"Not Racist, But…": Beliefs About Immigration Restrictions, Collective Narcissism, and Justification of Ethnic Extremism

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Surveys conducted across multiple countries show that most people view seeking lower immigration to help maintain the majority group's population share as a sign of racial self-interest—as opposed to racism. We investigated whether the belief that it is not racist to want immigration restrictions for cultural reasons is associated with ingroup identification (a positive attachment to and solidarity with one's group) or collective narcissism (a conviction that the ingroup is exceptional and deserves special treatment). We argue that if this belief reflects concern for the ingroup, it should be linked to ingroup identification. However, if it is a defensive justification of the ingroup's privileged position, it should be linked to collective narcissism. Across four studies, national (Study 1: United Kingdom, N = 467; Study 2: Poland, N = 1,285) and ethnic (Study 3a: United States, N = 2,000; Study 3b: United States, N = 2,938) narcissism emerged as predictors of the belief that ethnoculturally motivated immigration restrictions are racial self-interest (vs. racism). This belief was also associated with justifying collective violence against migrants (Study 2) and supporting the alt-right (Studies 3a–3b). We found less consistent evidence for an association between ingroup identification and immigration-restriction beliefs. We discuss implications for intergroup relations and political extremism.

KEY WORDS: racism, collective narcissism, ingroup identification, collective violence, alt-right

"A white American who identifies with her group and its history supports a proposal to reduce immigration. Her motivation is to maintain her group's share of America's population." Is this person "being racist" or "just acting in her racial self-interest, which is not racist"? Kaufmann (2017, p. 19) asked a similar question to thousands of people in WEIRD and non-WEIRD countries. Across

samples, most respondents believed it was racial self-interest, rather than racism, that underlies the majority group's desire for lower immigration ensuing from a perception of social or demographic changes threatening their (majoritarian) share of the population (Kaufmann, 2018). Here, we investigate the psychological concomitants of this belief, focusing on its relationship with ingroup identity, as well as its potential implications for intergroup hostility and the acceptance of racist social movements.

Beliefs About Immigration Restrictions and Their Correlates

Immigration remains one of the key challenges faced by developed democracies. For decades, research has attempted to identify factors that contribute to immigration preferences (for a review, see Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Studies tend to show that these preferences are primarily shaped by concerns about the potential cultural effects of immigration, and less so by economic factors. For example, analyzing data from 20 European countries, Sides and Citrin (2007) found that opposition to immigration was strongly related to preferences for cultural unity and homogeneity in customs and traditions. While these researchers sought to understand why people might want immigration restrictions, others—like Kaufmann (2018)—attempted to also shed light on people's views about what it means for someone to want immigration restrictions for cultural reasons.

Kaufmann's (2018) focus was on whether people consider the majority's desire to curb immigration racist or racially self-interested. He found that the main factors predicting a belief that ethnoculturally motivated immigration restrictions were racist (vs. not) were party affiliation and political ideology—this belief was stronger among left-leaning voters than among right-leaning voters. For example, in one U.S. survey, 73% of White Hillary Clinton voters, compared to 11% of White Donald Trump voters, agreed that it was racist for White Americans to seek reducing immigration to maintain their group's share of the population. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, 47% of White British Remain voters, compared to 5% of White British Leave voters, said it would be racist for a White Briton to seek to reduce immigration to maintain their group's share of the population (Kaufmann, 2017).

These differences notwithstanding, a conviction that immigration restrictions are not racist, but simply an expression of racial self-interest, was shared by most respondents in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the 17 other countries surveyed by Kaufmann (2018). The prevalence of this belief might be one reason why being concerned about demographic changes is sometimes seen as reasonable and justifiable (e.g., Goodhart, 2014). For example, Kaufmann argued: "[F]or the conservative members of the white majority who are attached to their group and its historic presence, I think that sense of loss and wanting to slow down that sense of loss is an understandable motivation" (as cited in Chotiner, 2019; para. 10).

However, what should be considered racist or not, and what opinions are justifiable or not, has been often debated in the media (Goodman, 2014; see also Figgou & Condor, 2006) and has also caused disagreements among academics (e.g., Wood, 1994). In this project, we then deliberately refrain from making normative claims about what constitutes racist attitudes, and instead we examine the psychological correlates of people's *beliefs* about what is racist versus not. Specifically, we focus on Kaufmann's (2018) question about whether restricting immigration is racist or a mere expression of one's racial self-interest.

To understand people's beliefs about immigration, it is useful to distinguish between ingroup and outgroup attitudes (e.g., Allport, 1954; Levin & Sidanius, 1999; Turner et al., 1979). As argued by Kaufmann, if the need to slow down ethnocultural change is simply motivated by ingroup attachment, then it should not be considered racist (as cited in Chotiner, 2019). This is because ingroup positivity does not necessarily need to imply outgroup prejudice or hostility (Brewer, 1999; see also Allport, 1954; Jardina, 2019, 2021; Earle & Hodson, 2020). Similarly, a belief that immigration

restrictions are racially self-interested (rather than racist) might stem from a mere concern for the ingroup and its members. Yet, there is scarce evidence that ingroup attachment is linked to viewing immigration restrictions as self-interested (vs. racist). Kaufmann (2018) reports results of just one pilot study which suggested that White Americans who were at least moderately identified with their ethnic group did not view the protection of White interests as racist. However, people can identify with their ingroups in various ways, which can produce very different intergroup outcomes (e.g., Ashmore et al., 2004; Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Cichocka, 2016; de Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Roccas et al., 2008).

The literature distinguishes secure and constructive ways of identifying with one's social group (be it one's nation, ethnic group, or sports team) from ones that are destructive and defensive (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950; Cichocka, 2016). For example, love for one's country (i.e., patriotism) is often differentiated from the need to dominate other nations (i.e., nationalism; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; see also Bizumic et al., 2021; Mummendey et al., 2001; Schatz et al., 1999). Beyond the specific context of national identity, some researchers differentiate ingroup identification from the more defensive collective narcissism (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013).

Distinguishing Ingroup Identification From Collective Narcissism

Ingroup identification can be defined as a self-investment in the group, which encompasses being satisfied with one's group membership, feeling solidarity with group members, and considering the group an important aspect of one's self-concept (Leach et al., 2008; Tajfel, 1978). It fosters a strong attachment and commitment to the group that are independent of one's attitudes towards outgroups (Brewer, 1999). Ingroup identification facilitates engagement on behalf of the group (e.g., Bilewicz & Wojcik, 2010; Huddy & Khatib, 2007; van Zomeren et al., 2008), as well as mutual trust and cooperation (Brewer, 1999; Putnam, 2000). It can be argued that viewing ethnoculturally motivated immigration restrictions as racially self-interested (vs. racist) is merely an expression of concern for effective group functioning and the well-being of ingroup members. Thus, a belief that restrictionism is not racist might be linked to stronger ingroup identification.

However, another possibility is that viewing ethnoculturally motivated immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) is a defensive belief that justifies and protects the ingroup's privileged position (see also White II & Crandall, 2017). Research from the U.S. context suggests that reminders of demographic shifts can drive concerns that Whites would lose their cultural dominance and be discriminated against in the future (Craig & Richeson, 2017; Craig et al., 2018; cf. Dai et al., 2021). If a preoccupation with protecting the ingroup image and position takes priority, then the belief that immigration restrictions are not racist should be linked to defensive (rather than secure) forms of ingroup identity.

Collective narcissism—a belief in ingroup greatness accompanied by the idea that the ingroup deserves privileged treatment and recognition from members of other groups (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009)—can be understood as defensive ingroup identity. Collective narcissism is associated with a conviction that others aim to threaten or undermine the ingroup and conspire against it (e.g., Bertin et al., 2021; Cichocka et al., 2016; Cislak et al., 2021; Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012; Guerra et al., 2020). Those who are high in collective narcissism also tend to respond with hostility to any stings of criticism or lack of appreciation of the ingroup (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013; Gries et al., 2015) and are prejudiced towards groups they find threatening (e.g., Bertin et al., 2022; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Lyons et al., 2010; Marchlewska et al., 2019). Crucially, collective narcissism has been linked to perceptions of threats from immigrants (e.g., Hadarics et al., 2020; Lyons et al., 2010) and generally negative attitudes towards immigration (Marchlewska et al., 2018).

Collective narcissism also predicts biased processing of information in favor of the ingroup (Bocian et al., 2021; Cislak et al., 2020). In a series of experiments, Bocian and colleagues (2021) found that participants high in collective narcissism judged actions favoring the interests of their ingroup as more moral compared to similar actions favoring the interests of an outgroup. For example, evaluations of the U.S. Senate's decision to confirm Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court depended on whether participants were Republicans or Democrats, but this effect was strengthened by partisan collective narcissism. There is also evidence that collective narcissism is associated with downplaying ingroup members' moral transgressions (e.g., Klar & Bilewicz, 2017). Overall, these findings suggest that collective narcissism might be linked to a perception that immigrants threaten the ingroup's position and, thus, a need to justify restrictions of immigration. A belief that restrictionism is just racial self-interest (and not racism) might then be linked to collective narcissism, rather than to ingroup identification.

Integrating this rationale with Kaufmann's (2017) ideas that restrictionism is an expression of ingroup attachment, we propose two competing hypotheses. If the belief that immigration restrictions are not racist (vs. racist) stems from caring for the ingroup and its members, then it should be predicted by higher identification with the ingroup. However, if the belief that immigration restrictions are not racist (vs. racist) is motivated by a desire to defend the ingroup's privilege, position, and image, then it should be predicted by higher collective narcissism.

Implications for Intergroup Violence and Extremism

Whether beliefs about immigration restrictions being racially self-interested (vs. racist) are associated with ingroup identification or collective narcissism might have implications for intergroup attitudes. In line with Brewer's (1999) theorizing about the independence of ingroup and outgroup attitudes, ingroup identification does not necessarily translate into prejudicial attitudes towards outgroups (e.g., Jackson et al., 2001; Jardina, 2019; Pehrson, Brown, et al., 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, et al., 2009). In contrast, collective narcissism is a robust predictor of intergroup violence and hostility (e.g., Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013; Jasko et al., 2020; Marchlewska et al., 2019). When measured in the context of White identity, it is also related to support for White supremacist movements, for example, the Unite the Right rally that took place in Charlottesville in 2017 (Marinthe et al., 2021). We propose to investigate whether viewing immigration restrictions as self-interested (vs. racist) would also be associated with overt intergroup hostility or support for extreme political movements. To this end, we focused on justifications of collective violence as well as support for the alt-right—a loosely organized far-right movement linked to White supremacy beliefs (e.g., Forscher & Kteily, 2019; Lyons, 2017).

Overview of the Present Research

In four surveys conducted in the United Kingdom, Poland, and the United States, two of which were nationally representative, we examined the ingroup and outgroup attitudes associated with beliefs about immigration restrictions. First, we investigated whether the belief that it is not racist (vs. racist) to want to maximize the demographic advantage of one's group is associated with in-group identification or collective narcissism. Second, we investigated whether such belief would be linked to support for collective violence or a racist social movement. We tested these predictions focusing on the dominant national (Studies 1 and 2) and ethnic identities (Studies 3a and 3b). In all regression models, we accounted for any effects of political ideology. We checked our analyses controlling for age and gender. Unless noted otherwise, the results remain the same when we include these demographic variables as covariates.

STUDY 1

In Study 1, conducted in the United Kingdom, we sought to examine whether beliefs about immigration restrictions being racist (vs. not) are associated with the strength and type of ingroup identity. We compared the effects of ingroup identification versus the more defensive collective narcissism.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Study 1 involved a sample of the 467 first-year psychology students, 84.80% women, Mean age = 19.26, SD = 2.31, recruited in 2018–19 at a U.K. university as part of a subject pool. Because our focus was on the dominant majority identity, we conducted our analyses with a subsample of 220 students who identified as "British" and "White British."

Measures

Collective narcissism was measured with a five-item version of the Collective Narcissism scale (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), for example, "If my country had a major say in the world, the world would be a much better place," "Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of people of my nationality." Participants responded on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) (α = .81, M = 2.73, SD = 1.05).

Ingroup identification was measured with five items capturing social identification (e.g., Cameron, 2004), for example, "Being my nationality gives me a good feeling," "I feel solidarity with people of my nationality," "My nationality is an important part of my identity." Participants responded on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) (α = .90, M = 4.58, SD = 1.12).

Political ideology was measured with a single item. Participants were asked to report their political orientation on a 5-point scale from 1 (*extremely left-wing*) to 5 (*extremely right-wing*) (M = 2.66, SD = 0.84).

Racial self-interest was measured with a single item from Kaufmann (2017): "A White Briton who identifies with her group, and its history supports a proposal to reduce immigration. Is this person…?" Participants indicated one of three answers: (1) Racist, (2) Racially self-interested, which is not racist, or (3) I do not know. In our sample, 53 (24%) participants indicated that the person was racist, and 96 (44%) that the person was racially self-interested. The third option was chosen by 71 (32%) participants, and following Kaufmann (2017), these participants were excluded from the analyses.

Results and Discussion

We first examined zero-order correlations between key variables (Table 1). We then tested ingroup identification, collective narcissism, and political ideology as predictors of viewing immigration restrictions as self-interested (i.e., not racist; coded as 1) rather than as racist (coded as 0) with a binominal logistic regression, Nagelkerke's R^2 = 0.21, C&S R^2 = .15, −2 log-likelihood = 168.66. In this model, the odds of perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) were significantly higher for those scoring higher on collective narcissism, OR = 1.59 [1.02, 2.47], B = 0.46, SE = 0.23, p = .041, but they were not significantly related to the strength of ingroup identification, OR = 1.28 [0.90, 1.83], B = 0.25, SE = 0.18, p = .170. This finding suggests that a belief that immigration restrictions are racially self-interested is associated with a defensive, narcissistic national identity. Once the overlap between collective narcissism and

Table 1. Table of Correlations for Main Variables (Study 1)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Racial self-interest (0 = RAC, 1 = SELF-INT)	–		
2. Collective narcissism	.31***	–	
3. Ingroup identification	.30***	.52***	–
4. Political ideology	.29***	.28***	.32***

Abbreviations: RAC, racist; SELF INT, racially self-interested.
***$p < .001$.

identification was accounted for, there was no evidence for the association between beliefs about immigration restrictions and identification with the nation understood as the emotional attachment to the group. Replicating Kaufmann (2017), we found that those with more right-wing views were more likely to indicate that immigration restrictions were racially self-interested rather than racist, $OR = 1.65$ [1.06, 2.58], $B = 0.50$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .027$.[1]

STUDY 2

In Study 2, we sought to replicate the findings of Study 1 in a different context. We tested similar models in a larger, nationally representative survey conducted in Poland. Although Poland used to be relatively diverse in the past, the Second World War as well as postwar border changes and migration had a tremendous impact on its demographic makeup. Currently, the country is ethnically homogenous, with a majority White population (Gudaszewski, 2015). According to the latest Polish census, around 97% of the population declares Polish nationality (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2012). Importantly, Poland has a difficult history of conflict between national and ethnic groups (e.g., Bilewicz et al., 2012; Snyder, 1999), and issues of immigration and refugee acceptance are on the forefront of public debate (e.g., Baczynska & Plucinska, 2021). It is against this backdrop that we examined people's behavioral intentions associated with beliefs about immigration restrictions.

If a belief that immigration restrictions are not racist (vs. racist) was mostly driven by one's care for their ingroup, it would not translate into overt intergroup hostility. However, if it reflects a defensive justification of the majority's privileged position (as the results of Study 1 suggest), this belief might be also positively related to intergroup hostility. Therefore, we decided to examine the association between beliefs about immigration restrictions and collective violence—arguably, an extreme expression of ingroup animosity. To account for the possibility that any links between immigration-restriction beliefs and intergroup hostility could be simply attributed to collective narcissism or political ideology, we controlled for these two factors as well as ingroup identification in the regression models for collective violence.

To measure the acceptance of different violent behaviors toward minority groups, we used a method by Winiewski and Bulska (2020). This method presents participants with a scenario in which a majority is in conflict with an ethnic minority that is newly settled in a town. As such, this methodology is well suited to capture people's potential reactions to immigration.

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[1]Note that when we controlled for age and gender, both the effect of collective narcissism, $OR = 1.53$, $p = .062$, and identification, $OR = 1.40$, $p = .082$, became only marginally significant, and the effect of ideology became nonsignificant, $OR = 1.46$, $p = .110$. This could be due to a relatively small sample we relied on in Study 1. We therefore sought to replicate our models with much larger samples in subsequent studies.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Study 2 involved a 2018 nationally representative sample of 1,285 Polish adults, 51.60% women, aged 18–84, Mean age = 43.80, SD = 15.44.[2] Data were collected with the use of an online research panel (http://www.panelariadna.com). Participants were recruited using a quota sampling strategy (based on population distribution of age, gender, place of residence, and education level). Because Poland is ethnically homogenous, the survey did not include questions about participants' ethnic identity. All participants were included in the analysis.

Measures

Collective narcissism was measured with the five-item version of the Collective Narcissism scale (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013), for example, "The Polish nation deserves special treatment." Participants responded on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) (α = .92, M = 3.63, SD = 1.25).

Ingroup identification was measured with six items taken from the Social Identification scale by Cameron (2004), for example, "I feel strong ties to other Polish people," "In general, I'm glad to be Polish," "In general, being Polish is an important part of my self-image." Participants responded on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) (α = .92, M = 3.69, SD = 0.87).

Political ideology was measured with a single item. Participants were asked to report their political ideology on a scale from 1 (*definitely conservative*) to 7 (*definitely liberal*), which we recoded so that higher scores indicate greater conservatism (M = 3.45, SD = 1.78).[3]

Racial self-interest was measured with the single item adapted from Kaufmann (2017): "A White Pole who identifies with her group and its history supports a proposal to reduce immigration. Is this person…?" Participants answered indicating one of three options: (1) Racist, (2) Racially self-interested, which is not racist, (3) I do not know/Hard to say. In this sample, 298 (23%) participants indicated that the person is racist, 578 (45%) that the person is racially self-interested, and 409 (32%) did not know or could not tell (as in Study 1, the latter group was excluded from the analysis).

Collective violence was measured using a scale capturing acceptance of violent collective behaviors (Winiewski & Bulska, 2020). Participants were presented with a short description of an intergroup conflict between the majority (ingroup) and a minority group of new residents in a town. Next, they were assigned one of four target minority groups at random: Jews, Vietnamese, Roma, or Ukrainians. These minority groups were selected due to their historical relevance, distinctiveness, or size (see also Cichocka et al., 2015). Finally, participants were presented with several possible behaviors of ingroup members towards the minority and rated the extent to which each of the actions was justified. We used a composite score of 12 items measuring direct confrontational behaviors, for example, "Native inhabitants of the town beat up the newcomers" or "Employees of shops and restaurants refuse to serve the newcomers." Participants responded on a scale from 1 (*fully unjustified*) to 7 (*fully justified*) (α = .97, M = 2.44, SD = 1.40).

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[2]This sample was also used in another project (Bilewicz et al., 2018), which tested different hypotheses.

[3]The dataset also included another general measure of political ideology, in which participants were asked about their self-placement on a scale from 1 (*definitely left-wing*) to 7 (*definitely right-wing*). When we included this item in the model instead of the liberal-conservative item, results were similar.

Table 2. Table of Correlations for Main Variables (Study 2)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Racial self-interest (0 = RAC, 1 = SELF INT)	–			
2. Collective narcissism	.44***	–		
3. Ingroup identification	.17***	.62***	–	
4. Political ideology	.29***	.26***	.12***	–
5. Collective violence	.29***	.19***	−.06*	.10***

Abbreviations: RAC, racist; SELF INT, racially self-interested.
*p < .05
***p < .001.

Table 3. Results of a Regression Analysis Predicting Collective Violence Justification (Study 2)

Predictor Variable	B (SE)	B CI$_{95\%}$	β	p
Constant	2.09 (0.20)	1.69, 2.49		<.001
Political ideology	0.02 (0.03)	−0.03, 0.07	0.03	.401
Collective narcissism	0.30 (0.05)	0.20, 0.39	0.27	<.001
Ingroup identification	−0.33 (0.07)	−0.46, −0.20	−0.21	<.001
Racial self-interest (0 = RAC, 1 = SELF INT)	0.57 (0.11)	0.36, 0.78	0.19	<.001
F	31.22			
R^2	.13			

Abbreviations: RAC, racist; SELF INT, racially self-interested.

Results and Discussion

We first examined zero-order correlations (Table 2). We then tested ingroup identification, collective narcissism, and political ideology as predictors of viewing immigration restrictions as self-interested (i.e., not racist; coded as 1) rather than racist (coded as 0) with a binominal logistic regression, Nagelkerke's R^2 = .32, C&S R^2 = .23, −2 log-likelihood = 894.86. In this model, the odds of perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) were significantly higher for those scoring higher on collective narcissism, OR = 2.61 [2.18, 3.12], B = 0.96, SE = 0.09, p < .001, but significantly *lower* for those with stronger ingroup identification, OR = 0.66 [0.53, 0.83], B = −0.41, SE = 0.12, p < .001. Thus, in the Polish context, we found that those identified with the national group in a secure, nonnarcissistic way were more likely to view immigration restrictions as racist than as racially self-interested. Again, in line with Study 1 and past work by Kaufmann (2017), we found that immigration restrictions were more likely to be perceived as not racist (vs. racist) among those with more conservative views, OR = 1.27 [1.16, 1.40], B = 0.24, SE = 0.05, p < .001.

We also sought to examine whether beliefs about immigration restrictions would be associated with intergroup hostility. We examined their associations with justification of collective violence. We accounted for any overlapping effects of collective narcissism, ingroup identification, and political ideology. We found that perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) was a significant predictor of justification of collective violence (Table 3).[4] This finding indicates that perceptions of racial self-interest are not only an expression of ingroup attitudes but are also linked to overt outgroup hostility. This result was observed even when we accounted for any effects of collective narcissism which, in line with past research, was positively associated with justification of collective violence (e.g., Golec de Zavala &

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[4]Note that the pattern of results was very similar across the four target groups, with two exceptions: ingroup identification was not significantly associated with collective violence against Vietnamese, while political conservatism was significantly associated with collective violence against Roma.

Cichocka, 2012; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013; Jasko et al., 2020). National identification, in contrast, was negatively associated with justification of collective violence (see e.g., Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). Political ideology was not significantly related to justification of collective violence.

STUDY 3A

In Studies 1 and 2, we examined the role of national identities in predicting perceptions of immigration restrictions. In Studies 3a and 3b, conducted in the United States, we sought to test whether similar effects would be observed when ethnic (i.e., White) identity is considered. We also examined whether seeing immigration restrictions as racially self-interested (vs. racist) would be associated with support for political movements advocating for racial supremacy. To this end, we measured participants attitudes towards the alt-right (Forscher & Kteily, 2019; see also Bai, 2020).

We report results based on two larger datasets: (1) an exploratory, quota-based sample that was nationally representative (Study 3a) and (2) a confirmatory (replication) convenience sample from the same population that we analyzed to minimize the influence of false positives and to maximize the generalizability and robustness of our results (Study 3b). Both samples completed the same study materials in the same order and manner.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We hired Cint (www.cint.com), a survey research firm that recruits participants from a pool of over 13 million U.S. citizens, to recruit a nationally representative sample of Americans in the months preceding the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election (from July 1 to July 22, 2020). The quotas were designed to match that of the 2018 U.S. Census' Current Population Survey (CPS) on age, income, education, and gender, with a maximum percentual difference of 5% at the bracket level. The sample has achieved a high level of national representativeness. We took a number of steps to ensure that the quality of the data would be high. These included following professional recommendations to minimize problems of careless responding and satisficing behavior in online survey studies (Meade & Craig, 2012). Detailed description of the sample and exclusions is presented in the online supporting information. The sample included 2,000 participants, 51.5% women, age distribution: 18–24 years (11.65%), 25–34 (17.80%), 35–44 (16.75%), 45–54 (16.55%), 55–65 (16.60%), and older than 65 (20.65%). White participants constituted 75.80% of the sample, and these participants were included in the final analysis ($N = 1,516$).

Measures

Collective narcissism was measured with nine items of the Collective Narcissism scale (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Participants responded to the items after reporting their ethnicity and reading the following instruction: "When thinking in terms of the group with which you just identified, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements"; for example, "It really makes me angry when others criticize Whites." Participants responded on a scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 9 (*strongly disagree*) ($\alpha = .90$, $M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.67$).

Ingroup identification was measured with one item "I identify with being White" (Postmes et al., 2012). Participants responded on a scale from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 100 (*strongly agree*) ($M = 80.89$, $SD = 23.34$).

Table 4. Table of Correlations for Main Variables (Study 3a)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Racial self-interest (0 = RAC, 1 = SELF INT)	–			
2. Collective narcissism	.52***	–		
3. Ingroup identification	.32***	.34***	–	
4. Political ideology	.54***	.43***	.28***	–
5. Alt-right support	.37***	.31***	.24***	.32***

Abbreviations: RAC, racist; SELF INT, racially self-interested.
***$p < .001$.

Political ideology was measured with a single item, which read "Overall, where would you place yourself, on the following scale of liberalism-conservatism?" Participants responded on a scale from 0 (*strongly liberal*) to 100 (*strongly conservative*) ($M = 54.67$, $SD = 30.40$).

Racial self-interest was measured with the single item adapted from Kaufmann (2017): "A White American who identifies with her group and its history supports a proposal to reduce immigration. Is this person…?" Participants answered indicating one of three answers: (1) Just acting in her racial self-interest, which is not racist; (2) Being racist; (3) I don't know. In this sample, 768 (38%) participants indicated that the person is just acting in their racial self-interest; 580 (29%) that the person is being racist, and 652 (33%) did not know or could not tell (the latter were excluded from the analysis).

Support for the alt-right was measured with one item: "How positive or negative do you feel concerning the following social movements?" whose target was "The alt-right Movement." Participants responded on a scale from 0 (*extremely negative*) to 100 (*extremely positive*) ($M = 36.51$, $SD = 28.85$).

Results

Zero-order correlations are presented in Table 4. We tested a binominal logistic regression with ingroup identification, collective narcissism, and political ideology as predictors of viewing immigration restrictions as self-interested (coded as 1; as opposed to racist, coded as 0), Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .49$, C&S $R^2 = .36$, −2 log-likelihood = 889.08. In this model, the odds of perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) were significantly higher for those scoring higher on collective narcissism, $OR = 1.70$ [1.51, 1.90], $B = 0.53$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$, and for those with more conservative views, $OR = 1.03$ [1.03, 1.04], $B = 0.03$, $SE = 0.00$, $p < .001$. The odds of perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) were also significantly higher for those with higher ethnic ingroup identification, $OR = 1.01$ [1.00, 1.02], $B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.00$, $p < .001$.

We then sought to examine whether beliefs about immigration restrictions would be associated with more positive attitudes towards the alt-right, accounting for any effects of collective narcissism, ingroup identification, or political ideology. We found that perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) was indeed a significant predictor of support for the alt-right movement (see Table 5). We also found that both White collective narcissism and White identification, as well as political conservatism, were predictors of positive attitudes towards the alt-right.

STUDY 3B

Method

We administered the same survey as in Study 3a to a large convenience sample of American adults in the months preceding the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election (from July 1 to July 24, 2020). The study was again conducted through Cint, and we applied the same quality-control criteria

Table 5. Results of a Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Towards the Alt-Right (Study 3a)

Predictor Variable	B (SE)	B CI$_{95\%}$	β	p
Constant	0.16 (3.07)	−5.86, 6.19		.957
Political ideology	0.16 (0.03)	0.09, 0.22	0.17	<.001
Collective narcissism	3.61 (0.58)	2.46, 4.76	0.22	<.001
Ingroup identification	0.09 (0.04)	0.01, 0.17	0.07	.022
Racial self-interest (0 = RAC, 1 = SELF INT)	8.64 (2.19)	4.34, 12.94	0.14	<.001
F	69.86			
R^2	.22			

Abbreviations: RAC, racist; SELF INT, racially self-interested.

Table 6. Table of Correlations for Main Variables (Study 3b)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Racial self-interest (0 = RAC, 1 = SELF INT)	–	–	–			
2. Collective narcissism	3.83	1.65	.54***	–		
3. Ingroup identification	83.01	21.62	.28***	.27***	–	
4. Political ideology	54.21	30.64	.52***	.41***	.21***	–
5. Alt-right support	35.98	28.67	.36 ***	. 30***	.22***	.31***

Abbreviations: RAC, racist; SELF INT, racially self-interested.
***p < .001.

as in Study 3a. The final sample included 2,938 participants, 69.54% women, with the age distribution of 18–24 years (8.75%), 25–34 (12.80%), 35–44 (16.30%), 45–54 (15.62%), 55–65 (18.52%), and older than 65 (28.01%). The final analyses were conducted for White (81.76%) participants only (N = 2,402). Measures were identical as the ones used in Study 3a. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 6. Collective narcissism formed a reliable scale (α = .90).

Results

Zero-order correlations are presented in Table 6. We tested ingroup identification, collective narcissism, and political ideology as predictors of viewing immigration restrictions as self-interested (coded as 1; as opposed to racist, coded as 0) with a binominal logistic regression, Nagelkerke's R^2 = .49, C&S R^2 = .36, −2 log-likelihood = 1,419.6. In this model, the odds of perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) were significantly higher for those scoring higher on collective narcissism, OR = 1.85 [1.69, 2.03], B = 0.62, SE = 0.05, p < .001, and for those with more conservative views, OR = 1.03 [1.02, 1.03], B = 0.03, SE = 0.00, p < .001. Again, the odds of perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) were also significantly higher for those with higher ethnic identification, OR = 1.01 [1.01, 1.02], B = 0.02, SE = 0.00, p < .001.

We then sought to examine whether beliefs about immigration restrictions would be associated with support for the alt-right, accounting for any effects of collective narcissism, ingroup identification, and political ideology. As in Study 3a, we found that perceiving immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) was a significant predictor of support for the alt-right (Table 7). We again also found that White collective narcissism, White identification, and political conservatism were associated with more positive attitudes towards the alt-right.

Table 7. Results of a Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Towards the Alt-Right (Study 3b)

Predictor Variable	B (SE)	B CI$_{95\%}$	β	p
Constant	−0.04 (2.70)	−5.35, 5.26		.988
Political ideology	0.14 (0.03)	0.09, 0.19	0.15	<.001
Collective narcissism	2.54 (0.48)	1.60, 3.48	0.15	<.001
Ingroup identification	0.14 (0.03)	0.08, 0.20	0.11	<.001
Racial self-interest (0 = RAC, 1 = SELF INT)	10.09 (1.73)	6.69, 13.49	0.17	<.001
F	90.67			
R^2	.19			

Abbreviations: RAC, racist; SELF INT, racially self-interested.

General Discussion

In four surveys, conducted in different national contexts, we investigated the psychological concomitants of beliefs about immigration restrictions. We based our research on Kaufmann's (2017) question about whether seeking immigration restrictions for cultural reasons is racist or an expression of racial self-interest (i.e., not racist). Our studies indicated that viewing immigration restrictions as racially self-interested (vs. racist) was robustly associated with national (Studies 1–2) and White (Studies 3a–3b) collective narcissism. We found less consistent effects for ingroup identification. National identification was either unrelated (Study 1) or negatively related (Study 2) to seeing immigration restrictions as self-interested (vs. racist). We found positive effects of White identification in Studies 3a and 3b, but these effects were weaker than those observed for White collective narcissism. Furthermore, they were observed for a single-item identification measure that does not directly capture feelings of solidarity and commitment we measured in Studies 1 and 2. Overall, our results suggest that viewing the protection of one's group's share of the population as mere racial self-interest might be an expression of a defensive need to protect the ingroup image and privileges, more so than of attachment to the ingroup and its members.

We further examined the potential implications of one's beliefs about immigration restrictions. Unsurprisingly, past work suggests that those who see immigration restrictions as not racist are also more likely to support them (Kaufmann, 2018). We found they would also be willing to support overt forms of intergroup hostility. In Study 2, participants who saw immigration restrictions as not racist (vs. racist) were more likely to justify collective violence against newly settled minority groups (see also White II & Crandall, 2017). In Studies 3a and 3b, seeing immigration restriction as not racist was also associated with more positive views of the alt-right—a movement linked to White supremacy beliefs, dominance, and blatant hostility towards minorities (Forscher & Kteily, 2019). These relationships were observed over and above any effects of political ideology, collective narcissism, or ingroup identification.

These findings have implications for understanding the political and intergroup attitudes associated with arguing immigration restrictions are not racist. Indeed, some authors have criticized Kaufmann's interpretation of his findings as serving to justify discriminatory attitudes and behavior (e.g., Holmwood, 2019; Lentin, 2020; Shaw, 2020). Like Kaufmann (2017, 2018), we found that most respondents in our samples thought that ethnoculturally motivated restrictionism was not racist. However, our work shows that the prevalence of this opinion does not preclude it from being associated with overt intergroup hostility and support for supremacist social movements (see also White II & Crandall, 2017).

Our analyses also showed that different intergroup outcomes were associated with different forms of ingroup identity. Independent of immigration beliefs, collective narcissism was linked to greater justification of collective violence. However, ingroup identification was *negatively*

associated with collective violence (Study 2). This is in line with past research showing that while collective narcissism is robustly related to intergroup animosity, ingroup identification without the narcissistic component can be linked to greater tolerance of outgroups (Cichocka et al., 2018; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). Furthermore, in Studies 3a and 3b, we found that Whites' collective narcissism was a strong predictor of positive attitudes towards the alt-right. This is consistent with studies linking Whites' collective narcissism to support for reactionary social movements more broadly (Marinthe et al., 2021). This finding also complements research on the psychological profile of the alt-right, indicating that it might not only be linked to needs for ingroup dominance (Bai, 2020; Forscher & Kteily, 2019) but also to ideas of one's ethno-national group's underappreciated greatness (see also Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Gest et al., 2017; Gronfeldt et al., 2021).

Limitations and Future Directions

In this research, we investigated individual factors associated with one's beliefs about what it means to want to slow down immigration for cultural reasons. Future research would do well to examine how exposure to the idea that such beliefs should be considered racist (vs. not) affects the public's attitudes and behaviors. For example, in July 2019, President Trump Tweeted that the "the Squad"—a group of Democrat Congresswomen—should go back to their countries (Yglesias, 2019). Yet, he claimed these tweets were not racist and that he did "not have a Racist bone" in his body (Fabian, 2019; see also Cineas, 2020; Kendi, 2020). Prevalent antiprejudice norms might have motivated him to deny being racist. Importantly, some of his critics might be equally motivated to refrain from calling out his racism to avoid accusations of censorship (Goodman, 2010, 2014; Goodman & Burke, 2010). Future studies should investigate the knock-on effects of failing to call more or less overtly discriminatory behaviors racist. Given our reliance on correlational data, such studies might also be well suited to establish causal effects of beliefs about immigration restrictions on intergroup attitudes and policy support.

Another limitation of the current research is that we examined implications of beliefs about immigration restrictions among members of dominant ethno-national groups, who made judgments about their ingroup member's immigration attitudes. The goal of Kaufmann's (2018) project was to also directly compare how people would view similar attitudes expressed by ethnic minorities versus majorities. For example, he found that White Hillary Clinton voters were less likely to view immigration-restriction preferences as racist when they were expressed by a minority, compared to a White person. The effect was reversed for White Donald Trump voters: They were *more* likely to view immigration-restriction preferences as racist when they were expressed by a minority, compared to a White person (although the magnitude of this difference was smaller than that observed for Hillary Clinton voters). Future research could examine whether immigration-restriction beliefs have similar ingroup and outgroup correlates depending on the target,[5] as well as when measured among minority respondents.

Importantly, our analyses excluded about a third of participants who said they were not sure how to respond to the key question on whether wanting immigration restrictions was racist or not. Future studies would do well to probe their beliefs about immigration further as well as examine why they might be reluctant to report their opinions on this topic.

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[5]A preliminary study (reported in the online supporting information) examined whether target change would affect the association between collective narcissism and beliefs about immigration restrictions. We found that collective narcissism predicted greater likelihood of viewing such restrictions as not racist (vs. racist), regardless of whether the target who expressed preference for restrictions was presented as a member of the ingroup or an outgroup.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to examine the concomitants of beliefs about restricting immigration for cultural reasons or to maintain one's ethnic group's share of the population. Our goal was not to establish whether restrictionism is in fact racist, justifiable, or reasonable. Instead, we sought to understand what sort of ingroup and outgroup attitudes characterize those who believe that immigration restrictions are racist versus those who believe they are simply racially self-interested. We found that viewing immigration restrictions as not racist might be underpinned by a defensive identity and linked to justification of violence and extremism. Thus, even if most people share a belief that a certain policy is not racist, this very belief may still be linked to blatant hostility towards outgroups. Researchers interested in uncovering the genesis of political behavior would then do well to go beyond taking people's stated rationalizations at their face value and investigate the psychological motives associated with the undergirding narratives—consciously or unconsciously held—that might help perpetuate unequal social systems.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Table S1. Results of a Binomial Logistic Regression Predicting Beliefs about Immigration Restrictions (Study S1)