ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Party people: Differentiating the associations of partisan identification and partisan narcissism with political skill, integrity, and party dedication

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Abstract

We investigated outcomes associated with different types of partisan identity in a sample of political candidates for parliament and local offices ($N = 214$). We distinguished partisan narcissism, a belief in the greatness of one's political party that is not appreciated by others, from partisan identification, feeling part of the party and evaluating it positively. We examined their links with self-reported measures of politicians' functioning in their work: political skill, integrity, and party dedication. Partisan narcissism was associated with lower integrity in one's political role, meaning those high in partisan narcissism reported more inclination to engage in secrecy, deception, and political blood-sport (behavior also known as politicking). Partisan narcissism did not predict party dedication: it was not associated with intentions to leave the party and volunteering in party activities, and in fact, it was linked to past membership in other political parties. Meanwhile, we found that partisan identification was associated with higher levels of political skill, while also predicting party dedication in that it predicted lower intentions to leave the party and volunteering in party activities but was unrelated to membership in other parties in the past. Cumulatively, these results suggest that partisan identification is associated with competence and dedication in politicians' work. Conversely, partisan narcissism seems to contribute to being cunning in the political arena and relates to more devious work habits that many find stereotypical of politicians.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Social identities play a central role in everyday life, be it in nations, communities, workplaces, or sports clubs (Ellemers et al., 2002). However, surprisingly little attention seems to be given to the role partisan identity might play in shaping politicians' behaviors and attitudes, potentially because politicians are a notoriously difficult group to recruit for research (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004). Using a unique sample of parliamentary and local political candidates, we examined partisan identity, not as passive support that is common for most citizens (Simonton, 1998), but as an important social identity among highly active political party members seeking influence and running for office. We distinguish between partisan (or collective) narcissism, a belief that one's political party is exceptional and entitled to special treatment (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Marchlewska, Cichocka, et al., 2022) and partisan (or

ingroup) identification, the "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p.63), in other words, feeling part of the ingroup and evaluating it positively (Cameron, 2004; Leach et al., 2008). Just like has been demonstrated in organizations and workplaces (Cichocka et al., 2022; Hogg & Terry, 2000), we expect these forms of party identity to relate differently with outcomes related to political work.

We focused on three sets of outcomes indicative of political functioning. First, we investigated political skill—the ability to achieve one's goals by acting politically (Ferris et al., 2005). Second, we examined integrity—the extent to which a politician is open and honest in their communication, avoids secrecy, deception, or engaging in political blood-sports (Wyatt & Silvester, 2018). Third, with respect to party dedication we examined intentions to leave the party in the future, membership in other political parties in the past (i.e., switching), and volunteering in party activities. We hypothesized that partisan narcissism would predict lower—but partisan identification higher—levels of political skill, integrity, and party dedication. In doing so, we make three contributions to the wider literature, while taking leverage of our sample of parliamentary and local political candidates. First, research has rarely linked organizational (or political party) identification with functioning of politicians, even though identification is an established predictor of other work-related outcomes (Riketta, 2005). Second, we contribute to an emerging literature on the manifestations of collective narcissism in organizations (Cichocka et al., 2022). Third, few studies to date have discriminated between partisan narcissism and partisan identification (cf., Bocian et al., 2021; Cichocka et al., 2022).

1.1 | Collective narcissism and ingroup identification in organizations

As alluded to earlier, collective narcissism is a defensive belief in the ingroup's greatness which is contingent on external validation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Collective narcissism can be measured in relation to virtually any social group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), but here we examine it in the political party context and, thus, refer to it as partisan narcissism. It is important to make a distinction between collective and individual narcissism. While there are parallels between the two, they operate at separate levels of the individual's self-concept. Collective narcissism captures beliefs about one's collective self (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), while individual narcissism captures beliefs about the self (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). A constant craving for external recognition of the ingroup and a sense of entitlement are therefore some of the main characteristics of collective narcissism (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020). Collective narcissism entails a painful feeling that the group's position in the world is fundamentally unfair and that the group has been wronged by others (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). It is also characterized by a preoccupation with an impeccable image of the group, and aggression toward others that

somehow threaten this idealized image (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020). While seemingly a strong form of ingroup attachment, collective narcissism seems to result in a shallow or superficial relationship with the ingroup and its members (Cichocka, 2016; Marchlewska et al., 2020). In fact, collective narcissism can have problematic consequences both for relations within and between groups (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Cichocka, 2016).

Collective narcissism increases when people's feelings of autonomy or self-worth are threatened (Cichocka et al., 2018; Golec de Zavala et al., 2020)—people seem to compensate for frustrated personal needs by investing in the ingroup image (Eker et al., 2023). This is likely why those high in collective narcissism are more concerned with how the ingroup reflects on them, rather than with the welfare of other group members (Cichocka, 2016). Consequently, the ingroup can be used as a tool for self-enhancement, either via direct interpersonal exploitation (Cichocka et al., 2022) or via intergroup comparisons (Gronfeldt et al., 2023). While collective narcissism has only been studied to a limited extent in organizations, research has linked it with antisocial behavior in the workplace, such as objectification of co-workers and undermining colleagues (Cichocka et al., 2022). The partisan context specifically should be a relevant setting to study collective narcissism, given how hostile relations can be between and within political parties (see Bocian et al., 2021; Cichocka et al., 2022).

A complete understanding of collective narcissism is perhaps best achieved by also gaining an understanding of what it is not. Collective narcissism is most often juxtaposed against ingroup identification since the two represent two distinct ways of relating to the ingroup (Cichocka, 2016). Importantly, collective narcissism does not tap into ties and bonds with the ingroup and its members, but rather what the individual thinks *outsiders* think of the ingroup, hubristic concerns about the ingroup's greatness and anger toward perceived offenders (Cichocka, 2016). Meanwhile, ingroup identification (Cameron, 2004) asks if one feels close to other group members, if one is glad or proud to be a group member, and if one thinks that being of this group is an important part of one's self-concept. None of these constructive intragroup dynamics are present in collective narcissism, and instead, it focuses on competitive intergroup processes. Collective narcissism and ingroup identification correlate moderately so research generally controls for their overlap (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013).

Research conducted predominantly in the business context suggests organizational identification is an important determinant of work-related outcomes in organizations (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Here, we consider partisan identification among parliamentary and local candidates and measure it in terms of positive affect toward the party, centrality of partisan identity for the self and ties with other party members (Cameron, 2004). This approach, therefore, differs from that of studies of mass public opinion, which view partisan identification among voters as an affective attachment to a preferred political party one is not necessarily an active member of (cf. Dalton, 2016). For active politicians, partisan identity could serve as an important organizational identity (Greene, 2004; Huddy &

Bankert, 2017), similar to workplace identity (Riketta, 2005). For example, organizational identification correlates with positive outcomes in the workplace, including higher job satisfaction and job performance (Lee et al., 2015; Riketta, 2005). Organizational identification appears to nurture a concern for the organization's general welfare and motivates better conduct and results (Dukerich et al., 2002). We suspect that this can be the case for candidates for parliament and local offices, which are deeply involved in their party and likely to have developed a strong sense of identification (see e.g., Van Knippenberg, 2000; Wegge et al., 2006). In the following sections, we review how partisan narcissism and partisan identification may relate differently with political functioning.

1.2 | Partisan identity and political skill

Political skill is the "ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ahearn et al., 2004, p.311). Political skill consists of four social competencies: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity (Ferris et al., 2005). In an attempt to achieve support, a politically skilled individual always presents themselves and their work in the best possible light using any (or all) of these competencies (Ferris et al., 2005). Political skill has been found to predict real-life electoral performance of political elites (Silvester et al., 2021) and some even argue that political skill is one of the most important competencies of leaders (Treadway et al., 2004). For example, political skill makes leaders more likely to benevolently support those around them (Ellen et al., 2016; Treadway et al., 2014). There is good reason to believe that politicians high in partisan narcissism will have a difficult time mastering political skills.

As mentioned earlier, those high in collective narcissism are preoccupied with what others think of their ingroup (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020). For a politician, this may take important mental resources (time, energy, effort) to be devoted to image management while neglecting political skill development. Those high in partisan narcissism are also likely to have an inherent distrust of political opponents (Marchlewska et al., 2022), which would hinder the formations of cross-party networks and the effective mobilization of these relationships to achieve one's political goals (Ferris et al., 2005). Similarly, partisan narcissism may sabotage social astuteness because of the narrow focus on the party's agenda, image, and reputation, resulting in a failure to understand needs and perspectives of diverse constituents. This preoccupation with the political party's image is also likely to sabotage one's apparent sincerity in the eyes of the wider public. Facets of interpersonal influence, such as making people feel at ease (Ferris et al., 2005), may also prove difficult to those high in partisan narcissism due to their emotional dysregulation (Golec de Zavala, 2019) and attachment anxiety (Marchlewska, Górska, et al., 2022). Last, partisan narcissism may also be linked with an unwillingness to compromise, which is often key in getting at least some of one's promises fulfilled, due to an overconfidence in the

party's abilities (Putnam et al., 2018) but also a personal worry that the party failing to deliver promises will reflect poorly on the self (Cichocka, 2016).

In contrast, partisan identification is likely to aid politicians in their work (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Lee et al., 2015; Riketta, 2005). In a community of like-minded and highly socialized group members, such as a political party, appearing genuine, sincere, and committed is key in gathering support and climbing the political ladder. Political skill entails coming across as prosocial, benevolent, and altruistic (Ferris et al., 2005). Highly identified workers exhibit honesty and consideration when they interact with peers (Grice et al., 2006), which conveys an image of the highly identified worker as caring and thoughtful toward colleagues. Thus, we expect identification to be linked with greater political skill.

1.3 | Partisan identity and integrity

The second outcome variable of focus is integrity (Silvester et al., 2014). Integrity is the extent to which a politician is open and honest in their communication, avoids secrecy, deception, or engaging in political blood-sports (Wyatt & Silvester, 2018). In this, we mean integrity in party interactions rather than electorate-facing ethics or morals. The effects of integrity on electoral performance have received only limited research attention, although Wyatt and Silvester (2018) found that ratings of integrity of local politicians', provided by party workers and colleagues, was associated with their electoral performance. Peer-rated integrity has been associated with resilience in a political role, while negatively predicting Machiavellianism (Silvester et al., 2014). The opposite of integrity is politicking—a readiness to engage in secrecy, deception, and political blood-sport (Wyatt & Silvester, 2018).

There are a few reasons why politicians high in partisan narcissism might be inclined toward politicking rather than integrity. Politicking entails a willingness to impose solutions and the perception that political blood-sport is an integral part of the political process (Silvester et al., 2014). Similarly, those high in partisan narcissism are unlikely to be interested in their opponent's perspectives and would probably dismiss the importance of consensus about major decisions (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Marchlewska et al., 2022). Prior research has demonstrated that those high in collective narcissism derive joy from opponents' failures and have an overall preference for conflict in intergroup relations (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016). Pushing through controversial policies and humiliating political opponents may therefore serve as a welcomed opportunity to draw attention to the party and show its strength and decisiveness. For example, collective narcissism in Poland (albeit measured in the national context) predicted support for controversial, even outright harmful, legislation to show outsiders that "we will not be bossed around" (Cislak et al., 2018; see also Szczepańska et al., 2022).

Other facets of politicking include preferences for secrecy and attaching little importance to honesty (Silvester et al., 2014). Those

high in collective narcissism are strongly motivated to maintain a positive image of the ingroup (e.g., Golec de Zavala et al., 2009) and react defensively even to constructive criticism (Marchlewska et al., 2020). Further, collective narcissism is associated with downplaying undesirable elements of the ingroup's past (Dyduch-Hazar et al., 2019) and a willingness to bend information to the ingroup's favor (Główczewski et al., 2022; Gronfeldt et al., 2023). Collective narcissism is also robustly related to suspicion of others and conspiratorial thinking (Cichocka et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012; Sternisko et al., 2021). Partisan narcissism might therefore be linked to being more inclined to keep threatening information secret, especially if they would reveal shortcomings of policies or political decisions. Honesty with the public may yield to a fear of losing power, influence, or support.

A mounting body of evidence suggests those high in collective narcissism act selfishly within their own groups, which is perhaps not surprising given its positive relationships with individual narcissism and psychological entitlement (e.g., Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Indeed, one study connected partisan narcissism with a self-serving motivation to engage in politics and objectification of co-party members (Cichocka et al., 2022). The same research linked collective narcissism in organizations with "backstabbing" behavior, such as telling on co-workers and keeping information secret (Cichocka et al., 2022) as well as conspiring against them (Biddlestone et al., 2022).

Thus, we expected partisan narcissism to be negatively related to integrity because individuals high in the trait may lack many of the prosocial, trustful, and benevolent elements accompanying partisan identification (e.g., Cichocka et al., 2022; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). In fact, one prior study found partisan identification to relate to benevolent political will, a motivation to engage in politics for the common good (Cichocka et al., 2022). Overall, we then expect partisan identification to be linked with trust and a more balanced view on inter- and intragroup relations (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020), thus likely being linked to greater integrity.

1.4 | Partisan identity and party dedication

Dedication is important for the betterment of political parties as any other social group. Here, we approach party dedication as a set of outcomes associated with intentions to stay with the party, past switching, and volunteering in party activities. Prior research suggests that those high in partisan narcissism would be less dedicated to their party. National narcissism has been associated with greater readiness to leave one's homeland for personal gains (Marchlewska et al., 2020), likely because those high in collective narcissism care more about how the group benefits them or reflects on them than being loyal to group members (Cichocka, 2016). How the ingroup reflects on the self may be especially relevant in the political party context: public opinion is volatile, and decisions made by the party can create unpopularity among the electorate, at least in the short term. Unlike other more fixed social categories, political parties in a multiparty system are fluid and flexible, and switching political parties is not a

fringe phenomenon. Leaving or changing the party may therefore be "a way out" for those high in partisan narcissism to avoid ego-harm (Cichocka, 2016). We, therefore, expected partisan narcissism to be linked to intentions to leave the party in the future as well as having switched parties in the past. Last, we examined volunteering in party activities. Volunteering can be taxing and a "quick pay-off" for one's effort is not guaranteed, while those high in collective narcissism prefer short-term ego enhancement (Cislak et al., 2018; Gronfeldt et al., 2023). Further, since collective narcissism has been linked with less organizational citizenship behavior (Cichocka, 2016), we expected those high in partisan narcissism to spend less time volunteering for the party.

Partisan identification among the public predicts electoral loyalty (Bankert et al., 2017). We thus expected partisan identification to predict to greater intentions to stay with the party in the future, an effect well established in other identity-related contexts (Ellemers et al., 1997; Lee et al., 2015; Marchlewska et al., 2020; Randsley de Moura et al., 2009; Riketta, 2005; Van Dick et al., 2004). Party loyalty can also be an effective persuasion tactic of its own, as research from political science suggests that it is appealing to voters (Folke & Rickne, 2020). Thus, we also predicted those high in ingroup identification to be less likely to have switched parties in the past. Further, prior research has linked partisan identification among the public with involvement in party activities (Bankert et al., 2017; Greene, 2004). In our study, we expected partisan identification to predict volunteering in party activities. While volunteering is a form of organizational citizenship behavior, it can also be a tactic of its own. As alluded to earlier, being seen by co-partisans as selfless in allocating one's own free time for the betterment of the party may demonstrate a devotion to the party and help one in becoming an appealing candidate.

1.5 | The present study

We tested our hypotheses in a sample of elite members of the Left-Greens, a left-wing political party in Iceland. Politicians and political candidates are a hard-to-reach population from which researchers experience considerable challenges obtaining self-report measures of psychological constructs (Silvester et al., 2021). As a result, most studies pivot to examine partisan identity in more accessible groups, such as students (Kane et al., 2021) or voters (Greene, 2005) or resort to at-a-distance methods, such as reviewing written blogs (Nilsson, 2012), recorded speech in parliamentary discussions (van Dijk, 2010) or Tweets (Shin et al., 2022). While arguably more accessible than self-report data, such at-a distance methods are public-facing tools manipulated by politicians (and sometimes written by others) to deliver political narrative (Gainous & Wagner, 2014). By achieving self-ratings from politicians, we provide a novel insight into actual rather than ascribed psychological constructs of interest in this study. Our sample is also methodologically useful because we collected responses at the same time point among members of a single political party, meaning that factors such as ideology and norms are controlled for naturally.
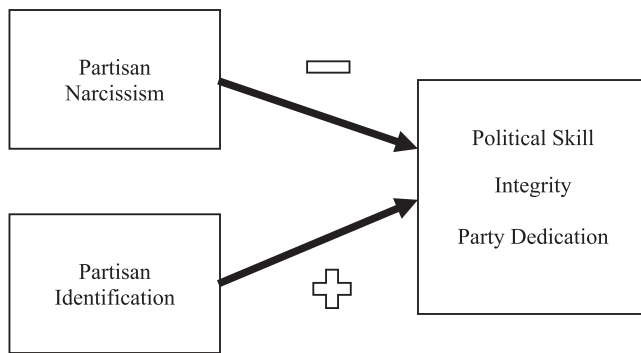
FIGURE 1 Schematic outline of partisan narcissism and identification as predictors of political skill, integrity, and party dedication.

We examine whether partisan narcissism versus partisan identification predict political skill, integrity, and party dedication (measured as intentions to leave the party in the future, actual past party switching, and volunteering in party activities). Hypotheses are outlined in Figure 1. To control for the possible confounding effects of socialization on the outcome variables (see e.g., Van Knippenberg, 2000; Wegge et al., 2006), we rely on tenure (i.e., years active in the party) as a proxy. These analyses can be found in the Supplement.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Participants and recruitment

The study was conducted between November 2017 and February 2018 among the Left-Greens—a left-wing party that has led the current government coalition since 2017. Originally a splinter group of left-wingers that refused to join a merger of center-left wing parties into the Social Democratic Alliance in 1999, the Left-Greens are self-described as socialist, pacifist, environmentalist, and feminist. The party has received between 8.8% and 21.6% in the eight national elections held since its founding and participated in three governmental coalitions. This was an opportunistic sample, selected because of one of the author's past employment for the party. The Icelandic voting system is based on party-list proportional representation. The Left-Greens' lists were accessed through the Ministry of the Interior's archives (www.kosning.is). We sought to contact all candidates (N = 388) of the parliamentary elections of 2013, 2016, 2017, and municipal elections of 2014. By the time of data collection, 19 candidates had left the party and five had passed away; 67 candidates did not reply to two telephone calls, or their telephone numbers could not be found. Of the candidates contacted, 12 refused to participate, 285 agreed, and 245 started the online survey. In total, 31 participants (12.65%) were excluded from further analysis due to missing data (less than one full scale completed), leaving 214 participants (59% of the available population) in the final data set. We aimed for a sample size of at least 173, which would provide 80%

power to detect the typical effect size in social/personality psychology of r = .21 (Richard et al., 2003).

All materials were in Icelandic. Mean age of participants was 48.53 years (SD = 13.91), and 53.66% were female, 45.85% male, and one participant (0.49%) identified as another gender. We used dummy variables in our analyses to account for the effects of different genders. We controlled for gender and age in our regression analyses as these demographics have been found to predict both integrity and political skill (Oerder et al., 2014; Silvester et al., 2014). Analyses without these controls can be found in Supplement.

The data set has also been used in a separate paper (Cichocka et al., 2022), focusing on a different set of outcomes related to social rather than political functioning of party members. This study was not preregistered. We were not able to make the data public due to privacy concerns.

2.2 | Measures

Answers for all scales ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

2.2.1 | Partisan narcissism

Partisan narcissism was measured using the 9-item Collective Narcissism Scale (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), e.g., "I insist upon the Left-Greens getting the respect they are due," M = 3.92, SD = 0.96, α = .81.

2.2.2 | Partisan identification

Partisan identification with the Left Greens was measured using the 12-item Social Identification Scale (Cameron, 2004). The scale was computed by combining the three subscales of the scale: ingroup ties (e.g., "I have a lot in common with other members of the Left-Greens"), centrality (e.g., "I often think about the fact that I am a member of the Left-Greens"), and ingroup affect (e.g., "In general, I'm glad to be a member of the Left-Greens"), M = 5.09, SD = 0.84, α = .81.

2.2.3 | Political skill

Political skill was measured with the Political Skill Inventory (Ferris et al., 2005). The inventory includes four subscales. The items were adapted to reflect the political nature of participants' work, as many will hold jobs outside of politics as well; for example: "I spend a lot of time and effort in my political work networking with others" (networking ability), "I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me" (interpersonal influence), "I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others" (social

astuteness), and "It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do" (apparent sincerity). We computed the scales total score (18 items; α = .90, M = 5.11, SD = 0.77). The results were similar when we analyzed each subscale separately (see the Supplement for details).

2.2.4 | Integrity

Following Wyatt and Silvester (2018), we operationalized integrity by reverse coding the "politicking" scale from the Political Performance Questionnaire (Silvester et al., 2014) which measures various aspects of competence in a political role (for other subscales of political performance, refer to the Supplement). Politicking was measured with items such as "Sometimes there is a need for secrecy when making decisions" (reversed, 5 items, M = 4.74, SD = 1.27, α = .76).

2.2.5 | Party dedication

Intentions to leave the party
Participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed with the statement "I might leave the Left-Greens sometime in the future," on a scale from 1 to 7. (M = 3.70, SD = 1.99).

Switching parties
Participants were asked whether they had been members of a political party other than the Left-Green Movement since the party's foundation in 1999. A total of 150 participants said no (73.53%, coded as 0) and 54 said yes (26.47%, coded as 1). Ten participants left this question blank. Please note that using switching between parties as an outcome creates the temporal problem of predicting past behavior from current levels of partisan narcissism. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, and for consistency with other analyses, we decided to include switching as an outcome variable rather than a predictor of current levels of partisan narcissism (however, regression analyses with partisan narcissism as an outcome yield similar results).

Volunteering
Participants were asked how many hours they volunteered for the party under two circumstances, during election campaigns and outside of election campaigns. The two correlated moderately, r (202) = 0.39, p < .001. These two items were averaged to reflect a global score of volunteering (M = 11.48, SD = 8.70).

2.2.6 | Tenure in the party

Participants were asked which year they became members of the Left-Greens (1999–2017). This question was used to compute tenure in party, measured as years since joining. This variable is used as a control variable in supplementary regression analyses (M = 11.87, SD = 6.17).

TABLE 1 Bivariate correlations among continuous variables.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Partisan narcissism					
2. Partisan identification	0.33***				
3. Political skill	0.14***	0.32***			
4. Integrity	−0.22***	−0.06	−0.07		
5. Volunteering	0.05	0.20***	0.33***	−0.10	
6. Intention to leave party	−0.19***	−0.42***	−0.16*	0.07	−0.15

*p < .05; ***p < .001.

3 | RESULTS

Correlations among continuous variables are displayed in Table 1. Partisan narcissism was positively associated with political skill, but negatively related to integrity and intentions to leave the party. Partisan identification was related positively to political skill and volunteering, but negatively related to intentions to leave the party. Note that while both partisan identification and partisan narcissism were negatively associated with intention to leave the party and positively related to political skill, the effects for partisan identification were about twice as large as for partisan narcissism.

Partisan narcissism and partisan identification were entered simultaneously as predictors in regression models for each outcome variable with pairwise exclusions for missing data. Gender and age were also added as control variables (the pattern of results remained the same without these variables, see Supplement). We used dummy variables for female and nonbinary gender with male gender as the reference category.

We first examined political skill and integrity as outcomes (see Table 2). Partisan identification was a significant, positive predictor of political skill (β = .34, p < .001), whereas partisan narcissism was not a significant predictor (β = .04, p = .563). Partisan narcissism was a significant, negative predictor of integrity (β = −0.18, p = .010), whereas partisan identification was not a significant predictor (β = .01, p = .928).

We then examined party dedication indices as outcomes. Results for volunteering and intentions to leave are presented in Table 3. Partisan identification was a significant, positive predictor of volunteering (β = .22, p = .004), whereas partisan narcissism was not a significant predictor (β = −.02, p = .763). The volunteering variable was highly skewed, with most participants reporting few hours. We, therefore, repeated our regression analysis with 5000 bootstrap samples. Pattern of results remained the same. Partisan identification was a significant, negative predictor of intentions to leave the party in the future (β = −0.36, p < .001), whereas partisan narcissism was not a significant predictor (β = −0.05, p = .455).

We then proceeded to examine past switching between political parties as an outcome of partisan narcissism and partisan identification in a logistic regression analysis (see Table 4). One point increase in

TABLE 2 Regression analyses with partisan narcissism and partisan identification as predictors of political skill and integrity.

Predictor	Political skill				Integrity			
	b	95% CI	β	p	b	95% CI	β	p
Partisan narcissism	0.03	[−0.08, 0.15]	.04	.563	−0.24	[−0.42, −0.06]	−.18	.010
Partisan identification	0.31	[0.18, 0.44]	.34	<.001	0.01	[−0.20, 0.22]	.01	.928
Female (vs. male)	0.03	[−0.18, 0.23]	.02	.817	0.81	[0.47, 1.15]	.32	<.001
Nonbinary (vs. male)	−0.31	[−1.76, 1.15]	−.03	.679	−0.60	[−2.97, 1.77]	−.03	.621
Age	−0.01	[−0.02, −0.01]	−.16	.024	−0.004	[−0.02, 0.01]	−.04	.526
F (df)	5.87 (5,194), p < .001				7.39 (5,194), p < .001			
R²	.13				.16			

Abbreviation: CI, confidence interval.

TABLE 3 Regression analyses with partisan narcissism and partisan identification variables as predictors of volunteering and intentions to leave.

Predictor	Volunteering				Intentions to leave			
	b	95% CI	β	p	b	95% CI	β	p
Partisan narcissism	−0.20	[−1.54, 1.13]	−.02	.763	−0.10	[−0.38, 0.17]	−.05	.455
Partisan identification	2.27	[0.72, 3.82]	.22	.004	−0.85***	[−1.17, −0.54]	−.36	<.001
Female (vs. male)	−1.96	[−4.44, 0.51]	−.11	.119	0.01	[−0.49, 0.52]	.003	.961
Nonbinary (vs. male)	−8.68	[−25.96, 8.59]	−.07	.323	1.21	[−2.31, 4.73]	.04	.497
Age	−0.05	[−0.14, 0.04]	−.08	.297	−0.04***	[−0.06, −0.02]	−.26	<.001
F (df)	2.36 (5,192), p = .042				12.69 (5,194), p < .001			
R²	.06				.25			

Abbreviation: CI, confidence interval.

TABLE 4 Logistic regression analyses with partisan narcissism and partisan identification as predictors of past switching between political parties.

Predictor	b	OR	95% CI	p
Partisan narcissism	0.45	1.56	[1.07, 2.29]	.022
Partisan identification	−0.40	0.67	[0.44, 1.02]	.060
Female (vs. male)	−0.39	0.68	[0.35, 1.32]	.253
Nonbinary (vs. male)	−20.72	0.00	[0.00, 0.00]	1.000
Age	−0.02	0.98	[0.96, 1.01]	.129
χ² (df)	11.97 (5, N = 197), p = .035			
Nagelkerke R²	.09			

Abbreviation: CI, confidence interval.

partisan narcissism was associated with a 1.56 increase in the odds of having been a member of another party in the past (b = 0.45, p = .022). Partisan identification was a marginally significant predictor, although its direction was negative (OR = 0.67, b = −0.40, p = .060).

We repeated the above analyses with tenure as a control variable. We chose to include tenure in a separate set of analyses as this variable had a lot of missing data, mostly due to participants not being sure which exact year they joined the party. Regression analyses can be found in the Supplement. The pattern of results remained the same for all outcome variables, except that partisan narcissism became a nonsignificant predictor of switching political parties, possibly due to data attrition.

4 | DISCUSSION

Our study examined partisan narcissism and partisan identification as predictors of outcomes important for functioning of active partisans running as candidates for parliament and local offices. First, we found that partisan narcissism predicted lower integrity in one's political role. Second, partisan identification was related to higher political skills. Third, we found evidence that these different types of identity differentially predicted measures of party dedication. While partisan

identification predicted more volunteering in party activities and lower willingness to leave the party in the future, partisan narcissism only predicted membership in other political parties in the past. In sum, partisan narcissism was associated with more malevolent behaviors stereotypical of politicians, that is low integrity and party switching. However, contrary to popular stereotypes (Arendt & Marquart, 2015), we found that partisans who feel a part of their organization and evaluate it positively (Leach et al., 2008; Tajfel, 1978) reported higher skills related to their profession, and pro-organizational objectives, such as intending to stay with the party and volunteering in its activities.

An emerging literature on collective narcissism in organizations suggest that the narcissistic component of identity has detrimental effects on work-related outcomes (Cichocka et al., 2022). Meanwhile, a large literature suggests that strong organizational identification can yield positive outcomes for the organization and the individual worker (Riketta, 2005; Wegge et al., 2006). Our study contributes toward an integration of these literatures in several ways. First, little research effort has been devoted to link organizational (or partisan) identification with political behavior in organizations, even though identification has been found to be a strong predictor of other work-related outcomes (Riketta, 2005). In particular, few studies to date have examined effectiveness and functioning of politicians or political candidates as political workers, other than electoral performance (cf. Silvester & Dykes, 2007; Silvester et al., 2014). Second, although politicians seem to show different sentiments toward their parties, few studies to date have distinguished between collective narcissism and identification in the partisan context (cf., Bocian et al., 2021; Cichocka et al., 2022). Third, we relied on data from actual parliamentary and local candidates, not an "from a distance" assessment of the party completed by voters (Simonton, 1998).

4.1 | Partisan identity, political skill, and integrity

Politics is art of the possible, or so the saying goes. In our study, partisan narcissism was unrelated to political skill, suggesting that it is at best unhelpful in achieving political goals. It was, however, negatively related to integrity in one's political role. In other words, it predicted greater engagement in politicking behavior, a readiness to engage in secrecy, deception, and political blood-sport (Wyatt & Silvester, 2018). This is in accordance with research linking collective narcissism to opposition to democratic principles (Marchlewska et al., 2022) as well as a willingness to conspire against one's ingroup members, including members of the same organization (Biddlestone et al., 2022). In the context of partisan narcissism specifically, the role of political cognition, that is how one interprets political events and makes attributes and decisions, should be underlined (Silvester & Wyatt, 2018). The conflict orientation of partisan narcissism may be due to distrust and attributing conspiratorial intentions to both political opponents and party comrades (Biddlestone et al., 2021; Cichocka, 2016). Such distrust can push a politician toward politicking behavior rather than integrity by (often inaccurately) attributing

sinister intentions to others, and suspicious interpretation even of mundane political events. Furthermore, collective narcissism has been linked to counterproductive decision-making in ingroup affairs. For example, partisan narcissism predicted bias in moral judgments about actions aimed to serve ingroup interest (Bocian et al., 2021). In the national context, collective narcissism was associated with support for policies that can harm the nation in the long run, a preference seemingly driven by the need to make the group appear strong and resistant to external pressures (Cislak et al., 2018, 2021; Gronfeldt et al., 2023).

Collective narcissism has also been linked with self-serving behavior in organizations rather than a genuine motivation to benefit the ingroup (Cichocka et al., 2022). In the political party context, Cichocka and colleagues (2022, Study 3) found that partisan narcissism was related to having an instrumental view of co-party members, i.e., using ingroup members as means to an end. This relationship was mediated by a self-serving motivation to engage in politics. Such behaviors are unlikely to go unnoticed for long and may ultimately generate a negative reputation, an important quality to have to persuade others (Ferris et al., 2008; Treadway et al., 2004). In this, collective narcissism resembles individual narcissism, which tends to predict engagement in short-term self-aggrandizing strategies, which harm social relationships in the long term (Cichocka et al., 2022; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Vazire & Funder, 2006). Furthermore, recent research has linked collective narcissism with social cynicism, a negative view on human nature (Marchlewska et al., 2022). A cynical mindset may allow those high in partisan narcissism to dismiss the effects of secrecy, deception, and blood-sport on those around them, instead of working toward goals with interpersonal skills, such as coalition building, networking, and astutely influencing those around them (Ferris et al., 2008; Silvester & Wyatt, 2018).

From our findings, it seems that partisan identification can potentially aid in mastering one's political skillset. Political skill entails the ability to understand and influence others to enhance political objectives (Ahearn et al., 2004; Silvester & Wyatt, 2018). While political skill is as not always prosocial, it seems that having ties with the ingroup, evaluating it positively, and seeing it as central in one's self-image (Cameron, 2004) goes hand in hand with coming across as benevolent, genuine and portraying one's work in the most positive light (Treadway et al., 2004). Again, political cognition and political sense-making may be important mediators of these relationships (Silvester & Wyatt, 2018). Secure forms of ingroup identity, net of collective narcissism, have been associated with a more balanced view on intergroup relations and ingroup interests (e.g., Cislak et al., 2018; Gronfeldt et al., 2023), free of conspiratorial ideation (Cichocka et al., 2016), likely leading to more astute decision making among politicians high in partisan identification. Partisan identification may not predispose politicians to perceiving enemies and plots everywhere. Such a secure and confident mindset may facilitate coalition-building and reaching across the aisle to political opponents. Indeed, in the national context, secure ingroup identity has been linked with support for democratic norms and principles, which necessitates putting trust in others (Marchlewska et al., 2022).

4.2 | The good comrade: Party dedication

Partisan narcissism was not related to intentions to leave the party or volunteering. The lack of a significant finding for intentions to leave may have been due to a lack of self-serving motive in the measure (i.e., we did not ask about monetary gain or ego-enhancement). It may also have been due to social desirability, as being seen as disloyal may reflect poorly on the self. However, membership in other parties in the past is more difficult to deny. Previous studies on national narcissism have found a link with intentions to leave if it were personally beneficial (Marchlewska et al., 2020), but never considered those group members who have already made the leap. One of the advantages of studying collective narcissism in an organizational setting is that it more easily allows for switching than national groups. Our study, therefore, adds to the literature suggesting that collective narcissism is associated with lower ingroup loyalty as this is the first study finding evidence for those high in collective narcissism "jumping" from group to group. This echoes with recent findings linking collective narcissism to seeking group membership to gain self-worth, recognition, or prestige (Eker et al., 2023).

Partisan identification predicted lower intentions to leave the party and more reported hours of volunteering for the party. This is consistent with research showing the benefits of organizational identification in the business context (see e.g., Abrams et al., 1998; Riketta, 2005). Both variables can be viewed as important for the future health and functioning of an organization. High levels of social identification may yield an intrinsic motivation (Eker et al., 2023) to work hard to benefit one's organization (Van Knippenberg, 2000) and stay with it (Ellemers et al., 1997). In any case, those high in partisan identification likely made the correct choice to stay with the party, as studies suggest that candidates who demonstrate party loyalty fare better in elections (Folke & Rickne, 2020).

4.3 | Strengths, limitations and future research

Our sample and data are the primary strength of the current research. Our study offered a rare opportunity to get an "up-close" account of politicians' self-reported behaviors, rather than "at-a-distance" measures where voters, the public, or experts draw inferences, as most previous studies have relied on (Simonton, 1998). We contacted almost every candidate running in a given period, with a high response rate. The sample can be considered close to representative for the Left-Greens as it entails over half of the population (59%) of party members actively seeking office. Also, because the sample comes from a single political party, we were able to hold factors such as political ideology and party norms constant.

Some drawbacks of the current research should be noted. The sample was opportunistic and recruited from a left-wing party, in a homogeneous country in Northern Europe. Further, the role of ideology was not considered in this research. We would expect the relationships exhibited here to generalize across different contexts, for example, defensive processes associated with collective narcissism have been documented in supporter of right-wing parties (Bocian et al., 2021). However, at the moment we can only generalize our findings to similar cultural and political environments. In the future, this research should be replicated across the ideological spectrum. Partisan narcissism (and partisan identification) may differ in their manifestations according to what is desirable or undesirable in each ideological space. For example, it may be that the constructs examined here differ in their relative importance for the left and the right.

We can also not preclude the possibility that our data suffers from selection-bias. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary. Given our findings that identification is associated with higher willingness to volunteer for the party, it could be that those who agreed to participate are higher in partisan identification than those who dropped out or not even opened the survey. Although the study would benefit from replication, work-related outcomes such as political skill and integrity can only be examined in a sample of active politicians (as opposed to supporters), so accessibility to appropriate samples remains a challenge for the field (Silvester et al., 2021).

Our data were cross-sectional, so causality cannot be established. Although we considered partisan narcissism and identification as predictors, it is possible to speculate that political skill and integrity build identification with one's party (although longitudinal research has found identification to have an independent effect on performance, Thomas et al., 2019). To disentangle these effects, future research should involve longitudinal studies. We also relied on self-report data, not *other*-rated skills and performance as some previous studies of performance (Ahearn et al., 2004; Silvester et al., 2014). However, past work has shown positive associations between political skill, as assessed by co-workers, with actual performance in work setting (Blickle et al., 2011). It would also be fruitful for future research on politician's performance to examine more "hard" indicators of past performance. For example, politician's self-reported identification could be examined as a predictor of past/future success at the ballot box, legislation passed, disclosure of conflict of interests, fundraising, tax records or annual reports, intraparty elections, and so on. Last, our data did not include measures indicative of socioeconomic status or education, which would have been relevant controls, especially for political skill (Ferris et al., 2008).

Future studies should also investigate long-term performance outcomes. For example, it is uncertain how politicking versus integrity works as a strategy. Even though it is reasonable to assume that politicking has negative social consequences in most populations, politicians are in the business of politics, and therefore may require deception and secrecy and similar political tactics to get their policies fulfilled (Wyatt & Silvester, 2018). For example, recent research has found factors of the "Dark Triad" to be associated with politicians' higher success at the ballot box (Blais et al., 2019) and higher levels of political engagement among voters (Chen et al., 2021). In other words, it is possible politicking may increase chances of "getting things done" in the political arena due to a readiness to strongarm others when it is deemed justified. The nature of political success is contested, and more research should be devoted to how

politicians balance being a "good party member" and an effective politician that "gets things done". In the words of the infamous Frank Underwood, "the road to power is paved with hypocrisy and casualties."

Finally, our research contributed to the growing literature on collective narcissism. Past studies mostly focused on collective narcissism in the national context (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020), occasionally applying it to other groups, including gender (Górska et al., 2020), ethnicity (Marinthe et al., 2022), and business (Cichocka et al., 2022), sport (Larkin et al., 2022), religious (Marchlewska et al., 2019) or extremist (Jasko et al., 2020) organizations. Here, we examine the role of collective narcissism within the political party context, which has been studied less frequently (but see Bocian et al., 2021; Cichocka et al., 2022). We go beyond other studies of collective narcissism and intragroup functioning (e.g., instrumental treatment of ingroup members, Cichocka et al., 2022, or willingness to conspire against them, Biddlestone et al., 2022) in that we found partisan narcissism to predict a greater preference for secrecy, deception, and blood-sport in a sample of a highly influential group in any society: active politicians. Given the conflict-driven, and often hostile, inter-, and intragroup dynamics in politics, partisan narcissism is an important factor to include in future research on partisanship, especially when considering the effects it can have on society at large, not merely the given political party.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

We found evidence linking partisan identification with higher political skill and party dedication among candidates for parliament and local office. Meanwhile, partisan narcissism was related to lower integrity in one's political role, a behavior also known as politicking. Therefore, partisan narcissism seems rather to be associated with more devious work habits that many find stereotypical of politicians. We also present novel evidence suggesting that those high in collective narcissism "jump" between group, possibly to take advantage of acquiring a new, positive social identity for ego enhancement. Those narcissistically identified with such groups are also those who may undermine group integrity to attain their personal or group goals.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data collection was a part of the first author's master's dissertation. Data cannot be made public due to concerns about participants' anonymity.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This project received appropriate ethics approval from the ethics committee of the School of Psychology at the University of Kent. All participants consented to participating in this research. No material was reproduced from other sources.

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