**National Nostalgia and Prostalgia Predict Support toward the Black Lives Matter Movement and Creating a New Normal Following the Pandemic**

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**Abstract**

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and the COVID-19 pandemic are introducing cultural change in the United States. Past research demonstrates that cultural change can be perceived as threatening when compared to cultural stability. Thus, the change brought upon by the BLM protests and the COVID-19 pandemic may be reducing support for the BLM movement and reducing support for creating a new normal after the pandemic (i.e., creating new social norms). Based on the Cultural Inertia Model, we predicted that highlighting the BLM protests and the COVID-19 pandemic as agents of change would hinder support for each agent of change. We also hypothesized that psychological anchors (i.e., national nostalgia) and psychological propellers (i.e., national prostalgia) would serve as individual difference measures that hinder or facilitate support toward the BLM movement and creating a new normal following the pandemic. Our findings demonstrated that highlighting the BLM protests and the pandemic as agents of change did not cause differences in support for the BLM movement or creating a new normal following the pandemic. However, national nostalgia and prostalgia served as individual difference measures that respectively reduced and facilitated support for the BLM movement and the creation of new social norms following the pandemic.

*Keywords:* Cultural Inertia, Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, Nostalgia, Prostalgia

**National Nostalgia and Prostalgia Predict Support toward the Black Lives Matter Movement and Creating a New Normal Following the Pandemic**

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is a collective uprising of people who have vowed to fight against existing power structures that inhibit Black people from gaining equality. In 2020, the BLM movement dominated the news after protests broke out across the U.S. following the murder of George Floyd by a White police officer (Hill et al., 2020). While not an isolated case, this event further fueled the continuous fight for equality (Taylor, 2021). Another event that dominated the news in 2020 was the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The deaths of over 500,000 Americans due to COVID-19 (The New York Times, 2021) and the BLM protests led to important questions. How is change brought upon by the BLM protests and the COVID-19 pandemic affecting support for the BLM movement and starting a “new normal” after the pandemic ends? What factors facilitate support for the BLM movement and for creating a “new normal” once the pandemic recedes?

We conceptualize the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic as agents of change. On one hand, the BLM movement is an agent of change that attempts to change the status quo by advocating for equality (Black Lives Matter, 2017) in a situation where White people are at the top and racial minorities are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic is an agent of change that has amplified the existing status quo differences. The pandemic has hurt communities of color more so than other groups at multiple levels (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Together, these agents of change are theorized to generate stress (Zárate et al., 2019). One agent of change tends to be stressful, and one underlying hypothesis is that two agents of change might prove to be particularly stressful. The research here tests predictions derived from the Cultural Inertia Model to test how these agents of change influence perceptions regarding a new normal.

**Cultural Inertia Model**

Cultural change is inevitable. Cultural landscapes are changing, new technologies introduce behavioral changes, immigration introduces demographic changes, to name just a few agents of change. The BLM movement hopes to produce change, and the pandemic has in fact produced severe change. Thus, it is imperative for researchers to study how the related cultural change influences people’s lives on a daily basis.

The Cultural Inertia Model is described more thoroughly elsewhere (Zárate et al., 2019), and is briefly described here. The theory highlights that cultural change brings upon positive (i.e., economic growth; Inglehart & Baker, 2000) and negative consequences (i.e., stress, outgroup derogation, etc.; Zárate et al., 2004; Zárate et al., 2012; Zárate et al., 2019). The Cultural Inertia Model has several components that are analogous to Newton’s three laws of motion. An object at rest remains at rest, an object in motion remains in motion, and for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Similarly, the Cultural Inertia Model has three tenets: 1) cultures at rest desire to stay at rest; 2) cultures in motion desire to stay in motion; and 3) groups react to perceived change. In addition, there are individual difference factors that function as psychological anchors or propellers that facilitate the rejection or acceptance of change (Zárate et al., 2019; Armenta et al., 2021). Through these tenets, the Cultural Inertia Model predicts that cultural change is threatening, particularly when forced upon them. Thus, forcing change via the BLM movement, for instance, should produce reactions towards those agents of change.

Most of the research testing the Cultural Inertia Model were conducted within the context of population shifts regarding immigration and they were conducted primarily with college samples or with Latino samples. To summarize, the research demonstrates that manipulating any perceived change produces greater prejudice towards those agents of change (Zárate et al., 2004; Zárate et al., 2012; Zárate et al., 2019). The research presented here tests and extends those constructs with community samples and within the context of the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic. From a theoretical perspective, this changes the experimental tests. With population movements, the agents of change are from outside the environment and moving into the environment. For COVID-19 and the BLM movement, the agents of change are from within the environment.

**BLM as an agent of change.** The BLM movement is a collective protest intended to challenge the status quo and is similar to past movements such as the Civil Rights Movement. The BLM movement is focused on changing existing cultural and legal interactions. Anti-Black bias seems prevalent everywhere, including criminal justice settings (Haney-Lopez, 2010), work settings (Quillian et al., 2017), healthcare settings (Hall et al., 2015), etc. The BLM movement aims to introduce cultural change as an attempt to dismantle existing power structures in the U.S. and abroad so that moving forward, equality is actually achieved. Only 45% of White Americans support the BLM movement, and racial/ethnic minority groups support it more (e.g., 66% of Latinos, 87% of Black individuals, and 69% of Asian individuals support the BLM movement; Thomas & Horowitz, 2020). Similarly, White Americans have 45% greater odds of supporting the confederate flag compared to racial/ethnic minorities – despite the very clear connection to slavery (Talbert & Patterson, 2020). These differences suggest that the BLM movement reflects a larger cultural conflict and is a challenge to the status quo, particularly for White Americans. The Cultural Inertia Model predicts that the cultural changes facilitated by the BLM movement may produce intergroup hostility for those who see it as a challenge to the status quo. We describe below some variables that should influence who sees these changes as greater threats.

**COVID-19 pandemic as an agent of change.** The COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as another agent of change. Whereas the BLM movement serves to challenge the status quo, COVID-19 has amplified the status quo. For example, the pandemic has changed how people socialize (Deane et al., 2021), work (Parker et al., 2020), and eat (Deane et al., 2021). Examples include, young adults living with parents at rates not seen since the great depression (52%), increased difficulty to handle child-care (38%), and lower-income people losing jobs or taking pay cuts due to the pandemic (53%; Deane et al., 2021). Additionally, White American citizens have received COVID-19 vaccines at a much greater rate than ethnic minority groups, despite more ethnic minorities dying from the pandemic (Ndugga et al., 2021). Thus, this pandemic has amplified pre-existing group differences.

To combat the pandemic, group and interpersonal interaction patterns were changed dramatically. Many states instilled stay-at-home orders, social distancing practices emerged, and many mandated mask wearing guidelines (National Academy for State Health Policy, 2021). While a large segment of the population has complied with these safety precautions, these changes were also rejected by many, especially by conservatives (Prasad, 2020). Those who refuse to comply with COVID-19 related public health measures do so to avoid change. Thus, the pandemic has sparked in many a longing for how life was in the past (i.e., national nostalgia; Ipsos, 2020), while others are looking forward to creating new social norms and broadly a “new normal” when the pandemic ends (Boyon, 2020).

**Psychological Anchors.** The Cultural Inertia Model contends that there are individual difference variables that prevent individuals from accepting change. The model conceptualizes these variables as psychological anchors (Zárate et al., 2019). The primary psychological anchor is conservatism. Conservatism produces broad and more negative reactions toward potential changes. As a result, conservatives are likely to react against the cultural change brought on by the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic. The prediction that conservatives react more negatively to the BLM movement or to changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic is consistent with a much larger body of research showing political ideology differences on such variables (Zárate et al., 2019). Conservatism has long been known to predict more negative reactions toward change, particularly when it involves race. Thus, we use political ideology as a covariate in our models to distinguish the effect of political ideology from variables more specifically relevant to the model. Below, we identify some factors that differentiate what types of persons are more supportive or resistant toward agents of change such as BLM and creating a new normal (i.e., new social norms).

National nostalgia—a “sentimental longing for a country’s past” (Smeekes et al., 2015)— is an example of a psychological anchor. Those high in national nostalgia can be conceptualized as being grounded in the past and resistant towards any movement. It is theorized that social change is threatening to those higher on national nostalgia because social change threatens their memories of their cultural and environmental objects, people, and spaces that have become an extension of their self-concept (Zárate et al., 2019). For example, majority groups often believe that minority groups (e.g., Latinos, Asian people, immigrants, Black individuals, etc.) wear down and alter existing national norms and cultures (Stephan et al., 1999; Esses et al., 2002; McLaren, 2003; Zárate et al., 2004; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017). Smeekes (2015) demonstrated that people higher on national nostalgia greatly idealize the past and thus report greater prejudice toward those who are believed to be enacting cultural change (i.e., immigrants) in the present. Thus, national nostalgia is theorized to generate a restorative state of being where one wants to harken back to the “good ol’ days” when environmental and cultural changes perceived to have been introduced by specific groups of people/agents of change were not present (Boym, 2007; 2008).

Those findings extend to real-world social settings. For example, Mr. Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign facilitated and fostered national nostalgia in his supporters. His slogan “Make America Great Again” is reminiscent of national nostalgia because it references how America “used to be.” Because national nostalgia appears to influence individuals to disregard improvements in the present (Zárate et al., 2019), we argue that those higher on national nostalgia will report the least amount of support toward the BLM movement and the least support for creating new social norms after the pandemic. Not all individuals, however, are predicted to react negatively against societal changes.

**Psychological propellers.** In contrast to psychological anchors, psychological propellers are individual difference variables that facilitate the acceptance of change (Zárate et al., 2019). An example of an established psychological propeller in the literature is openness to new experiences. People high on openness to new experiences report lower levels of prejudice toward other social groups (Flyn, 2005) and are more willing to accept change (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Although psychological propellers have yet to be investigated within a Cultural Inertia framework, we propose that national prostalgia may serve as a psychological propeller. We conceptualize national prostalgia as a sentimental longing for the future of one’s nation. For example, a real-world display of national prostalgia might be Mr. Obama’s presidential campaign slogans “hope” and “forward” (Blake, 2012). Both slogans fostered a longing for what the nation should be in the future; and longing for the nation’s future (i.e., prostalgia) may be considered a type of prospection.

Thinking about the future has multiple benefits, such as increased mental well-being, motivation, and goal planning that may influence subsequent behavior (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Robbins & Bryan, 2004; Nurmi, 2005; Rothspan & Read, 1996). Thus, we hypothesize that future thinking regarding one’s country, what we call national prostalgia, may benefit individuals by allowing them to accept cultural change. The research presented here is one of the first tests of the prostalgia concept.

**Purpose of the current study**

The current study investigated how presenting the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic as agents of change impacted support for the BLM movement and support for creating a new normal after the pandemic seizes. We predicted that making salient the changes generated by the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic would lower support for the BLM movement and starting a new normal in comparison to only highlighting the BLM movement or the pandemic as agents of change. Additionally, we propose that national nostalgia and national prostalgia serve as psychological anchors and psychological propellers that hinder support or facilitate support for the BLM movement and support for a new normal. Specifically, we hypothesized that national nostalgia would predict less support for the BLM movement and less support for the COVID-19 post-pandemic changes (i.e., a new normal). It was further hypothesized that national prostalgia would predict higher support for the BLM movement and higher support for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Past research has found that collective nostalgia is often driven by political orientation, such that conservatives and liberals idealize the past, but in different ways (Stefaniak et al., 2021). Other research has found that national nostalgia is highly, positively correlated with conservatism (Smeekes et al., 2015). Thus, to control for these possible confounds (i.e., political ideology driving the effect of nostalgia and/or prostalgia on support), we also predicted that the aforementioned effects would still be present after controlling for political ideology.

**Method**

**Participants**

We used G\*Power to compute an *a priori* statistical power analysis to determine our sample size for a one-factor(Condition: BLM vs COVID-19, vs BLM and COVID-19) between-subjects experimental design. Power analysis with moderate power of .90, α = .05, and 3 groups suggested a sample size of 243 participants to detect an effect size of *f* = .209. We recruited 276 participants using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. The overall sample was 40% female, 56% male, 80.4% White, 6.5% Black, 5.4% Asian, 1.4% Hispanic/Latinx, 4% Mixed race, and 2% other. All participants completed the experiment between December 8th, 2020 and January 23rd, 2021, were from the U.S., and had at least a 95% MTurk approval rate. Thus, data were collected while these issues were salient. Participants were paid .60 cents for their participation in this study. Because our primary interest was in identifying negative reactions toward the BLM movement, the primarily White sample is appropriate.

**Materials**

**Agents of Change Manipulations.** To highlight the changes brought upon by the BLM movement and/or the COVID-19 pandemic in our experiment, passages were presented that highlighted either the COVID-19 pandemic, the BLM movement, or both the pandemic and the BLM movement as creators of change in society. The following passage highlighted both the BLM protests and the COVID-19 pandemic:

“The current pandemic is forcing Americans to change their everyday lives. It is changing how people socialize, work, and travel. That change is occurring in almost every part of the country and is influencing almost every facet of life. People are ready for the pandemic to be over. Once the pandemic is over, people will be able to “return to normal.” In addition to the pandemic, society is experiencing other societal changes. The Black Lives Matter protests, for example, represent a push for change in society. Although, some things will be back to the same as before, experts are predicting that there will be a “new normal”. In the new normal, you may have the opportunity to develop new routines, new policies, cultural norms, work habits, and overall functioning styles. Here, we are asking about your perceptions and hopes for life once the pandemic is over. Thus, once the threat of disease has passed and the Black Lives Matter protests have a systemic effect in the U.S., how do you see your life changing? How do you feel about your life after the potential changes?”

Those in the BLM only condition received a prompt like the text above but only mentioned BLM as an agent of change:

“Society is experiencing multiple changes. The Black Lives Matter protests, for example, represent a push for change in society. These potential changes might reflect a new normal with new policies, norms, work habits, and overall styles. Thus, if the Black Lives Matter protests have a systemic effect in the U.S., how do you see your life changing? How do you feel about your life after the potential changes?”

Those in the COVID-19 pandemic condition received a prompt that only mentioned COVID-19 as an agent of change:

“The current pandemic is forcing Americans to change their everyday lives. It is changing how people socialize, work, and travel. That change is occurring in almost every part of the country and is influencing almost every facet of life. People are ready for the pandemic to be over. Once the pandemic is over, people will be able to “return to normal.” Normal, however, might be different than before the pandemic. Some things will be back to the same as before. On the other hand, experts are predicting that there will be a “new normal”. In the new normal, you may have the opportunity to develop new routines, cultural norms, work habits, and overall functioning styles. Here, we are asking about your perceptions and hopes for life once the pandemic is over. Thus, once the threat of disease has passed, how do you see your life?”

**National Nostalgia.** The national nostalgia scale was adapted from items used by Routledge et al. (2008), Batcho (1995), and Smeekes et al. (2014). Participants were asked to complete a 4-item scale assessing their sentimental longing for the past (1 = Never, 5 = Always). A sample item was “How significant is it for you to feel nostalgic about the way the United States was in the past?” Scores were reverse coded so that higher numbers meant more national nostalgia (α = .78).

**National Prostalgia.** The national prostalgia scale was adapted from Routledge et al. (2008), Batcho (1995), and Smeekes et al. (2014). National prostalgia was designed to be an inverse of the National Nostalgia scale. Participants were asked to complete a 5-item scale assessing their sentimental longing for the future (1 = Never, 5 = Always). A sample item was “How significant is it for you to feel prostalgic about the way the United States will be in the future?” And “The way Americans will be in the future.” Items were reverse coded so that higher numbers meant more national prostalgia (α = .79).

**COVID-19 specific questions.** We created a 9-item scale assessing participants’ thoughts on developing a “new normal” due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A sample item was “I don't want to develop a new normal with new routines following 2020.” Higher scores indicated higher support for creating a new normal once the pandemic ends (α = .70).

**BLM specific questions.**We created an 8-item scale assessing participants’ thoughts on developing a “new normal” due to the recent Black Lives Matter protests. A sample item was “I support the BLM movement.” Higher scores indicated higher support for the BLM movement (α = .74).

**Social Political Ideology.**Participants were instructed to rate their political ideology on social issues on an 8-point scale (0 = extremely liberal, 7 = extremely conservative). An example item is: “Here is a 7-point scale on which the social views that people might hold are arranged from extremely socially liberal (left) to extremely socially conservative (right). Where would you place yourself on this scale?”

**Other scales.** We included an individualism scale (Chirkov, 2008), an item asking about fiscal political ideology, and an adaptation of the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler et al., 2000) for exploratory purposes. Those scales did not influence our reported results and are not reported. No other measures were presented.

**Procedure**

In the experiment, participants were asked to complete a survey regarding their opinions on creating a “new normal.” Participants were instructed that they would answer a variety of questions regarding how they feel about creating a new normal following the year 2020. After granting consent, participants answered questions regarding social political ideology, national nostalgia, and national prostalgia. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: 1) BLM, 2) COVID-19 pandemic, or 3) both the BLM and COVID-19 pandemic as agents of change. After reading the associated prompt, participants were instructed to answer the COVID-19 items and the BLM items. At the end of the survey, participants were debriefed, received $0.60 cents, and were thanked for their participation.

**Results**

We had three hypotheses. We first hypothesized that highlighting the changes brought upon by the BLM movement and the pandemic would reduce support for the BLM movement and creating a new normal when compared to only highlighting one agent of change (the BLM movement or the pandemic). To test this hypothesis, we ran a General Linear Model (GLM) with condition as the independent variable and support for the BLM movement and support for creating a new normal as the dependent variables. While Whites report much lower support toward the BLM movement than all other racial/ethnic groups, opponents of the BLM movement and creating a new normal can be found within every group (Thomas & Horowitz, 2020; Prasad, 2020). Thus, we decided to include all participants, regardless of demographic background, in our analyses. The results demonstrated no difference between the conditions in support for BLM, *F*(2, 273) = 0.19, *p* = .823, *η2* = .001 [95% CI: .000, .015], or support for creating a new normal, *F*(2, 273) = 1.49, *p* = .226, *η2* = .011 [95% CI: .000, .042]. Thus, highlighting the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic as agents of change did not produce different levels of support toward the BLM movement or creating a new normal. Post-hoc analyses with only White-identifying participants also demonstrated that our manipulation did not produce different levels of support toward the BLM movement or creating a new normal.

Next, we hypothesized that national nostalgia would predict less support for the BLM movement and less support creating a new normal, whereas national prostalgia would predict higher support for the BLM movement and higher support for creating a new normal. To test this, we a ran a GLM where condition, national nostalgia, and national prostalgia were the independent variables and support for the BLM movement and support for creating a new normal were the dependent variables. The findings demonstrated that above and beyond the effects of condition, national nostalgia predicted less support for the BLM movement, *F*(1, 267) = 11.87, *p* < .001, *ηp2* = .043 [95% CI: .008, .096] and predicted less support for creating a new normal, *F*(1, 267) = 4.38, *p* = .037, *ηp2* = .016 [95% CI: .000, .056]. In contrast, and in line with predictions, national prostalgia predicted higher support for the BLM movement, *F*(1, 267) = 19.18, *p* < .0001, *ηp2* = .067 [95% CI: .020, .128] and higher support for creating a new normal, *F*(1, 267) = 30.56, *p* < .0001, *ηp2* = .103 [95% CI: .043, .171].

Finally, we hypothesized that national nostalgia and prostalgia would differentially predict support for the BLM movement and creating a new normal after controlling for social political ideology. The findings demonstrated that after controlling for social political ideology, national nostalgia no longer predicted support for the BLM movement, *F*(1, 266) = 1.39, *p* = .239, *ηp2* = .005 [95% CI: .000, .035] or support for a new normal, *F*(1, 266) = .33, *p* = .563, *ηp2* = .001 [95% CI: .000, .023]. This was not surprising as nostalgia and political ideology were highly correlated in this sample, *r* = .44, *p* < .0001. Conversely, national prostalgia continued to predict higher support toward the BLM movement, *F*(1, 266) = 17.53, *p* < .0001, *ηp2* = .062 [95% CI: .017, .121] and support for creating a new normal, *F*(1, 266) = 28.84, *p* < .0001, *ηp2* = .098 [95% CI: .039, .165]. The beta coefficients and associated errors from our regression models can be found in Tables 1 and 2 below. Correlations, means, and standard deviations for each of the variables can be found in Table 3 below.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Support for Black Lives Matter*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | |
| Variable | *ß* | *SE* | *p* | *ηp2* | *ß* | *SE* | *p* | *ηp2* |
| National Nostalgia | -.14 | .09 | < .001 | .043 | -.04 | .09 | .24 | .005 |
| National Prostalgia | .38 | .10 | < .0001 | .067 | .34 | .09 | < .0001 | .057 |
| Social Political Ideology | - | - | - | - | -.10 | .02 | < .0001 | .077 |

**Table 2**

*Summary of Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Support for Creating a New Normal*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | |
| Variable | *ß* | *SE* | *p* | *ηp2* | *ß* | *SE* | *p* | *ηp2* |
| National Nostalgia | -.07 | .07 | .037 | .016 | -.02 | .07 | .56 | .001 |
| National Prostalgia | .29 | .08 | < .0001 | .103 | .27 | .08 | < .0001 | .098 |
| Social Political Ideology | - | - | - | - | -.06 | .02 | .002 | .034 |

**Table 3.**

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations for National Nostalgia, National Prostalgia, Support for creating a New Normal, Support for the BLM Movement, and Social Political Ideology.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. National Nostalgia | --- |  |  |  |  |
| 1. National Prostalgia | .38\*\*\* | --- |  |  |  |
| 1. Support for New Normal | .01 | .29\*\*\* | --- |  |  |
| 1. Support for BLM Movement | -.10 | .19\*\* | .61\*\*\* | --- |  |
| 1. Social Political Ideology | .44\*\*\* | .11 | -.17\*\* | -.31\*\*\* | --- |
| *M* | 2.67 | 3.12 | 3.24 | 3.46 | 3.58 |
| *SD* | 0.84 | 0.76 | 0.59 | 0.72 | 2.08 |

\**p* ≤ .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

**Discussion**

To implement policy changes effectively, it is important to understand how people react toward change more broadly. Thus, the study tested how changes brought upon by the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic affect support toward the BLM movement and creating a new normal after the pandemic. Contrary to predictions, the findings demonstrated that support for the BLM movement and creating a new normal were similar across conditions. Participants reported the same amount of support for each movement regardless of the experimental condition. We also tested the hypotheses that national nostalgia and prostalgia are a psychological anchor or propeller, respectively. These predictions were supported. National nostalgia predicted less support for both the BLM movement and creating a new normal, whereas national prostalgia predicted more support for the BLM movement and creating a new normal. These effects persisted after controlling for social political ideology, but only for prostalgia. In the remainder of this discussion section, we consider ties and differences to previous work on nostalgia and prospective thinking, limitations and future directions, and discuss how our findings may influence policy changes.

**Cultural Change in the U.S.**

Cultural change is theorized to generate stress and induce threat (Zárate et al., 2019). Given that the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic have generated several changes to the U.S. (Menjiver, 2020; Deane et al., 2021), we tested whether presenting the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic as agents of change would reduce support toward the movement and the creation of new social norms. Our findings did not support that hypothesis.

One explanation for the aforementioned discrepancy in findings is that our manipulation was too weak to produce any observable changes in support toward the BLM movement and the creation of new social norms. Independent of the prompts, the actual scales used could have acted as the relevant prompts, masking any manipulated effects. Thus, future research should further investigate these issues as they pertain to the BLM movement and the pandemic, but with better manipulations.

**National Nostalgia Fosters Support for Cultural Stability**

The Cultural Inertia model theorizes that individual difference factors predict reactance toward cultural change. Specifically, psychological anchors should foster negative reactions toward change in attempt to restore a stable past (Zárate et al., 2019). In line with the theory, participants who were high in national nostalgia reported less support for the BLM movement and less support for creating a new normal following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our results extend work on national nostalgia by demonstrating that people high in national nostalgia prefer stability by providing less support toward agents of change (i.e., starting a new normal after the pandemic and supporting the BLM movement). Similarly, the Cultural Inertia Model predicts that majority groups and those higher on psychological anchors (i.e., national nostalgia) react against cultural change because change threatens their cultural customs, spaces, in-group members, self-concepts, etc. (Zárate et al., 2019). In the context of the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic, those higher on national nostalgia report less support toward cultural change produced by the BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic possibly because the change produced by those agents of change is believed to threaten their lifestyle.

Although we found support for national nostalgia being a psychological anchor, this effect dissipates after controlling for social political ideology. Previous research demonstrates that nostalgia and conservatism are highly correlated (Gest, et al., 2018; Lammers & Baldwin, 2018; Smeekes et al., 2015). For example, across nine studies and a meta-analysis, Lammers and Baldwin (2018) found that conservatives were more nostalgic than liberals and therefore preferred political ideas that were presented with past-focused rhetoric. Similarly, Gest and colleagues (2018) found that nostalgic deprivation—the discrepancy between perceived status and perceptions of the past—was positively correlated with radical right ideologies. We also found comparable results between social political ideology (i.e., higher conservatism) and national nostalgia, *r* = .44, p < .0001. However, other studies have found that national nostalgia serves as a psychological anchor even after controlling for political ideology (Lammers & Baldwin, 2018), whereas we did not. The methodological differences between the studies are too severe to make any conclusions about those differential findings and in general, our national nostalgia findings replicate previous research well.

**National Prostalgia Fosters Support for Cultural Change**

In contrast to psychological anchors, psychological propellers are theorized by the Cultural Inertia Model to predict receptive reactions toward cultural change (Zárate et al., 2019). In line with this theory, our results demonstrate convincing evidence for national prostalgia serving as a psychological propeller. Participants who were high in national prostalgia reported more support for the BLM movement and creating a new normal after the COVID-19 pandemic seizes even after controlling for political ideology. Thus, our findings were not driven by liberalism or conservatism.   
 Those results align with work on prospection and future thinking. When people think about the future, they consider multiple possible outcomes (Baumiester et al. 2018). Additionally, future thinking and prospection have been tied to planning and setting goals to meet the future one envisions (Papies et al., 2009). For example, Papies and colleagues (2009) found that over time, participants who made goals for behavioral change not only created goal-directed associations but also completed more goals. Thus, thinking about the future and planning for goal attainment, led to completing the goals they initially envisioned. Similarly, those higher on national prostalgia may have elicited multiple views of the nation’s potential future and changing tapestry, allowing them to be more receptive to changes, including new social norms, generated by the BLM movement and the pandemic. Though, more research is needed to support this argument.

This is one of the first published tests of the concept of prostalgia. It is conceptualized as a longing for a future, with a focus on national level constructs. Conceptually, it is close but distinct from prospection, partly because of how the measure was developed. The prostalgia items were derived from various nostalgia scale items (Routledge et al., 2008; Batcho, 1995; and Smeekes et al., 2014). Thus, conceptually, prostalgia is closer to the opposite of nostalgia than it is to prospection. Future research will more clearly differentiate and test differences between prostalgia and prospection. The longing for the future, especially at the national level, distinguish prostalgia from prospection – at the conceptual level. Future research will have to empirically test the conceptual differences between the two constructs.

It is also important to determine whether racial/ethnic minorities respond differently to support toward the BLM movement and creating a new normal as a function of national nostalgia and national prostalgia in comparison to White people. The primary goal was to test for negative reactions, and as such, our sample was appropriate. The BLM movement and creating a new normal differentially impact racial/ethnic minority peoples’ lives so our effects should be magnified, especially for national prostalgia. However, we were unable to analyze our data by race/ethnic group because the number of racial/ethnic minorities was small (*N* = 53), and we were not adequately powered for those comparisons. Thus, future research should investigate those potential differences.

**Policy Implications**

Our results have implications for how policy change should be presented. We found that in the face of change, some people hark on the way things were in the past while others long for a hopeful future – and these individual differences predict support for the BLM movement and the creation of new social norms. Policymakers should keep these individual difference factors in mind when trying to implement changes. Our results suggest that framing change to cater to people’s preference for time orientation may have important implications for adhering to new social policy changes. Thus, social distance measures, for instance, might be presented as a way to maintain our past cultural styles or as a way to return to the old normal as quickly as possible. In doing so, current changes might be perceived as temporary and as the best possible vehicle to remain stable. It may be advantageous to present changes as both restoring good qualities about the past and encouraging thinking about the future to foster adherence to the policy among those that are nostalgic and prostalgic, respectively. Similarly, a focus on the future might motivate others to change to adapt to the impending changes. Often, sudden change is more negative than anticipated change. Thus, by anticipating changes, one might make those changes more palatable for all involved.

Change need not challenge one’s perspective. One implicit assumption might be that change is bad. Change can also reflect one’s past once one recognizes that change is constant. Thus, the idealized past was also a change from the time before that. Recognizing the constant change might work to make one more open toward more change. Similarly, highlighting changes one agrees with might also make one more open to different changes.

**Conclusion**

The BLM movement and the COVID-19 pandemic have become forces in the U.S. and across the world that have generated cultural change. Thus, it is important for researchers to investigate how changes generated by modern agents of change are received by the public. We found that while the changes generated by the BLM movement and the pandemic do not influence support toward the BLM movement and the creation of new social norms, national nostalgia and national prostalgia are good predictors of support toward the BLM movement and the creation of new social norms. Those higher in national nostalgia oppose changes brought upon by BLM and the pandemic, while those higher in national prostalgia endorse those changes. These findings have important implications for future research and policy changes.

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1. All materials, scales, code, data, etc. can be found on our open-science framework account: <https://osf.io/932zq/?view_only=461104a62b3c47f480e1648898a074fc>. The study hypotheses were not preregistered. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)