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# Longing for the "good old days" of our country: National nostalgia as a new master-frame of populist radical right parties

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**Abstract**

Scholars and commentators have argued that national nostalgia forms a germane element of the rhetoric of populist radical right parties (PRRP). We addressed the national nostalgia component of PRRP ideology with respect to voters. Relying on political science theorizing and social psychological evidence, we proposed that national nostalgia forms a new emotion-based explanation for PRRP support within the cultural grievance framework. National nostalgia reflects grievances over perceived loss of the ethnically and culturally homogeneous moral community. Such grievances are subsequently mobilized by PRRP to justify and increase the persuasiveness of their nativist ideology. We hypothesized that voters who experience higher national nostalgia would evince stronger support for PRRP, due to national nostalgia's association with endorsement of PRRP's nativist ideology (i.e., ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes). We tested this hypothesis by surveying a representative sample of native majority members in The Netherlands (*N* = 1,934). The results were consistent with the hypothesis, highlighting the relevance of national nostalgia for understanding PRRP success.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Political campaign slogans, such as "Make America Great Again" by U.S. president Donald Trump or "The Netherlands Ours Again" by Dutch politician Geert Wilders, indicate that radical right-wing populism uses nostalgia to depict the national past as glorious. Scholars have proposed that national nostalgia forms a key ideological component of populist radical right parties (PRRP; Betz & Johnson, 2004; Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018), and is an integral piece of a new master-frame employed to increase PRRP allure among their electorate (Mols & Jetten, 2014). Yet, the national nostalgia element of PRRP rhetoric has rarely been studied in reference to voters. Although there is a burgeoning literature on reasons for PRRP electoral support, particularly in political science (for reviews see: Golder, 2016; Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2018), few studies have focused on the emotional underpinnings of PRRP support (for exceptions, see: Rico et al., 2017; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017),

let alone on nostalgia. Finally, although collective forms of nostalgia––such as national nostalgia––and their relationship with intragroup and intergroup dynamics have caught on in social psychology (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019; Smeekes, 2015, 2019; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015; Smeekes et al., 2015; Wildschut et al., 2014), their link with established research on PRRP voting and ideology is largely missing (but see [Smeekes, 2019]).

In this article, we link national nostalgia with PRRP ideology and support. Relying upon an integration of political science research on PRRP ideology and social psychological research on national nostalgia/group dynamics, we contend that national nostalgia can be understood as a new element within the cultural-grievance explanation for PRRP success. We hypothesize, in particular, that national nostalgia predicts stronger PRRP support due to its association with PRRP nativist ideology in the form of exclusionary notions of national identity and anti-Muslim attitudes. We test this hypothesis in a representative sample of native Dutch adults.

## 2 | NATIONAL NOSTALGIA AND GROUP DYNAMICS

Personal nostalgia is typically defined as an ambivalent, but predominantly positive, emotion characterized by sentimental longing for a meaningful and fondly remembered autobiographical past (Sedikides et al., 2008). Prototypical personal nostalgic memories involve valued events from one's childhood, momentous occasions shared with close others (e.g., family vacations, graduations, anniversaries, and birthdays), or memorabilia (Abeyta et al., 2015; Wildschut et al., 2006). In nostalgizing, one experiences warmth, contentment, and joy, but also a tinge of longing and sadness for a cherished but irredeemable bygone past (Hepper et al., 2012; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2016). Although, then, nostalgia is affectively mixed and generally contains both positive (e.g., happiness and warmth) and negative (e.g., loss and sadness) affective components, positive affect is more central to the prototypical personal nostalgic experience (Hepper et al., 2012). Nostalgia may be a somewhat bittersweet emotion, but the "sweet" is more prominent than the "bitter." Personal nostalgia has received due empirical attention in the last couple of decades (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2015; Wildschut & Sedikides, 2020).

More recently, social psychologists have started addressing the collective forms of nostalgia, such as national nostalgia. From a sociological standpoint, this emotion is shared (i.e., experienced together) by group or societal members (Davis, 1979). However, from a social-psychological standpoint, collective nostalgia can also be experienced individually on the basis of a particular social identity (Smeekes & Jetten, 2019; Smeekes et al., 2015; Wildschut et al., 2014). This standpoint is exemplified by intergroup emotions theory (Mackie et al., 2000, 2009), which combines insights from social identity theory and self-categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). According to intergroup emotions theory, when group membership becomes part of the psychological self, individuals can experience emotions owing to their social identity. These emotions function as regulators of intragroup and intergroup attitudes and behaviors. People, then, can feel nostalgic not only for their own past (i.e., personal nostalgia), but also for objects, periods, or events from their groups' past (i.e., collective nostalgia), including their national past (i.e., national nostalgia). Although both personal and collective nostalgia involve a sentimental longing for a positively remembered past, the referent of collective (national) nostalgia is the group (nation) rather than the individual. As such, from a social-psychological standpoint, national nostalgia can be understood as a specific form of collective nostalgia that is based on national group membership, and that is likely to regulate intragroup and intergroup attitudes and behaviors of national in-group members. We define it as sentimental longing for a positively remembered national in-group past. Unlike personal nostalgia, collective and national nostalgia can refer to a past that individuals have not experienced firsthand, but rather feel familiar with it through shared memories.

Personal and collective forms of nostalgia are empirically distinguishable; further, only collective forms of nostalgia hold relevance for understanding intragroup and intergroup dynamics (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019; Smeekes et al., 2015). For example, national (and not personal) nostalgia is associated with and results in positive attitudes toward the national in-group as well as negative attitudes toward immigrant out-groups (Dimitriadou et al., 2019; Smeekes, 2015, Study 1; Smeekes et al., 2015, Study 1). Also, a recent cross-cultural study demonstrated that national nostalgia is related to higher levels of in-group belonging in 24 countries and to stronger opposition to immigration in 20 countries (Smeekes et al., 2018).

The theoretical rationale behind these relationships lies in nostalgia's psychological functions. The emotion helps individuals cope with unwanted change, restoring their identity (Sedikides et al., 2015, 2016; Vess et al., 2012; Wildschut et al., 2011; Wildschut & Sedikides, 2020). Longing for one's past can clarify which aspects of identity the individual values and wishes to have restored in the present. Put otherwise, holding on to nostalgic memories can help individuals to reaffirm their identities when experiencing discontinuities in their life. Nostalgia, then, is a functional coping mechanism in response to threats to self-continuity. Nostalgia re-establishes self-continuity, a sense of connection between one's past and present. Interestingly, personal and collective or national nostalgia appear to be equally effective coping mechanisms in that regard (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019; Smeekes, 2019; Smeekes et al., 2018).

The restorative function of collective nostalgia has also been highlighted in anthropological, historical, and sociological accounts (Boym, 2001; Davis, 1979; Hewison, 1987; Milligan, 2003), which advocate that collective nostalgia enables people to rebuild a connection with fellow in-group members, affording a sense of in-group identity continuity over time. Sociologist Fred Davis (1979), for example, proposed that collective nostalgia strengthens a renewed sense of social identity, based on awareness of shared past experiences, which helps to mend the lost identity. This reasoning has implications for national nostalgia. Longing for a positive past shared with fellow national in-group members contributes to the preservation of national identity in contexts of continuity threat. Awareness, through national nostalgia, of the positive and valued elements of the shared national past fosters a renewed sense of national identity based on bonding with fellow "old-timers," those national members who were part of this past.

However, by fostering national identity and belonging that relies on the past, national nostalgia can culminate in social categorization processes that accentuate differences between the old "us," who share a positively remembered past, and the new "them," who are not part of it (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015). Indeed, national nostalgia among native Dutch majority members is positively linked to an exclusionary understanding of national identity based on the distinction between "old-timers" and "newcomers" (i.e., ethnic nationhood), which subsequently translates into more negative attitudes toward immigrant out-groups (Smeekes, 2015). The concept of ethnic nationhood marks differences between national old-timers and newcomers on the grounds of common origin and blood ties. Ethnic nationhood is often discussed in literature on nationalism and citizenship (Brubaker, 1992; Weldon, 2006), as it defines the national

group and hereby signals the bounds of national sovereignty and equality. A belief in ethnic nationhood reflects the perception that one only truly belongs to the country, if one is of native descent. This belief excludes newcomers from national in-group membership, as they do not fit the ancestry requirement. Consistent with this reasoning, endorsement of ethnic nationhood is related to negative attitudes toward immigrant out-groups (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013; Nijs et al., 2020; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015).

Taken together, the literature on national nostalgia among native majority members indicates that it can hamper positive intergroup relations, as it fosters a renewed and exclusionary understanding of national identity based on shared historical roots. Although such an understanding may be functional for native majority members (i.e., as a tool for strengthening national identity continuity; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015), it can also be destructive for intergroup relations: Definitions of national identity based on historical roots foster opposition to those who were not perceived as part of this positively valued past (i.e., immigrants or newcomers). These are relevant insights for the current study, as national nostalgia, ethnic nationhood, and anti-immigrant attitudes figure prominently in PRRP ideology.

## 3 | NATIONAL NOSTALGIA AND SUPPORT FOR POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES

According to political scientists, two main features of PRRP ideology are populism and nativism (Golder, 2016; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018). The ideational approach further explicates that populism is a set of ideas depicting society as divided between "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and as striving for the defense of popular sovereignty (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018). Populism is not a distinctive characteristic of PRRP; it can be found in other political movements. It is considered a thin-centered ideology, given that it is almost always attached to other ideological elements. In the case of PRRP, it is attached to the ideology of nativism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018), a term that is often used to distinguish the nationalism of PRRP from that of mainstream parties (Golder, 2016). Nativism combines ethnic nationalism with xenophobia, and holds that "states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state" (Mudde, 2007, p. 19). PRRP employ an exclusionary version of populism that relies on nativism to create broader antagonistic groups by pitting "us" (the virtuous people with a native ethnic background) against "them" (a set of corrupt elites and dangerous "others" who deprive the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice) (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2007). In this rhetoric, the dangerous "others" are almost always immigrants and, in particular, Muslims.

Scholars have proposed that, especially after 9/11, Islamophobia has become the most prevalent form of xenophobia upon which PRRP build their exclusionary populism (Hafez, 2014; Kallis, 2018). They have redefined the notion of "us" and "them" as reflecting a clash between the Western "we" (national, transnational, civilizational) on the one hand, and Islam and Muslims on the other hand. Muslims are depicted as wanting to impose their incompatible, illiberal ways of life on the native/Western majority, and are perceived as being supported by liberal elites, who are accused of favoring minority rights over those of the pure (native/Western) people (Marzouki & McDonnell, 2016).

National nostalgia forms a crucial affective justification for this exclusionary populism, as it is used to define, essentialize, and unite "the pure people" and also mobilize them to protect the continuity of the in-group identity against "dangerous others." PRRP are often labeled as reactionary, because they express the desire to restore a mythical and idealized version of the national past, in which the country consisted of a virtuous and morally upright national community that was culturally and ethnically homogeneous (Betz & Johnson, 2004; Minkenberg, 2000; Rydgren, 2004). Taggart (2004) refers to this nostalgic portrayal of the national community as the "heartland"––a conception of an ideal world that is constructed retrospectively from the past. PRRP heartland is a plain, simple, and united society in which people shared "the right" norms and values (Duyvendak, 2011; Marzouki & McDonnell, 2016). This nostalgic portrayal of the national past serves to increase the persuasiveness of their exclusionary populism by dividing society into "old-timers" (i.e., the original native inhabitants of the country) who are part of this positively remembered shared past and those who came later and threatened, if not ruined, it (i.e., immigrants/Muslims and corrupt elites).

Moreover, these differences are further essentialized and antagonized by being drawn into the moral domain. In the PRRP rhetoric of national nostalgia lies a moral sentiment that idealizes the national past as being one in which people still held "the right" norms and values. By being part of this positively remembered and shared national past, original inhabitants are portrayed as belonging to a united moral community for which they are responsible to ensure its continuity. Psychologists have described moral community as having "a set of shared norms about how members ought to behave, combined with means for imposing costs on violators and/or channeling benefits to cooperators" (Haidt, 2007, p. 1000; see also Opotow et al., 2010). That is, a moral community expresses group unity through a shared set of moral norms and values, and applies rules of justice and fairness to those considered part of the in-group. Out-groups who do not commit to these principles are morally excluded, being viewed as outside the scope of justice (Opotow, 1990). Hence, PRRP nostalgic portrayal of the (supposed) united, morally upright, and ethnically homogeneous community of the national past serves to unite, essentialize, and purify native/Western in-group members in order to mobilize them to protect the continuity of this community by re-asserting native identities and symbols, and by excluding (and even promoting social injustice toward) those with different moral values. In this rhetoric, the groups threatening this moral community are typically Muslims, because of their ostensibly incommensurable illiberal values, and liberal elites, because they are seen to protect such out-groups and promote immigration, multiculturalism, and globalization.

# 4 | RELATION OF NATIONAL NOSTALGIA TO ESTABLISHED THEORIES ON PRRP SUPPORT

In the large literature on PRRP support, a distinction is made between demand-side and supply-side explanations. Whereas supply-side explanations focus on the choices that these parties make and the political opportunity structures that shape their success, demand-side explanations are concerned with grievances that render PRRP appealing to voters and hence create the demand for these parties (Golder, 2016). The current study aligns with demand-side explanations, as it examines PRRP support from the vantage point of voters and their grievances.

Two prominent lines of research that offer demand-side explanations focus on economic grievances (i.e., economic anxiety or insecurity) and cultural grievances (i.e., clashing and changing cultural norms and values) (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018). Traditional accounts of both economic and cultural grievances for PRRP support stem from the modernization literature, in which the "modernization losers"––those who are unable to cope with rapid economic and cultural societal changes––are the ones likely to vote for such parties (Golder, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Economic-modernization accounts focus on grievances that emerged following the shift to a globalized and postindustrial economy, which has purportedly contributed to some professional groups converting their economic loss or anxiety into PRRP support. Cultural modernization accounts concentrate on the transition to a postmodern society––a silent revolution (Inglehart, 2015)––and the rise of progressive values (e.g., open-mindedness toward different cultures and lifestyles, gender equality, same-sex marriage, and secular values), which are presumed to have unleashed a reactionary backlash or silent counter-revolution among those with traditional values who feel left behind by these progressive cultural tides (Ignazi, 1992). Individuals who are unable to cope with these rapid economic and cultural changes, then, vote for PRRP, because these parties promote traditional and authoritarian values, including the protection of economically vulnerable groups. Hence, from this perspective, the national nostalgia of PRRP supporters reflects longing for the good old days of a past in which people still held traditional values and led lives that were economically secure.

However, it is difficult to reconcile the modernization accounts with more recent studies on PRRP success (Rydgren, 2018). In contrast to the economic-modernization thesis, research indicates that economic factors at the macro-level, such as income and unemployment rates, are unrelated to PRRP voting (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Lubbers et al., 2002; Swank & Betz, 2003). Also, PRRP are particularly successful in European countries that have a prosperous economy, low unemployment, and extensive social welfare policies (Mudde, 2016). Moreover, work on the so called wealth paradox (Mols & Jetten, 2017), indicates that PRRP are even more strongly supported by wealthier people, as they have more to lose and hence experience a "fear of falling." Furthermore, and in contrast to the cultural-modernization account, scholars have argued that anti-postmaterialism and traditional values are nowadays less central to PRRP ideology in Western Europe (Arzheimer, 2018). Several contemporary PRRP in Western Europe, such as the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) and the French National Rally (FN), claim to defend liberal secular values (e.g., gender equality, homosexuality) against the growing threat of Islam, which is portrayed as a political and totalitarian ideology that is incompatible with the Judeo-Christian Western culture (Hafez, 2014). Finally, although modernization accounts entail that the typical PRRP voter is older (and, therefore, endorses more traditional values), recent investigations indicate that PRRP support is more often prevalent among younger people (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012). In summary, modernization accounts seem to have problems explaining the rise of current PRRP in Western countries.

Realistic group conflict theory provides an alternative explanation of grievances and current electoral appeal of PRRP from a demand-side perspective (Riek et al., 2006). It proposes that both economic and cultural grievances can emerge from competition over (the distribution of) material and symbolic resources. Groups, then, can compete over conflicting economic interests (e.g., jobs, housing, and welfare distribution) and cultural interests (e.g., ideologies, values, and traditions). Under such competitive conditions, in-group members search for a scapegoat (an out-group) that is to blame for their grievances, and subsequently develop perceptions of threat and hostile out-group attitudes. Contemporary PRRP exploit these grievances by linking (particularly Muslim) immigrants to economic hardship and cultural ways of life that are colliding with those of the native population.

Whereas both economic and cultural threats at the individual level matter for PRRP voting, cultural threats are more impactful (Ivarsflaten, 2005, 2008; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012). According to political scientists, PRRP have monopolized the nativist stance, which includes anti-immigrant attitudes (i.e., xenophobia in the form of Islamophobia) (Abou-Chadi, 2016). Such attitudes constitute a key explanatory factor for PRRP support (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Werts et al., 2013), and anti-immigrant attitudes in Western European countries are mostly driven by cultural concerns (Schneider, 2008; Velasco González et al., 2008). Although PRRP espouse their nativist stance as the basis for all their policies (including economic ones), this stance is most strongly directed toward protecting ethnic homogeneity and (reducing) the cultural threats by (Muslim) immigrant groups that undermine the identity of the native majority. Hence, PRRP have become issue owners of cultural concerns related to national identity and immigration (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Rydgren, 2018) rather than economic ones. Economic issues (e.g., unemployment and taxes) are often owned by other mainstream parties (Abou-Chadi, 2016).

We propose that national nostalgia can be understood as a new emotion-based explanation for PRRP support within the cultural grievance framework, because it reflects grievances over the loss of the ethnically and culturally homogeneous moral community. These grievances are subsequently mobilized by PRRP to justify and increase the persuasiveness of their nativist ideology as well as its accompanying calls for restoration and re-assertion of native identities

and symbols. We hypothesize that voters who experience high levels of national nostalgia will manifest stronger support for PRRP, due to national nostalgia's association with PRRP nativist ideology in the form of ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes. We test this hypothesis among native majority members in The Netherlands.

# 5 | NATIVISM AND PRRP SUPPORT IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands was one of the stronger proponents and political enactors of multi-culturalism in Europe. There has been a retreat from multiculturalism, though, in both discourse and policy making since the 1980s (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Preservation of immigrant identity gave way to cultural assimilation (Vasta, 2007), as multiculturalism was increasingly seen to emphasize and promote cultural differences at the expense of a shared national identity, thereby undermining the cohesiveness of Dutch society (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007; Verkuyten, 2014). Similar to other Western European countries, such as France and the United Kingdom, multiculturalism in The Netherlands was held responsible for minorities adhering to their own cultural identities instead of that of the host nation. Muslim immigrants became the main target of these debates, given that they were perceived as the most culturally deviant immigrant group (Duyvendak, 2011). Islamic values and practices were portrayed as incompatible with Western liberal values, and are still considered an obstacle for Muslim immigrant integration into Dutch society. The idea that Islam is a threat to Dutch culture is currently endorsed by 62% of the native majority members (Van Houwelingen, 2019, p.17). Furthermore, Islamophobia in The Netherlands has risen sharply during the last decade (Van der Valk, 2019). According to some commentators, there is an ongoing Dutch-Muslim cultural war, especially over issues of free speech and religious minority rights (Scroggins, 2005). Visible manifestations of Islam (e.g., veiling and Mosques) have been described in the media as part of the increasing islamization of The Netherlands, and as corroding Dutch culture and identity (Uitermark et al., 2005; Van der Valk, 2012).

Related to these developments is the growing presence and popularity of PRRP. The Netherlands has two PRRP, the Party for Freedom (PVV—led by Geert Wilders) and Forum for Democracy (FvD—led by Thierry Baudet). The PVV was founded in 2006 and has become increasingly successful in the House of Representatives, with 10% of the votes in 2012 and 13% of the votes in 2017. The PVV has also gained seats in the Senate (11.5% of the votes in 2015) and the European Parliament (13% in 2014). However, the party lost votes in the Senate and European parliament to the FvD in the 2019 election, dropping to 6.5% of votes in the Senate and 3.5% of votes in the European parliament. The ideology of the PVV has been described as a combination of Islamophobia, nativism, populism, and law and order (Holsteyn, 2018). In its current election program (PVV, 2017), titled "The Netherlands Ours Again," the party calls for the de-Islamization of The Netherlands, leaving the European Union,

direct democracy, and better funding for the military and police. In addition, the PVV claims to defend core progressive Dutch values, such as gender equality, homosexuality, and freedom of speech.

FvD is a relatively new party that was established in 2016, gaining 1.8% of the votes (two seats in the House of Representatives) in the 2017 national election. In 2019, the party boasted a victory in the Senate (almost 16% of the votes) and in the European parliament (almost 11% of the votes). FvD's ideology is also strongly based on a combination of populism and nativism. The party claims that The Netherlands and Western civilization should be saved from the invasion of non-Western values, which are seen as endorsed by non-Western/Muslim immigrants. In its current election program (FvD, 2017), the party calls for protection of Dutch progressive values (e.g., freedom of speech and equality), strict national immigration policies, leaving the European Union, direct democracy, and popular sovereignty. Opinion makers have argued that, although the PVV and FvD are ideologically similar, characteristic differences are that the FvD (a) has a more realistic and less-extreme anti-immigration/Islam policy proposals, and (b) is democratically governed, making it potentially more effective in obtaining political power (Kulk, 2017). The PVV is ruled by a sole member (its leader, Geert Wilders), whereas the FvD is governed by a party board and party members.

The Netherlands forms a suitable context for our study, as both the PVV and FvD have appealed to national nostalgia to justify their nativist campaigns. An analysis of Geert Wilders' political speeches by Mols and Jetten (2014) revealed that, similar to other PRRP in Europe, the PVV implicates a rhetoric of national nostalgia to mobilize voters against immigration. During its most recent election campaign, FvD showed a movie with nostalgic Dutch images of cows in the meadows, wooden mills, and old furnaces, asking the audience afterward whether this is who the Dutch people were or are, and subsequently raising existential threats to national culture. Commentators have described Thierry Baudet, the leader of FvD, as a "nostalgic populist" who fears the end of Western civilization is nigh and wants to return to an ethnically and culturally homogenous past (Entzinger, 2019).

# 6 | METHOD

We collected data from a representative sample of native Dutch adults in March 2019 via the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social sciences (LISS) panel, administered by CentERdata (Tilburg University, The Netherlands). This panel consists of 4,500 households, comprising 7,000 individuals, who complete 15–30 min online questionnaires every month for payment. The panel is based on a true probability sample of households drawn from the population register of Statistics Netherlands, including households without Internet access (which are provided with computer and Internet connection). We were offered the opportunity to collect new data free of charge via a competitive round of research proposals organized by Open Data Infrastructure for Social Science and Economic Innovations (ODISSEI). This opportunity enabled us to collect

longitudinal data (two waves) for projects pertinent to collective nostalgia ([Smeekes et al., 2019]). For this article, we proceeded to create a cross-sectional data set to test our hypotheses. We only used data collected in our Wave 1 to match those collected in Wave 11 of the LISS Core study "Politics and Values" (openly available). This matching was necessary, given that it allowed us to form measures of PRPP support (which were not part of our Wave 1). Wave 1 of our study and Wave 11 of "Politics and Values" occurred in the same time period.

In total, 2,497 household members were selected for our survey. We had a non-response of 563 (22.5%), which resulted in a final sample of 1,934 participants. As a next step, on the basis of the unique encrypted household member numbers, we coupled our data set to Wave 11 of the LISS Core Study "Politics and Values" collected between December 2018 and March 2019, and we selected the variables of interest (see below).

## 6.1 | Measures

### 6.1.1 | National nostalgia

We assessed national nostalgia (the predictor) with four items adapted from Cheung et al. (2017b) and Smeekes et al. (2015). Participants indicated the extent to which they experienced the following when thinking about their country: "nostalgic about the way Dutch people were in the past," "nostalgic about the values that Dutch people had in the past," "nostalgic about the good old days of the Dutch," and "nostalgic about the sort of place The Netherlands was before" (1 = *never*, 5 = *to a great extent*; $\alpha$ = .93). The items made no reference to immigrants or cultural diversity. Missing value analysis revealed that 0.3% of participants (N = 5) had a missing value for national nostalgia. We imputed these missing values using the Estimation Maximization strategy (EM) in SPSS (Molenberghs & Verbeke, 2005).

### 6.1.2 | PRRP nativist ideology

We assessed PRRP nativist ideology with two constructs (the mediators). We indexed the first construct, *ethnic nationhood*, with two items: "A real Dutchman is someone who is originally Dutch" and "A real Dutchman is someone who has Dutch ancestors" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). These items have been used in previous Dutch studies (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015).

We aggregated responses (r = .57, p < .001). Of the participants, 0.6% (N = 11) had a missing value for ethnic nationhood, which we imputed using EM.

We measured the second construct, *anti-Muslim attitudes*, with a feeling thermometer (Ostrom et al., 1994). Participants indicated how positive (i.e., warm) their feelings were toward Muslims in The Netherlands on a slider ranging from 0° to 100°. We computed a new variable based on this measure in which higher scores reflected

stronger anti-Muslim attitudes and in which the scale ranged from 0 (0°) to 10 (100°). Of participants, 0.6% (N = 11) had a missing value for anti-Muslim attitudes, and we imputed these values using EM.

### 6.1.3 | PRRP support

We used two measures from Wave 11 of the LISS Core study "Politics and Values" to assess PRRP support (the outcome). The first measure, *PRRP voting intention*, consisted of the question: "If parliamentary elections were held today, for which party would you vote?".[1] In total, 883 participants responded to this question. The response options featured all the Dutch political parties represented in the parliament, as well as: "I would not vote," "blank," "other party," "I prefer not to say," and "I don't know." We coded voting preferences for the PVV or FvD as "1," and voting preferences for all other parties as "0" (including "blank" and "other party"). Finally, we coded the remaining preferences ("I would not vote," "I prefer not to say," and "I don't know") as missing. This resulted in 690 scored participants.

The second measure, *PRRP sympathy*, consisted of the question: "How sympathetic do you find the political parties?". Participants responded to this question (1 = *very unsympathetic*, 10 = *very sympathetic*) for each political party in the parliament. We used the two questions referring to the PVV[2] and FvD[3] (the PRRP), and aggregated responses (r = .61, p < .001). In total, 1,687 participants answered at least one of these questions, and hence received a score.

### 6.1.4 | Control variables

As control variables, we used the 7-item SNS (Sedikides et al., 2015; Wildschut et al., 2006), a measure of personal nostalgia. The SNS assesses frequency and importance of nostalgic engagement. Sample items are: "How important is it for you to bring to mind nostalgic experiences?" and "How valuable is nostalgia for you?" ($\alpha$ = .94). We opted to include the SNS, because findings for our key variable, collective nostalgia, would acquire added theoretical value when compared to, or contrasted against, findings for personal nostalgia. National identification is theoretically and empirically distinct from national nostalgia and ethnic nationhood (Smeekes, 2015; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015), but we nevertheless wanted to account for a possible overlap. We thus assessed national identification with the following (Postmes et al., 2013): "How strongly do you identify with The Netherlands" (1 = *not at all*, 10 = *totally*). We also assessed highest obtained educational level (1 = *primary education*, 6 = *university*), age (in years), and gender (1 = *male*, 0 = *female*). Of participants, 0.3% (N = 6) had a missing value for education and 0.5% (N = 9) for

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[1] Variable cv19k308 in the LISS core study "Politics and Values" Wave 11.

[2] Variable cv19k213in the LISS core study "Politics and Values" Wave 11.

[3] Variable cv19k305 the LISS core study "Politics and Values" Wave 11.

national identification (which we both imputed via EM), but none for SNS, age, or gender.

## 6.2 | Descriptive results

We report in Table 1 means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all variables. Correlations among the key variables were significant and in the expected direction. Personal nostalgia correlated positively with national nostalgia and all outcome variables, except anti-Muslim attitudes (with the effect being null). Participants had somewhat low levels of national nostalgia, as a *t* test against the scale midpoint indicated, $t(1,933) = −12.12$, $p < .001$. Participants evinced high levels (i.e., exceeding the scale midpoint) of support for PRRP nativist ideology, with regard to both ethnic nationhood, $t(1,933) = 26.81$, $p < .001$ and anti-Muslim attitudes, $t(1,934) = 15.71$, $p < .001$. Finally, they manifested low PRRP support in terms of both voting intention ($N = 112$ or 16.2%) and sympathy, $t(1,686) = −.34.47$, $p < .001$. Specifically, out of the 690 participants who received a score on the measure of voting preferences, 52 (7.5%) indicated an intention to vote for the PVV and 60 (8.7%) to vote for FvD. Moreover, the mean scores for PRRP sympathy were somewhat lower for PVV ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 2.78$) compared to FvD ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 2.67$), $t(1,471) = −4.32$, $p < .001$.

National nostalgia was higher among participants who expressed the intention to vote for PRRP ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .98$) versus another party ($M = 2.70$, $SD = .92$), $t(686) = 6.57$, $p < .001$. Finally, levels of national nostalgia were comparable among those intending to vote for the PVV ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.02$) and FvD ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .94$), $t(110) = .81$, $p = .419$.

## 6.3 | Main results

We conducted two separate regression-based mediation analyses to test the hypothesis that national nostalgia is associated with stronger PRRP voting intention (Model A) and greater PRRP sympathy (Model B), via ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes. We used Hayes's (2012) PROCESS macro (version 3.4; Model 4) in SPSS 24.0, which allows for having either dichotomous or continuous outcome measures. In these models, we estimated all (mediational) paths simultaneously while controlling for personal nostalgia, national identification, education, age, and gender. As a reminder, due to missing values, we tested Model A on a sample of 690 participants and Model B on a sample of 1,687 participants.

We present the results of these analyses in Figures 1 and 2. National nostalgia was positively related to both components of PRRP nativist ideology (ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes) and also to PRRP voting intention and PRRP sympathy. Moreover, both ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes were positively related to PRRP voting intention and PRRP sympathy. We estimated the indirect effects using bootstrapping procedures (5,000 samples). In Model A, there were significant positive indirect effects of national nostalgia on PRRP voting intention via ethnic nationhood ($B = .074$, $SE = .035$, LLCI = .016, ULCI = .155) and anti-Muslim attitudes ($B = .281$, $SE = .067$, LLCI = .170, ULCI = .429). In Model B, there were significant positive indirect effects of national nostalgia on PRRP sympathy via ethnic nationhood ($B = .055$, $SE = .016$, LLCI = .023, ULCI = .087) and anti-Muslim attitudes ($B = .196$, $SE = .028$, LLCI = .143, ULCI = .253). These findings are consistent with our hypothesis that national nostalgia relates to stronger support for PRRP, due to its association with stronger endorsement of those parties' nativist ideology in the form of ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes.

We next turned to analyses involving the control variables. Personal nostalgia was unrelated to the outcome measures in Model A ($ps > .148$). However, it was negatively related to anti-Muslim attitudes in Model B ($B = −.159$, $SE = .053$, $p = .003$): Higher personal nostalgia was related to lower prejudice toward Muslims. Furthermore, in both models, education was negatively associated with ethnic nationhood (Model A: $B = −.091$, $SE = .041$, $p = .029$;

**TABLE 1** Descriptives and correlations (after imputation)

| | N | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National nostalgia | 1,934 | 2.75 | .92 | – | .28*** | .24*** | .24*** | .34*** | .46*** | .30*** | −.26*** | .26*** | .00 |
| Ethnic nationhood | 1,934 | 4.91 | 1.50 | | – | .21*** | .17*** | .23*** | .13*** | .26*** | −.17*** | .11*** | −.04 |
| 3. Anti-Muslim attitudes | 1,934 | 5.88 | 2.46 | | | – | .34*** | .36*** | .02 | .02 | −.17*** | .05* | .09*** |
| 4. PRRP voting intention | 690 | .16 | .37 | | | | – | .62*** | .08* | .02 | −.17 | −.03 | .10*** |
| 5. PRRP sympathy | 1,687 | 2.88 | 2.53 | | | | | – | .12*** | .14*** | −.21*** | −.05* | .06* |
| 6. Personal nostalgia | 1,934 | 4.25 | 1.23 | | | | | | – | .23*** | −.00 | .07*** | −.04 |
| 7. National identification | 1,934 | 7.71 | 1.89 | | | | | | | – | −.11*** | .18*** | −.03 |
| 8. Education | 1,934 | 3.70 | 1.52 | | | | | | | | – | −.11*** | .08** |
| 9. Age | 1,934 | 54.06 | 17.89 | | | | | | | | | – | .09*** |
| 10. Gender | | | | | | | | | | | | | – |

***$p < .001$;

**$p < .01$;

*$p < .05$.
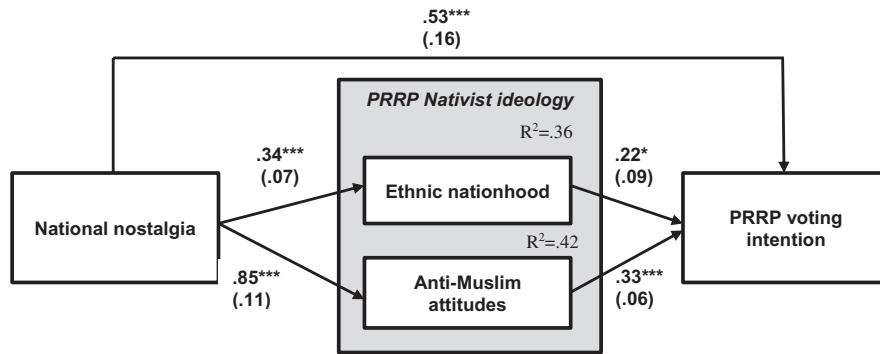
**FIGURE 1** Logistic regression mediation Model A (*N* = 686): Association between national nostalgia and PRRP voting intention via ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes (controlling for personal nostalgia, national identification, education level, age, and gender). Path-coefficients are unstandardized estimates with standard errors in brackets. PRRP = Populist Radical Right Parties. ***p < .001, *p < .05
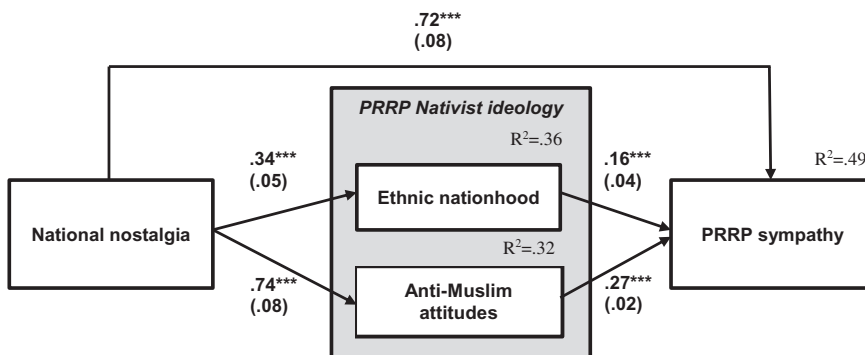


**FIGURE 2** Linear regression mediation Model B (*N* = 1,681): Association between national nostalgia and PRRP sympathy via ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes (controlling for personal nostalgia, national identification, education level, age, and gender). Path-coefficients are unstandardized estimates with standard errors in brackets. PRRP = Populist Radical Right Parties. ***p < .001

Model B: $B = -.086$, $SE = .024$, $p < .001$) and with anti-Muslim attitudes (Model A: $B = -.232$, $SE = .061$, $p < .001$; Model B: $B = -.209$, $SE = .040$, $p < .001$). Moreover, education was negatively associated with both PRRP voting intention ($B = -.233$, $SE = .087$, $p = .007$) and PRRP sympathy ($B = -.158$, $SE = .038$, $p < .001$). More (compared to less) educated participants were less likely to endorse PRRP nativist stances and support for PRRP. Moreover, age was unrelated to ethnic nationhood ($ps > .375$) and anti-Muslim attitudes ($ps > .216$) in both models, but was negatively associated with PRRP voting intentions ($B = -.021$, $SE = .008$, $p = .005$) and PRRP sympathy ($B = -.024$, $SE = .003$, $p < .001$). Older (compared to younger) participants were less likely to support PRRP. Finally, gender was unrelated to ethnic nationhood in both models ($ps > .228$), but was positively linked to anti-Muslim attitudes in both models (Model A: $B = .917$, $SE = .165$, $p < .001$; Model B: $B = .510$, $SE = .114$, $p < .001$). Also, gender was positively associated with both PRRP voting intention ($B = .466$, $SE = .236$, $p = .049$) and PRRP sympathy ($B = .274$, $SE = .110$, $p = .013$). Men (compared to women) displayed stronger anti-Muslim attitudes and more support for PRRP.

### 6.3.1 | Robustness checks

We conducted several checks to assess the robustness of the main results. First, we tested, for each dependent variable, whether a model without the control variables would yield similar results

(Appendix A). Second, although we did not have a sufficient number of participants expressing a voting intention for the PVV and FvD to analyze these as two separate dependent variables, we did test whether analyzing sympathy for these two PRRP as separate dependent variables would yield parallel results (Appendix B). In both cases, the results were similar to those of the main models, confirming the robustness of the findings.

## 7 | DISCUSSION

Scientists and commentators have proposed that emotional appeals to national nostalgia form a vital component of populist radical right parties (PRRP) rhetoric (Betz & Johnson, 2004; Entzinger, 2019; Lubbers, 2019; Mols & Jetten, 2014). We addressed in this article how PRRP implement national nostalgia to mobilize voters. We proposed, in particular, that national nostalgia forms a germane emotion-based justification for the exclusionary populism of PRRP. These parties implement national nostalgia to define, essentialize, and unite "the pure people" of a native background against "dangerous others"—specifically, Muslims. By glorifying a mythical and idealized version of the national past, in which the country consisted of a virtuous and morally upright national community that was culturally and ethnically homogeneous, PRRP encourage a societal division between "old-timers" (i.e., the original and native inhabitants of the country) who are part of this positively remembered

shared past and newcomers (i.e., immigrants/Muslims) who threaten this national ideal. This division, highlighted by national nostalgia, strengthens the appeal of PRRP nativist ideology, which comprises exclusionary elements of national identity based on shared ancestry (ethnic nationhood) and Islamophobia (Rydgren, 2018). Consistent with this possibility, previous social psychological studies demonstrated a positive link between national nostalgia and an exclusionary understanding of national identity and anti-Muslim attitudes (Smeekes, 2015; Smeekes et al., 2015).

Based on our theoretical analysis, we hypothesized that national nostalgia relates to stronger PRRP support due to its association with PRRP nativist ideology in the form of ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes. We tested this hypothesis by surveying a representative sample of native Dutch adults, and measuring PRRP support in terms of voting intentions and sympathy for PVV and FvD. In line with our hypothesis, national nostalgia related to voting intentions and greater sympathy for PRRP, via stronger endorsement of ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes. We obtained these results while controlling for personal nostalgia, national identification, education level, age, and gender.

Indeed, when entered simultaneously with national nostalgia, personal nostalgia was unrelated to all outcome variables except anti-Muslim attitudes in the second model (Model B), which featured a larger sample size (the effect was negative). It is national nostalgia, then, not personal nostalgia that drives these effects, and it does so above and beyond demographic variables and the potential confounding variable national identification.

Our findings suggest that researchers should consider personal and collective forms of nostalgia simultaneously in the context of intergroup processes. The bivariate correlations revealed that, similar to national nostalgia, personal nostalgia was significantly positively related to all outcome variables (except for anti-Muslim attitudes). Yet, when estimated simultaneously, personal nostalgia was mostly unrelated to the outcome variables and even evinced a negative relation with anti-Muslim prejudice in one of the main models (i.e., Model B). Personal nostalgia, freed of its associations with national identity, can have positive consequences for intergroup relations, a possibility reinforced by findings that personal nostalgia conduces to the motivation to control prejudice against African Americans (Cheung et al., 2017a).

The discrepant findings for national versus personal nostalgia align with intergroup emotions theory (Mackie et al., 2009; see also Wildschut et al., 2014), which posits that collective emotions can be differentiated from personal emotions, and that the function of the former is to regulate intergroup processes. In our study, national nostalgia predicted a behavioral outcome, PRRP voting intention. This outcome is also relevant to the argument that collective (or national) nostalgia serves, in part, to restore a sense of identity continuity (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019). According to their rhetoric, PRRP aim to re-establish national identity continuity by "giving the country back" to its original inhabitants by combatting nonnative elements (e.g., immigrants; Mols & Jetten, 2014). As such, PRRP voting intention, as predicted by national nostalgia, can be seen as a

behavioral tendency that reflects the aim to restore national identity continuity.

Our work had several limitations. To begin, due to the study's cross-sectional design, we cannot draw causal inferences. Although various authors have proposed that PRRP use national nostalgia as a tool to increase the appeal of their nativist ideology (Marzouki & McDonnell, 2016; Mols & Jetten, 2014; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019), and experimental work has shown that national nostalgia strengthens the endorsement of such nativist stances (Smeekes et al., 2015), it is possible that voters' national nostalgia is not only a cause, but also a consequence of such nativist stances. That is, when voters feel that their country should be solely inhabited by members of the native group, and that immigrants are a threat to the homogeneous nation-state, they may resort to nostalgia for a past shared with fellow in-group members. Experimental and longitudinal studies should scrutinize this possibility.

Another limitation refers to the single national context of our study, raising concern as to whether the findings are replicable in other countries. Scholars have argued for a comparable national nostalgic discourse in Western Europe and their PRRP (Duyvendak, 2011; Lubbers, 2019; Mols & Jetten, 2014), and empirical findings have demonstrated that the relation between national nostalgia and anti-immigrant attitudes is present in many Western countries (Smeekes et al., 2018). In addition, the relation between anti-immigrant attitudes and support for PRRP has been confirmed in several Western European countries (Lubbers, 2019; Rydgren, 2018). As such, we think that the relationships among national nostalgia, anti-Muslim attitudes, and PRRP support would be observed in other national contexts (at least in Western culture), besides The Netherlands. However, our findings concerning ethnic nationhood may only generalize to Western countries in which this conception of nationhood is dominant, such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland (Weldon, 2006). For countries where the more inclusive civic conception of nationhood prevails (i.e., the idea that national group membership is based on adhering to the basic civic principles of society), such as Canada, New Zealand, or (traditionally) the United States, it is less likely that ethnic nationhood links national nostalgia to PRRP support. Yet, prevailing conceptions of civic nationhood in a country do not preclude the presence of a successful populist radical right party or leader and associated discourse of national nostalgia and ideology of nativism. This is evident in the case of the United States, where president Trump often evokes national nostalgia ("Make America Great Again") to legitimize harsher stances toward immigrants and other countries (e.g., China) or the EU. Trump's nativism, then, may be mainly based on xenophobia rather than ethnic nationalism. Indeed, even though all PRRP rely on some form of nativism, PRRP differ (across countries) in the elements that they highlight and the out-groups that they depict as "dangerous others" (Golder, 2016; Mudde, 2007). Nevertheless, we encourage replication of our findings in other national contexts.

An additional limitation pertains to our measurement of national nostalgia: We assessed it in a general way, without soliciting

concrete aspects or objects of the national past. Yet, people may vary in the meaning they assign to national nostalgia, and this can influence their endorsement of nativist stances or support for PRRP. As a case in point, a recent study in The Netherlands, based on a content analysis of national nostalgia, illustrated that the link between national nostalgia and anti-Muslim attitudes is weaker among those who perceived their country as having been more cohesive and less individualistic in the past (Lackner & Smeekes, 2018). Follow-up research could examine in more detail how the content of national nostalgia predicts stronger versus weaker support for PRRP.

In conclusion, we found that national nostalgia related to stronger PRRP support in the form of voting intention and PRRP sympathy. This support was due to national nostalgia's association with PRRP nativist ideology, and in particular with ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes. PRRP appear to implement effectively national nostalgia as a master-frame for increasing their appeal among voters.

## Peer Review

The peer review history for this article is available at https://publons.com/publon/10.1002/jts5.78.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available via the LISS panel data archive: https://www.dataarchive.lissdata.nl. The LISS Data Archive is free to browse. Before you can download data sets, you need to sign a statement.

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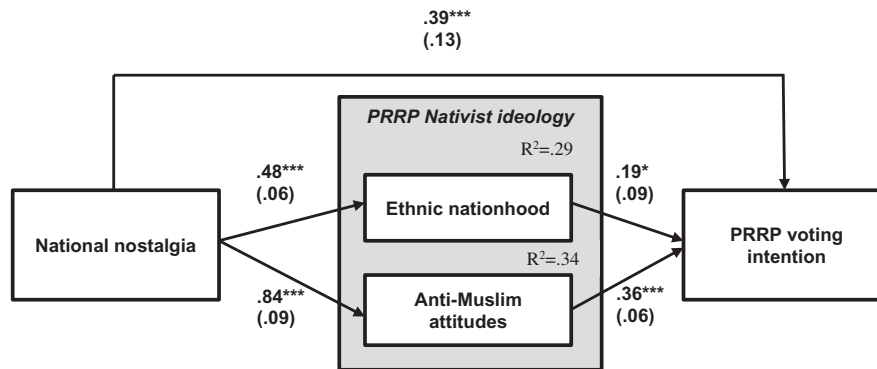
## APPENDIX A



**FIGURE A1** Logistic regression mediation Model C ($N = 686$): Association between national nostalgia and PRRP voting intention via ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes, excluding control variables. Path-coefficients are unstandardized estimates with standard errors in brackets. PRRP = Populist Radical Right Parties. ***$p < .001$, *$p < .05$. Indirect effects via ethnic nationhood, $B = .090$, $SE = .042$ (LLCI = .019, ULCI = .180), and via anti-Muslim attitudes, $B = .301$, $SE = .061$ (LLCI = .196, ULCI = .431)
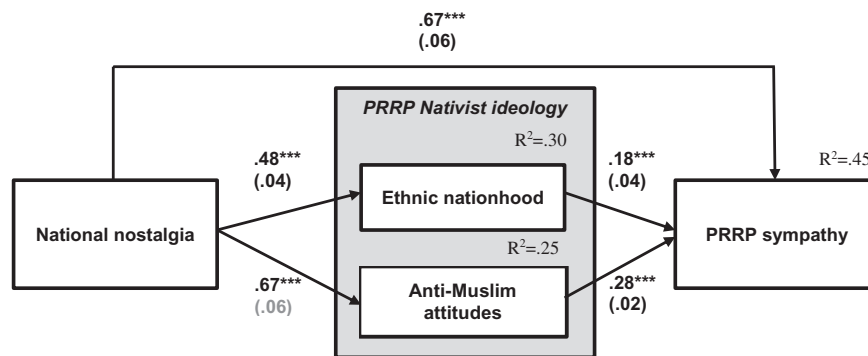


**FIGURE A2** Linear regression mediation Model D ($N = 1,681$): Association between national nostalgia and PRRP sympathy via ethnic nationhood and anti-Muslim attitudes, excluding controls. Path-coefficients are unstandardized estimates with standard errors in brackets. PRRP = Populist Radical Right Parties. ***$p < .001$. Indirect effects via ethnic nationhood, $B = .086$, $SE = .020$ (LLCI = .047, ULCI = .127), and via anti-Muslim attitudes, $B = .188$, $SE = .025$ (LLCI =.140, ULCI = .239)

## APPENDIX B

**TABLE B1** Results of logistic and linear mediation models for voting intentions and party sympathy separately for PVV and FvD, including control variables personal nostalgia, national identification, education, age and gender

|  | PVV sympathy | FvD sympathy |
| --- | --- | --- |
| National nostalgia → ethnic nationhood | .34***(.04) | .33***(.05) |
| National nostalgia → Anti-Muslim attitudes | .73***(.08) | .69***(.08) |
| National nostalgia → sympathy | .81***(.08) | .61***(.09) |
| Ethnic nationhood → sympathy | .15***(.04) | .19***(.05) |
| Anti-Muslim attitudes → sympathy | .33***(.03) | .21***(.03) |
| Indirect effect via ethnic nationhood | .050 (.016), LLCI = .020, ULCI = .085 | .061 (.018), LLCI = .029, ULCI = .101 |
| Indirect effect via anti-Muslim attitudes | .242 (.033), LLCI = .181, ULCI = .306) | .144 (.029), LLCI = .093, ULCI = .204 |

*Note:* Coefficients are unstandardized estimates with standard errors in brackets.

***$p < .001$.