

# Outgroup Attitudes, Personality and Support for Secessionist Movements: IWAH and Collective Narcissism Predict Support for Scottish Independence

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## Abstract

Attitudes toward secession are studied across disciplines yet remain under-researched in the field of personality psychology. The present study (N = 430) examined xenophobia, identification with all humanity (IWAH) and 4 personality traits (universalism-tolerance, openness, right-wing authoritarianism, collective narcissism) in relation to attitudes toward Scottish independence. IWAH was a predictor of support for independence, while xenophobia and right-wing authoritarianism were predictors of less favourable attitudes to independence. These findings complemented previous research linking support for secessionist movements with non-nativist thinking and personality traits such as agreeableness and extraversion. Collective narcissism was the strongest predictor of support for Scottish independence, hinting at a narcissistic distortion in secessionist thinking that invites further research.

## Keywords

secession, IWAH, xenophobia, openness, universalism-tolerance, right-wing authoritarianism, collective narcissism

## Non-Technical Summary

### Background

Secession is an important area of research for advanced democracies. The creation of a new state has important consequences for the people living in its territory. Governments are obliged to treat calls for secession seriously, so policy makers should understand the factors that can contribute to populations seeking secession.

### Why was this study done?

People can be characterised in terms of their enduring dispositional qualities, i.e., their personalities. Psychologists have taken advantage of this information in ways that have significant consequences for understanding behaviour in many different fields. Personality has been investigated in relation to a broad spectrum of political attitudes, behaviours, and preferences, and can have an important impact on political decision-making, yet attitudes toward secession remain under-researched in the field of personality psychology.

### What did the researchers do and find?

A public survey measured peoples' attitudes toward Scottish independence and various aspects of their personality and attitudes toward outgroups (e.g., foreigners). Favourable attitudes toward Scottish independence were related to higher identification with all humanity (IWAH) and collective narcissism, and lower xenophobia and right-wing authoritarianism.



**What do these findings mean?**

The results suggest that broadly inclusive attitudes and beliefs are associated with favourable attitudes toward Scottish independence whilst prejudicial, authoritarian attitudes and beliefs are associated with unfavourable attitudes. This supports a trend away from authoritarianism and conservatism, and toward agreeableness and concern for individual rights among people who support secession. The inclusivity we observed was thought to be related to the perception of pro-independence Scots as holding broadly social democratic values. Similarly, a conservative preference for authority may have undergirded the desire to stay with the UK since Westminster could be perceived as stronger than a newly-fledged Scottish government. Finally, the association between collective narcissism—the unrealistic belief in the greatness of one’s nation—and support for Scottish independence was thought to be related to political partisanship and could result in distorted thinking that could damage social and civic institutions.

Secession is an important area of research for advanced democracies. The creation of a new state constitutes a historic event holding important consequences for national populations. Democratic governments are ethically and politically obligated to treat calls for secession seriously, so policy makers should understand the factors that can contribute to populations seeking secession.

The number of countries in the world has tripled in the second half of the twentieth century due to secession and decolonisation. Secessionist movements in East Timor, Kosovo, Montenegro, and South Sudan have been successful in recent times, while movements in the Basque country, Catalonia, Northern Ireland, Quebec, and Scotland continue to lobby for their regions’ independence. Attitudes toward secession are a continuing focus of interdisciplinary study yet remain under-researched in the field of personality psychology (Barceló, 2017).

**What Drives Support for Secessionist Movements?**

A range of psychological factors has been investigated in relation to attitudes toward secession. National identification (Muñoz & Tormos, 2015) has been cited as a major influence in the Catalan case. Perception of economic threat (Kopasker, 2014) was a significant factor against decoupling the Scottish economy from the rest of the UK. Vergés-Gifra and Serra (2022) dismantled misconceptions in their argument for Catalan secessionism as a non-nativist, non-xenophobic movement.

Risk attitudes have been studied extensively in the field, with sovereignty referenda being cited as ‘ideal settings’ for exploring how attitudes toward risk may influence voters (Nadeau, Martin, & Blais, 1999). Quebecers with a higher tolerance for risk weighted their decision-making in favour of the anticipated costs and benefits of secession, while those with lower tolerance weighted in favour of a perceived ‘worst outcome’ (Nadeau et al., 1999). In the context of gender, Catalan women’s likelihood of voting in favour of secession was found to be depressed by uneasiness with risk-taking (Verge, Guinjoan, & Rodon, 2015). Liñeira and Henderson (2021) found that risk attitudes among Scots contributed to the status quo bias found in referenda during Scotland’s 2014 ‘Indyref’ vote. They also found that information mediated the effects of risk attitudes on voting behaviour, that is, political knowledge dampened the effects of risk attitudes on ballot choice.

**Why Personality?**

People can be characterised in terms of their enduring dispositional qualities, i.e., their personalities. Psychologists have taken advantage of this information in ways that have significant consequences for understanding behaviour in fields as diverse as organisational effectiveness (Hogan, 1991) and political decision-making.

Personality research in relation to political behaviour is often conducted in terms of the Big-Five personality traits (Gerber et al., 2011): conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and neuroticism. However, other facets of personality, such as the ‘lethal union’ of right-wing authoritarianism and social-dominance orientation, have proved important to the debate (Choma & Hanoch, 2017; Cohen & Smith, 2016; Golec de Zavala, Guerra, & Simão, 2017), as,

increasingly, has collective narcissism (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Forgas & Lantos, 2020; Golec de Zavala et al., 2017; Marchlewska et al., 2018).

Personality has been fruitfully investigated in relation to a broad spectrum of political attitudes, behaviours, and preferences. Research supports the idea that personality can have an important impact on political decision-making. Despite this, attitudes toward secession remain under-researched in this field other than a few notable exceptions discussed below.

## Personality in Relation to Secessionist Movements

In a historical study, Scottish nationalists (i.e., those desiring independence for Scotland from the rest of the UK) were found to be neither authoritarian nor conservative (Ray, 1978). Lewis and Brown (2015) found individuals desiring Scottish independence to score high on concern for individual rights and low on concern for normative in-group cohesion. These studies complement one another on the grounds that authoritarianism demands in-group cohesion (Stellmacher & Petzel, 2005) while opposing individual liberties (Moghaddam & Vuksanovic, 1990). Barceló (2017) found support for Catalan independence to be influenced by agreeableness and, to a lesser extent, extraversion. This is consistent with the research in the Scottish context given authoritarians tend to score lower on agreeableness (Butler, 2000).

In the field of mood profiling, Oller i Sala, Satorra, and Tobeña (2019) found secessionists to feel less tired and confused than unionists after their protracted and unsuccessful lobby for independence, as well as less fearful and more hopeful about the future—despite evidence that their movement may have damaged the social, political, and financial fabric of Catalonia. The researchers suggested the personality trait, collective narcissism, may have contributed to this cognitive distortion, though this was not empirically investigated.

This small body of research supports the beginnings of a trend away from authoritarianism and conservatism, and toward agreeableness and concern for individual rights, among people who support secessionist movements. There is also the potential for narcissistic distortion: a hypothesis that is worth investigating given the impact secession can have on national economies and the populations that constitute them.

## Context for the Present Study

Favourable attitudes toward secessionist movements may be related to higher concern for rights, higher agreeableness and extraversion, lower xenophobia, lower authoritarianism, and the potential for collective narcissistic distortion. The present study examined xenophobia, identification with all humanity (IWAH) and four measures of personality (universalism-tolerance, openness, right-wing authoritarianism and collective narcissism) in relation to support for Scottish independence.

## Measures of Outgroup Attitude

### Identification With All Humanity (IWAH)

Identification with all humanity (IWAH) relates to the disposition to identify with, and show concern for, human beings regardless of their national, racial, ethnic, or religious groups. It relates to higher levels of concern and supportive behaviour toward the disadvantaged (Reese, Proch, & Finn, 2015) and predicts valuing the lives of ingroup and outgroup members equally (McFarland, Webb, & Brown, 2012). IWAH captures both the lack of authoritarianism and conservatism previously associated with Scottish nationalists (Ray, 1978), and the concern for individual rights and disinterest in normative, ingroup cohesion associated with those desiring Scottish independence (Lewis & Brown, 2015). IWAH is positively related to agreeableness and extraversion (Ashton & Lee, 2009), which captures the findings in Barceló (2017), and is predicted by openness and universalism-tolerance (Hamer, McFarland, & Penczek, 2019).

## Xenophobia

Xenophobia is the dislike of, or prejudice against, people from other countries. Xenophobia is motivated by the perception of conflict between in-group and out-group and can manifest as suspicion, hostility, or fear of out-groups and individuals perceived as belonging to them (Bolaffi et al., 2002). Xenophobia is predicted by right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017).

Mobilisation of xenophobic sentiment was found to have been related to support for the UK Brexit referendum of 2016 (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017). The success of this referendum saw Scotland exiting the EU despite a majority (62%) of Scots voting to remain (McHarg & Mitchell, 2017). Subsequently, the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP)—the ruling party in Scotland that advocates on behalf of Scottish independence—claimed ‘a renewed, refreshed and strengthened mandate’ for independence (Paun & Sargeant, 2019). Pro-European sentiment is increasingly associated with the Scottish independence movement (Ormston, 2015), with the SNP describing itself as ‘the most consistent and strongest pro-European voice in Scotland’ (SNP.org, 2011). An examination of xenophobia in relation to Scottish secessionism could provide cross-cultural support for the argument in Vergés-Gifra and Serra (2022) that Catalan secessionism is a non-nativist, non-xenophobic movement.

## Measures of Personality

### Openness

Openness is one of the ‘Big 5’ facets of personality and relates to receptivity to new ideas and experiences, intellectual curiosity, and the desire for novelty. High openness is associated with a tendency toward liberalism and tolerance for diversity (McCrae, 1996) and is associated with fuzzier distinctions between ingroups and outgroups (Lee, Ashton, Choi, & Zachariassen, 2015). Hamer et al. (2019) consider openness an important predictor of IWAH due to the flexibility and open-mindedness it engenders, enabling the formation of broad identifications such as the cross-cultural ones required for IWAH. Openness has been considered in relation to support for Catalan secession (Barceló, 2017). Its contradictory expectations—that, on the one hand, openness would influence a desire for novelty but, on the other, depress participants’ willingness to break bridges through desire for a heterogeneous social milieu—were borne out by the results: that is, no effect found.

### Universalism-Tolerance

Universalism-tolerance (UT) refers to a single facet (tolerance) of the tripartite ‘universalism’ characteristic. Schwartz (1992) defines it as a value emphasising self-transcendence for the sake of accepting and understanding people different from oneself. UT was found to be a significant predictor of IWAH alongside openness (Hamer et al., 2019). The qualitative similarities between UT and IWAH are clear—both relate to a conscious, elevated respect for outgroups and to enhanced out-group concern (Hamer et al., 2019)—however, UT emphasises the difference through tolerance between individual and outgroup, rather than their identification.

### Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) is a three-faceted attitude syndrome combining 1) submission to strength-based authority, 2) aggressiveness toward social deviants and dissenters, and 3) support for conventionalism, order, and a non-diverse environment (Altemeyer, 1988). Although RWA is linked with support for conservative politics (McFarland, Ageyev, & Abalakina, 1993; Smithers & Loble, 1978), the ‘right-wing’ in RWA does not refer to a political preference but to a preference for authority and in-group cohesion: it is therefore meaningful to investigate RWA in the context of a left-wing movement such as Scottish independence. Authoritarianism was previously found to be negatively related to support for Scottish nationalism (Ray, 1978). RWA correlates with collective narcissism (CN) and predicts higher levels of xenophobia (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017).

## Collective Narcissism

Collective narcissism (CN) is a facet of personality pertaining to an unrealistic belief in national greatness: specifically, the belief that the nation is unfairly judged to be less great than the individual believes it to be (Forgas & Lantos, 2020). CN has become the focus of a growing body of research linking prejudicial attitudes with support for nationalistic political movements (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Forgas & Lantos, 2020; Golec de Zavala et al., 2017; Marchlewska et al., 2018). CN has been found to correlate with RWA and predict higher levels of xenophobia (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017). Considering that CN was hypothesised to underlie the energetic disregard of Catalan secessionists for the alleged damage their minority ‘crusade’ was doing to the broader society (Oller i Sala et al., 2019), investigating CN in relation to Scottish independence extends this hypothesis to the broader picture of secessionist movements to understand whether it might be a feature of secessionist thinking in general.

Investigating CN, previously a robust predictor of prejudice, in the context of the Scottish independence movement—which has clear tones of inclusivity and tolerance—may seem counterintuitive. However, CN is not only linked to prejudice: it is also related to constructs such as benevolence, tolerance and trustworthiness (Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2021) in a manifestation known as ‘communal collective narcissism’. Communal CN pertains when the self-enhancement of the group is satisfied in the domains of compassion, morality and helpfulness rather than the traditionally conceived narcissistic domains of assertive dominance and competence. This makes CN a relevant construct to consider in relation to the Scottish independence movement.

## The Present Study: Rationale and Predictions

It was hypothesised that IWAH would influence support for Scottish independence. This is due to the findings that Scottish nationalists showed low authoritarianism and conservatism (Ray, 1978) and high concern for individual rights and disinterest in normative, ingroup cohesion (Lewis & Brown, 2015), which are consistent with IWAH. It would also complement the findings in Barceló (2017), who demonstrated that support for Catalan secession is influenced by agreeableness and extraversion, both of which correlate with IWAH (Ashton & Lee, 2009).

Would openness be positively associated with the desire for independence, given the intellectual and experiential novelty implicit in the rejection of the status quo engendered by a Scottish secession? Barceló (2017) found no relationship between openness and support for secession in Catalonia, and in fact hypothesised against it on the grounds that individuals who score high in openness tend to be more involved in heterogeneous social networks which depresses their willingness to break bridges across groups. Given the opposing tendencies of openness in the context of secession, no predictions were made.

UT captures a facet of left-wing, progressive political thinking that fits well with the social democratic politics of the Scottish independence movement (Keating, 2007). Given this, and the qualitative similarities and strong statistical relationship between UT and IWAH, it was predicted that UT would influence support for secession.

On the grounds that Catalan secessionism has been characterised as a non-xenophobic, non-nativist movement (Vergés-Gifra & Serra, 2022), xenophobia was hypothesised to associate negatively with support for a Scottish secession. RWA was hypothesised to be likewise negatively associated, both on these grounds and on the grounds of its close association with xenophobia.

It was hypothesised that CN would influence pro-secessionist thinking in Scotland, firstly because of partisan belief in the Scottish independence movement’s superior inclusivity and benevolence toward outgroups; secondly, because of the pervasive nationalist perception of Scotland as an ‘English colony’ (Connell, 2004), which fits with the sense of unfair treatment and insufficient recognition of the nation’s worth that has been theorised to underpin CN (Forgas & Lantos, 2020). Finally, it was included as a means of extending the hypothesis in Oller i Sala et al. (2019) that CN had led to a distorted increase in clarity and hope for the future among secessionists in Catalonia, despite the ostensible damage done by the secessionist movement there. The present study’s hypothesis regarding CN went against the grain of previous research (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017) suggesting CN should have a strong statistical relationship with xenophobia.



## Materials and Method

### Participants

Participants were sought from social media (Facebook and Twitter) by targeting pro-independence, anti-independence, and non-partisan groups with a short introduction and link to the survey. A condition of participation was that they had voted in the Scottish independence referendum of 2014. Given a population of 3.6 million Scottish independence referendum voters, 385 participants were sought allowing for a 95% confidence interval with a 5% error margin. This figure met and exceeded the recommendations of research (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013) suggesting correlations should stabilise at around 250 participants. The questionnaire was completed in full by 430 participants.

Ethical approval was given by the first author's institutional ethics committee. No names or contact details were recorded, ensuring participant anonymity. While participants divulged some personal information (e.g., age-group, gender, birthplace) there was no way to link the data back to individual participants. QuestionPro was used to collect the data.

### Procedure

After opening the questionnaire using the link provided, participants read an information sheet which told them that the study examined attitudes toward Scottish independence in relation to national attitudes and personality. After providing informed consent participants could proceed to the study made up of 52 items. Participants were first asked how they voted in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum and how they felt about the 'No-to-independence' outcome. Next, participants responded to individual difference measurements presented in the order: IWAH, xenophobia, openness, UT, RWA, CN. After answering the questions, participants were thanked for their time, debriefed, and provided with an email address to contact should they wish to withdraw their data.

### Measures

#### Demographic and Identity Controls

Participants were born in Scotland ( $N = 371$ ), England ( $N = 33$ ), Northern Ireland ( $N = 4$ ), and Wales ( $N = 3$ ); 15 were born outside the UK and 4 failed to provide data. This meant 86% of the sample were native to Scotland. Gender was split 197 males to 230 females, with 1 participant identifying as transgender and 2 identifying as neither male nor female (46% male, 54% female, <1% other). The mode age-group of the participants was 40-49. 375 participants considered themselves Scottish, 36 considered themselves British, and 19 considered themselves other nationalities.

As per the 2011 census<sup>1</sup>, 83% of Scots were native-born compared to 86% of survey respondents, indicating that the sample was representative of the general population regarding birthplace. Gender was split in the census 48% male to 52% female compared to 46% male to 54% female in the present study, again showing good representativeness in the present sample regarding gender. Age groupings follow and are shown in the format 'census:survey respondents': 16-19 (6%:1%), 20-24 (7%:3%), 25-29 (7%:5%), 30-39 (13%:24%), 40-49 (15%:15%), 50-59 (13%:25%), 60-69 (11%:22%), 70+ (12%:6%). The age spread of the present sample was therefore not representative of the age of the general population, showing an overrepresentation of 30-39 year-olds and 50-69 year-olds at the expense of the under-25s and over-70s.

In terms of national identification, the 2011 census recorded 60% identified as 'Scottish' compared to 87% of survey respondents, 8% 'British' compared to 8% of respondents, and 10% 'Other' compared to 5% of respondents. The sample was therefore underweighted regarding self-identified 'Other' nationalities in Scotland and representative regarding self-identified British nationalities in Scotland. No firm conclusions can be drawn regarding the self-identified Scots in Scotland since the census included a category the survey did not, namely, 'Scottish and Other', which came to 20% of the population. We can conclude that the survey was overweighted in favour of those considering themselves Scottish.

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1) Freely available online here: <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/population/>

## Personality Measures

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  cited are for the current study. Following Hamer et al. (2019), a short, 4-item version was adapted from McFarland et al.'s (2012) IWAH scale, with the most politicised questions included (see Appendix),  $\alpha = 0.79$ . The 5-item xenophobia scale from Lewin-Epstein and Levanon's (2005) study into Arab and Israeli xenophobia was used (the generality of the questions suited it to cross-national use),  $\alpha = 0.89$ . To measure openness the short, 6-item Openness to Experience scale from Soto and John's (2017) The Big Five Inventory-2 Short Form (BFI-2-S) was used,  $\alpha = 0.74$ . The short, 3-item UT scale adapted from Schwartz's PVQ5-R (Schwartz et al., 2012) in Hamer et al. (2019) was used,  $\alpha = 0.87$ . The 'very short', 6-item RWA scale developed by Bizumic and Duckitt (2018) was used,  $\alpha = 0.73$ . The 5-item CN scale from Golec de Zavala et al. (2017) was used,  $\alpha = 0.87$ .

## Support for Secession

A 9-item 'support for the referendum's outcome' Likert scale was adapted from Golec de Zavala et al.'s (2017) Brexit study but referred to the outcome of the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 (using reverse scoring due to the opposing outcomes of the referenda),  $\alpha = 0.88$ . Example questions included: "The outcome of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum made me feel uneasy", with answers graded on a 5-point Likert scale indicating "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". Materials used in this questionnaire can be seen within the Appendix.

## Results

In order to affirm previous research into the relationships between the dependent variables (outgroup attitude and personality), a partial correlation was run with demographic controls (age, gender, birthplace, national identification). All variables correlated with one another in line with expectations and previous research, with the exception of CN. See Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Correlations Between the Dependent Variables*

| Variable | Xen     | Openness | UT      | RWA     | CN     |
|----------|---------|----------|---------|---------|--------|
| IWAH     | -.47*** | .24***   | .31***  | -.29*** | -.04   |
| Xen      | –       | -.29***  | -.36*** | .50***  | -.05   |
| Openness |         | –        | .11*    | -.37*** | -.12*  |
| UT       |         |          | –       | -.13**  | -.02   |
| RWA      |         |          |         | –       | .24*** |

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

Two multiple linear regression models assessed the extent to which the IWAH predictors (openness, UT) had predicted IWAH, and the xenophobia predictors (RWA, CN) had predicted xenophobia, over and above all other constructs plus demographic controls. The IWAH model explained 24% of the variance in IWAH scores and was a significant predictor of IWAH:  $F(9, 410) = 16.00, p < .001$ . Openness ( $\beta = .10, p < .05$ ) and UT ( $\beta = .16, p < .001$ ) both contributed significantly to the model, as per previous research (Hamer et al., 2019). The xenophobia model explained 41% of the variance in xenophobia scores and was a significant predictor of xenophobia:  $F(9, 410) = 33.87, p < .001$ . RWA ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ) contributed significantly to the model, in line with previous research, while CN ( $\beta = -.07, p = .07$ ) had no significant relationship to xenophobia at the  $< .05$  level, contradicting previous research (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017).

A multiple linear regression model established the relative influence of identification with all humanity (IWAH), xenophobia, openness, universalism-tolerance (UT), right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), and collective narcissism (CN) on participants' attitudes toward secession. Attitude was regressed on all six measures in addition to demographic controls. The model explained 28% of the variance in attitude toward secession and was a significant predictor of

attitude:  $F(10, 409) = 16.90, p < .001$ . IWAH scores ( $\beta = .15, p = .002$ ) and CN scores ( $\beta = .39, p < .001$ ) were significant predictors of secession, with those scoring higher in these variables more likely to support secession. CN scores showed a moderate effect whilst the effect of IWAH was relatively weak. Significant negative effects on attitude towards secession were found for xenophobia ( $\beta = -.20, p < .001$ ) and RWA ( $\beta = -.15, p = .005$ ) at comparable effect strengths to IWAH (though in the opposite direction). No significant effects were found for openness or UT.

## Discussion

Favourable attitudes toward Scottish independence were related to higher identification with all humanity (IWAH) and collective narcissism (CN), and lower xenophobia and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA).

IWAH predicted attitudes in favour of Scottish independence. This result may be driven by higher levels of caring suggested in individuals in favour of independence, and may be linked to the perception that those in favour of independence tend to hold social democratic beliefs (see Hetherington, 2014). This finding built upon previous research in the Scottish context (Lewis & Brown, 2015; Ray, 1978) and complemented findings of an association with agreeableness and extraversion in the Catalan context (Barceló, 2017). IWAH correlated positively with openness and UT, negatively with xenophobia and RWA, and had no relationship with CN, as expected. As indicated by Hamer et al. (2019), IWAH was predicted by openness and UT.

Xenophobia predicted unfavourable attitudes toward Scottish independence. This mirrored the findings in Vergés-Gifra and Serra (2022) regarding the non-xenophobic nature of the Catalan secession movement, and suggests low xenophobia may be a character of secessionist movements in general. If it is the case that individuals with more favourable attitudes toward Scottish independence tend to hold social democratic political beliefs, this may explain the lower scores. Xenophobia was predicted by right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), in line with previous research (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017).

Openness did not affect support for secession. This was consistent with Barceló (2017), who found no relationship between openness and support for secession in Catalonia. Given the high scores across conditions, it is possible that high openness individuals saw equal worth in the novelty and liberalism of independence on the one hand, and the maintenance of a heterogeneous social milieu as afforded by the union on the other. Openness predicted IWAH, correlated positively with UT, and had a negative association with RWA, in line with previous research (Hamer et al., 2019). The finding that openness correlated negatively with xenophobia was consistent with the link between openness and left-wing/liberal politics (McCrae, 1996).

Universalism-tolerance (UT) predicted IWAH, correlated positively with openness (Hamer et al., 2019), correlated negatively with xenophobia and RWA (Livi et al., 2014), and was unrelated to CN (Hamer, Penczek, & Bilewicz, 2018) in line with previous research. However, unexpectedly, there was no relationship between UT and attitudes towards secession. Tolerance may not play such a large part in attitudes towards Scottish independence as initially considered. However, it is interesting that IWAH did, indicating a tendency for Scottish secessionists to identify with—rather than differentiate themselves from—the broader spectrum of humanity.

The finding that right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) predicted lower support for secession was consistent with expectations. This result was in line with Ray's (1978) finding that Scottish Nationalists had low authoritarianism. As the potential Scottish Government, emerging after a successful referendum, would have been untested in terms of economy and military, people high in RWA—which is associated with the preference to submit to authority—may have preferred to remain with a “strong” UK and as such had fewer positive attitudes to independence. Again, the promoted social democratic ideology of an independent Scotland may have been unappealing to those high in RWA as this construct has previously been linked with support for conservative politics (McFarland et al., 1993; Smithers & Loble, 1978). RWA predicted xenophobia (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017), and correlated negatively with openness (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008), in line with previous research.

Collective narcissism (CN) was the single strongest contributing factor toward attitudes in favour of Scottish secession. This may have to do with the pervasive nationalist perception of Scotland as an ‘English colony’, which could have led to the sense of unfair treatment that has been theorised to underpin CN (Forgas & Lantos, 2020). CN did not



relate to prejudice in the context of Scottish independence: it did not predict xenophobia as prior research indicated it should (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017). Rather, it is possible that CN in this sample indicated ‘communal collective narcissism’ (Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2021), in which the self-enhancement of the group is satisfied in the domains of compassion, morality and helpfulness. It is an interesting question whether Scottish secessionists might be prone to similar cognitive distortions as their Catalan counterparts (Oller i Sala et al., 2019), whose greater energy, confidence, clarity and hopefulness than their anti-secession opponents was theorised to be undergirded by CN. At the very least, the evidence suggests an association that invites further research.

## Limitations

Although the results were obtained from a sample large enough to reveal stable correlations (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013), the results may not be representative. Firstly, the sample was small compared to other studies looking at personality and secession (Barceló, 2017). Secondly, it was not representative of the age-groupings of the Scottish census. Thirdly, despite efforts made to engage non-partisan participants, the majority of respondents seem to have accessed the survey through partisan social media pages. Though this is unsurprising, the sample is likely to have been polarised due to this, and unrepresentative of the wider voting population. In particular, this may partly explain the high association between the independence movement and collective narcissism (CN), on the grounds that partisanship and CN have been shown to correlate (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

The results are correlational and cross-sectional, and do not allow for firm causal inferences or firm inferences regarding directionality of the effects. Though it is, *prima facie*, more likely that participant attitudes and personality had influenced their attitude toward secession, this is not demonstrated here. It is worth considering, particularly in the present context, whether the opposite might be true: whether the progressive/inclusive Scottish independence rhetoric, as highlighted in some media (Hetherington, 2014), might have instilled positive outgroup attitudes in some participants (or at least influenced higher reporting of such attitudes). Given suggestions of a link between political partisanship and social desirability bias (Klar, Weber, & Krupnikov, 2016), this latter possibility cannot be ruled out.

## Conclusion

The results suggest that broadly inclusive attitudes and beliefs are associated with favourable attitudes towards Scottish independence whilst prejudicial, authoritarian attitudes and beliefs are associated with unfavourable attitudes. In the broader context of attitudes toward secession, the association with IWAH, and negative relationship with xenophobia and RWA, built upon previous research in the Scottish context (Lewis & Brown, 2015; Ray, 1978) and complemented findings of an association with agreeableness and extraversion in the Catalan context (Barceló, 2017). Thus, the tentatively asserted trend away from authoritarianism and conservatism, and toward agreeableness and concern for individual rights in the context of secessionist thinking, holds within the limited context of this study. Further research might seek to compare other secessionist movements to this trend to see whether it is strengthened or diminished by application to the broader geopolitical picture, while broadening the area of inquiry to related traits such as social-dominance orientation, empathy, and conscientiousness, in order to build a more nuanced picture of the underlying personality clusters that may influence secessionist thinking.

Perhaps the most notable result was the association between the Scottish independence movement and collective narcissism (CN). Although research has investigated CN extensively in relation to political movements and preferences (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Forgas & Lantos, 2020; Golec de Zavala et al., 2017; Marchlewska et al., 2018), this is the first time CN has been empirically linked to a secessionist movement. The finding lends credence to the suggestion in Oller i Sala et al. (2019) that CN may have undergirded the distorted clarity and energy of Catalan secessionists. The concept of ‘communal collective narcissism’ (Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2021) provides a tenable explanation of how CN can be associated with a broadly-perceived inclusive, tolerant political movement. Subsequent research should seek to understand whether the association with CN is, firstly, evident across a more representative/less partisan sample of Scottish secessionists and, secondly, unique to the Scottish independence movement or a feature of secessionist movements more broadly.

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## Appendix

### Identification With All Humanity

Adapted measure for 'TWAH', short 4-item scale adapted from Hamer et al. (2019; original scale in McFarland et al., 2012):

1. 'How much do you care (worry; feel concerned) when something happens to:
  - A. a person in your community.
  - B. a person in your country.
  - C. a person anywhere in the world?
2. 'How much do you want to be:
  - A. a responsible citizen of your community.
  - B. a responsible citizen of your country.
  - C. a responsible citizen of the world?
3. 'How much do you feel loyal to:
  - A. people in your community.
  - B. people in your country.
  - C. people all over the world?
4. 'How much do you identify with:
  - A. people in your community.
  - B. people in your country.
  - C. people all over the world?

Scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'not at all' to 5 = 'very much so').

IWAH is the sum total of scores for option C.  $\alpha$  (current sample) = 0.79.

## Support for Secession

Adapted measure for 'support for the referendum's outcome' (from Golec de Zavala et al., 2017):

1. "To what extent did you feel happy about the result of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum?"

For items 2 to 9 substitute each of the following for "happy" (disappointed, shocked, proud, worried, anxious, thrilled, scared, angry).  
Scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'not at all' to 5 = 'very much so').

Reversed scoring from original measure on the grounds that Brexit and Indyref gave opposite results,  $\alpha$  (current sample) = 0.88.