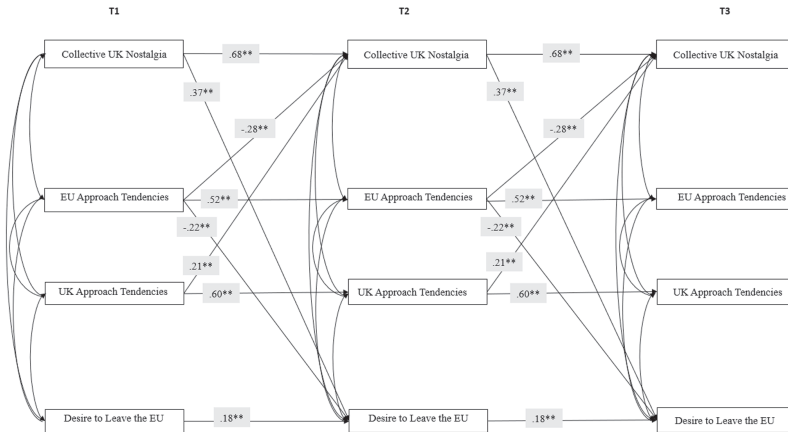
⁵According to the goodness-of-fit indices of Hu and Bentler (1999), CFI value $> .90$, RMSEA value $< .08$ and SRMR value $< .08$ indicate good fit.



Panel (a)



Panel (b)



Panel (c)

In support of the alternative model that we explored above (Figures 2 and 3), ties to EU citizens predicted decreased collective UK nostalgia in each model (social identification: $b = -0.19$, $p = .001$; group evaluations: $b = -0.28$, $p = .046$; approach tendencies: $b = -0.28$, $p < .001$). Conversely, ties to UK citizens predicted increased collective UK nostalgia in each model (social identification: $b = 0.18$, $p = .005$; group evaluations: $b = 0.31$, $p = .022$; approach tendencies: $b = 0.21$, $p = .001$).

Ties to EU citizens additionally predicted decreased desire to leave the European Union (social identification: $b = -0.32$, $p < .001$; group evaluations: $b = -0.81$, $p = .001$; approach tendencies: $-b = 0.22$, $p < .001$) and ties to UK citizens predicted increased desire to leave the European Union based on social identification ($b = 0.29$, $p = .003$) and group evaluations ($b = 0.62$, $p < .001$) but not approach tendencies ($b = 0.01$, $p = .813$).

DISCUSSION

The present research investigated whether citizens of the United Kingdom who are nostalgic for the way the United Kingdom used to be, were more likely to wish that the United Kingdom leaves the European Union. This main hypothesis was consistently supported by both cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis. At all three time points, higher levels of collective UK nostalgia were associated with the intention to vote leave rather than remain in a hypothetical future Brexit referendum. Additionally, longitudinal analyses consistently found that higher levels of collective UK nostalgia predicted increased desire to vote leave rather than remain at subsequent time points.

We also hypothesized that these relationships would be mediated by ties to UK citizens and EU citizens. We measured ties to these groups in terms of identification, group evaluations and approach tendencies. Cross-sectional parallel mediation analysis showed that collective UK nostalgia was associated with *increased* ties to UK citizens (all relationships reached statistical significance except for group evaluations at Time 1 and Time 3). These ties were, in turn, associated with the intention to vote *leave* rather than remain (except for group evaluations and behavioural intentions at Time 2). Furthermore, collective UK nostalgia was associated with *decreased* ties to EU citizens (except for group evaluations at Time 3). These ties were, in turn, associated with the intention to vote *remain* rather than leave. However, additional exploratory mediation analyses reversing collective nostalgia, the original predictor, and group ties, the original mediator variables, supported this alternative model at least similarly strongly. At each time point and for all three measures of group ties (except for group evaluations at Time 3), we found that stronger UK group ties were associated with greater collective UK nostalgia and that this was, in turn, associated with greater likelihood to vote leave than remain. Conversely, stronger EU group ties were associated with lower levels of collective UK nostalgia, and this was, in turn, associated with greater likelihood to vote remain than leave (again with the exception of group evaluations at Time 3).

Longitudinal analyses revealed greater support for the alternative rather than the hypothesized model. All measures of UK and EU group ties predicted collective UK nostalgia at subsequent time points in the expected directions, while collective UK nostalgia only predicted UK group ties represented with a single indicator (social identification) and never predicted measures of EU group ties at subsequent time points.

Both the cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses support our primary hypothesis. Furthermore, in each of the models, we included additional known predictors of voting patterns in the Brexit referendum. At Time 1 of the cross-sectional analysis, we controlled for general election voting intention, while at Times 2 and 3, we controlled for left–right political orientation, need for closure and optimism. We also included left–right political orientation, need for closure and optimism in the cross-lagged panel models. Thus, the important contribution of the present paper is that collective UK nostalgia predicts a desire to leave the European Union beyond indicators or correlates of political ideology. Therefore, the present relationship between collective nostalgia and the wish to leave the European Union cannot merely have been reduced to their association with political ideology.

Nostalgia for how the United Kingdom was in the past predicts a desire to leave the European Union. Support for Brexit has previously been constructed as being in part rooted in xenophobia and racism (Khalili, 2017). From this point of view, the findings of the current research can be seen as supporting previous research which has found links between collective nostalgia and political opinions associated with outgroup derogation (Cheung et al., 2017; Smeekes et al., 2015; Smeekes et al., 2023). Similarly, previous research has provided evidence of a link between collective nostalgia and support for right-wing (conservative) politics. Conservative political ideology fits well with nostalgia, because of its focus on tradition and preference for incremental changes that respect the past (Huntington, 1957; Kirk, 1953; Muller, 1997; Scruton, 1980). Results connect to recent findings showing that collective nostalgia can have important political implications. Recent research has found that framing liberal issues such as gun control or pro-environmentalism as a return to the past increases support for those issues among conservatives because it connects to their nostalgic disposition (Baldwin & Lammers, 2016; Lammers & Baldwin, 2018 but see Kim et al., 2021 who failed to replicate this work).

Beyond national identity nostalgia, the current results mirror findings in research on army regiment mergers (Jetten & Hutchison, 2011), which show that people who perceive high continuity of their ingroup are more resistant to mergers. Similarly, we showed that people who attribute a high value to the way the United Kingdom was in the past show a stronger desire to return to a time when the United Kingdom was separated from the European Union.

We additionally hypothesized that collective UK nostalgia would predict stronger ties to the ingroup, UK citizens, and weaker ties to EU citizens. We based this on the notion that nostalgia is felt as an overall positive emotion (Hepper et al., 2012), and that people are motivated to more strongly identify with positively approved ingroups (Tajfel et al., 1979). Thus, nostalgia for the ingroup's past would make positive associations with the ingroup salient. We hypothesized a causal direction where collective UK nostalgia predicted stronger ties to UK citizens and weaker ties to EU citizens. However, longitudinal and exploratory cross-sectional analysis show stronger evidence for the reverse relationships. It, therefore, seems that rather than collective UK nostalgia leading to stronger ties to UK citizens and weaker ties to EU citizens, those participants who already have stronger ties to the United Kingdom are, in turn, more likely to be nostalgic for the way the United Kingdom used to be. Conversely, those participants who have strong ties to the European Union are less likely to be nostalgic for the way the United Kingdom used to be.

The current research contributes to the growing field of collective nostalgia literature. The findings suggest that nostalgia for one's country's perceived past can be associated with perceived discontinuity in one's national identity and a desire to restore continuity, and in the case of the current research, a return to the way things were believed to be. These findings are in line with previous collective nostalgia research (Smeekes et al., 2023) and are in line with personal nostalgia research which has found nostalgia to be triggered by self-discontinuity (Kim & Wohl, 2015; Sedikides et al., 2015).

Our findings have practical implications. Understanding people's motivation to engage politically is particularly timely as recent research indicates that many people globally have become disengaged (Wike & Castillo, 2018). Like Smeekes et al. (2023), we found that collective national nostalgia can propel people into political action with the aim of protecting the national identity. While these researchers provided evidence of this relationship in a Dutch context, we do so in the context of the UK post-Brexit. Future research could address this issue in relation to various national identities and in other contexts to extend generalizability.

Limitations and future research

The findings of the current research show considerable support for the hypothesis that collective UK nostalgia predicts the desire for UK citizens to leave the European Union. This hypothesis was supported both cross-sectionally, at three distinct time points, and in longitudinal analysis which

utilized cross-lagged panel models. Exploratory analysis additionally suggests that ties to UK citizens are increasing collective UK nostalgia and that ties to EU citizens are decreasing collective UK nostalgia. Despite the consistent findings, we acknowledge that there are limitations in the current research. By utilizing cross-lagged panel models with longitudinal data, we show initial evidence of a causal relationship in which UK collective nostalgia predicts desire to leave the European Union and that ties to UK and EU citizens are antecedents rather than consequences of UK collective nostalgia. However, the power to derive causal relationships from non-experimental studies is limited. To determine the directionality of these relationships, future research could utilize experimental manipulations.

The generalizability of the current study may be impacted by the fact that our sample contained a greater number of remain voters than would be expected based on the results of the election and more recent polls. It may also be the case that the relationship between collective nostalgia, ties to social groups and political action is specific to the context. Nostalgia is a complex emotion likely highly influenced by cultural context (Shaver et al., 1987), and this is particularly the case for collective nostalgia. Future research can test for cultural differences by manipulating nostalgic content in various cultural contexts.

In the current study, our measure of nostalgia specifically refers to a time before the United Kingdom joined the European Union. As such, we expected this measure of nostalgia to be associated with a desire for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. Previously, researchers have shown that both conservatives and liberals experience collective nostalgia, but that the content of their collective nostalgia differs (Stefaniak et al., 2021). While conservatives experienced collective nostalgia for a more homogenous society, liberals experienced collective nostalgia for a more open society. As such, we may expect that in the current context, nostalgia has different consequences if people's nostalgizing differs in content. It may be the case that collective nostalgia for the United Kingdom during its membership in the European Union would, in fact, lead to a greater desire to remain in the European Union. Future research could utilize a more nuanced measure of nostalgia which allows interpretation of the content of nostalgia.

Finally, there are of course some potential factors that could affect the relationship between collective UK nostalgia and desire to leave the European Union that were not accounted for in the current study. It is plausible that this effect would, for example, differ for UK citizens who were particularly impacted either socially or financially by Brexit. By measuring such factors, future research could identify moderating influences on the hypothesized relationship.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the current research was to investigate whether collective UK nostalgia predicted a desire for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. Additionally, we aimed to test whether the relationship between these two variables was explained by ties to both UK citizens and EU citizens. Our analyses suggest that those people who have stronger ties to UK citizens are more likely to be nostalgic for the United Kingdom of the past and this drives a desire to leave the European Union. On the other hand, people with stronger ties to EU citizens are less likely to be nostalgic for how the United Kingdom was in the past and this drives a desire to remain within the European Union. Our findings contribute to the literature on the relationship between collective emotions and political action.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Jack Loughnane: Conceptualization; methodology; software; data curation; formal analysis; investigation; project administration; writing – review and editing; writing – original draft. **Jenny Roth:** Conceptualization; methodology; writing – review and editing; supervision. **Wijnand van Tilburg:** Conceptualization; methodology; writing – review and editing; software; formal analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by a doctoral fellowship to the first author by the Irish Research Council. Open access funding provided by IReL.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available on OSF.com at [https://osf.io/42myv/?view_only=9a5f0ae87a16462f9939792c50068ed5].

ORCID

Jack Loughrane  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2840-7967>

REFERENCES

- Baldwin, M., & Lammers, J. (2016). Past-focused environmental comparisons promote proenvironmental outcomes for conservatives. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *113*(52), 14953–14957.
- Boym, S. (2001). *The future of nostalgia*. Basic Books.
- Campanella, E., & Dassù, M. (2019). Brexit and nostalgia. *Survival*, *61*(3), 103–111.
- Cheung, W.-Y., Hepper, E. G., Reid, C. A., Green, J. D., Wildschut, T., & Sedikides, C. (2020). Anticipated nostalgia: Looking forward to looking back. *Cognition and Emotion*, *34*(3), 511–525.
- Cheung, W.-Y., Sedikides, C., Wildschut, T., Tausch, N., & Ayanian, A. H. (2017). Collective nostalgia is associated with stronger outgroup-directed anger and participation in ingroup-favoring collective action. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, *5*(2), 301–319.
- Davis, F. (1979). *Yearning for yesterday: A sociology of nostalgia*. The Free Press.
- Duyvendak, J. (2011). *The politics of home: Belonging and nostalgia in Europe and the United States*. Springer.
- Fiedler, K., Harris, C., & Schott, M. (2018). Unwarranted inferences from statistical mediation tests—an analysis of articles published in 2015. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *75*, 95–102.
- Hayes, A. F. (2017). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. Guilford Publications.
- Hepper, E. G., Ritchie, T. D., Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2012). Odyssey's end: Lay conceptions of nostalgia reflect its original Homeric meaning. *Emotion*, *12*(1), 102–119.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, *6*(1), 1–55.
- Huntington, S. P. (1957). Conservatism as an ideology. *American Political Science Review*, *51*(2), 454–473.
- Jetten, J., & Hutchison, P. (2011). When groups have a lot to lose: Historical continuity enhances resistance to a merger. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *41*(3), 335–343.
- Johnson-Laird, P. N., & Oatley, K. (1989). The language of emotions: An analysis of a semantic field. *Cognition and Emotion*, *3*(2), 81–123.
- Jost, J. T. (2017). Ideological asymmetries and the essence of political psychology. *Political Psychology*, *38*(2), 167–208.
- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Sulloway, F. J., & Kruglanski, A. W. (2018). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. In *The motivated mind* (pp. 129–204). Routledge.
- Khalili, L. (2017). After Brexit: Reckoning with Britain's racism and xenophobia. *Poem*, *5*(2–3), 253–265.
- Kim, H. S., & Wohl, M. J. (2015). The bright side of self-discontinuity: Feeling disconnected with the past self increases readiness to change addictive behaviors (via nostalgia). *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *6*(2), 229–237.
- Kim, I., Hammond, M. D., & Milfont, T. L. (2021). Do past-focused environmental messages promote pro-environmentalism to conservatives? A pre-registered replication. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *73*, 101547.
- Kirk, R. (1953). *The conservative mind: From Burke to Eliot*. Avon Books.
- Lammers, J. (2023). Collective nostalgia and political ideology. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *52*, 101607. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101607>
- Lammers, J., & Baldwin, M. (2018). Past-focused temporal communication overcomes conservatives' resistance to liberal political ideas. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *114*(4), 599–619.
- Leach, C. W., Van Zomeren, M., Zebel, S., Vliek, M. L., Pennekamp, S. F., Doosje, B., Ouwerkerk, J. W., & Spears, R. (2008). Group-level self-definition and self-investment: A hierarchical (multicomponent) model of in-group identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *95*(1), 144–165.
- Leunissen, J., Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., & Routledge, C. (2021). The hedonic character of nostalgia: An integrative data analysis. *Emotion Review*, *13*(2), 139–156.
- Maher, P. J., Igou, E. R., & van Tilburg, W. A. (2021). Nostalgia relieves the disillusioned mind. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *92*, 104061.

- Milligan, M. J. (2003). Displacement and identity discontinuity: The role of nostalgia in establishing new identity categories. *Symbolic Interaction, 26*(3), 381–403.
- Muller, J. Z. (1997). *Conservatism: An anthology of social and political thought from David Hume to the present*. Princeton University Press.
- Pearsall, J. (Ed.). (1998). *The new Oxford dictionary of English*. Oxford University Press.
- Rossee, Y. (2012). Lavaan: An R package for structural equation modeling and more. Version 0.5-12 (BETA). *Journal of Statistical Software, 48*(2), 1–36.
- Routledge, C., Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., Juhl, J., & Arndt, J. (2012). The power of the past: Nostalgia as a meaning-making resource. *Memory, 20*(5), 452–460.
- Sandrin, P. (2021). The rise of right-wing populism in Europe: A psychoanalytical contribution. In *Financial crisis management and democracy: Lessons from Europe and Latin America* (pp. 227–239). Springer.
- Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A reevaluation of the life orientation test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*(6), 1063–1078.
- Schlenker, B. R., Chambers, J. R., & Le, B. M. (2012). Conservatives are happier than liberals, but why? Political ideology, personality, and life satisfaction. *Journal of Research in Personality, 46*(2), 127–146.
- Scruton, R. (1980). *The meaning of conservatism* (Vol. 866). Springer.
- Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2018). Finding meaning in nostalgia. *Review of General Psychology, 22*(1), 48–61.
- Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2019). The sociality of personal and collective nostalgia. *European Review of Social Psychology, 30*(1), 123–173.
- Sedikides, C., Wildschut, T., Arndt, J., & Routledge, C. (2008). Nostalgia: Past, present, and future. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 17*(5), 304–307.
- Sedikides, C., Wildschut, T., Routledge, C., & Arndt, J. (2015). Nostalgia counteracts self-discontinuity and restores self-continuity. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 45*(1), 52–61.
- Shaver, P., Schwartz, J., Kirson, D., & O'Connor, C. (1987). Emotion knowledge: Further exploration of a prototype approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*(6), 1061–1086.
- Sideridis, G., Simos, P., Papanicolaou, A., & Fletcher, J. (2014). Using structural equation modeling to assess functional connectivity in the brain: Power and sample size considerations. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 74*(5), 733–758. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164414525397>
- Smeekes, A. (2015). National nostalgia: A group-based emotion that benefits the in-group but hampers intergroup relations. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 49*, 54–67.
- Smeekes, A., Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2023). Collective nostalgia: Triggers and consequences for collective action intentions. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 62*(1), 197–214.
- Smeekes, A., Verkuyten, M., & Martinovic, B. (2015). Longing for the country's good old days: National nostalgia, autochthony beliefs, and opposition to Muslim expressive rights. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 54*, 561–580. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12097>
- Stefaniak, A., Wohl, M. J. A., Sedikides, C., Smeekes, A., & Wildschut, T. (2021). Different pasts for different political folk: Political orientation predicts collective nostalgia content. *Frontiers in Political Science, 3*, 633688.
- Stephan, E., Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2012). Mental travel into the past: Differentiating recollections of nostalgic, ordinary, and positive events. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 42*(3), 290–298.
- Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *Organizational Identity: A Reader, 56*(65), 9780203505984-16.
- Turner, R. N., Wildschut, T., & Sedikides, C. (2012). Dropping the weight stigma: Nostalgia improves attitudes toward persons who are overweight. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48*(1), 130–137.
- van Tilburg, W. A. P. (2023). Locating nostalgia among the emotions: A bridge from loss to love. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 49*, 101543. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101543>
- van Tilburg, W. A., Bruder, M., Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., & Göritz, A. S. (2019). An appraisal profile of nostalgia. *Emotion, 19*(1), 21–36.
- van Tilburg, W. A., Igou, E. R., & Sedikides, C. (2013). In search of meaningfulness: Nostalgia as an antidote to boredom. *Emotion, 13*(3), 450–461.
- van Tilburg, W. A., Sedikides, C., Wildschut, T., & Vingerhoets, A. J. (2019). How nostalgia infuses life with meaning: From social connectedness to self-continuity. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 49*(3), 521–532.
- van Tilburg, W. A., Wildschut, T., & Sedikides, C. (2018). Nostalgia's place among self-relevant emotions. *Cognition and Emotion, 32*(4), 742–759.
- Webster, D. M., & Kruglanski, A. W. (1994). Individual differences in need for cognitive closure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*(6), 1049–1062.
- Wellings, B. (2021). Brexit, nationalism and disintegration in the European Union and the United Kingdom. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies, 29*(3), 322–334.
- Wike, R., & Castillo, A. (2018). Many around the world are disengaged from politics. *Pew Research Center, 17*.
- Wildschut, T., Bruder, M., Robertson, S., van Tilburg, W. A., & Sedikides, C. (2014). Collective nostalgia: A group-level emotion that confers unique benefits on the group. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 107*(5), 844–863.

- Wildschut, T., & Sedikides, C. (2023). Water from the lake of memory: The regulatory model of nostalgia. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 32(1), 57–64.
- Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., Arndt, J., & Routledge, C. (2006). Nostalgia: Content, triggers, functions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(5), 975–993.
- Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., & Cordaro, F. (2011). Self-regulatory interplay between negative and positive emotions: The case of loneliness and nostalgia. In *Emotion regulation and well-being* (pp. 67–83). Springer.
- Zhou, X., Sedikides, C., Mo, T., Li, W., Hong, E. K., & Wildschut, T. (2022). The restorative power of nostalgia: Thwarting loneliness by raising happiness during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 13(4), 803–815.
- Zmigrod, L., Rentfrow, P. J., & Robbins, T. W. (2018). Cognitive underpinnings of nationalistic ideology in the context of Brexit. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(19), E4532–E4540.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Loughnane, J., Roth, J., & van Tilburg, W. (2024). Collective UK nostalgia predicts a desire to leave the European Union. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 63, 1254–1271. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12728>