Citizens' Knowledge of Parties' Left-Right and EU Integration Conflicts: the Role of Cognition, Affect, and Political Parties

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Conflicts: the Role of Cognition, Affect, and Political Parties

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I. Abstract

In representative democracies citizens are supposed to be well-informed about what parties do and say. Such information helps voters to choose parties and candidates which are likely to promote their interests in political decision-making. However, it is well established that many people often fail to become adequately informed about politics due to a lack of political interest and cognitive abilities. It is, furthermore, broadly acknowledged that our impression formation is to a considerable degree guided by affect and particularly by our party identity, which can severely bias our perceptions of parties' policy standpoints and their responsibilities. This dissertation investigates how our impression of what political parties stand for in the left-right spectrum as well as in the conflict over European integration is determined by voters' level of cognitive resources and by their party attitudes.

In addition, what people might know inevitably depends on the information environment, which is largely shaped by political parties' behavior; our knowledge about politics depends on the quantity and quality of policy-relevant information disseminated by political parties. I discern between three policy-based strategies of party competition: 1) position-taking; 2) the manipulation of salience; and, 3) a politics of ambiguity. By employing these policy-based strategies parties create information that is crucial for representation. Thus, public knowledge about political parties is the outcome of a communicative process between voters and political parties. It depends on voters' cognitive and affective components as well as on the policy-based strategies of competition employed by political parties. Moreover, I explore how cognition and party affect are associated with party knowledge conditional upon the information environment as shaped by political parties.

II. Table of contents

III. List of Tables

IV. List of Figures

Introduction

This dissertation is about voters' knowledge of parties' issue positions with respect to EU integration and left-right conflicts across European democracies. I test the extent to which such knowledge is a function of individuals' attributes as well as party-related factors. Moreover, I examine whether the associations between the individual-level explanatory factors and party knowledge are contingent on the information environment as shaped by political parties.

In contemporary democracies, voters are represented by political parties which are supposed to promote citizens' interests in political decision-making. While both representation and democracy are contested concepts, many scholars contend that the requirement of representation is met when parties' policy preferences and implemented policies correspond with voters' own policy preferences (Thomassen 1994; Weissberg 1978). Only on rare occasions can citizens exert control over the process of representation; once every four or five years they can decide by whom they wish to be represented. Given the rarity of this opportunity, from a normative perspective it is crucial that citizens cast a vote that is truly in their best interests. Little wonder that theories of representative democracy have invested great expectations in this particular moment. In the final chapter of Berelson et al.'s seminal book *Voting (1954, 308),* these expectations are summarized as follows: "[the voter]…is expected to be well informed about political affairs. He is supposed to know what the issues are, […] what the relevant facts are, what alternatives are proposed, [and] what the likely consequences are". Indeed, these are great hopes given that politics is often complex, confusing, and in the eyes of many citizens not even particularly rewarding (Dahl 1961). Luskin (2002) summarizes the findings of the empirical studies on political knowledge noting that the level held by citizens is indeed disillusioning. However, knowledge varies both across individuals and countries and, as Philip Converse (1990: 372) observes: "the two simplest truths […] about the distribution of political information in modern electorates are that the mean is low and the variance high."

According to many theories of democracy, a well-informed citizenry is not the only and nor even a particularly important normative requirement on citizens. Their opinion should be reasoned and conform to other normative values such as tolerance, equality, and freedom. In fact, many theories of representative democracy even cast doubt on human ability and willingness to meet such requirements. In consequence, such pessimistic or realistic theories stress the importance of the capacity of elites to deliberate and to compromise, and they value highly the various institutional constraints on governmental power in order to protect

individuals and minorities from the tyranny of the majority (Madison 1787; Riker 1982; Lijphart 1999; Sartori 1987). What is much less explored in a comprehensive and holistic way is the normative role of political parties. The responsible party model (American Political Science Association 1950) proposes clear instructions as to how political parties should behave: they should offer clear, coherent, and distinct policy alternatives to the voters, and once elected into government, their MPs should be disciplined enough to implement these promised policy proposals (Birch 1972; Thomassen 1994; Powell 2004).

In fact, what voters might possibly know about politics depends to a considerable extent on how clearly parties communicate their policy preferences to the electorate. At the same time, knowing parties' preferred policies seems pointless if parties either deliberately break their promises or if they are seriously constrained by external factors in implementing their policy program. Still, the responsible party model remains a much contested model of representation. Accordingly, in Chapter 1 the responsible party model will be assessed in greater detail and it will be shown that this model stands in marked contrast to alternative theories of representative democracy. Many theorists who adhere to the trustee model of representation, who equate representation with accountability, and who base the legitimacy of democratic systems on policy outcomes and efficiency provide a number of reasons why politicians should renege and follow their own judgments (Schumpeter 1952; Pitkin 1967; Brennan and Hamlin 1999; Andeweg and Thomassen 2005). In line with these arguments, the responsible party model can be criticized on grounds of its inapplicability to contemporary societies and democracies as well as for the lack of an integrated theory of party behavior.

The relevance of the research question in this dissertation stems not only from normative considerations. Perceptual accuracy of parties' issue positions and the capacity to place them on issue scales reveal a great deal about the salience and the level of issue politicization within a country (Carmines and Stimson 1989). Thus, these are interesting indicators of the extent to which issue conflicts at the party level, such as the contemporary conflict over European integration, trickle down to the electoral level. Moreover, voters' knowledge of parties' policy preferences has a practical relevance for political parties. On the one hand, it may be important for parties to have their policy stance correctly perceived. A large body of empirical studies, for instance, examines whether shifts in issue positions by political parties impact their vote shares (cf. Adams et al. 2004; Laver 2005). Such studies often assume only implicitly that parties are strongly interested in citizens being well-informed about their current policy proposals. Another assumption is that voters vote sincerely by choosing parties with the most similar policy preferences (Downs 1957; Hinich and Munger 1996). Should citizens be ignorant about parties' positions, should the public not respond to

parties' recent positional shifts, and should voters succumb to projection by believing in whatever they want to believe, parties' efforts to gain votes by positioning themselves in issue conflicts and by shifting their positions would be futile. In this sense, it is of practical relevance for political parties to understand how and when individuals acquire an accurate understanding of their policy offers. On the other hand, however, parties might equally well be interested in having an inaccurately perceived position (Page 1978). In particular, parties which are internally divided and characterized by heterogeneous preferences among its supporters on controversial issues strive for their supporters to succumb to projection effects (Brody and Page 1979; Tomz and van Houweling 2009). For instance, scholars on the Europeanization of party politics point to the fact that the established parties' supporters diverge in their opinions on European integration (van der Eijk and Franklin 2004). Such parties face the danger of internal party-splits, and the most practical means to cohere a heterogeneous electorate is to make supporters succumb to partisan biased perception – that is, when every supporter, no matter whether she or he opposes or favors European integration, believes that her and his party's position perfectly reflects her own ideal position.

What explains party knowledge? One group of individual predictors refers to cognitive factors which supposedly help people to interpret what parties stand for. These theories rest on the assumption that citizens are generally motivated to be accurately informed about politics. Thus, cognitive factors such as interest in politics, intelligence, education, and attention to political news enable individuals to become well-informed about parties' policy profiles (Neuman 1986; Zaller 1992; Alvarez 1997; Bartels 1996). When asked to place parties on issue scales, individuals who are well-equipped with such cognitive resources are more likely to 1) place parties on an issue scale, and 2) place them more accurately.

Another literature, however, stresses the importance of affective components such as party attitude and identity for impression formation and information-seeking (Taber and Lodge 2006). Affect plays a crucial role in politics, for parties are affect-laden objects. According to this literature, voters are motivated to preserve their party attitudes and identity, a desire which can lead to projection effects: voters place preferred parties close to their own position, while they push disliked parties away as a means to preserve party identification. What is particularly striking, as recent research shows, is that projection effects appear to be more common among the politically aware and interested electorate (Taber and Lodge 2001; Bartels 2008; Lavine et al. 2012; Lodge and Taber 2013). In this thesis, I test two relationships between party attitudes and party knowledge. First, party attitudes in combination with issue attitude are expected to relate to party knowledge. If party attitudes and issue attitudes don't match, voters should be associated with greater misperception and

lower probability of placing parties on an issue scale. This phenomenon can be referred to as 'projection effects', and has been the subject of many studies (Brody and Page 1972; Granberg and Brent 1974; Conover and Feldman 1983, 1989; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Granberg 1993). This dissertation reveals that projections are common for both left-right and the EU integration issue, and that they are particularly pervasive in the left-right conflict. Apart from the fact that this dissertation examines projections across 24 European countries and two issues, another important contribution to the projection literature lies in distinguishing between two aspects of party knowledge. While the projection literature has implicitly or explicitly been concerned with perceptual accuracy, I show that voters can also adjust their perceptual uncertainty in order to cope with cognitive inconsistency (Festinger 1957, Heider 1958). Second, there is a large body of work that offers empirical evidence and various explanations showing that voters are generally more exposed and better informed about the policies propagated by their preferred candidates and parties. This phenomenon can be subsumed under the term selective exposure, which has been and still remains a salient topic in political communication studies for over 50 years (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Sears and Freedman 1967; Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Taber and Lodge 2006; Iyengar et al. 2008; Garrett 2009).

Political knowledge does not only vary across individuals within a country, but it also varies across parties and countries. This is due to the supply-side of party knowledge, and the focus here is on political parties rather than the media as the source of information. Parties seek to achieve various goals by drawing on a range of strategies of political competition. Some strategies are policy-based while others are not. I discern between three policy-based strategies of party competition: 1) issue salience; 2) policy ambiguity; and, 3) position taking. First, parties seek to manipulate the salience of certain issues by deliberately emphasizing or deemphasizing them (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996). Limited space in media outlets and limited public attention to political information forces parties to decide which issue to address. As a result, the public should be informed of the parties' positions on those issues which are emphasized. Secondly, parties often blur their preferences on certain issues by disseminating inconsistent statements (Shepsle 1972; Campbell 1983; Rovney 2012). By presenting ambiguous standpoints on an issue, the electorate faces increased uncertainty and difficulty in interpreting what policies a future government would implement. Finally, political information is conveyed to the public whenever parties disagree on an issue. By taking diverging standpoints on an issue, parties contribute to issue polarization, which in turn increases media coverage of the topic, elicits public attention and thus informs citizens about what parties stand for (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Schuck et al. 2011).

This dissertation examines whether it is possible for people to be accurately informed, whether they are willing to be accurately informed about parties and whether the political context matters for citizens to acquire an accurate knowledge of politics. In order to provide answers to these questions, my thesis combines various datasets including the European Parliament Election Survey 2009, the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010, and the Euromanifesto project as well as the Comparative Manifesto project data. By employing a multilevel approach, I explore the simultaneous contributions of individual-level and party-level explanatory factors as well as cross-level interactions. The research questions can be formulated as follows: To what extent is knowledge about political parties' issue positions a function of individual-level attributes? In particular, what are the roles of cognitive and affective factors? To what extent is public knowledge about where political parties stand in issue conflicts attributable to how and what information parties convey? In particular, to what extent is knowledge about political parties' issue positions a function of issue salience, ambiguity, and polarization? Finally, how do the associations between individual-level attributes and party knowledge depend on the information environment as shaped by parties' attributes and their behavior, and especially by the competitive strategies they employ?

In the first chapter, I discuss the normative relevance of these research questions. In particular, I confront the assumptions and arguments made by the responsible party model and other optimistic theories of representative democracy with those made by pessimistic theories that consider citizens as unable to be sufficiently well-informed to choose parties in accordance with their interests (cf. Lippmann 1922). I argue that voters *are* able to learn parties' policy proposals (Patterson 1980; Conover and Feldman 1989), and that they should be informed about parties' issue positions rather than merely rely on various forms of informational short cuts (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000; but see Lupia 1994). Moreover, the relevance of party knowledge with respect to the main voting models – such as the proximity issue voting and the socio-psychological voting model – is briefly discussed. In the proximity voting model, the voter is well-informed about the parties' policy offer and she votes for the party with the most similar policy preferences (Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984). Knowledge is crucial as it enables voters to maximize their utility of political parties and elections, with utility maximization considered as the main driver of political behavior. In socio-psychological voting models, by contrast, party identification plays a crucial role as it not only determines voting behavior and opinion formation but also biases our perception of what political parties stand for in order to preserve party identity and to enhance self-esteem (Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002).

Chapter 2 begins with a proper conceptualization and measurement of party knowledge. I argue that knowledge can be decomposed into perceptual accuracy as well as perceptual uncertainty of parties' issue positions (Kuklinski et al. 2000). I provide measures for both dimensions of party knowledge and compare parties and countries with respect to how well-informed citizens are about parties' left-right and EU issue positions. The comparison reveals a considerable variance in party knowledge across and within European democracies.

Chapter 3 focuses on the individual-level correlates of party knowledge and presents the cognition and the affect model of perception formation. The first model assumes that people are generally interested in being accurately informed contending that knowledge is a function of cognitive resources. The affect model assumes that voters are generally interested in confirming prior beliefs and evaluations and postulates that knowledge is subject to affect. I then introduce the measures for the cognitive and affective components and subject both models to an empirical examination.

In Chapter 4, the concept of political clarity – the supply side of party knowledge – will be introduced. After reviewing the main theories of policy competition, I present three ways in which parties compete for votes by disseminating policy-related information: 1) issue salience, 2) policy ambiguity; and, 3) position-taking (issue polarization). While the measurements for issue salience and polarization are well established in the literature on party politics, I present a novel and simple way to measure policy ambiguity based on manifesto data. By introducing this measure, I seek to contribute to the nascent literature on the causes and consequences of policy ambiguity (Rovney 2012; Lo et al. 2014; Somer-Topcu 2014). I argue that this measure for policy ambiguity based on manifesto data constitutes an improvement to alternative measures proposed by other scholars in manifold ways: 1) it is easy to calculate; 2) the CMP data allows to trace policy ambiguity back to the end of WWII in many European democracies; 3) While scholars have often employed standard deviation of experts' party placements (Campbell 1983; Rovney 2012; Grand and Tielmann 2004) or even relied on pubilc survey data to measure the level of ambiguity inherent in parties' policy appeals (Somer-Topcu 2014), my measure relies directly on policy statements made by political parties; and finally, 4) my measure does not suffer from a lack in discriminance validity to the same extent as standard deviation measures of ambiguity based on expert or public opinion data. Taken together, issue salience, ambiguity, and polarization shape the clarity of the information environment, which is expected to impinge upon individuals' perceptual accuracy and certainty of parties' issue positions. The empirical section of this chapter serves to test these hypotheses.

Finally, Chapter 5 examines whether the relationships of the cognitive and affective components to party knowledge are contingent on the party-induced information environment. This analysis is in line with a growing literature that investigates the contextual contingency of various models of political behavior and impression formation. The argument that cognitive factors such as political interest and education help individuals to acquire political knowledge especially when the political context provides sufficient and clear information is rather well-established (cf. Zaller 1992; Classen and Highton 2006; Jerit et al. 2006; Hobolt 2007). My contribution to this literature lies primarily with the differentiation of various aspects of the party-induced information environment as well as with the high number of countries included in this analysis. What is much less explored is the question as to whether affect-driven perception formations, such as projection effects, are contingent on the information environment and particularly on the level of issue polarization, salience, and consistency (cf. Conover and Feldman 1989; Jerit and Barabas 2012). My disseration also seeks to contribute to this literature, and my empirical results suggest that projection is not less likely in high-information environments (see also Jerit and Barabas 2012). However, I find that the positive association between positive party attitudes and party knowledge, as it has often been reported in varios studies (cf. Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Sears and Freedman 1967; Lau and Redlawsk 2006), appears to be contingent on the information clarity.

Chapter 1

The normative relevance of political knowledge

The aim of this chapter is to critically assess the normative relevance of my research question; why and to what extent is public knowledge about political matters, and in particular knowledge about parties' policy preferences, relevant? Given that public party knowledge is an outcome of a communication process between political elites and voters, I address the normative roles of both actors as envisioned in theories of democracy. The first section of the chapter sheds light on the demand side of representation - citizens. The normative criteria citizens are expected to meet will be briefly reviewed, followed by a discussion of the concepts of representation and democracy. In the subsequent part of the chapter, I take a closer look at the supply-side of representation - political parties. Although, surprisingly, research has not yet dealt in a sufficiently comprehensive manner with the normative requirements on political parties in democracies (as opposed to citizens' normative requirements), most theories of representative democracy generally require parties to do two things: to represent and to govern efficiently. With regard to representation, the Responsible Party Model in particular demands clarity as well as distinctiveness of parties' policy proposals. Clear and distinctive policy-offers allow citizens to cognitively assess parties' policy profiles with accuracy and choose between relevant policy alternatives.

1.1 Citizens and representation

This section is concerned with normative demands on citizens' attitudes, political knowledge, and behavior. In theory, citizens are endowed with political power to govern themselves but in practice it is parties that represent their interests in actual decision-making. Thus, in democracies self-determination is comprised of a three-stage process: 1) citizens form political opinion, views, attitudes, evaluations, and values; 2) citizens vote for parties or candidates that supposedly represent their views and interests; and, 3) parties implement policies which correspond with voters' issue preferences.

One important demand on citizens in democratic theory is an accurate understanding of politics. This understanding can be further articulated as an accurate perception of parties' policy profiles, accurate attribution of responsibility for government performances, and accurate information about the consequences of implemented policies (Berelson et al. 1954; Kuklinksi et al. 2000). "The democratic citizen," as stated in the final chapter of Berelson et

al.'s seminal book Voting (1954, 308), "is expected to be well informed about political affairs. He is supposed to know what the issues are, [...] what the relevant facts are, what alternatives are proposed, [and] what the likely consequences are". In particular, a sufficient level of political knowledge allows individuals to influence the policy-making process by choosing representatives with congruent preferences and views (Thomassen 1994; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Althaus 2003). Information serves to accurately assess which of the political parties is most likely to implement their preferred policies. In fact, according to some theories of representative democracy, a party becomes dysfunctional should voters be unaware of what parties do or say. In this sense, self-determination requires political knowledge.[1]

Empirical evidence suggests that citizens who are uninformed and uncertain about parties' policy positions tend to vote for parties or candidates whose preferences don't correspond with their own (Bartels 1996: Alvarez 1997). Similarly, people need information about the performance of incumbent parties in order to reward and punish correctly and by doing so, make political accountability work (Ferejohn et al. 1990). There is also a relationship between political knowledge and participation with some scholars arguing it is knowledge that makes people become aware of the relevance of political participation (Verba and Nie 1972; Klingemann 1979; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1993). Participation in political decision-making contributes to the realization of self-determination and according to some theorists it strengthens citizens' civic awareness and social responsibility (Walker 1966; Barber 1984).

Political knowledge of parties' policy positions is but one demand among many others. In this sense, an accurate understanding of politics is not a sufficient condition and according to some democratic theories political knowledge even fails to be a necessary condition for a democratic citizen. Liberal democratic theories in the tradition of John Locke (1946) consider tolerance towards the interests of minority groups a necessity for legitimate and, in particular, stable democracies. Toleration of minorities' autonomy, their religious lives, views, and social habits together with a limited role of the state in interfering in society are measures of precaution which serve to protect individual autonomy (Madison 1787). Theories of deliberative democracy particularly stress the importance of considered opinion – that is to say, political opinion which is well-justified and based on better arguments, rather than

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[1] Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, 1): „democracy functions best when its citizens are politically informed", because „a broadly and equitably informed citizenry help assure a democracy that is both responsive and responsible."

propagated by the manipulation of third parties (Cohen 1989; Fishkin 1991; Habermas 1991; Druckman and Lupia 2002). The point at stake is that even if people were informed about parties' stances, they might still err in knowing what policies serves best their own self-interests as well as the long-term interests of the larger society. But there are various cognitive and affective constraints that keep people from forming opinion based on good arguments and reasons (cf. Lupia 2002).

Theories of democracy diverge in the extent to which they consider human beings as able and willing to meet normative requirements such as knowledge, participation, tolerance, and deliberative capacity. The pessimistic view sees a contradiction between the two central principles of democracy - "rule by the people" and "rule for the people" - for they consider the mass public to be unqualified to rule in their own best interests (Schumpeter 1952). Consequently, they question the relevance of policy representation as an aspect of democracy. Instead, they define democracy, and even representation, with reference to *procedure* rather than consideration of citizens' policy preferences (cf. Rehfeld 2006). For instance, Schumpeter's definition of democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (p. 269) emphasizes competition among the political elites without making any reference to the representation of public opinion. In a similar vein, Edmund Burke understands representation as "taking care of" the public interest (Pitkin 1967). In contrast, the optimistic view sees the mass public as sufficiently enlightened to rule themselves. They are more optimistic with regard to morality in citizens' opinions and self-interests. Moreover, they have faith in the public ability to choose candidates and parties which serve their interests.

The pessimistic view

The pessimists of representative democracy raise two broad concerns which they consider as sufficient to disqualify people from ruling themselves (Dahl 1989): 1) they lack adequate knowledge of the details and consequences of policies; 2) their preferences and opinions don't conform to other moral norms and values. This criticism targets the populist conception of representative democracy in particular (Arendt 1958; Riker 1982; Barber 1984).

Ever since surveys on public political knowledge have been conducted, scholars have lamented how uninformed the average citizen is about relevant political issues and, as a consequence, they have questioned the whole idea of policy representation (Schumpeter 1952; Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Lippmann 1922; Pitkin

1967; Almond and Verba 1963; Neuman 1986). Luskin (2002: 282) summarizes this perspective as follows: "There seems to be a consensus that by anything approaching elite standards most citizens think and know [draw]-dropping little about politics." Apart from the low level of public knowledge, people have sometimes been considered to be unwilling or unable to learn and reason about the information which parties disseminate (Schumpeter 1952; Lippmann 1922). "No progress can be made toward [the] unattainable ideal [of educating] a people for self-government", Lippmann (1922) asserts. Such discouraging statements have been supported by experimental research which shows that people do indeed forget quickly and are unable to recall almost all information on parties' policy positions during the course of an election campaign (Neuman 1986; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991; Lodge et al. 1995). Whereas some scholars disagree pointing to measurement problems or contrary evidence (cf. Judd et al. 1981), and while others claim that mass knowledge has improved over the course of the last decades (cf. Dalton 1984), most scholars agree that the level of political information among the people is indeed low no matter what measurement techniques are used (Luskin 1987). As Dahl puts it (1961: 224): "Typically, as a source of direct gratifications political activity will appear to homo civicus as less attractive than a host of other activities; and, as a strategy to achieve his gratifications indirectly political action will seem considerably less efficient than working at his job, earning more money, taking out insurance, joining a club, planning a vacation, moving to another neighborhood or city, or coping with an uncertain future in manifold other ways." Schattschneider (1960: 131-132) takes the same line by noting: "If we start with the common definition of democracy (as government by the people), it is hard to avoid some extremely pessimistic conclusions about the feasibility of democracy in the modern world, for it is impossible to reconcile traditional concepts of what ought to happen in a democracy with the fact that an amazingly large number of people do not seem to know very much about what is going on".

Human incapacity and the unwillingness to understand political complexities would suggest that parties are exempted from providing any information concerning their policy profiles. Citizens do not include such information in their voting decisions and nor are parties capable of making citizens knowledgeable (see Lodge et al. 1995). If no one cares, why should parties present policy proposals in the first place? I will argue later in this chapter that that this line of argumentation is too narrowly considered and it can be criticized on various normative as well as empirical grounds.

The second point raised by pessimists concerns the lack of moral value in citizens' preferences which, as a consequence, implies their normative irrelevance. First, it might be

argued that voters' preferences are not exogenous to political competition. Instead, preferences that people claim to be their own might be formed by parties themselves through persuasion and manipulation (Schumpeter 1952; Dahl 1961; Berelson et al. 1954; Entman 1993).[2] People tend to pick up positions propagated by parties which they feel attached to, which they like, or in which they trust (Popkin 1991; Brady and Sniderman 1985). To the extent that citizens' preferences are formed endogenously through party competition, the whole significance of representation might be questioned as parties would indirectly be representing only themselves (Entman 1993). Studies on framing effects, for instance, have often conceived of this phenomenon as an indication of citizens' incompetence (Entman 1993). While some experimental studies report that persuasion occurs mainly among individuals who lack in experience and knowledge (Ottai and Wyer 1990), others suggest that persuasion requires some political awareness on the part of the receiver rendering them more likely to acquire new information in the first place (Zaller 1992; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Lenz 2009). Persuasion which occurs among politically competent voters tends to be seen in a positive light, coined as "political learning" (cf. Lenz 2009). What might be regarded as problematic for the representative quality of a democratic system, however, is when people are persuaded to change their opinion and views to the detriment of their substantive interests (Cohen 2003; Druckman et al. 2013; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). For the perceived legitimacy and stability of a political system, however, it might not be of central concern whether interests are exogenous to political competition or whether they are formed by political elites themselves.

Second, the pessimists are concerned with the potentially unjust and selfish interests of the "tyrannical majority" which harms the well-being of minorities (Madison 1787; Schumpeter 1952, Dahl 1956; Sartori 1987). The will of the majority can sometimes violate human dignity, individual freedom, and equality. Hitler's rise to power and the breakdown of the Weimar Republic is the prime example for tyrannical majority. This lack of faith in the virtues of the 'people' as a whole has led elitist theorists to consider political participation by the public as a potential threat rather than as an advantage for a well-functioning and stable democracy (cf. Berelson et al. 1954; Lipset 1962). Liberal theories of democracies, on their part, hold dear constitutions and institutional checks and balances as a precautionary measure designed by the elite to prevent majorities from exerting too much power (Madison

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[2] Persuasion might be defined as "human communication designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values, and attitudes" (Simon 1976: 21), whereas manipulation is similar to persuasion with the addition that it is purposefully conveyed to serve the interests of the sender, but which is at the detriment of the receiver's interest.

1787; Sabine 1952). In this context, others have pointed out that not knowledge but a sense of civic responsibility is crucial for effective democracy (Althaus 2006).

In sum, according to the pessimistic view, democracy needs procedures that induce political elites to behave efficiently and innovatively. It is true that "political leaders, in an effort to gain support at the polls, will shape public policy to fit the citizen's desires" (Walker 1966), but at the same time citizens' policy preferences ought to be ignored (Thompson 1970: 24). To the extent that government for the people is seen as the ultimate reason d'être of a democratic state, then government by the people would fail to fulfill this normative principle (Schumpeter 1952: 406). Voters are irrational, they are selfish, do not take into account the interests of others, they lack motivation and the cognitive ability to reason about politics, they are vulnerable to emotional appeals, and their policy preferences are formed by political elites through persuasion and manipulation. As a result, in order to achieve the primary normative goal of a stable and well-functioning democracy, the ability of the political elites to forge a consensus despite their conflictive interests and to guarantee stability is of crucial importance (Sartori 1986; Walker 1966).

The optimistic view

In contrast to the pessimists, optimists see citizens as sufficiently qualified to rule themselves by using parties as representative instruments for two main reasons: 1) public opinion and their vote choices have a moral weight; 2) notwithstanding low levels of political knowledge, voters' party choices by and large reflect their preferences. The first claim rests on two fundamental principles which presuppose each other – political equality and individual autonomy/political sovereignty. Optimistic theorists presume enlightened preferences on the part of the citizens meaning that people know best what their own interests are (Thompson 1970; Downs 1957; Dahl 1989). This is the principle of individual autonomy according to which "in the absence of compelling evidence showing to the contrary everyone should be assumed to be the best judge of his or her own good or interests" (Dahl 1989: 99). Since everyone is perceived as his or her own best judge, it follows that all interests have an equal value to contribute to the decision-making process.[3] The principle of political equality postulates that "all members are sufficiently well qualified, taken all around, to participate in making the collective decisions binding on the association that significantly affect their good or interests. In any case, none are so definitely better qualified than the others that they should be entrusted with making the collective and binding decisions" (Dahl 1989: 98).

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[3] Other studies point to the fact that political leaders are not necessarily more tolerant than the general public, as many pessimists contend (cf. Sniderman et al. 1991)

Thus, the optimists see in the political participation of citizens a crucial component of democracy (e.g. Almond and Verba 1963). According to republican and classical theories of democracy, political involvement raises citizens' sense of social responsibility, improves their understanding of civil rights and liberties, and enables them to form opinion on the basis of good arguments (Barber 1984; Habermas 1991). Political equality and the right to decide collectively on laws and rules are the quintessence of popular sovereignty and are the principal factors which turn individuals into moral and reasonable citizens (Rousseau 1762). Any institutional constrains on democratically elected governments merely serve the interests of elites and are to the detriment of the public interest (Sabine 1952). The rise of Nazism has certainly changed some theorists' minds, but political equality is nonetheless still equated with self-determination and citizens are still considered to be reasonable enough to decide in their own and society's best interests.

Nonetheless, whether or not citizens are actually able to choose representatives according to their best interests remains questionable. The optimists are confident on that matter. Many scholars do not even question low levels of political knowledge but they nevertheless consider citizens to be able to make decisions in line with their interests.[4] It is argued that the decisive point is not only whether normative standards are realistic, but whether they imply important consequences for individuals' well-being. On the one hand, some scholars maintain that classic democratic theory simply demands too much of the human mind, which in reality is distracted from politics and severely limited in its capability to properly gather and process political information (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Lau and Sears 1986). On the other hand, several models have been presented of how voters act in line with their interests notwithstanding their low level of information. In other words, citizens' knowledge about parties' policy positions (as well as their knowledge about political actors' responsibility for socioeconomic conditions) might not be a crucial factor. Optimists present four theories of how individuals could cope with low levels of information: 1) cognitive short-cuts; 2) the on-line model of information processing; 3) the issue voter hypothesis; and, 4) the collective rationality hypothesis.

It is widely argued that people might act rationally despite their low level of information by using cognitive shortcuts (Downs 1957; Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991; Lupia 1994; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). Relying on low cost heuristics people might arrive

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[4] Some scholars pinpoint to the fact that people are often less affected by elite's frames and persuasion attempts than it has been thought, and the occurrence of framing effects depends on individual as well as contextual factors (Sniderman 2000; Druckman and Lupia 2002).

to a more or less accurate idea of where parties stand without great cognitive efforts and without any actual information on parties' policy preferences (Popkin 1991). For instance, they might simply follow the recommendation of trusted social groups or use personal stereotypes and ideological schemata as heuristics (Sniderman et al. 1991; Kahneman and Tversky 1974; see also Downs 1957; Hinich and Munger 1996). It is in this context, where an intermediate theory of democracy between the optimists and pessimists view might operate. According to Dahl (1956) it is sufficient that sub-elites, well-organized and active minorities, remain sensitive to policy-making. In this sense, all that democracy requires is that a small portion of society is informed about parties' policy positions while the majority might remain inactive and ignorant, merely following the voting recommendations of trusted and active groups. Downs (1957) mentions that voters rely on party labels as well as ideologies to guess what a party might do in future in order to save on information costs (see also Hinich and Munger 1996). Some scholars suggest that such cognitive shortcuts are used mostly by individuals who are less motivated and interested in spending time and energy on collecting and forming party judgments (Chaiken et al. 1989; Sniderman et al. 1991; Petty and Wegener 1999; see however Lau and Redlawsk 2006). Not every cognitive shortcut is equally useful, however, and can even be misleading (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000).[5] Some heuristics improve decision-making capabilities, while others do not (Lau and Redlawsk 2001). In this context, scholars claim that the quality of an adopted heuristic depends on the individual's intelligence and interests (Ferejohn et al. 1990; Hobolt 2007).

Authors have also criticized the idea of a memory-based strategy of evaluating a candidate or party and proposed the on-line model instead. The memory-based strategy assumes that every piece of information, which serves to evaluate parties, is stored until the individual is asked to give an answer in a survey or to make a vote choice (Zaller 1992; Zaller and Feldmann 1992). Such an understanding of how the human mind works, however, underestimates its capacity to use information efficiently (Lodge et al. 1995; Lodge et al. 1989). In the on-line model, by contrast, information is used to update the overall evaluation of a candidate or a party, but it gets rapidly forgotten shortly after the evaluation has been updated (Lodge et al. 1995; Rahn et al. 1994). The issue at stake is that voters derive a rational decision without being able to recall what the preferred party might stand for (Rahn et al. 1994). Hence, according to the on-line model, people may be ignorant about politics but are still able to be responsive to political information (Lodge et al. 1995). However, it has been found that the on-line model of impression formation is predominantly exhibited by

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[5] Kuklinski and Quirk (2000: 156) argue that „…people take their heuristics off the shelf, use them unknowingly and automatically, and rarely worry about their accuracy".

people who are equipped with greater political knowledge and interest (McGraw et al. 1990). The on-line model has been further criticized on grounds of insufficient and scarce empirical evidence in support of its theoretical claims (Althaus 2003).

A third argument made by optimistic theorists suggests that individuals are issue voters interested in only one or two issues which are important to them (RePass 1970). Because the human mind is able to manage only a small portion of information, they prefer to specialize on certain issues (Iyengar 1990; Popkin 1991). The "issue public" hypothesis suggests that people might become knowledgeable about those issues that are salient to them and vote accordingly (Converse 1964; Iyengar 1990; Krosnick 1990; Dahl 1961). A farmer is on average more interested and informed about agriculture-related policies because agriculture policies are decisive for his well-being. By the same token, parents with small children will pay greater attention to education bills. The central point of this hypothesis, in this context, is that people appear to be well-informed if the measurement focuses on issues which are particularly relevant to the individual's well-being (RePass 1970; Iyengar 1990). For Luskin (1987), voters who are interested in only one particular policy field while ignoring other relevant issues are considered, however, as politically unsophisticated becasue the perceived importance of political topics are to a large extent formed by parties and the media themselves.

A final optimistic argument found in the literature is that a collective decision might be more rational than suggested by the insufficiency of individuals' political knowledge (Converse 1990; Page and Shapiro 1992). For instance, Page and Shapiro (1992: 14) assert: "While we grant the rational ignorance of most individuals, and the possibility that their policy preferences are shallow and unstable, we maintain that public opinion as a collective phenomenon is nonetheless stable (though not immovable), meaningful, and indeed rational in a higher, if somewhat looser, sense; it is able to make distinctions; it is organized in coherent patterns; it is reasonable, based on the best available information; and it is adaptive to new information or changed circumstances, responding in similar ways to similar stimuli." This optimistic view sees collective opinion as more rational than individual opinions due to the assumption that inaccurate or "random" judgments cancel each other out, while the accurate opinions and beliefs of well-informed individuals prevail. Consequently, it could be argued that the decisive point is not what an individual knows, but whether the *median voter* perceives accurately what his party stands for. More recently, however, scholars have questioned the validity of the collective rationality hypothesis (Althaus 1998, 2003; Alvarez and Brehm 2002; Caplan 2007). Instead of canceling each other out, "the opinions of poorly informed respondents tend to be more consistent with one another than

are those of well-informed respondents" (Althaus 2003: 60). In other words, the aggregated distribution of the opinion of knowledgeable citizens differs from those who are ill-informed (Bartels 1996; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Alvarez and Brehm 2002; Caplan 2007).

While pessimists deny the relevance of public policy preferences for democracy, optimists defend the demand for effective representation of citizens' interests. I align with the optimistic view in as far as I consider correspondence of public policies with citizens' preferences of fundamental importance for democracy. Citizens' interests deserve to be represented, although neither do I see policy representation as a sufficient condition for democracy nor do I naïvely take it for granted that people's preferences are always well-informed. Preferences might be exogenous to political competition or they might be endogenous to it. For the question of democratic legitimacy or stability, however, it might simply not matter from where preferences are derived.

Moreover, I also deem people to be generally capable of learning (Patterson 1980). In fact, what the debate on political knowledge has also shown is that some citizens are better informed than others. The reasons explaining this variance might be traced back to individual factors such as interest in politics, cognitive ability, and other opportunities which differ across individuals (Luskin 1990: Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). As a consequence, social groups advantaged by such facilitating factors exert a stronger impact on policy-making (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Neuman 1986; Althaus 2003).

Variance in political knowledge might not be merely attributable to individual factors alone. As shown in the next chapter, the level of political knowledge differs across democracies as well as parties. Thus, the fact that individuals in some countries know less than their peers in other political systems might be attributed to differences in how parties communicate with their electorate. This is also the theme of the 'rational public' literature which states that public opinion reacts to new information (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Althaus 1998, 2003; Gilens 2001). Should elites exert an impact on civic competence, this would certainly weaken the argument propagated by elitist democratic theories.

At the same time, my view negates the optimistic assumption that people might simply rely on short-cuts to compensate for their lack in knowledge. As discussed above, heuristics often fail to assure self-determination and can sometimes even be deceiving. For this reason, political knowledge and, more specifically, accurate perception of what parties stand for in terms of the policies they espouse, is considered a necessary condition for self-determination in representative democracies, which makes it worth studying on its own right. However, political knowledge is only useful to the extent that it affects political decisions.

1.2 Political knowledge and its impact on party choice

In democratic systems, people are given the possibility to vote on a regularly basis and to influence governments' composition and actions (Verba and Nie 1972). Elections are, on the one hand, a collective symbolic act that legitimizes governmental actions and the political regime as such (van der Eijk and Franklin 2009: 4). On the other hand, elections are presumably the most influential instrument with which people try "*to rule for themselves*". Voters have the opportunity to choose a party with a policy program as well as other attributes that serve their interests and preferences (Verba and Nie 1972). The most popular models to explain voting behavior are: 1. socio-psychological models; 2. the retrospective model; 3. the rational choice or proximity issue voting model. Each model not only proposes different explanatory factors, but voters' interests are differently understood and decisions are understood to require different kinds of political knowledge.

Socio-psychological voting model

What is known as the Michigan School of political behavior postulates that voters decide based on social factors and enduring party identification – an act which is seen simply as an expression of habit or loyalty towards a certain social group (Campbell et al. 1960; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; see Converse 1975 for a comparison of the different voting models). Thus, voters don't choose but rather confirm their loyalty or identity during elections. Still, to many scholars such voting behavior based on social factors expresses self-interest (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Berelson et al. 1954) – it is an act of self-determination in which knowledge about parties' policy profiles and governmental records is irrelevant.[6] The main motive in social choice is to preserve and confirm personal identity.[7] The socio-psychological voting model postulates that blue-collar workers vote for socialist or communist parties, those who regularly attend church vote for the conservative Christian party, farmers support agrarian parties, and equity owners back up liberals. In Marxist views, political interests derive from the social class an individual is part of and are thus objectively observable.

Party identification takes center stage in the Michigan voting model (Campbell et al. 1960), which is defined as "the individual's affective orientation to an important group-object" and has several characteristics. First, party identification determines vote choice as people

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[6] Self-interest and self-determination are much debated concepts. Self-interest might refer to individuals' material well-being (Sears and Funke 1990, Green and Shapiro 1994) or it might just as well consist in the advancement of non-material values such as feelings of moral righteousness or group interests (Campbell et al. 1960; Sen 1970).

[7] As humans are social beings, their identity consists of personal characteristics and a social group with which they identify. Political identity or party identity is this exogenous part of an individual's identity.

prefer to select a party they have trust in without having to spend too much time on collecting information and reasoning (see also Rose and McAllister 1986). Second, party identification often develops before adulthood and usually remains stable over the course of life unless a major event occurs. It tends to emerge in a phase of life where the level of knowledge and experience is generally low (Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002; Goren 2006). Thus, party identification is not the result of careful consideration of parties' policy proposals, but is formed before any political self-interest has been developed (Sears and Funke 1990). Third, voting for a party one identifies with serves to preserve social identity which is grounded on the need to enhance one's self-esteem (Greenwald 1980). In other words, voting for the party you identify with has a value in itself. Fourth, to some, party identification makes it easier for voters to cope with the complexity of the political world (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). In this sense party identification constitutes an important cue for opinion formation on policy issues (Campbell et al. 1960; Page and Jones 1979; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Carsey and Layman 2006). However, such political learning and issue congruence might happen to the detriment of a more thoroughly formed issue preference (Druckman et al. 2013).

This leads me to the fifth aspect of party identification: people with party identification tend to perceive politics in ways that confirm their prior predispositions and beliefs, while ignoring or downplaying other incongruent information (Festinger 1957; Bartels 2002; Gaines et al. 2007). Party loyalty biases people's perception of what parties stand for on specific policy issues and of how well parties have performed in government. In particular, people might remain ignorant about what their preferred party stands for in order to reconcile their political identity with their issue attitudes. Such misperception of political reality leads to an adverse selection of political agents. Should party identification precipitate misperception of parties' policy profiles rather than leading to adaptation and political learning we might considered such affect-induced opinion formation and behavior a failure of self-determination (cf. Lavine et al. 2012).[8] Finally, strong party identification makes individuals less available for other parties' policy appeals. Party identification does not only bias the perception of what parties stand for, but it makes voters less responsive to information that suggests a reevaluation of political parties.

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[8] Scholars have shown how projection effects might impede partisans to judge economic conditions correctly and thus rendering the idea of democratic accountability through retrospective less likely (Gaines et al. 2008; Lavine et al. 2012). Others, on the other hand, have illustrated how projection effects cause individuals to misperceive parties' and candidates' issues stands (Lavine et al. 2012), and thus rendering representative selection through prospective voting less likely.

In recent decades, both class voting as well as the level of party identification have been in decline across most established democracies (Rose 1974; Dalton et al. 1984; Franklin et al. 1992; Knutsen 2006) due to broad processes such as secularization, deindustrialization and a weakening of trade unions, individualization, and changes in the way parties communicate to the public (Mair 2007). Although social factors such as a respondent's occupation, class, or religion have, in many countries, remained relevant explanatory predictors of vote choice (Franklin et al. 1992), recently scholarship has suggested citizens are more to vote based on parties' policy proposals and retrospective considerations (Rose and McAllister 1986; van der Eijk and Niemoeller 1987; Whitten and Palmer 1996). Party identification is considered by many scholars in decline (Dalton et al. 2004), but this does not correspond to current changes in the context of American politics (Layman and Carsey 2002; Murakami 2008). Furthermore, the proponents of realignment theory argue that voters are in a transition process searching for new political parties to identify with, which eventually will lead to new cleavage structures (cf. Kriesi et al. 2006).

Retrospective voting model

The retrospective model of voting assumes that the voter chooses based on her evaluation of the incumbent parties' past performance (Fiorina 1981; Key 1966). One distinctive element of retrospective voting, according to Key (1966), is that citizens are more concerned with the outcomes of governmental decisions than with the decisions themselves. In this regard, they evaluate past governmental performance less in terms of the enacted policies but more in terms of the outcomes which they link to government actions. In the retrospective model voters compare only current with past well-being, while disregarding policy debates (Fiorina 1981).[9] As such, the model demands less from voters in terms of political knowledge, and is also less demanding of political parties (Key 1966). Voters are not required to scrutinize parties' policy promises, while parties are not required to present alternative policy proposals.[10] The normative idea behind the retrospective model is that retrospective voting and accountability induce government to govern efficiently with positive consequences for individuals' welfare. However, since voting is merely about punishing and rewarding, information about parties' policy proposals is irrelevant.

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[9] Fiorina (1981: 5) states that: "In order to ascertain whether the incumbents have performed poorly or well, citizens need only to calculate the changes in their own welfare"

[10] Hence, citizens should have merely the possibility to punish and reward incumbent parties post facto. What the government might be punished for depends mostly on some salient valence issues such as a good economic situation (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000), perceived corruption (Tavits 2009), but also broken campaign promises (Stokes 2001), which drifts into the realm of policy-based voting.

Many political analysts see retrospective voting as a remedy to both the current decline in structural factors and party identification as well as to the difficulties that parties encounter in representing an increasingly heterogeneous and individualized society (Riker 1982; Manin 1997; Andeweg 2003; Mair 2009). In this context, retrospective voting has been seen as a fundamental aspect of political accountability, and political accountability has been understood by some as the way representation should be conceptualized (Pitkin 1967; Andeweg 2003).[11]

However, retrospective voting is more demanding in terms of citizen's capacities than is often assumed (Achen and Bartels 2004). For one, effective rewards and punishment require the ability to attribute credit and blame correctly to the responsible actors (Achen and Bartels 2004; Ferejohn et al. 1990; Murakami 2008). This implies that voters know who has implemented what policies, and that they are able to evaluate the effects of implemented policies in order to know the causes for current socioeconomic conditions. Given that such a task is demanding and potentially unpleasant, attribution of responsibility appears to be driven by heuristics – particularly by party identity. In particular, several studies report that responsibility attribution is subject to severe partisan bias (Rudolph 2003; Anderson et al. 2004: Tilley and Hobolt 2011). Parties, for their part, often provide arguments in an attempt to avoid blame and to get credit for favorable conditions (Weaver 1986). Thus, recent findings support the prevalence of the socio-psychological model, as it appears that it is party identification rather than an impartial and detailed analysis of causes and consequences of political decisions, which determines who individuals blame and who they reward.

Proximity voting model

Whereas in social-psychological models voters rely on habit, loyalty, and trust, in spatial voting models people choose in congruence with their ideologies or policy preferences. Rational-choice explanations postulate that voters decide in ways that maximize their utility income. Theoretically, such utility might relate to anything an individual values. In spatial voting models, utility is maximized when the individual selects a candidate or party with the most similar policy preferences. The model requires both voters' as well as parties' preferences to be placed as points on an issue or ideological scale. Voters are assumed to have a single peaked preference which is their ideal point. Points that are further away from the ideal point are less liked than points which are proximate. The individuals' preference

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[11] To the extent that parties are not able to enact what they might promise during election campaigns due to circumstances which are beyond their scope of influence, the retrospective voting model might become a more realistic and hence more useful normative standard (Fiorina 1981).

functions are moreover assumed to be symmetric, so that people are indifferent between two options which are equally far away but in opposite direction (Hinich and Munger 1996). The voter compares the policy packages of each party, estimates to what extent each corresponds with her own preferences and chooses accordingly to the utility income maximization principle (Downs 1957). As individuals are supposed to vote for the party with the nearest position, it is also referred to as the spatial or proximity voting model. While Downs modeled party competition and voting behavior with only one issue dimension, later models included the possibility of two or three dimensions (Enelow and Hinich 1984).

The directional voting model constitutes a special type of spatial model. According to this model, the voter is assumed to choose a party with clear signals and positions in the same direction. Parties compete over directions rather than positions, and consequently voters are assumed not to be sophisticated enough to know a party's position, but only its direction (Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989). Thus, citizens are not required to know positions but solely directions. In proximity voting theory, the issue dimension is taken as continuous with points depicting alternative policy stances, and the positions in the center are regarded as a moderate stance (Westholm 1997). In directional theory of voting, in contrast, the 10- or 7-point scales employed are in fact a combination of direction and intensity. The midpoint is not a position but a cutting edge between the two alternative directions, while the distance from the midpoint denotes issue salience or intensity (Westholm 1997). Voters favor parties from the same side of the divide and do not necessarily opt for parties whose preferences are located in the immediate area. Instead, they rather opt for parties with an intensive stance but within a realm of acceptability (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989). The key difference lies in the different conceptualization of the issue dimension. In the proximity model, utility is a function of the aggregated sum of all absolute distances between the parties' positions and the respondent's ideal point weighted by the salience the respondent lends to the issue. In the directional voting model, utility derives from the scalar product between the direction (-1 or 1), depending on which side you are on, multiplied by intensity which is understood as the distance from the midpoint (cf. Westholm 1997).

In general, issue or ideological voting has often been regarded as the purest form of rational voting (Fiorina 1981). Issue or ideological congruence between the representative and the represented understood in either proximal or directional terms is for many scholars indicative for good representation (Downs 1957; Dalton 1985). Voters' decisions based on the principle of utility maximization approaches the ideal of democracy (Downs 1957; Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Enelow and Hinich 1984; Hinich and Munger 1996).

Of great importance to many spatial voting approaches is the individual's belief. People evaluate candidates or parties based on their beliefs of where those actors stand and choose accordingly (Franklin et al. 1992). Thus, voters choose in ways that maximize their utility given their beliefs (Green and Shapiro 1994). Spatial voting models are often tested by considering the effect of perceived rather than the actual issue distance between the voter's and the party's ideal position. This distinction between actual issue distance and perceived issue distance is central to my thesis because voters' perception is often seriously and systematically biased to such great extent that voters appear to be interested not in representation of their policy preferences but in preservation and confirmation of their social (political) identities (MacDonald et al. 2001).

One of the preconditions for maximizing utility income through issue-based voting among many others is an accurate understanding of political offers in terms of the policy proposals parties make. In contrast to other voting models, citizens are supposed to know parties' issue positions. Knowledge permits a more accurate assessment of the potential subjective benefits and costs of each party's policy package. In this sense, policy representation and self-determination require people to base their vote decisions on accurate beliefs. In the proximity voting model voters are assumed to know parties' issue positions, while in the directional voting model voters ought to know their directions.

Spatial voting models, although dominant in the 80's and 90's, have been increasingly criticized in recent years. In their influential book, Green and Shapiro (1994) conclude that the explanatory power of rational choice arguments and of proximity voting models, in particular, has been meager. The largest impact is to be found for the rather ambiguous left-right position and with respect to issues which closely relate to the dominant left-right conflict (van der Eijk and Niemoeller 1983; Granberg and Holmberg 1988).[12] Another strain of research points to the intervening effect of contextual factors such as electoral system, ideological polarization of the party system and the level of novelty of the democratic system (Dalton et al. 2011). Spatial voting models and rational-choice explanations, in general, do not seem to apply in all circumstances (Green and Shapiro 1994).

Voter heterogeneity and correct voting

The impact of explanatory factors for vote choice differs across democracies depending on political culture and the political offer made by parties, and it also varies across individuals. In addition, there is a common understanding of voter heterogeneity (Tomz and

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[12] Others assert that voters' choices are influenced by specific issue preferences, mainly when such issues are of personal relevance (RePass 1971).

Houweling 2008). Voter heterogeneity might be defined as "voters' divergent reliance on the various ingredients of political judgment, such as party, issues and ideology, government performance, and feeling about individual candidates" (Basinger 2004: 1). Some people base their decision on issues or ideology, others support a party out of trust and loyalty, and still others punish or reward incumbents for the socioeconomic conditions. Voter heterogeneity is also influenced by the context – by the party system and the election campaigns (Franklin 1991; Alvarez 1997; Downs 1957; Basinger 2004). Voters' reliance on policy considerations depends to a large part on the supply-side of representation – on how parties communicate.

More recently, scholars have proposed the correct voting model on the premise that an individual's own interests can only be identified by the individual herself (Lau and Redlawsk 2006). In this vein, Dahl (1989: 180) argues that "a person's interest or good is whatever that person would choose with fullest attainable understanding of the experiences resulting from that choice and its most relevant alternatives". In other words, the central question is whether "the voter [managed] to select the candidate that he or she would have chosen in the ideal world of fully informed preferences". Therefore, correct voting might be defined as "one that is the same as the choice that would have been made under conditions of full information" (Lau and Redlawsk 2006: 75). Empirically, whether an individual has voted correctly or not can only be assessed through experimental methods. For instance, this has been done by presenting to the subject full information about the parties' profile, and subsequently asking whether they would vote the same way or change their minds (Alvarez et al. 2012).

In this thesis, the focus is on one condition presumed to enable people to vote correctly. I argue that vote choice will tend to be correct the more accurately people are informed about the ideological and policy profile of the main competing parties. I simply assume that with a better understanding of what parties stand for an important condition is met which gives people the possibility to choose correctly. As soon as one is fully informed about parties' policy positions, the choice made will most probably be correct even when the voter is driven in her choice by trust, party identification, or retrospective evaluation of the governmental performance.

1.3 Political parties and representation

The demand side of representation is voters with various policy preferences, interests, and opinions, while political parties embody the supply side. Political parties might be defined as "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free) candidates for public office" (Sartori 1976). Parties perform two crucial functions in the process of supplying what citizens want: they represent, and they govern (Mair 2009). Democracy means, literally, rule by the people (Dahl 1989), but in modern democracies, ruling is performed de facto by political parties. While voters seek to impact the government's composition and policy decisions through elections, their physical absence in the decision-making bodies implies that they must be represented by organizations that aggregate their demands and make collective decisions in their interests (Pitkin 1967).[13] The extent to which a representative is required to follow voters' instructions and demands is a debated issue. Whereas the delegate model of representation requires politicians to accurately act in accordance with their voters' interests and instructions, the trustee model allows for more leeway on the part of representatives in order to guarantee the workability of a democratic system (Pitkin 1967; Katz 2006; Mansbridge 2011). According to the trustee model, parties should act in voters' long-term interests rather than follow their current expression of their opinion (Katz 2006, Mansbridge 2009, 2011).

In reference to the input criteria of legitimation (Scharpf 1999), a political system or parties are conceived as legitimate if people's policy interests are reflected in decision-making. Such input legitimation is not the only way through which a political regime or parties might acquire legitimation. Parties must also govern and when they do this efficiently they acquire legitimation based on the output criterion of democracy. The output theory of democracy considers elections as a means to force governments to deliver public goods which are broadly demanded, such as low levels of corruption, economic growth, low unemployment rates, as well as political stability (Scharpf 1999). Those who are more skeptical about the relevance or possibility of policy representation, emphasize the importance of political accountability as a means to induce governments to a better performance (Przeworski et al. 1999; Andeweg 2003; Pitkin 1967). Political accountability refers to the idea that governments are to be held responsible for the "the results of their past actions" (Manin et al. 1999). Some theorists regard the aspect of governmental efficiency and political accountability as the more relevant criterion for the legitimacy of a democratic system and for

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[13] According to Pitkin (1967), "*in representation something not literally present is considered to be present in a nonliteral sense*".

its stability than policy representation understood as issue congruence between the representative and the represented (Schumpeter 1952; Riker 1982; Ware 1987).[14]

Whereas parties are required to both govern efficiently and represent citizens' interests, there is debate as to the extent to which parties manage to fulfill both functions. Whereas parties have remained a fundamental element in modern democracies, they are, for various reasons, nevertheless often considered a problem for the good function of those democracies (Müller 2000: 309).[15] Theories of political representation should commence by acknowledging the fact that parties are not mere instruments but instead political actors with their own aims that impact their policy preferences and behavior (cf. Powell 2004). With respect to principal-agent models, the problem of delegation occurs when the agent's (that is, the party's) interests differ from those of the principal (the voter) (Strom 2000). In fact, parties are often primarily interested in surviving (Panebianco 1988) and in gaining access to office on a regular basis (Müller and Strom 1999), a purpose for which they need votes.[16] The main problem for theories of representation derives from the unfortunate fact that the avoidance of policy-based mobilization strategies might often be advantageous to parties. This means that parties might be punished by the electorate for disseminating too much information. In particular with regard to new issues such as immigration or European integration, parties are sometimes better advised not to take clear positions due to the diverging opinions of party supporters on such issues.

This thesis focuses on policy representation - on the input theory of democracy. Referring to the Responsible Party Model (ASAP 1950; Katz 1986; Thomassen 1994; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999; Dalton 2008) and Powell Bingham's chain of responsiveness, representation can be conceived as a process which consists of several necessary conditions. In this process, parties are required to present distinct policy alternatives affording citizens a policy choice. Moreover, they ought to be united and disciplined enough to be able to enact their policy program, and they are obliged to implement their promises once in government. The main condition, in the context of my research question, is that parties ought to present a clear policy position which would allow voters to know what parties stand for. However, political

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[14] According to Riker (1982: 9), "…the function of voting is to control officials, and no more….The liberal remedy is the next election. That is all that is needed to protect liberty; so election and limited tenure are sufficient."

[15] Declining partisanship, party membership, increased electoral volatility, diminishing public trust in political parties and parliament give raise for concerns about democracies and parties in particular (Dalton et al. 1984; Mair 2007).

[16] Only a minority of parties are predominantly motivated to implement their policy proposals, while most parties use policy appeals merely as a means to mobilize voters' support (Downs 1957).

clarity constitutes just one aspect of representation and its relevance is contingent upon the extent to which all the other requirements are met (Thomassen 1994; Powell 2004).[17]

Clarity of the policy offer

According to the Responsible Party Model, parties are required to make clear policy proposals. Parties disseminate policy information to the public by what they say (campaign speeches, parliamentary speeches, party statements, TV debates), by what they do (roll-call behavior, government decisions) and by the outcomes of the incumbent parties' actions as perceived by the people. This information on parties' issue positions, which is, deliberately or not, transferred through different media, amounts to the material which both experts and laymen can use to form an opinion on political actors' policy preferences. This overall material, filtered by the media, differs in clarity. As Key notes (1966), "what voters know or don't know of the candidates and the policy issues in any election is largely determined by the information and the clarity of the information, presented to them during the […] campaign". It appears, however, that, dues to its multidimensionality, the concept of clarity is more difficult to pin down than is often assumed. The Oxford Dictionary, for example, defines clarity as: "1) the quality of being coherent and intelligible; 2) the quality of being easy to hear and see; sharpness of image and sound; 3) the quality of being certain and definite; and, 4) the quality of transparency and purity" (The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998). How could this abstract and multidimensional definition of clarity be transferred to the case of party politics? Here, I present two general dimensions of the concept of clarity and discuss their normative relevance for democratic representation. These dimensions are: 1) the amount of policy information; and, 2) consistency of policy preferences. The first dimension refers to the quantity of information and is closely linked to the concepts of issue salience and issue polarization. The term consistency, in turn, refers to quality of information and bears, according to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, several meanings: "1 a) agreement or logical coherence among things or parts; 1 b) correspondence among related aspects, compatibility; 2) reliability or uniformity of successive results or events; 3) degree of density, firmness, or viscosity".

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[17] As suggested by Kitschelt (1989), parties are also obliged to provide people with possibilities to engage in politics through party-internal debates and democracy. Such theories view individuals' engagement in the political process as important as individuals learn to take responsibility for the society, to trust the political system, to give political decision more legitimacy, and to become a more competent citoyen (Barber 1984).

Amount of policy information: issue salience

Are parties normatively obliged to offer policy proposals, and to what extent do parties actually make policy appeals in contemporary democracy? As Müller (2000: 311) notes, "without party programmes […] and MPs committed to these programmes, elections would not allow the voters to exercise prospective influence over policy". In other words, party programs (or policy-related statements) are a fundamental precondition for the possibility of issue voting and policy representation. Without information on parties' policy preferences it is simply impossible to locate a party on a policy scale and to calculate the "utility income". The Downsian model of democracy presupposes that parties do provide policy proposals as a means to mobilize voters and win seats. Such policy-based strategies of voter mobilization presumably leads to issue congruence between the represented and the representatives, and hence to a better democracy (Downs 1957).[18] In contrast, if we adopt the pessimistic view and assume the human mind to be incapable of knowing parties' policy preferences and predicting their consequences, then the argument could be made that parties are exempted from communicating clear policy preferences (Schumpeter 1952; Sears et al. 1980). Obviously the question as to whether or not parties are obliged to offer policy offers ultimately depends on assumptions about human nature.

As some scholars have argued, parties do not only aggregate citizens' demands into more or less coherent policy packages, but they also select issues (Klingemann et al. 1994; Schattschneider 1960). This selection of issues appears to be an inevitable element of democracy. In this vein, according to Schattschneider (1960: 138) democracy is "a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process". Political debates, campaign ads, parties' programs, the number of parties, and public attention are inevitably limited (Jones and Baumgartner 2004, McCombs and Shaw 1972). Neither parties nor the public can pay attention to all policy issues. The selection of issues inevitably presupposes the neglect of other issues which potentially harms the quality of democratic representation. Consequently, Klingemann et al. (1994: 12) maintain that *"…If a political system concerns itself only with problems and policy options that are not threatening to some behind-the-scenes power mongers, then the claim that it is democratic is severely weekend"*. When the political agenda and the scope of issues on which people can express their opinion is controlled and constrained by the political elite, the

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[18] In contrast to the cleavage-based model of democratic politics (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), parties operate detached from any binding relations with societal groups, and use policy appeals as the only means to mobilize voters.

possibility for self-determination is minimized (Dahl 1989). Given that the agenda is constrained, parties should at least propose relevant alternative policies which reflect important divisions within the society (Dahl et al. 1984; Ware 1987).

It is not only that politics inevitably constrain the scope of debated issues, but some theories of democracy even conceive collusion and thus issue avoidance under certain circumstances as desirable to the extent that it protects other values such as stability, cooperation, and equality (Sartori 1987). The consociational model of democracy, for example, portrays competition and issue avoidance as necessary forms of elite behavior for the stability and performance of democratic states in pluralist societies (Lijphart 1977; Sartori 1987; Bartolini 2002). The need for cooperation in coalition governments and parliaments demands compromises and coerces parties into deviating from their initial election promises and party programs and playing down certain issues during election campaigns (Bartolini 2000). Thus, parties should avoid emphasizing specific issues in order to not harm the workability of a democratic system and their coalition partners. It has been, for instance, argued that parties should depoliticize the EU integration issue in order to not jeopardize European cooperation (Bartolini 2004). Or, they should avoid politicizing certain issues that would harm minorities (Sartori 1987). In sum, even from a normative perspective the claim could be made that parties should ignore certain issue for the following reasons: 1) it would secure other values such as stability, freedom, cooperation, and equality; 2) it could help secure a party's organizational survival; or, 3) the political agenda is limited in scope and thus inevitably selective.

Parties do not only neglect certain policy issues but might also avoid discussing policies in general, focusing instead on non-policy issues, a strategy which could be electorally more rewarding (cf. Kitschelt 2002). Parties and candidates have often been found to pay greater attention to abstract valence issues and to focus on leadership abilities and styles coupled with emotional appeals (Budge and Farlie 1983; Norris 2000; Manin 1997).[19] Populism is another often discussed concept which deprives voters of the possibility of accurately knowing what parties stand for. Populist communication includes a personalized campaign with focus on charismatic party leaders and appeals to the population at large rather than specific social groups (Mény and Surel 2002). Such a focus on non-policy issues reduces the information available about parties' policy preferences.

Not only is the politicization of valence issues and leadership style sometimes electorally more rewarding, but it could be argued that it is forced upon parties due to changing external

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[19] Valence issues are issues on which people mostly agree and which are for this reason less controversial (Stokes 1963), and they do not involve legitimate alternative values (Schneider 1980: 79).

circumstances which are beyond their control. The candidate-centered style of political campaigning has, for instance, been attributed to the extensive use of television as a medium of political communication which favors portrayal of the political leadership personality traits over the discussion of complicated policy programs (Ware 1987: 82; Manin 1997; Poguntke and Webb 2005). The politicization of managerial skills and the deemphasizing of ideology, especially by social democratic parties, have been linked with the need to cope with globalizing market pressure (Blyth and Katz 2005). Similarly, even half a century ago Kirchheimer (1966) claimed that "[under] present conditions of spreading secular and mass consumer-goods orientations, with shifting and less obtrusive class lines, the former class-mass parties and denominational mass parties are both under pressure to become catch-all people's parties". Still, Poguntke and Webb (2005) maintain that it is up to the parties to choose whether "to strive for personalization of political communication or for a more substantive political discourse".[20] Empirical evidence appears to lend support to both views. Some scholars have observed an increase in valence issues and personalized campaigning (cf. Poguntke and Webb 2005; Garzia 2013), but there is also evidence which negates such trends portraying party competition as still revolving mainly around contrasting policy standpoints (Kriesi 2011; Karvonen 2010).

Amount of policy information: issue distinctiveness

Policy information can also result from the patterns of relations between competing parties rather than from individual parties' behavior and statements (Sartori 1976). An important concept in this context is issue polarization or issue distinctiveness. Issue polarization appears to be associated with better policy representation, political involvement and political knowledge.

One important condition for policy representation, as envisaged by the Responsible Party Model, is the supply of distinctive policy alternatives which are bundled into general and coherent packages (ASAP 1950; Thomassen 1994: Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Kitschelt 2000). More generally, voters need to perceive differences between parties and candidates in terms of emphasis, priority and performance (Bartolini 2002). Parties with indistinguishable priorities, performance and policy programs merge, from a theoretical point of view, into one single actor which turns competitive democracy into collusion. The distinctiveness between policy programs as stressed by the responsible party model has elsewhere been praised as

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[20] Only recently the French presidential candidate François Holland announced 60 detailed propositions for how to change France - to a large extent because party sympathizers and members were expecting a precise policy proposal from their candidate (see webpage of the partie socialist).

"classical opposition" (Dahl 1966). Manin (1997) states that "the more parties fail to differentiate […] the more democracy fails to fulfill one of its central goals which is responsiveness." In fact, a well-established finding is that issue distinctiveness allows voters' party choices to be affected by their issue preferences (Dalton 1985; Alvarez and Nagler 2004; de Vries 2007; Dalton et al. 2011). Furthermore, issue polarization induces citizens to participate in elections in the first place as engagement depends on perceived party differentials (Bartolini 2002; Franklin 2004; Schattschneider 1960). Thus, it seems that the wealth of policy-related information is relevant for democracy only to the extent that parties present alternative issue positions.

Issue distinctiveness is also often associated with a more intensive campaign which is assumed to increase public knowledge on what parties stand for in policy terms (Riker 1982; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Hobolt 2008). A polarized issue conflict indicates that parties mobilize voters by taking a clear stance in the conflict (Sani and Sartori 1983). More intensive issue conflicts, in turn, are linked with a greater public attention devoted to the contested issue (Schattschneider 1960; van der Eijk and Franklin 2004; de Vries 2007)

Nonetheless, not all theories of democracy conceive issue distinctiveness as a necessarily desirable component. First, large ideological gaps between the competing parties and candidates reduce voters' possibility and willingness to punish and reward the incumbent in a retrospective manner (Key 1966; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). The practice of accountability or the likelihood that the incumbent gets punished for poor governing depends on the attractiveness of the reversion point (Lupia and McCubbins 1998). In this vein, Key (1966) argues that ideologically converging parties offer voters real alternatives, whereas parties with completely divergent ideological positions do not. In general, theories of representation that praise retrospective voting, accountability understood as ex-post representation and output legitimation, and theories that claim that mandate representation is neither feasible nor desirable in times of globalization (in light of the increasing complexity of national and international governance) do not consider issue distinctiveness to be a relevant element of democracy (Schumpeter 1952; Pitkin 1967; Manin 1997; Andeweg 2003; Mair 2009). In addition, issue distinctiveness between competing parties can even turn into an overtly polarized system in which the search for consensus is made more difficult, where opposition is directed not only against the incumbents' policies but against the political system as such, and thus where the stability and legitimacy of a political system is endangered (Dahl 1966; Sartori 1976; Bartolini 2002).

In sum, theorists argue that parties are required to offer policy proposals which are both distinct but, at the same time, not too distinct. Taken together, issue distinctiveness has the

following properties (see also Druckman et al. 2013): 1) it offers a choice, 2) it disseminates information; 3) it heightens public attention; 4) as a result, it increases citizen's policy-related party knowledge; 5) it increases turnout; 6) it increases, however, the cost to voters of switching party support; and, 7) it potentially endangers the workability and stability of a political system.

An important question as to the relevance of my research question is whether parties actually do differ in terms of the policies they communicate. Following the two oil shocks of the 1970s, and in context of European integration and globalization, many scholars have proclaimed a decline in policy differences between competing parties in established democracies and warned of negative effects for the legitimacy and public trust in parties and the democratic system (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Mair 2002, 2006). According to this view, competitive global markets and European integration have reduced the scope for alternative policies and forced parties to converge. The individualization of society is another potential factor explaining why parties offer decreasingly distinctive policies. Several empirical studies have established that parties have converged towards a neoliberal "mainstream consensus" (cf. Downs 2001; Heinisch 2003). In general, it can be argued that issue distinctiveness with regard to certain issue conflicts is declining, but there are still considerable between-country differences (Kriesi et al. 2008; Roberts 2010).[21] The case of Greece where the radical left party Syriza has replaced the moderate left-of-the-center party PASOK as the main rival to the conservative ND, clearly illustrates that democracy has built-in mechanisms that limits the extent to which parties are able to converge in terms of policies and ideology without being punished during elections. Moreover, both the literature on the Europeanization of party systems and the literature on realignment points out that in some countries (more than in others) new issue conflicts are replacing older conflicts.

Consistency in policy preferences

Consistency and ambiguity in parties' policy preferences constitutes the second dimension of clarity. Parties can be more or less consistent or ambiguous with regard to what they do as well as to what they say. Their activities in parliament and government can, furthermore, deviate from their statements and promises made during election campaigns. There are various ways in which parties disseminate ambiguous information, but the focus of this dissertation is on what parties say during elections.

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[21] A growing polarization is also clearly visible in the US with high programmatic divergence between and high cohesion within both political parties (Layman and Carsey 2002; Murakami 2008).

Several authors have maintained that parties' policy programs should show a certain degree of stability – that is to say, consistency over time (Bowler 1990; Andeweg 1995; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2010). A consistent program, so it is argued, enables voters to become familiar with parties' policy stances, while radical changes deprive them of this possibility. Inconsistency presents contradicting information, and consequently it raises a voter's uncertainty and misperception of the actual party position (Downs 1957; Andeweg 1995, Dahlberg 2009). Nonetheless, policy consistency can, under certain circumstances, also be considered a sign of a party's weakness (Panebianco 1988; Huntington 1968). Hence, policy inconsistency is sometimes viewed as a necessary means of adapting to a changing environment (ibid.). Especially when faced with major shifts in external stimuli and particularly shifts in public opinion, the adjustment of parties' policy appeals to the electorate can be considered as necessary and democratically legitimate (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2010). As long as adjustments remain minor, the familiarity of parties and the quality of cognitive short cuts are assured. In sum, to the extent that shifts are necessary for a better representation of public opinion and to the extent that such shifts help to improve the efficiency of a democratic system, the resulting misperception or uncertainty regarding where parties stand in terms of policy preferences can be seen as an indispensable and hence legitimate side effect of party competition.

Parties are also supposed to aggregate interests that are often difficult to integrate into a cohesive package (Ware 1987; Kitschelt 2000; Thomassen 1994). However, clarity implies a certain coherence of policy programs (Thomassen 1994). Voters are forced to compare parties' offers in various policy fields and to choose the party's whole policy package, even though they might disagree on some issue proposals. One solution to this problem is that the preferences of both parties and voters are constrained by an overarching left-right ideology which structures and constrains preferences in more specific policy issues (Thomassen 1994). In this context, Riker (1982) mentions the "impossibility theorem" according to which preference aggregation is not possible given the heterogeneity of societal preferences. The literature on welfare-state retrenchment (Pierson 1994; Levy 1999) and on third way politics (Giddens 1998), with its prominent cases of the UK and Germany, point to how social democratic parties have adopted ambiguous left-right positions in their effort to justify privatization, liberalization, and social benefit cutbacks. Given that third way politics combines leftist and neoliberal elements, social democratic parties' policy programs are nowadays more incoherent and less clear in left-right terms. Moreover, the proliferation of new issues which are divorced from the dominant left-right division provides evidence that

parties increasingly encounter difficulties in forming general and coherent policy packages (Inglehart 1990; Green-Pedersen 2007).

With regard to the European integration conflict, political actors appear to be more or less consistent in terms of how they position themselves towards the more specific constitutive issues (Marks and Hooghe 1999; Bartolini 2006; Helbling et al. 2010). For instance, parties can declare their support for the European single market and at the same time oppose its stronger supranational regulation.

Parties can also be internally more or less cohesive and united when members and parliamentarians from the same party disseminate deviating policy positions. Parties ought to not only offer clear and distinct policy alternatives but also be united and cohesive enough for voters to know what policies are likely to be implemented (Schattschneider 1942; Thomassen 1994). Coherence might be defined as "the degree of congruence in the attitudes and behavior of the party members" (Janda 1980: 118). Cohesion is also necessary for parties to fulfill their policy program (Thomassen 1994). Scholars often mention the importance of party unity and cohesion for representation (Barnes 1977; Thomassen 1994). Some argue that MPs ought to vote according to their party positions, since it is often assumed that their party has won seats only because of their policy program they proposed to the electorate (Birch 1972). In addition, the more a party is fragmented in terms of their parliamentarians' policy preferences and ideological attitudes the less we can speak of a party's unique position in a policy space. As a consequence, the whole question of whether or not people accurately perceive the position of a particular party might be misleading. In this context it has been argued that party cohesion protects the quality of the party label which voters might use as cognitive short cuts to evaluate the prospective behavior of individual representatives (Cox and McCubbins 1993). Cohesive political parties are thus an important precondition which makes it easier for voters to judge what policies parties stand for (Müller 2000). Finally, as parties become less coherent in policy making, it becomes more difficult for voters to hold parties accountable for their past actions (Powell 2000: 60). Hence, party cohesion is important for at least three reasons: 1) it strengthens the representation role of incumbent parties by allowing them to enact the promised policy package; 2) it increases the clarity with which parties communicate to the people; 3) it allows voters to make parties accountable for their policy behavior. In general, despite the often asserted 'de-ideologization' of political parties they have remained highly disciplined, especially in established democracies (Dalton et al. 2011).

Parties in government

Representation, according to the Responsible Party Model, demands that incumbent parties pursue their policy promises. Hence, the responsible party model entails mandate responsiveness which can be defined as the requirement that politicians present clear and distinctive programs in their campaigns which they also enact when elected (Budge et al. 1987; Thomassen 1994; Manin et al. 1999). For some scholars, parties mainly get elected for the policy programs which they present to the electorate during the election campaign (Birch 1972; Budge et al. 1987). If parties fail to realize their mandate, individuals who invested time and energy in collecting information and reasoning about politics are deprived of the opportunity to influence government policies and thus to preserve self-determination (Budge et al. 1987; Thomassen 1994). The chain of responsiveness would break down, representation would fail, and knowledge about parties' policy programs would become irrelevant (Powell 2004). In this context, Ware (1987: 25) claims that the fulfillment of the electoral mandates becomes problematic particularly when decisions are made through behind-closed-doors negotiations between coalition members. Moreover, a gap between what parties say and what they do constitutes an additional form of inconsistency which not only jeopardizes public self-determination but confuses citizens regarding the actual policy preferences of parties. For these reasons, "the congruence between what parties say and what governments do is important in the theory of representative democracy" (Klingemann et al. 1994: 1).

In contrast, various theorists claim that a deviation from the mandate might in many instances be legitimate. Some scholars question whether mandate responsiveness is always in voters' best interests (Manin et al. 1999; Stokes 1999). First, pessimists would argue that policy-making and the assessment of its consequences are too complicated for citizens, and that governing should be pursued by the incumbent parties according to their own better informed and mature judgment (Mansbridge 2011). Thus, parties may deviate from their mandate, especially when it leads to an improvement in voters' welfare and to reelection as a reward for good governmental performance (Manin et al. 1999). The trustee model of representation, in contrast to the more rigid delegate model, offers representatives more leeway for their actions as a means to advance the voters' long-term interests but not necessarily their current opinions (Katz 2006; Mansbridge 2011). The whole mandate model might, in fact, be thrown into question if voters would decide according to the retrospective voting model instead of based on prospective consideration of policy preferences (MacDonald et al. 1995; Stokes 1999; Caplan 2007).

A second theoretical position that casts doubt on the necessity of the implementation of mandates points to the possibility that a government may face changing conditions or unexpected circumstances such as an unexpected financial deficit (Dahl 1961; Manin et al. 1999). Governing parties are also constrained by a responsibility towards their international environment – the legal and economic system within which they are embedded (Stokes 1999; Mair 2009). Mair (2009) argues that "leaders and governments are expected to act prudently and consistently and to follow accepted procedural norms and practices". Manin (1997: 221) claims that "one may say that contemporary governments need discretionary power in relation to party platforms, for it is increasingly difficult to foresee all the events to which government have to respond." However, a widening gap between representation and responsibility leads to democratic malaise and a decline in the perceived legitimacy and stability of the system (Mair 2009).

Third, the delegate model as a normative ideal of democracy does not account for the special rights of minorities and has, for that reason, often been decried as highly populist or 'rationalistic' (Riker 1982; Sartori 1987; Thomassen 1994). The tyranny of the majority is an often used term to express the danger of the political predominance of the majority to the autonomy of minorities and, hence, for the stability of the state (Sartori 1987; Lijphart 1999; Madison 1787). In a similar vein, liberal theories of democracy identify the party in power as a potential threat to the autonomy of individuals (Katz 2006). In turn, different solutions have been proposed to help curb governmental power through institutional checks and balances or the decentralization of political authority. A multiparty system with the need for parties to cooperate is another solution to reduce the threat of the tyranny of the majority (Katz 2006). The principle of mandate responsiveness leaves little room for parliamentary deliberation as a means to reach more broadly accepted and, hence, more legitimate decisions (Pitkin 1967; Powell 2000; Lijphart 1977, 1999). In consociational democracies minorities are even included in decision-making processes based in the principle of inclusion – the idea that the legitimation of policy decisions presupposes the inclusion of as many relevant societal interests as possible. The central property of a consociational democracy is that "…centrifugal tendencies inherent in a plural society are counteracted by the cooperative attitudes and behavior of the leaders of the different segments of the population" (Lijphart 1977: 1). In pluralist societies, in particular, where interests are diverse a closer cooperation between political elites based on the principle of inclusion constitutes an important precondition for a country's prosperity and stability (Lijphart 1999).

Whether parties actually do implement different policies while in government, however, is a crucial question that has caught the attention of scholars since the 1980's. While earlier

work found that parties' policy programs do impact government policies, recent literature suggests a weakening of the correspondence between what parties say and what parties do (Klingemann et al. 1994; Schmidt 1996; Imbeau et al. 2001; but see Dalton et al. 2011, Soroka and Wlezien 2005). In general, a definitive answer to the question as to whether parties continue to make a difference is not yet provided. For instance, parties might indeed be constrained by European Integration at the national level – as it has often been argued – but at the same time they increasingly operate and make decisions within European institutions.

In sum, insufficient information on the part of citizens, changing and unexpected conditions, responsibilities towards international agreements and norms, as well as the autonomy of individuals and minorities may legitimate an incumbent party's deviation from its stated policy program. Nonetheless, the more parties deviate from the principle of mandate responsiveness, the less relevant the information about the parties' policy preferences as a means for self-determination becomes. Consequently, the normative 'truth' must lie somewhere between the delegate model, with rigid instructions, and the trustee model of representation which allows greater leeway for governments (Pitkin 1967; Thomassen 1994; Mansbridge 2011; Riker 1982).

Summary of Chapter 1

In this chapter I have laid out the normative relevance of my research question, arguing that citizens ought to know what parties stand for in order to improve the quality of democracy. I argue against an elitist view of democracy with particular regard to two points. First, I contend that people are generally capable of learning, although they differ in the extent to which they are limited not only by cognitive skills and interest in politics but also by the affective components which distort people's perception and opinion formation. In addition, whether people know what parties stand for is to a large extent simply a matter of information context. I have argued that parties ought to provide clear and distinct policy profiles to the extent that it does not damage democracy and violate other important values.

Figure 1 presents a typology of political clarity based on the two dimensions: 1) the amount of political information; and 2) consistency of policy preferences. Type D represents an ideal case of a party which disseminates a high amount of relevant policy information, while at the same time preserving a high level of consistency in policy preferences. The other three types, by contrast, limit the capacity of people to know what parties stand for. They are either confronted by insufficient information (Type B), inconsistent policy profiles (Type C), or both (Type A). In the following chapter, I discuss first the concept and the operationalization of party knowledge and then compare party knowledge across individuals and countries.

Figure 1 A Typology of the clarity of political parties' policy preferences

		consistency of parties' policy preferences (preference stability; party unity; ideological coherence)	
		Low	High
amount of political information (issue salience; policy-oriented party-voter linkages; issue distinctiveness)	Low	Type A	Type B
	High	Type C	Type D

Chapter 2

Conceptualizing and comparing voters' party knowledge

In this chapter, I introduce the concept of party knowledge and detail its operationalization in this thesis. In a subsequent step, I compare party knowledge across issues, regions, countries and party families. Due to data availability I focus on two substantive political issues: the left-right issue and the issue of European integration.

In Chapter 1, I argued that citizens should be knowledgeable about where parties stand with respect to issue conflicts, but the question remains as to how can party knowledge be measured? The multidimensional nature of party knowledge means that there are some intrinsic difficulties in measuring the concept. The argument could be made that the main theoretical concept is not directly operationalizable and that, instead, we require additional systemized sub-concepts corresponding to the various dimensions of party knowledge (Adcock and Collier 2001). I distinguish two broad dimensions of party knowledge: *perceptual accuracy* and *perceptual certainty*. In other words, knowledge about a specific issue denotes that an individual has both an accurate understanding of the issue and that she is sufficiently certain about her opinion with respect to that issue. A comparison of the extent to which parties' policy profiles are clearly understood by the electorate requires, therefore, a measure for each of the two relevant dimensions of party knowledge. Moreover, each knowledge dimension – *perceptual accuracy* and *perceptual certainty* – can be examined in relation to specific policy issues. The focus of my thesis is on left-right and European integration issues. These issues were chosen for two principal reasons. First, the availability of perceptual data enables us to compare party knowledge across almost all EU member states and, thus, it makes it possible to analyze the impact of country-level contextual factors. Secondly, a large body of political science literature exists on topics concerned with the left-right and the European integration issue conflicts. Whereas the left-right conflict has dominated and structured political conflicts in most European democracies, the integration issue has the potential to bring about a new political conflict line which might, and in some countries already has, reshaped national party systems (Hix and Lord 1997; Marks and Steenbergen 2002; van der Eijk and Franklin 2004; Kriesi et al. 2006; de Vries and Hobolt 2012).

2.1 Conceptualizing party knowledge

Party knowledge is not only a multidimensional concept but is also a particular type of political knowledge. It differs from other types of political knowledge which are unrelated to political parties; for example, neutral factual political knowledge (e.g. knowing the correct number of EU member states), which has been equated with the concept of political awareness (Price and Zaller 1993; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993; Converse 2000), is not the explanandum in this dissertation. Further, I am also not concerned with aspects of knowledge that are unrelated with parties' policy profiles. For example, whether or not voters know a party leader's name is not within the scope of this thesis. That is the case for two reasons: 1) such knowledge is often only an ineffective resource that does not truly enable an individual to realize self-determination through informed party choice (see also Gilens 2001);[22] and, 2) this thesis is about the knowledge required to vote prospectively for parties with similar issue standpoints as the voter (as opposed to the kind of knowledge which is required to properly attribute blame and credit).

With regard to parties' policy profiles, a distinction can be drawn between being uninformed and misinformed (Kuklinski et al. 2000; see also Mondak and Davis 2001; Althaus 1998). In this sense, party knowledge could be understood as the result of a two-stage process of opinion formation (see Figure 2.1). First, individuals differ in whether or not they have a belief about a party's policy preference. Citizens without an opinion are uninformed. Among those with an opinion we can differentiate between more accurate and less accurate opinions (see also van der Brug and van der Eijk 1999). Distinguishing between the uninformed and the misinformed is relevant because we expect such attributes to have different consequences for behavior and opinion formation (Kuklinski et al. 2000). Particularly salient is that misinformed voters are much more resistant than the uninformed to changes in political views and are more likely to act upon their wrong beliefs (a situation which makes self-determination in democracies especially troublesome) (Kuklinski et al. 2000). Figure 2.1 displays the process of opinion formation with three possible outcomes: 1) uninformed; 2) misinformed; and 3) well-informed. Such a conceptualization is a good fit with available opinion survey data. It derives from survey questions in which respondents are asked to place parties on an interval scale or opt for the "don't know" (DK) or the "non-response" options.

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[22] Gilens (2001) distinguishes people with general political knowledge that score poorly on specific policy knowledge. He argues that specific-policy knowledge is required to evaluate and choose parties with the most congruent policy profile.

Party knowledge might just as well be understood as a two-dimensional concept with one continuous dimension referring to perceptual accuracy and the other pertaining to certainty. In that sense, certainty is a matter of degree rather than a dichotomous variable (see Figure 2.2) and is related to confidence or assurance in opinion (Alvarez and Franklin 1994; McGraw et al. 2003; Petty and Krosnick 1995). People may have impressions which are inaccurate but at the same time be nevertheless very certain in their opinion (this corresponds to type B in Figure 2.2). Other citizens may misperceive parties' policy positions at the same time as being unsure about them (type A). Some individuals have little confidence in their own opinion but are still able to place parties accurately in issue conflicts (type C). Ideally we would dispose of continuous variables which measure both perceptual accuracy as well as certainty. For a cross-country study, however, no continuous measures are available that tap directly into respondents' certainty or confidence in party knowledge (see Alvarez and Franklin 1994 for the US case).

Figure 2.1 A two-stage process of opinion formation
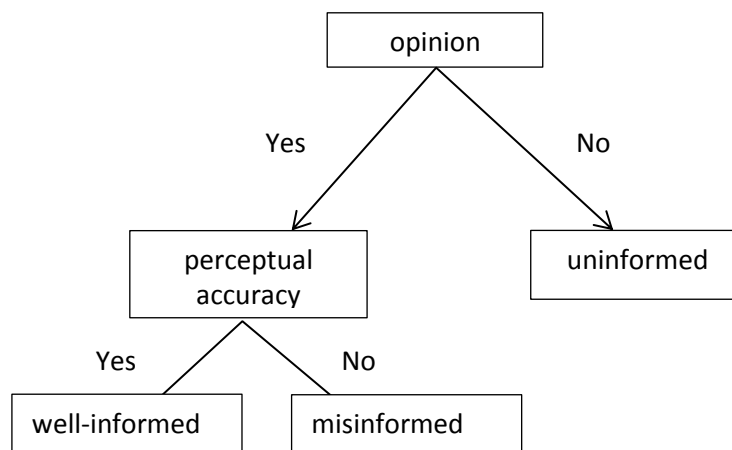
Figure 2.2 Typologies of party knowledge

		certainty	
		no	**yes**
accuracy	**no**	A	B
	yes	C	D

2.2 Data and measurement

The calculation of the knowledge indicators used in this thesis is based on European Election Survey 2009 (EES) data and Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010 (CHES). The EES 2009 data is a survey of the electorates which was conducted following the 2009 European Parliament elections across all 27 EU member states. Data collection commenced immediately after the election between 4-7 June. The aim of the survey was to conduct 1'000 successful interviews for each country. The number of countries in my data set is slightly smaller due to the fact that CHES excludes three small countries (Luxembourg, Malta, and Cyprus). In most of the 24 remaining countries, data were collected via phone interviews while in seven countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) phone interviews were complemented with face-to-face interviews in order to ensure the representativeness of the sample (see van Egmond et al. 2013 for more detailed information on the EES). The CHES data set includes data on party' positions on a range of different issue conflicts where each political party was assessed by around 9 country experts (see Bakker et al. 2015 for more information).[23]

The two dataset have been merged in order to obtain parties' actual issue positions and respondents' party placements. In addition, the dataset has been stacked so that the unit of observation is the respondent-party dyad. The measurement of perceptual accuracy rests on the individual's perception of what the party stands for and the party's actual issue position according to country experts' mean party placement. In the EES 2009 respondents were asked to place themselves and political parties on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 to 10 on two issues: the left-right and the European integration issue.[24] For both issues, respondents were given the opportunity to select "don't know" or the "non-response" category. The measures of actual party positions for both issues derive from the CHES 2010, in which country experts were asked to place parties according to the overall orientation of their leadership towards several issues, including the general left-right and integration issues. The European integration question uses a 7-point scale which has been rescaled in correspondence with the 11-point scale employed in the EES 2009, with 0 indicating strong

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[23] Both datasets are freely accessible. The EES 2009 dataset can be obtained from www.prideu.eu, while the CHES dataset can be obtained from www.chesdata.eu.

[24] The respondent's perception of a party's left right position was measured with an 11-point scale based on the following question: "*In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right"…On this scale, where 0 means "left" and 10 means "right", which number best describes the position of party XY?*" In the same vein, using the same scale size, respondents were asked to place parties on an 11-point scale through the following phrasing: "*Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far…Please indicate your views using an 11-point scale. On this scale, 0 means unification "has already gone too far" and 10 means it "should be pushed further". What number on this scale best describes the position of party XY?*"

opposition and 10 strong support for the European integration process (see Adams et al. 2014 for a similar usage of linear interpolations to calibrate the experts' party placements against voter placements based on the same data).[25] With respect to the left-right issue, 0 was given to parties which have been considered to be extremely left, whereas 10 referrs to an extremely right-oriented ideology. Although the survey questions are interval-scaled, the actual party position is derived from the mean of the expert evaluations and takes, therefore, a continuous format. Thus, policy preferences and the perception thereof are described in spatial terms – a common way to conceptualize and measure policy preferences.

Expert survey data to derive party positions has gained prominence through the work of Castles and Mair (1984) and has over the years been refined and extended to include more countries and more specific policy issues than merely left-right scales (cf. Huber and Inglehart 1995; Ray 1999; Benoit and Laver 2006). Like every measure of party preferences, expert surveys do have their weaknesses (see Budge 2000, and, more recently, Trechsel and Mair 2011 for reviews). On the one hand, it becomes difficult for experts to estimate a party's "true" position if the party is small and the issue is of little concern to it. Furthermore, we do not know on what information and time frames the experts' judgments are based. On the other hand, we might assume that experts and respondents from the same country share a similar understanding of rather abstract terms such as left-right and European integration. In addition, it has been shown that the different techniques to measure party positions tend to produce similar results, which lends support to the validity of my measurement (Steenbergen and Marks 2007; Whitefield et al. 2007; Hooghe et al. 2010).[26] Nevertheless, there are several potential problems with my party knowledge measure because it combines expert (CHES) and public survey data (EES): 1) the EES 2009 (11-point) and the CHES 2010 (7-point) employ different scales for the placement questions; 2) the question wordings for the EU issue differ slighly in the two surveys; and, 3) both surveys were conducted in two different years. Hence, to what extent does my measure actually capture party knowledge? Are the measures valid? The party knowledge variable, which combines expert and public

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[25] The question wording for the EU issue differs slightly in the CHES and read as follow: "[What is the]…overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration in 2006?". Response options range between 1 (strongly opposed) and 7 (strongly in favor).

[26] A confirmatory factor analysis conducted by Steenbergen and Marks (2007) reveal that expert data load highest on a single factor compared to loading scores of other measures for parties' EU issue positions, such as the Comparative Party Manifesto data, the European Election survey or elite surveys. In other words, expert survey are a highly reliable method to derive actual party positions compared to other available techniques such as text analysis or mass or elite surveys (Steenbergen and Marks 2007). In addition, Steenbergen and Marks test for inter-observer reliability by means of standard deviation in experts' judgments and conclude that the validity of expert data for both issues can be considered as sufficiently reliable. See also Netjes and Binnema (2007), Whitefield et al. (2007), and Bakker et al. (2015) for other validation tests of expert data.

survey data, does well in terms of content validity. Content validity is a matter of precise and persuasive linguistic clarification of a concept and its operationalization. Political knowledge is usually difficult to assess particularly when it concerns abstract notions such as party positions as opposed to objective facts. Perceptual accuracy refers to similarity between the respondent's opinion (or her perception) and expert opinion, and this is partly the reason why I prefer the expert survey data to alternative measures for actual party issue positions.[27] Adcock and Collier (2001) maintain, however, that content validation does often not suffice to examine the validity of a measure. Instead, they suggest to combinine additional validation tests such as convergence, construct, or face validation. These tests seem necessary in light of the various potential problems that might occur due to the combination of two different datasets (EES 2009 and CHES 2010).

Convergence validity requires a fairly strong correlation between alternative indicators for the same concept, which indicates that both measures tap into the same phenomenon they are expected to be measuring. The convergence validity of my party knowledge measure is, however, difficult to assess given that alternative indicators are missing. Construct validity, in turn, can be evaluated by examining well-established hypotheses that were already tested and confirmed in other studies based on alternative indicators for the same concepts. In Chapter 3, for example, I test and confirm such a well-established hypothesis with my indicators: the hypothesis that cognitive resources such as level of education and political awareness assist respondents in placing parties accurately on both scales (cf. delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Alvarez 1997). The confirming results presented in Chapter 3 are not surprising. Yet, it is precisely this kind of hypotheses that are particularly suitable for testing the construct validity of an indicator. Hence, the construct validity of the dependent variable appears to be satisfactory.

The dependent measure also appears to do well in terms of face validity, as shown and discussed in Chapter 2. For example, the rankings of party families and countries according to the mean misperception of their parties' actual EU issue positions (and left-right positions) are largely in line with literature and expectations: a) parties are placed more accurately on the left-right scale in established democracies; b) the regionalist parties are placed particularly inaccurately; c) the most accurately placed party group in the EU issue conflict is the nationalist far-right; d) parties are placed particularly accurate on the EU issue scale in those countries where the EU issue is highly politicized. All these findings based on the

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[27] Notwithstanding the shortcomings of my operationalizations (with regard to both perceptual accuracy and uncertainty), due to data availability these are the best indicators, which are currently available for a cross-country comparison.

aggregated values of the dependent variable corroborate the face validity of my party knowledge measure.

In sum, in terms of content validity, construct validity and face validity my indicators for the dependent variable seem to do quite well. I admit that (1) different scales, (2) time lags, and (3) differences in question wordings between the component parts of the dependent measure constitute potential problems. The central question, however, remains whether the indicator is sufficiently valid or not. The discussion in this section has provided a number of good arguments in support of the validity of these measures.

I now describe the measurement of party knowledge more in detail. The first knowledge indictor measures perceptual accuracy and rests on the assumption that actual, as well as perceived, preferences of political actors can be marked as points in a policy space. Perceptual accuracy is measured by the absolute distance between the actual party position and the respondent's party placement. The values range between a minimum of 0 and a maximal misperception of 11. The closer the voter's placement approximates the experts' mean judgments, the smaller the absolute distance becomes. A small distance indicates a higher perceptual accuracy and, hence, a lower misperception. Figure 2.3 illustrates the measurement of perceptual accuracy. In this example, misperception equals 4 given that the party's actual EU issue position is 6 while the respondent locates the same party at point 2.[28]

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[28] Left-right as well as European integration are quite complex constructions with multiple meanings. For that reason such survey questions leave sufficient room for voters' and experts' own interpretations of the scale.

Figure 2.3 Measurement of perceptual accuracy
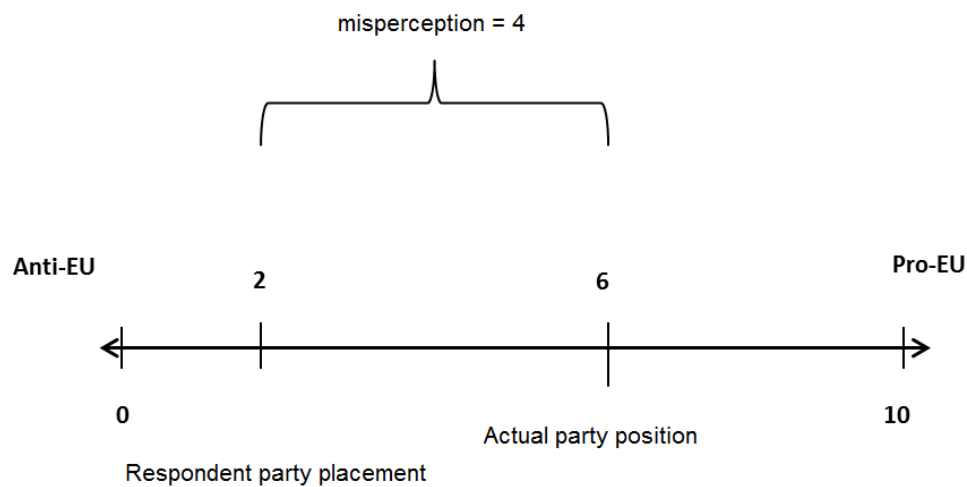
The second variable results from the criticism that policy preferences should be conceptualized as directions rather than as positions (Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1991). The proponents of the directional voting model disagree with the notion that policy preferences are meaningfully conceptualized as alternative positions on a continuum. They have furthermore established that voters choose parties which are on the same side of the left-right divide but not necessarily those with the most proximate position. In some countries, moreover, citizens might be more acquainted with a directional understanding of party preferences, especially as a result of the size of the party system. Related to this problem, it has been suggested that people often use broader categories to make sense out of politics, disproportionally often placing parties at the more "prominent" positions; that is to say, at both extremes of a scale and in the center (Aldrich and McKelvey 1977). As a final note, political parties with an actual position in the center of the scale can be misperceived by maximal 5 points, while a party with a position at one of the two extremes can be misperceived by up to 11 points. Consequently, the second variable for party knowledge measures whether an individual assesses correctly a party's directional orientation in the left-right or European integration conflict. Nonetheless, it remains a variable which is closely related to the first knowledge variable because both measure perceptual accuracy. I refer to this indicator as the correct directional placement capacity.

In order to measure this capacity, parties' preferences and respondents' placements are categorized as either left, neutral or right, or as pro-, neutral or anti-EU. A party's ideological tendency is considered to be left (or anti-EU) if its position is between 0 and 4.5, neutral if party position is between 4.5 and 5.5, and right (or pro-EU) if party position surpasses the threshold of 5.5. Individuals perceive parties to be left (or anti-EU), neutral, or right (or pro-EU) if they place them below 5, exactly at 5, or above 5, respectively. A party's political tendency is correctly perceived whenever the party's actual orientation corresponds with the categorized respondent's placement. Semi-correct perceptions occur when the respondent's placement category is adjacent to the party' actual category. A wrong judgment refers to when directions are mixed up. Ultimately, I operate with a dichotomous variable (1 = correct; 0 = otherwise).

Various ways have been proposed to measure perceptual certainty (Alvarez and Franklin 1994; Alvarez 1997).[29] Here I employ a dichotomous variable distinguishing between respondents who have placed the party on the issue scale and those who were either unwilling or unable to do so. The additional information contained in non-responses and "don't knows" (DKs) complements the other party knowledge variables and provides a more complete picture. Such a variable has already been employed in studies as a measurement for either uncertainty (see Bartels 1986) or to differentiate between informed and uninformed respondents (Kuklinski et al. 2000; Mondak and Davis 2001). Non-responses and DKs might point to a lack in information or to a psychological feeling related to confidence that prevents the respondent from claiming knowledge of a party's issue position. This dichotomous variable is therefore far from a perfect indicator of political knowledge as non-responses and DKs are partly a function of personality traits such as level of self-confidence and propensity to guess, (cf. Mondak 1999; Mondak and Anderson 2004) or social expectancies. In other words, non-responses and DKs indicate that a person is either unwilling or unable to place a party on the issue scale. Without an opinion on what parties stand for, however, an individual is deprived of the possibility of comparing and of perceiving differences between parties' policy proposals. Another problem of non-responses and DKs concerns selection bias. The assessment of level of perceptual accuracy of parties' policy preferences is based only on

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[29] Some scholars maintain that an individual's opinion about a party's policy preference can be characterized as an ideal point in spatial terms (central tendency) with a variance around this tendency (Alvarez 1997, Alvarez and Franklin 1994; Alvarez and Brehm 2002). A larger variance denotes greater uncertainty. Another way to measure certainty is through self-report on the survey question: "how certain are you of [the judgment just provided]" (Alvarez and Franklin 1994).

the party placements by respondents with an opinion.[30] It is likely that respondents without an opinion share many attributes with respondents who place parties inaccurately. At aggregated levels of analysis such as parties, party families, or countries, the problem of missing values is less severe. Here, we combine three knowledge indicators: an average measure for perceptual accuracy; the net difference in the probability of correct and wrong evaluation of parties' ideological tendencies; and non-response rates. The dependent variables are described in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Description of the party knowledge variables

Concept	Measurement	Scale
perceptual accuracy	absolute distance between the actual party position according to country experts and the respondent's party placement	0-10
	the placement of the party in the correct tendency of an ideological conflict	1 = correct; 0 = otherwise
perceptual uncertainty	placement of the party on the issue scale	1 = yes; 0 = "don't know" and "non-response"

Source: EES 2009 and CHES 2010

The issues: Left-right and European integration issue

The left-right dimension is considered to be the dominant conflict line which structures politics in most established democracies. Scholars have contributed to the literature on the left-right conflict by describing party systems, discussing its consequences and development, and by understanding party (as well as voting) behavior by reference to left-right positions (cf. Klingemann et al. 1994; Sartori 1976; Bartolini and Mair 1990). Furthermore, various studies show that people seem to be well represented in left-right terms (Dalton 1985; Holmberg 1999; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999).

However, other scholars have pointed out that party politics in Western Europe is often best described by two distinct left-right dimensions (Ingelhart 1990; Kitschelt 1994; Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006; Kriesi et al. 2008). Left-right can been understood in at least

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[30] Thus, at the individual level of analysis we are confronted with the problem of missing values for which we have two possible solutions. The first solution would be to use multiple imputations to acquire estimates for the missing observations. However, this method ignores the valuable information contained in non-responses.

two different ways. One conflict pertains to the socioeconomic-distributive aspect, which includes conflicts over the size of the public sector, the welfare system, taxation rates, and other market regulations. The other left-right conflict consists in a cultural dispute over non-material values such as tradition, family values, the role of the church, gay rights, abortion and so on. The meaning of left and right, however, often differs across time and countries. Moreover, in most post-communist democracies the terms left and right refer to the conflicting sides during the collapse of the communist regimes. Parties emanating out of the communist elite are considered to be left, while parties which arose out of the protest movements have been labeled as being right-oriented. In contrast to established democracies, the left-right conflict has not emerged out of deep and stable social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Instead, parties in Central Eastern Europe appear to be less constrained by social interests and ideologies and have often even been formed in the parliamentary arena (Innes 2002). In addition, the EU accession process and the requirements connected to the acquis communautaire has seriously limited governing parties' policy scope (Ladrech 2010). Such a leeway would have allowed governmental parties to produce diverging policy outputs that would distinguish them from their opponents during the formative years of their existence. In fact, many former-communist parties adopted neoliberal reform packages such as privatization and market deregulation to a greater extent than their opponents to the right (Hanley 2004; Tavits and Letki 2009). Finally, particularly important to note is the fact that the redistributive and the cultural left-right dimensions tend to be contradictory in post-communist democracies. While in Western Europe both conflicts tend to correspond, that does not appear to be the case in Eastern Europe (Kitschelt 1994, Marks et al. 2006). In Eastern Europe, the left-right conflict has an ambivalent character in that parties that are conservative in cultural terms often happen to politicize on the left side with regard to redistributive issues (and vice versa) (Kitschelt et al. 1999; Marks et al. 2006). All these factors explain why we should expect parties' left-right positions to be more accurately perceived in the West as opposed to new democracies in Central Eastern Europe.

In light of the different understandings and multidimensionality of the left-right conflict, various scholars have critized the usage of the overarching left-right scale as an instrument to measure parties' ideological standpoints. In consequence, one could also question whether the perceptual accuracy of parties' actual left-right positions is a valid indicator for party knowledge. Despite this criticism, I use the overarching left-right scale for several reasons. First, a substantial amount of studies, recently published in high quality journals, continue to rely on the single overarching left-right scale (cf. Fortunato and Stevenson 2013; Adams et al. 2011; Dalton et al. 2011; Somer-Topcu 2014). My reasearch speaks and

contributes to this literature. Second, another reason is data availability. I am not aware of any cross-country survey datasets, which include more specific issue *placement* questions as well as enough countries to investigate the contextual impact on party perception and cross-level interactions. Third, the terms left and right remain widely used heuristics to describe politics in public debates and the media. Very often neither the media nor the public differentiates between the various subdimensions of the left-right conflict. Finally, in many European democracies one left-right subdimension usually dominates alternative notions. In line with these arguments, it is not surprising that scholars have observed a high agreement among country experts as to the parties' left-right placements (cf. Steenbergen and Marks 2007). Overall, there are many reasons to study one single left-right dimension, although there seem to be just as many good reasons to study two left-right dimensions.

The European issue, in contrast, has been portrayed as a newly emerging issue with the potential to reshape traditional conflict lines (Hix and Lord 1997; Marks and Steenbergen 2002; Hooghe et al. 2002; Kriesi et al. 2008). Accordingly, scholars have also started to pay greater attention to the Europeanization of national party systems (Ladrech 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008; Marks and Wilson 2002; Marks and Hooghe 2002). From a theoretical point of view, the conflict over European integration is just as multidimensional as the left-right conflict. The European Union is highly complex and its integration multifaceted, with parties potentially favoring integration in one policy area but in not others (Marks and Hooghe 1999; Scharpf 1999; Bartolini 2006). For instance, negative integration denotes measures of market making such as market deregulation and the elimination of national constrains on trade (Scharpf 1999). In contrast, positive integration refers to the regulation of the common market – labor market regulations, environment regulations, the harmonization of tax systems and fiscal policies, and measures to guarantee social stability (Scharpf 1999). Furthermore, European integration includes the question of whether the European Union should be enlarged to include new member states such as Turkey or the Ukraine, and whether integration should be deepened through closer cooperation in certain policy fields and through the empowerment of supranational institutions such as the European Parliament, European Commission or the ECB to the detriment of national institutions (Marks and Wilson 2000). It has been maintained that parties tend not to be equally supportive or opposed to all aspects of the integration project (Marks and Hooghe 1999).[31]

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[31] In general, social democrat, liberal, and Christian democrat parties have traditionally been, and remained, supportive of both economic and political integration, although social democrats generally tend to be more supportive of political and positive integration as the integration proceeds (Hooghe et al. 2002, Marks et al. 2002). Conservative parties appear to become increasingly reserved with regard to the integration process, notwithstanding their initial support and continuing influence on the formation of the European Union and its

2.3 Comparing party knowledge

In this section, I compare party knowledge in terms of both issue conflicts across as well as within regions, countries, and party families. Figure 2.4 shows kernel density plots representing the distribution of the first knowledge variable of perceptual accuracy for both the left-right as well as the EU integration issue. The solid curves display distribution of the variable in established democracies, while the dashed lines describe distribution in the post-communist region. With regard to the left-right issue, it can be noted that both distributions are skewed with peaks located between 1 and 2. Hence, we might conclude that a majority of respondents reveal a fairly good understanding of parties' ideological positions, while relatively few misperceive parties' positions by more than 4 points. Given the skewed distribution, the median seems to be a more accurate measure to describe central tendencies in perceptual accuracy. This applies not only to the description of the central tendency of regions, but also to other aggregated units such as countries, party families, or individual parties. At the same time, however, distribution of party knowledge in post-communist countries seems to be more highly dispersed with a lower peak suggesting not only a lower level but also greater inequality in party knowledge.

Accordingly, median left-right misperception in established democracies amounts to 1.4, while in post-communist democracies the corresponding value equals 2 points. Both values are the best guesses we can make about a random individual's misperception of an arbitrary party in a random country. Given that misperception scores range between 0 and 11, median values of 1.4 or 2 points suggest that European citizens judge political parties' left-right positions rather accurately (see also van der Eijk and van der Brug 1999 as well as Dalton et al. 2011 for similar findings). In substantive terms, we might infer from the median misperception values that people are fairly knowledgeable about what parties stand for in left-right terms.[32] To the extent that parties' left-right positions reflect more specific policy preferences, the argument could be made that people are fairly well informed about parties' policy profiles.

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policy outputs (Hooghe and Marks 2009). Scholars have explained this reservation by pointing to the Conservatives ambivalent ideology, which combines neoliberalism (and hence support for economic integration), on the one hand, and nationalism (and therefore opposition to political and symbolic integration), on the other hand (Marks et al. 2002). In a similar vein, regionalist parties have also become less Europhile during the past two decades as various scholars have suggested. Extreme right parties are said to mobilize anti EU-sentiments by referring to values of national sovereignty, traditions, and by linking the EU issue with multiculturalism and immigration. The radical left has rejected the EU as a neoliberal project which harms national achievements in the realm of the welfare state (Hooghe et al. 2002; de Vries and Edwards 2009, Bartolini 2006). Thus, they are first and foremost opposed to the Common market.

[32] An observation which stands somewhat in contrast to conclusions drawn by other scholars on the level of public knowledge about parties and politics in general (Luskin 2002; Lippman 1922).

Figure 2.4 The distribution of perceptual accuracy in Western and Eastern Europe
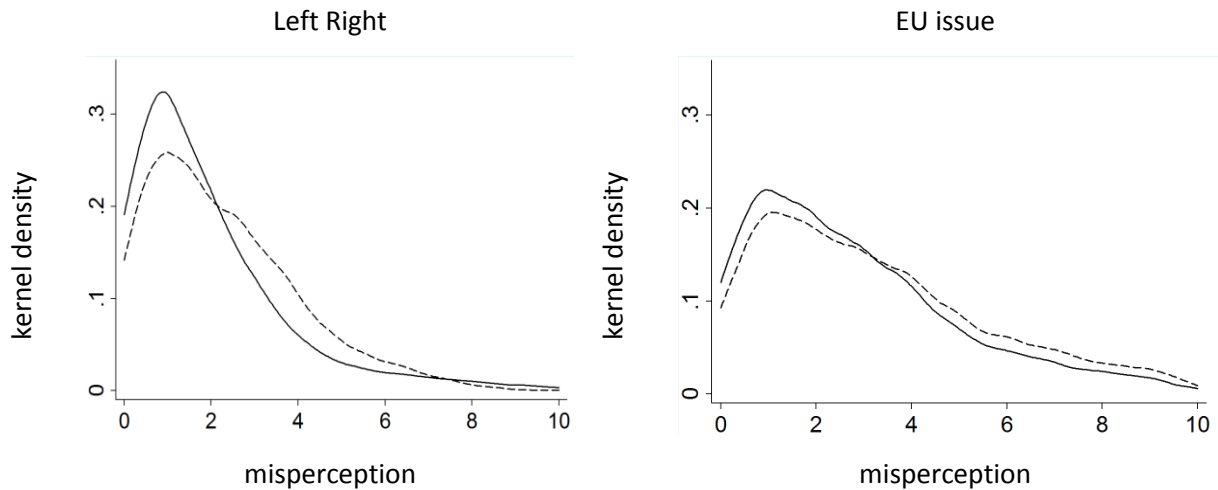
Note: The two graphs are kernel density plots displaying the distribution of the misperception variable. The solid line presents the distribution in established democracies, while the dashed line displays the distribution in post-communist democracies.

The corresponding distribution curves for the European integration issue are displayed on the right of Figure 2.4. Similar to the left-right issue, we see a distribution skewed towards zero. However, the curves run much flatter and both peaks are not as evident as for the left-right issue. Hence, knowledge about parties' EU issue positions appears to be more unequally distributed as compared to knowledge about parties' left-right positions. Furthermore, the difference in the distribution between both regions is limited. In fact, the median misperception score for the West European region amounts to 2.29, whereas in Central Eastern Europe misperception reaches 2.64 points. Compared to the left-right conflict, public knowledge about parties' EU integration preferences is lower. This is not surprising given the novelty and the low salience of the integration issue relative to issues pertaining to the established left-right dimension. Furthermore, the public seems to be more knowledgeable in established democracies than in new democracies irrespective of the issue at stake. This finding is also not very surprising given the novelty of post-communist democracies, their under-institutionalized party systems and the absence of parties rooted in deep and durable cleavages.

Table 2.2 displays country knowledge scores with regard to parties' left-right preferences, and Table 2.3 does the same for the EU issue. In both tables, countries are grouped depending on their region and are ranked based on an additive knowledge index. The results presented in Table 2.2 confirm that citizens are more accurately informed as well as more certain in their party perceptions in established, as opposed to post-communist, democracies. In established democracies, individuals show a 65% probability of correctly assessing a party's left-right direction, while 15% of the perceptions are erroneous. In comparison, the Central Eastern European democracies are characterized by a lower likelihood that respondents will attribute to place parties in correct left-right direction (56%) and a slightly higher percentage of wrong responses (17%). The non-response rate with respect to the left-right issue amounts to 12% in established democracies and is thus notably smaller than in post-communist democracies (where respondents are either unwilling or unable to respond to the placement question in 26% of all cases).

The results for the EU issue are presented in Table 2.3.[33] Compared to the left-right conflict, the scores suggest a generally lower level of knowledge, as people are less likely to make correct judgments and more likely to misperceive parties' orientation with respect to integration (van der Brug and van der Eijk 1999). Furthermore, we again find a higher proportion of correct assessments in established democracies when compared to post-communist democracies. The country average of correctly placed parties in established democracies is 54%, while misplacements occur in 25% of all cases. For post-communist democracies, the equivalent values are 46% and 33%, respectively. In fact, the percentage scores for post-communist democracies come close to mere guessing. In Western Europe, the average non-response percentage with respect to the EU issue amounts to 25%, while in Eastern Europe the non-response rate is as high as 42%.

Overall, Eastern Europeans are less likely to hold an opinion both on parties' left-right position and their positions on the EU issue. They are also more likely to misperceive parties' positions with respect to both issues. The countries' mean non-response rates provide an argument for why knowledge indicators should be combined in an attempt to obtain a more comprehensive picture of knowledge levels across regions, countries, party families, or individual parties. For example, a median misperception of 2.64 points and a net correct opinion probability of only 14% in the case of the EU issue in post-communist democracies suggest a low level of knowledge. It is, moreover, particularly low given a drop-out rate of 42%. Put differently, perceptual inaccuracy of 2.64 points suggests a particularly low level of knowledge given that almost half of the respondents have precluded themselves from the

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[33] Table 2.3 is displayed on page 66, where the EU issue case is discussed in greater detail

perceptual accuracy measure. Thus, whenever we look at differences in a single knowledge indicator score, we should always consider the other two indicators as well.

Table 2.2 Country knowledge scores — the left-right conflict (in 2009)

	perceptual accuracy	perceptual uncertainty	perception of direction correct	perception of direction wrong	Index
Established democracies					
Sweden	1.38	5%	0.78	0.10	3.33
Portugal	1.17	13%	0.75	0.09	3.06
Denmark	1.18	6%	0.68	0.11	2.99
France	1.11	11%	0.68	0.09	2.85
Germany	1.38	5%	0.67	0.15	2.22
Finland	1.40	7%	0.62	0.09	2.11
Austria	1.29	13%	0.66	0.13	1.91
Italy	1.33	25%	0.77	0.07	1.73
Netherlands	1.36	10%	0.60	0.13	1.54
Greece	1.64	7%	0.67	0.17	1.31
Ireland	1.88	9%	0.59	0.24	-0.44
Spain	1.82	25%	0.62	0.22	-1.41
Belgium	1.79	15%	0.56	0.26	-1.12
United Kingdom	1.87	19%	0.54	0.21	-1.49
Established democracies (aver.)	1.40	12%	0.65	0.15	1.33
Post-communist democracies					
Czech Republic	1.26	10%	0.62	0.05	2.41
Hungary	1.59	19%	0.74	0.13	1.08
Poland	2.00	17%	0.64	0.10	-0.13
Slovenia	2.00	14%	0.56	0.17	-0.90
Slovakia	2.00	21%	0.56	0.19	-1.64
Latvia	2.25	23%	0.51	0.12	-2.36
Bulgaria	1.82	33%	0.56	0.21	-2.54
Estonia	1.77	35%	0.54	0.21	-2.70
Lithuania	2.15	36%	0.45	0.19	-4.11
Romania	3.00	44%	0.44	0.30	-7.70
Post-communist democ. (aver.)	2.00	26%	0.56	0.17	-1.86
All EU Countries	1.55	18%	0.62	0.15	

Sources: The knowledge variables were calculated based on the European Election Survey 2009 and Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010 data set.

Note: Perceptual accuracy denotes the country's mean average of parties' median misperception scores. Perceptual uncertainty is measured with the mean average of non-responses for each political party within a country.

2.3.1 Comparing party knowledge across countries

Left-right issue in established democracies

For the country comparison three aggregated knowledge indicators were computed for each country: 1) the mean country average of parties' median misperception scores; 2) the percentage of correctly assessed minus the percentage of wrongly assessed parties' tendencies;[34] 3) the percentage of non-responses. Based on the standardized values of these three knowledge indicators I have created an additive knowledge index. The index scores indicate how well-informed citizens are in one country compared to those in other countries. In each region, countries have been ranked according to their knowledge index scores. Figure 2.5 uses box plots to show the within-country variations for established democracies and Figure 2.6 does the same for post-communist democracies.

Figure 2.5 Knowledge of the left-right conflict in established democracies (in 2009)
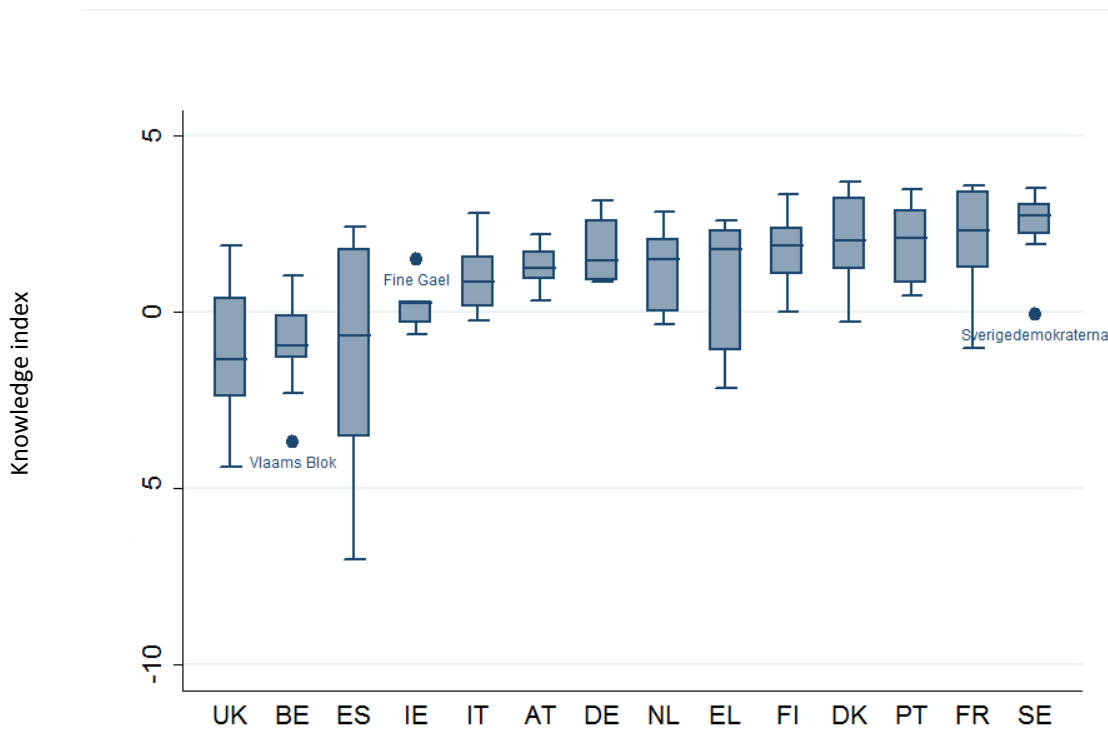
Note: Entries denote parties' index scores which combine the three knowledge indicators scores.

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[34] This indicator is far from being perfect but is justified as a means to double check the validity of the perceptual accuracy measure. I have also looked at various ways how to combine the percentages of correct, wrong and assessments which are semi-correct. The net differences between the correct and wrong percentages, however, have brought the most consistent and median scores.

As shown in Table 2.2, Sweden, Portugal, Denmark, and France have particularly high indicator scores feeding into the highest knowledge index scores. In these four countries, citizens appear to be particularly knowledgeable as regards parties' left-right profiles. The scores are consistently high across all indicators, which suggests that citizens in these countries are both accurately informed as well as certain about parties' left-right placements. Overall, Sweden performs best. In 2009, Swedes misperceived the actual party position by only 1.38 points on average, 78% of all judgments were correct, while in only 10% of all observational cases were respondents mistaken about the party's ideological direction. Finally, in only 5% of all cases were respondents either unwilling or unable to place a party on the left-right scale. Based on the results presented in Figure 2.5, however, we see that not all Swedish parties are equally well perceived with regard to their left-right positions. The profile of the nationalist Sverige Democrats (SD) is significantly less accurately perceived than their opponents in left-right terms. The SD's actual left-right position is 8.38, but around 24% of the respondents perceive the nationalist party to be left-oriented, and its non-response rate equals 20%. This finding corresponds well with the existing literature on Swedish politics which suggests that the terms left and right are still associated with the socio-economic rather than the cultural dimension of politics (see Rydgren 2010). As it will be shown, far-right parties also tend to be relatively highly misperceived in left-right terms in other countries where a socio-economic understanding of the left-right conflict dominates.

The case is different in France where the nationalist Front National (FN) is perceived with highest accuracy. 80% of the respondents correctly viewed the party as right-oriented (the French average is 68%). The strong performance of FN with regard to the perceived accuracy of their left-right profile is consistent with the argument that in France the terms left and right primarily refer to a cultural conflict (Bartolini 2000). This finding is nonetheless surprising given that FN has explicitly resisted being defined in left-right terminology (Grunberg 2008). Furthermore, FN has intentionally shifted to the center with respect to the socioeconomic left-right conflict in order to gain the support of the working class (Kriesi et al. 2008). In France, the worst knowledge scores in left-right terms are associated with the environmentalist Les Verts.

A second group of countries with above average knowledge scores consists of Germany, Finland, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, and Greece. These countries' average knowledge scores are above the Western average meaning their citizens are comparatively well informed about parties' left-right orientations. Misperception ranges between 1.29 and 1.64, net difference in placing the party in the correct direction is between 53% and 70%, and the non-response rate is between 5% and 25%. Notably, Italy has a relatively high non-response

rate coupled with precise and correct party placements in terms of both parties left-right positions and tendencies. As such, without the non-response indicator Italians would appear as well-informed as Swedes.[35] The case of Greece and Germany serve as counterexamples, with low non-response rates coinciding with rather low perceptual accuracy and correctness. In this group, the within-country variation is particularly large in Greece, where the socialist PASOK is associated with an unclear left-right profile while both the far-right LAOS and the communist KKE score comparatively well. PASOK is placed by country experts at 4.36 but 46% of the Greek population perceive the party to be right-oriented, while only 30% regard PASOK as left-oriented. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the poor performance of PASOK is to some extent due to individual-level factors. In particular, the supporters of the leftist opponent parties such as SYRIZA or KKE move PASOK to the other side of the left-right divide (only 17% of these respondents consider PASOK as a leftist party). In certain countries left and right are contested concepts and, for some, it is difficult to accept the fact that a disliked party shares the same ideological orientation.

In a third group of established democracies are Ireland, Spain, Belgium, and the United Kingdom with knowledge index scores below the EU average. These are the four Western European countries in which citizens seem to be least well-informed about parties' left-right profiles. The countries' average median misperception scores are above 1.79, the non-response rates surpass 15% (apart from Ireland where the non-response rate is 9%), at least 21% confuse parties' general orientations, and only 62% perceive them correctly. While Spain, Belgium, and the United Kingdom score below average on all accounts, the Irish seem to rather hastily place parties on the left-right scale which is reflected in their low non-response rate. However, in contrast to other established democracies with equally low non-response rates, the Irish non-response rate is not confirmed by the other two indicators.

Belgium and, in particular, Spain and the United Kingdom also reveal a high variation among parties. Hence, it is party attributes and behavior, rather than country-level factors, which account for the perceived accuracy of parties' left-right profiles. In the case of Belgium the relatively high variance might be attributed to the particularly poor performance of the Vlaams Blok (VB). VB is a far-right party with anti-immigration and anti-Islam rhetoric while pursuing at the same time politics favoring regional autonomy and even separation of the Flemish part of Belgium (Mudde 2003, 2007). While country experts place VB at the very end

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[35] However, how would perceptual accuracy as well as the percentage of correct responses change if we forced all respondents to place parties on the scale? There is a reason to assume that the high knowledge scores for the two indicators might have been caused by a severe selection bias. For this reason, I account for the non-response rates and include them into an additive index which provides a general view on the level of party knowledge within a country.

of the left-right scale (9.8), 37% of the Flemish population considers the party to be left-oriented, which eventually results in a comparatively high median misperception of 3.86 points (see also Mudde 1996). Similar to the Swedish case, but in strong contrast to the case of France, it is again a far-right party with the most unclear left-right profile as compared to other parties within the same system. It is interesting to note that the other francophone extreme right party, the Belgian Front National, is associated with the clearest left-right profile as only 26% of the Wallonian population place the party to the left. Thus, given the same language and cultural heritage it might be speculated that left and right are similarly understood in Wallonia and France.

The variance within the other two countries, Spain and the UK, is mainly due to the existence of many small regional parties. Regional parties mainly mobilize territorial conflicts which are often divorced from the left-right conflict, and they encompass a plethora of socio-economic interests (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan and Urwin 1982). In consequence, regional parties usually convey relatively little information about their left-right preferences. In Spain, it is Coalición Canaria and the Basque regionalists Eusko Alkartasuna which display especially unclear left-right profiles as perceived by the Spanish electorate, while the conservative Partido Popular is widely and correctly perceived as a rightist party. The other main Spanish Party, the social democratic PSOE, is also relatively well perceived. In the UK, on the other hand, the regionalist Scottish Nationalist Party and the Welsh Plaid Cymru are joined by the nationalist parties the United Kingdom Independence Party and the British Nationalist Party. Hence, we again find relatively small parties with an unclear left-right profile while the public is well informed about the preferences of the two main parties. Similar to the case of Spain, in the UK it is again the Conservatives that have a clearer left-right profile compared to their main socio-democratic opponent. However, the Spanish and British party systems are characterized by many regional parties competing in only a small portion of constituencies, which accounts for the relatively high non-response rates associated with regional parties. Coalicion Canaria was not placed by 40%, the Basque Eusko Alkartasuna by 45%, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya by 29%, the Scottish National Party by 31%, and the Welsh Plaid Cymru by 40% of the respondents. While in Spain regional parties also reveal inferior knowledge scores with regard to perceptual accuracy and correctness compared to the main parties, this is not the case for the UK where both regional parties display better scores than the Labour Party.

Figure 2.6 Knowledge of the left-right conflict in post-communist democracies (in 2009)
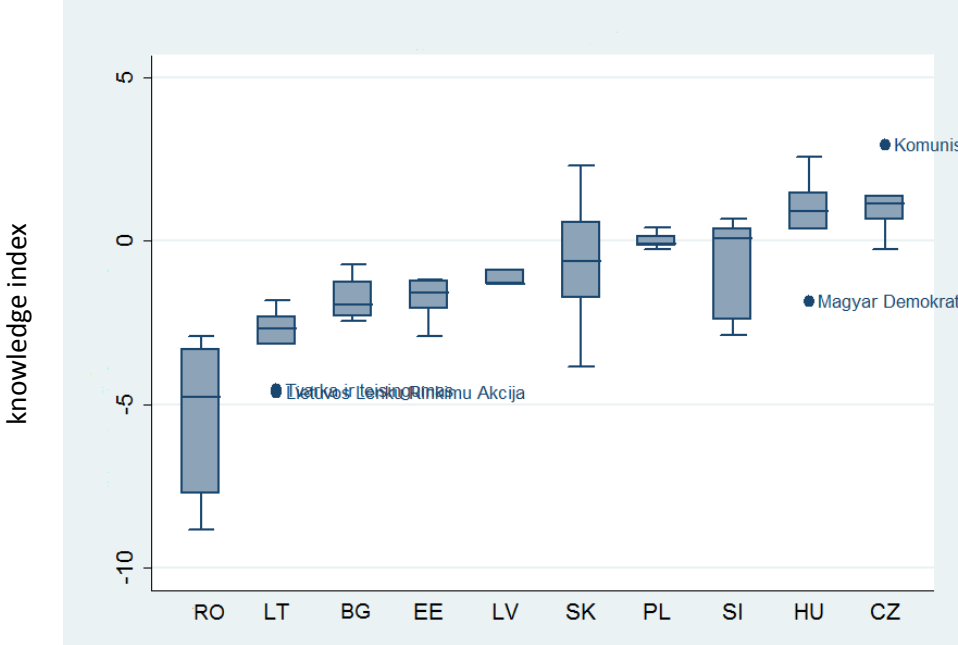
Note: The parties' index scores combine their three knowledge indicator scores.

Left-right issue in post-communist democracies

It has already been noted that citizens in new EU member states appear to be less knowledgeable about parties' left-right profiles than people in Western Europe. However, within the Central Eastern region there is significant variance between countries. Although most post-communist democracies score below the overall average, the Czech Republic and Hungary show a relatively high level of public knowledge of parties' left-right profiles. In both of these consolidating democracies citizens seem even to be better informed about the left-right conflict than the electorate in Ireland, Belgium, Spain, and the United Kingdom. In particular, the Czech Republic shows consistent and considerable high scores for all three indicators outperformed only by the electorate in Sweden, Portugal, Denmark, and France. Hence, notwithstanding the relative novelty of the political system after the breakdown of the communist regime, Czechs seem to be more knowledgeable about parties' ideological profiles than citizens in, for example, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, or Finland. The variation within both Hungary and the Czech Republic is limited and marked by the outlier positions of Komunistická strana Cech a Moravy in the Czech case and the conservative Magyar Demokrata Fórum in the Hungarian case. The two main Czech parties as well as the Czech communists have a clear left-right profile. In Hungary, it is again the two main parties

together with another anti-system party, the ultra-nationalist Jobbik, that have a clear stance in the left-right conflict. It is noteworthy that both the Hungarian and the Czech party systems have been considered the most institutionalized systems across all post-communist democracies (Lewis and Markowski 2011).

Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia cluster with lower levels of political knowledge compared to the overall average but with higher levels in comparison to the post-communist mean. While in Poland parties are somewhat more accurately and equally correctly perceived, there is remarkable variation across Slovenian and, especially, Slovakian parties. In Slovakia, the variation ranges from the communist party Komunistická strana Slovenska with a very high index score to the nationalist party Slovenská národná strana (SNS) with a low score. Although SNS is placed by country experts to the right, 42% of the respondents perceive the party to be left-oriented and average misperception amounts to 2.85 points. In Slovenia, it is again a nationalist party which is associated with the least clearly perceived left-right profile, since the party is placed by almost 30% of respondents to the left.

Finally, the three Baltic countries together with Bulgaria and Romania display the least accurate responses (cf. Pettai et al. 2011). Most dramatically, Romanians misperceive parties' left-right placements on average by 3 points, the probability of non-responses is 44%, while 30% of respondents confuse parties' general direction in the left-right conflict. The low index score for Romania suggests that politics can hardly be understood in left-right terms, as there is serious public confusion on this matter. However, variation across Romanian parties is substantial. The ethnic Hungarian minority party in Romania is placed to the left by 53% and the nationalist Partidul România Mare by 54% of the respondents despite both parties being placed to the right by country experts. However, even the Romanian party with the best index score reflects lower knowledge scores than the median party in the full sample. In Lithuania, the ethnic minority party Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania together with the conservative Order and Justice both fail to convey their left-right issue positions to the Lithuanian electorate. Order and Justice - the third largest party in the Lithuania - is often considered as a predominantly populist party (Ucen 2007). Its actual center-right orientation, however, is perceived by almost 50% of the respondents as left-leaning. An examination of the party level shows that five Romanian and four Lithuanian parties figure among the ten least well-perceived parties in the post-communist region.

Overall, the results presented so far suggest that in some countries citizens perceive parties' ideological positions fairly well. It appears that in these countries politics revolves around the left-right conflict. In other countries, however, people are confused about parties' left-right profiles. In general, established democracies tend to belong to the former, while

consolidating democracies belong to the second group of countries. The United Kingdom, Spain, Ireland and Belgium, however, are established democracies in which people seem, on average, to lack a sufficient understanding of left-right party positions, whereas in Hungary and, in particular, in the Czech Republic, people appear to be well informed about party competition in left-right terms.

The second inference which can be drawn from this comparison is that within some countries – such as Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom – there is considerable variation across parties in terms of voters' perceptual accuracy and certainty of their left-right placements. Country-level factors – such as the history of the party system, the nature of the media or the political culture – fail to explain these variations. In these countries we should rather expect party-level explanations to count. The variation within Spain and the United Kingdom – both democracies with two dominant parties – can be attributed to the particularly low scores of small regionalist parties. The two dominating parties in both countries, in contrast, are associated with accurately perceived left-right profiles.

Finally, some countries display consistency across all knowledge aspects while in other countries there appears to be a misfit between perceptual accuracy and certainty. As shown in Figure 2.7, the correlation between perceptual uncertainty (measured with the mean average country non-response rate) and perceptual accuracy (measured with an index) is fairly strong at –0.67. Italy deviates from this pattern. In Italy, the public has a precise idea of parties' left-right positions, while at the same time many are too uncertain to place parties at all.

Figure 2.7 Perceptual accuracy and uncertainty – the left-right conflict

perceptual uncertainty (non-response rate)
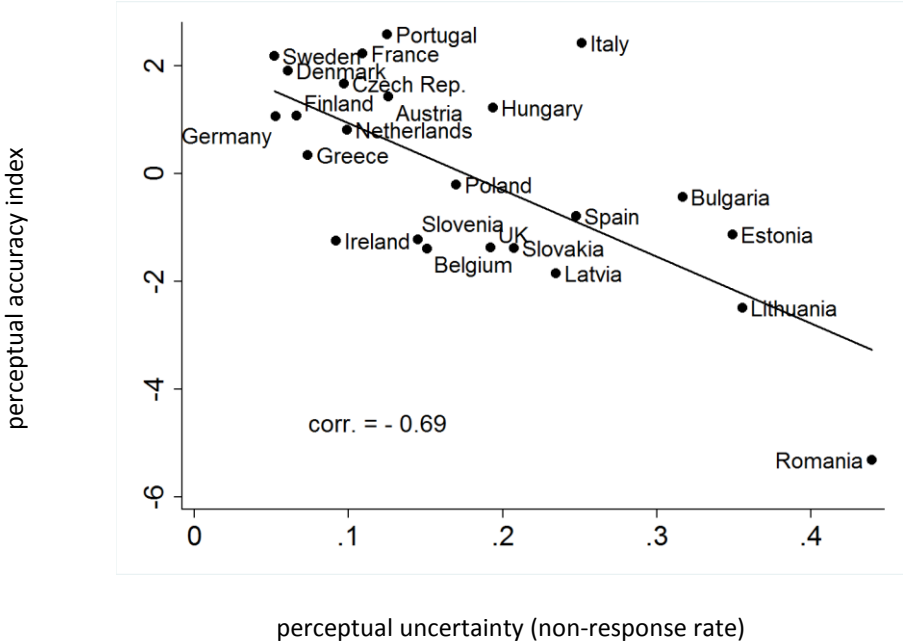
Note: The perceptual accuracy index is composed of the two perceptual accuracy indicators. Higher scores indicate higher accuracy.

Table 2.3 Country knowledge scores – the EU issue (in 2009)

	perceptual accuracy	perceptual uncertainty	perception of direction		index
			Correct	Wrong	
Austria	1.62	16%	0.63	0.15	**4.55**
Sweden	1.78	19%	0.68	0.15	**4.30**
Finland	1.89	24%	0.55	0.12	**3.19**
The Netherlands	1.67	21%	0.52	0.18	**3.13**
Denmark	2.27	12%	0.56	0.25	**2.49**
Germany	2.33	13%	0.55	0.25	**2.25**
Greece	2.12	26%	0.60	0.24	**2.13**
Ireland	2.71	12%	0.52	0.27	**1.28**
France	2.63	27%	0.54	0.27	**0.61**
United Kingdom	2.33	22%	0.44	0.34	**0.26**
Belgium	2.69	24%	0.50	0.34	**-0.04**
Portugal	3.33	43%	0.53	0.30	**-2.10**
Spain	2.88	42%	0.40	0.40	**-2.70**
Italy	2.89	53%	0.47	0.36	**-2.77**
Established democracies	2.29	25%	0.54	0.25	1.18
Slovenia	2.03	29%	0.54	0.27	**1.50**
Poland	2.33	33%	0.53	0.26	**0.62**
Slovakia	2.11	37%	0.48	0.31	**0.14**
Hungary	2.53	36%	0.53	0.31	**-0.29**
Romania	2.79	45%	0.46	0.30	**-1.71**
Czech Republic	3.33	29%	0.45	0.37	**-2.12**
Latvia	2.48	49%	0.33	0.30	**-2.33**
Estonia	3.08	51%	0.45	0.36	**-3.15**
Bulgaria	3.38	61%	0.44	0.31	**-4.05**
Lithuania	3.53	50%	0.35	0.44	**-5.21**
Post-communist democ.	2.64	42%	0.46	0.33	-1.66
All EU Countries	2.38	31%	0.51	0.27	

Sources: The knowledge variables were calculated based on the European Election Survey 2009 and Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010 data set.

Note: Perceptual accuracy is measured with the median absolute distance between the respondents' party placements and the actual party position according to country experts. Perceptual uncertainty is measured with the mean average of non-responses for each political party within a country.

Figure 2.8 EU issue knowledge in established democracies
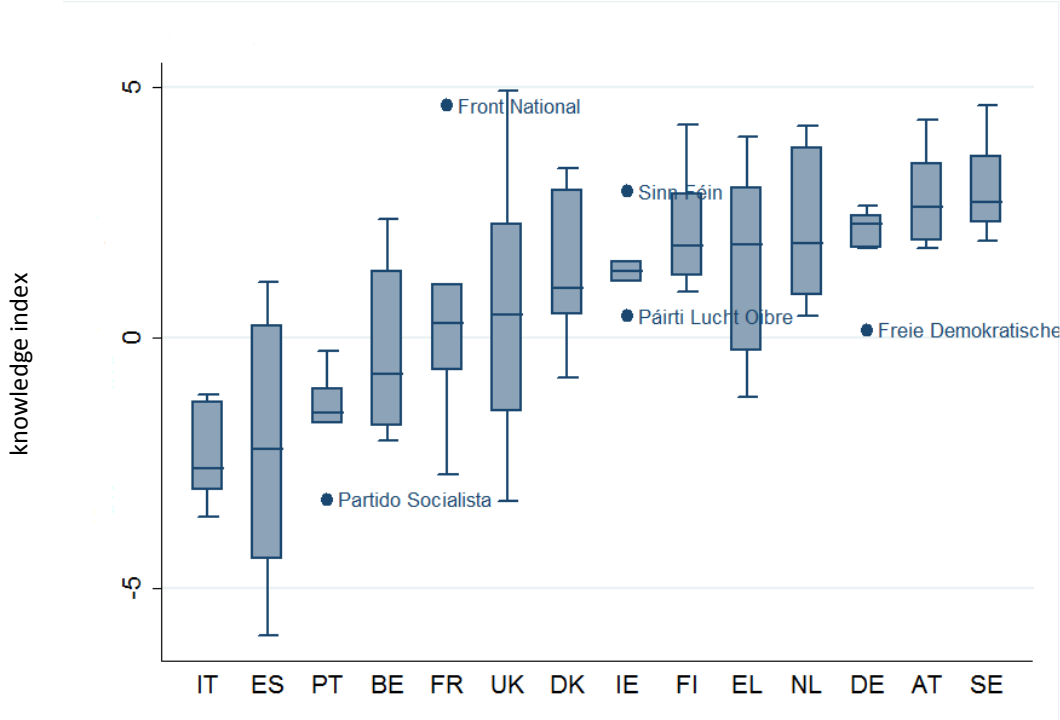
Note: The parties' index scores combine their scores for the three knowledge indicators. Higher values indicate higher knowledge.

EU integration knowledge across established democracies

Country mean knowledge scores for the EU issue are displayed in Table 2.3. Just as in the left-right case we see considerable variations within both regions. Furthermore, the box plots reveal considerable variations across political parties within most EU member states.

Among established democracies, Austria, Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands exhibit the highest scores across all three knowledge indicators (see van der Brug and van der Eijk 1999 for similar findings). Austria is prominent at the very top of the table with an average median misperception of 1.62, a non-response rate of only 16%, and a net difference in the probability of correct responses of almost 50%. It appears, therefore, that Austrians are particularly well informed about the European integration conflict. Interestingly, all countries within this group apart from the Netherlands have only recently joined the European Union. Further, all these countries have in recent years witnessed the emergence of electorally successful eurosceptic parties.

According to Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008), the EU issue is openly contested in Austria and Sweden. In both countries, well-organized and visible eurosceptic parties contribute to a polarization of the EU issue conflict. Public opinion is increasingly polarized and preferences for EU integration seem to influence voters' party choices (de Vries et al. 2011). In Austria,

the FPÖ is the largest Eurosceptic party, and prior to accession it has, mainly for strategic reasons, opposed Austria's membership of the EU (Falland 2008).[36] Together with Austria's other far-right party, the BZÖ, the FPÖ has in recent years succeeded in mobilizing a growing share of the electorate (the FPÖ won 10.0% of the vote in 2002, 11.04% in 2006 and 17.54% in 2008, while in 2008 BZÖ won 10.70%). Both parties are associated with the highest knowledge scores across all three indicators. Accordingly, only 12% of Austrians perceive the FPÖ to be pro-EU and in the case of the BZÖ the figure is only 8%.

In Sweden, opposition to the EU comes from two sides; from the nationalist Swedish Democrats and from the far-left Vänsterpartiet, which fears a welfare-state retrenchment in consequence of EU membership (Sitter 2001). Meanwhile, the Social Democrats, the Centre and the Christian Democrats are internally fragmented, characterized by the formation of eurosceptic factions and significant opposition within their supporter base (Johanson and Raunio 2001; Alyott 2008). Notably, in Sweden it is the pro-EU conservative party Moderaterna, rather than the two anti-EU parties, whose stance on EU integration is most accurately perceived.

Raunio (2008) describes the Finnish party system as a system with limited contestation regarding the EU issue as parties have generally managed to keep party cohesion high and a low level of salience of the question of integration in the political discourse. Finland is, moreover, marked by a consensual style of politics with frequent super-sized coalitions with low ideological polarization and high coalitional flexibility. Nonetheless, the eurosceptic and nationalist True Finns (TF) have increased their electoral support enormously in recent years. In the 2003 parliamentary election TF won only 1.57% of the votes, in 2007 the party won 4.05%, two years later it reached 10% of the votes in the election for the European Parliament and, finally, in 2011 the party became the country's third largest party, winning 19.05% of votes in the national election. TF is the Finnish party that most highly politicizes EU integration, and it is the party whose position on this issue is perceived most accurately by the Finnish electorate. Despite the fact that the Finnish party system is characterized by limited contestation regarding EU integration, Finnish parties' EU issue positions are perceived fairly accurately.

In the Netherlands it is again a eurosceptic party, Party voor de Vrijheid, which is associated with the clearest EU profile. This party's vote shares have steadily grown in recent years (5.6% in 2006, 15.4% in 2010). Only 20% of respondents misperceived its general orientation in the EU conflict. The length of the Dutch boxplot suggests, however, that there is considerable variation between parties in this regard. Interestingly, another

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[36] Until the beginning of the 1990s, the FPÖ was, however, clearly in support of integration (Falland 2008).

eurosceptic party, the far-left Socialistische Partij (SP), has the least well perceived EU profile in the Dutch party system. Although described by country experts as clearly anti-EU (cf. de Vries and Edwards 2007), the SP was perceived by 35% of the respondents as pro-EU.

Denmark, Germany, Greece and, particularly, Ireland show somewhat inferior results when compared to the first group of countries but, nonetheless high scores when compared to the mean for established democracies. Surprisingly, Denmark has similar scores to those of Ireland and Germany, despite the fact that the strongly euroscpetic Danks Folksparti (DF) (12.0% in 2001; 13.3% in 2005; 13.9% in 2007) has successfully shaped the political debate.[37] Ireland is again characterized by a low non-response rate coupled with a relatively high misperception. Similarly, Germans misperceive parties to a relatively high degree but the non-response rate is comparatively low. In contrast, Greece has a rather high percentage of non-responses but those with an opinion are relatively accurate and correct in their assessments of parties' preferences regarding European integration.

Germany's scores are surprising given that scholars have repeatedly pointed to the low attention paid to EU issues by the main German political parties and the broad consensus among the political elite on the advantages of European integration for Germany (Kriesi 2007; Lees 2008). Neither can the far-left PDS be described as a party that is overtly opposed to European integration (Lees 2008) and nor was there any sizeable anti-EU party on the right up until 2014.[38] In Germany, the liberal FDP is associated with significantly weaker knowledge scores. Its median misperception is 3.33, and around 33% of the respondents mistakenly perceive the party to stand in opposition to European integration. Within-country variation is larger in Greece and Denmark. In Denmark it is again a liberal party (Liberal Alliance) with the worst knowledge indicators, whereas the nationalist Dansk Folkeparti is associated with the highest knowledge scores. In Greece, on the other hand, it is the Green party Oikologoi Prasinoi which is misperceived most and the orthodox communist KKE with the most accurately perceived stance. Interestingly, the nationalist Laïkós Orthódoxos Synagermós seemed to have an equally ambivalent and diffuse discourse on European integration, with 39% of Greeks regarding this anti-EU party to be in favor of the integration process.

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[37] Denmark has also been characterized as having all the hallmarks of a politicization of the EU issue, such as the existence of a referendum option, a strong far-right party, and a relatively eurosceptic population (Green-Pedersen 2012)

[38] The situation in Germany has, of course, now changed with the new eurosceptic party AfD winning 7.1% of the votes at their first European Parliament elections in 2014.

France and the United Kingdom show lower knowledge scores compared to other established democracies. This is surprising given the increasing attention paid to this issue by both the far right Front National in France and the Conservatives together with other small far-right parties in the UK (Evans 1999, Kriesi et al. 2008). While up until 2010 scholars had been in disagreement as to the extent to which the EU issue in France ought to be considered as politicized, the British system is more unequivocally characterized as having an open contestation of the EU issue (Evans 1999; Grunberg 2008; Baker et al. 2008). According to Kriesi (2006) the Conservatives in the UK have in recent years become a more eurosceptic party and have put more emphasis on that issue in their election campaigns, while in Germany the integration issue was mostly absent in political debate. However, the position of the German CDU is more accurately perceived than the one of the Conservatives; the CDU is correctly perceived by 59% of respondents as pro-EU (24% see the CDU as anti-EU) while the Conservatives, in contrast, are correctly perceived as anti-EU by only 43% of the electorate (33% of British respondents believe that the Conservatives are pro-EU).

In France, as in the United Kingdom, we observe a remarkable variation between parties. FN is a clear outlier in the French party system and no other party in France has a similarly clear stance on the EU issue. The net probability of a correct judgment amounts to 67% (79% are correct and 12% are wrong), median misperception is only 0.37, and the non-response rate equals 24%. FN has been defined as a hard Euro-skeptical party together with other far left groups, although the stance of the Communist party was rather ambivalent (see Grunberg 2008). Grunberg claims that …"*the Front National is primarily perceived by voters as a xenophobic party that holds values contrary to values of the republic, not as an anti-European party*" (p. 52).[39] The results presented in the table suggest otherwise: FN is clearly perceived as anti-European while other French parties are associated with high percentages of incorrect categorizations.

In the United Kingdom it is mainly the small far right parties the British National Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party that have a clear stance on the EU, while regionalist parties such as the Scottish National Party or the Welsh Plaid Cymru display ambivalent attitudes towards the European Union. The Conservatives occupy an intermediate place in the British ranking. Hence, it seems that the Conservatives have not successfully communicated their skeptical stance towards further integration. It might also be speculated that the Conservatives' ambiguous profile helps to attract supporters from both

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[39] Other Hard euroscpetic parties such as the French Communist (see Grunberg 2008) have not a clear stance on the issue of integration.

camps of the integration divide. In fact, among eurosceptic supporters 31.7% conceive the party to be pro-EU while among pro-EU supporters 76.5% believe that the party is pro-EU.

Finally, citizens in Belgium, Portugal, Spain, and Italy seem to be both misinformed and uninformed about parties' preferences regarding European integration (see also van der Brug and van der Eijk 1999 for similar results). Citizens in the three Southern European countries are on average less well-informed about parties' preferences than voters in most post-communist democracies. In these countries the EU has, until recently, been a non-topic in political debates and political elites have been unanimously in favor of integration (Gomez-Reino et al. 2008; Deschouwer and Assche 2008). Italians have been particularly severely uninformed about parties' stances on integration, and only in Estonia, Bulgaria, and Lithuania are the electorates less well-informed. The non-response rate in Italy amounts to 53% (a figure only surpassed by Bulgaria which has a 61% non-response rate), median misperception is 2.89, and the net difference in the probability of assessments of a party's direction being correct is just 11%. The Lega Nord (LN) is associated with the highest knowledge scores in Italy. LN has politicized outside the traditional left-right conflict (Brand and Mackie 1996). In the 90s, on several occasions LN expressed its support for European integration and especially for the reforms which were necessary in order to comply with the convergence criteria of the European Monetary Union (Quaglia 2008). Only since the end of the 90s has LN become an overtly eurosceptic party, a transformation undertaken predominantly for strategic reasons as the other main parties have remained favorable to the EU (ibid.). Nonetheless, 30% of the electorate considers the LN to be pro-integration, while only 58% correctly perceive LN to be opposed to EU integration. Moreover, 50% of the respondents have no opinion at all as to LN's EU issue position. Even among its own supporters 49% consider LN to be pro-EU.

In Portugal it is yet another far-left party, Partido Socialista, with the least accurately perceived preferences on integration, while Spain and Belgium are characterized by high between-party variance. In Spain, the regional parties Coalicion Canaria, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya and Eusko Alkartasuna increase the within-country variance with their particularly low knowledge scores, while the two main parties, Partido Popular and PSOE, demonstrate considerably higher scores. In Belgium, the liberal Lijst Dedecker and two far-right parties Vlaams Blok (VB) and Front National score comparatively high. The pro-EU social-liberal SLP and the conservative Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie both score particularly poorly.

According to Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008), countries in which the major parties share a consensus on the advantages of the EU, where the importance of EU-related issues are

deemphasized in campaigns, and where EU-skepticism is only expressed by marginal parties are systems with limited contestation of European integration. These authors consider Italy, Belgium, Spain, France, and Portugal as examples of countries with limited contestation of the EU issue. However, Szczerbiak and Taggart also include Germany, the Netherlands, and Finland in this group; all countries in which people are fairly well informed about parties' EU issue positions. A system with open contestation is one where at least one major party has become skeptical toward the EU and where parties' stances regarding the EU are openly communicated. The UK is a prime example of a system with open contestation (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008; Evans 1999). Yet, in terms of the electorate's knowledge on parties' EU issue positions, British parties score considerably worse than other examples of open contestation, such as Greece, Austria, Denmark and Sweden. Moreover, British parties are even outperformed in terms of the perceived accuracy of their EU preferences by parties in countries characterized by limited contestation such as the Netherlands, Finland and Germany.

Figure 2.9 EU issue knowledge in post-communist democracies
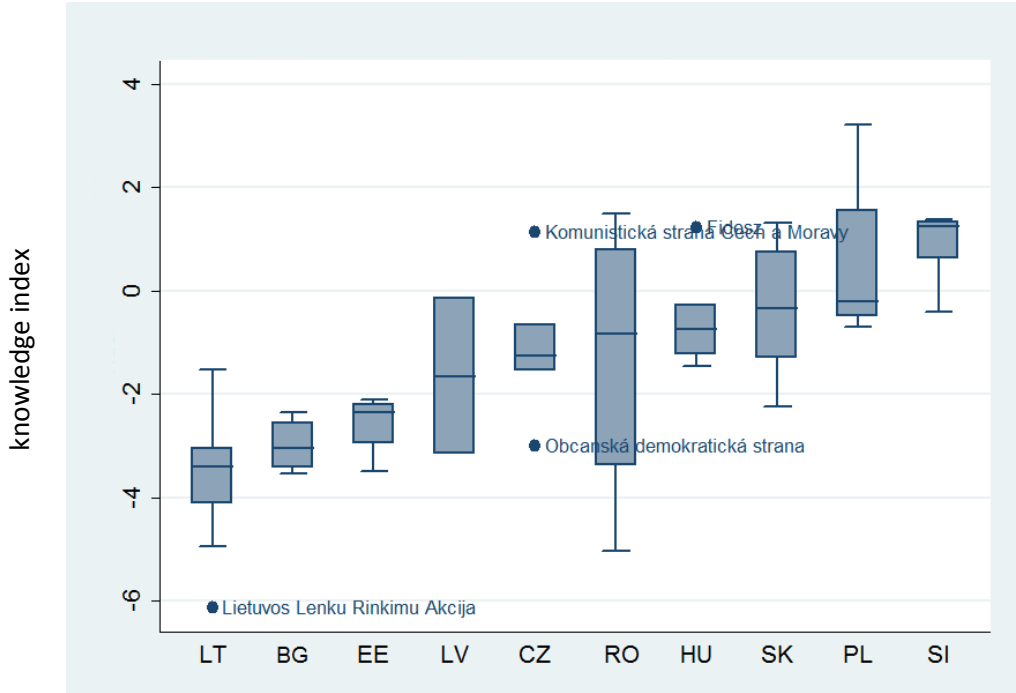
Note: The parties' index scores combine their scores for the three knowledge indicators. Higher values indicate higher knowledge.

EU Integration knowledge across post-communist democracies

In comparison to established democracies, citizens in post-communist countries are less well informed about parties' positions on EU integration. The results reflect the observation made by other scholars that the EU issue has been largely absent in the political debates in Central Eastern Europe in recent years (Lewis and Markowski 2011).

The post-communist region is, moreover, characterized by a lack of electorally successful parties that are unambiguously eurosceptic (Lewis and Markowski 2011; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008). This is the result of a strong public desire for EU membership and a high degree of agreement among politics elites on membership's economic and geopolitical advantages. Consequently, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008) have described post-communist democracies, with the exception of Slovenia and the Czech Republic, as systems with constrained contestation over the EU issue. Constrained contestation is associated with low polarization of public opinion and a high degree of consensus on the advantages of EU-membership, although some parties may demonstrate a degree of reservation towards some aspects of EU politics. Slovenia, in contrast, has been described as an example of limited contestation with broad party consensus with only small and electorally irrelevant parties openly contesting integration. The Czech Republic is a case of open contestation, where the main conservative eurosceptic party ODS has openly criticized the EU and tried to bring the integration issue onto the political agenda (Kopecky and Mudde 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008).

The results presented in Table 2.3 and Figure 2.9 reveal, however, significant differences between countries in terms of the accuracy and certainty with which parties' EU issue positions are perceived. Contrary to what might be expected, Slovenia is the only post-communist country with an index score above the mean of established democracies. Slovenians seem to be more knowledgeable about parties' preferences regarding European integration than the electorate in Ireland, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Italy. Slovenia's median misperception equals 2.03, the non-response rate is 29% and the likelihood of placing a party in its correct direction is 54% - twice as high as the likelihood of placing a party in the wrong direction. The within-country variation, meanwhile, is relatively small. The case of Slovenia is puzzling in the sense that its categorization as a case of limited contestation of the EU issue contrasts with the high level of knowledge citizens hold about parties' EU preferences. This suggests that the emphasis which parties' preferences are presented need not necessarily be reflected in the clarity with which citizens perceive these preferences.

Slovenia is followed by Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, where knowledge is high as compared to other post-communist democracies. Median misperception in Hungary, for example, reaches 2.53, the non-response rate amounts to 36% while the net probability of correct assessments is only 22%. In substantive terms, therefore, it might be argued that Hungarians lack adequate information to make reasonable sense out of the politicized integration conflict. It is, furthermore, interesting to note, that it is not the EU preferences of the nationalist Jobbik party which is perceived most clearly, but rather those of FIDESZ, at the time a pro-EU party and largest opposition party. The results show that among non-suporters 47.1% and, among supporters, and 72.3% of Hungarians correctly believe that FIDESZ is pro-EU. In Poland, it is the conservative-liberal incumbent PO whose EU position is associated with the highest knowledge scores. In Slovakia, it is the nationalist Slovenská národná strana with the most accurately perceived stance on EU integration.

In Romania, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, and, particularly, Lithuania citizens are even less well-informed. At first blush, we might assume that in these countries European issues have a low level of salience in political discourse. In the case of the Czech Republic, however, this conclusion cannot be maintained. The Czech Communist party as well as the main conservative ODS have both openly declared themselves to be eurosceptic, which has led to a polarization of the European integration conflict (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008). Particularly surprising is the fact that the position of the ODS is strongly misperceived. As revealed by the box plot, the communist party is an outlier with the most accurately perceived EU profile. In contrast, the conservative ODS of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek scores significantly worse than other parties and figures as an outlier at the opposite end of the box. According to the results, 62% of Czech voters perceive the ODS to be in favor of European integration, only 24% see ODS as being opposed to further integration, 26% have no opinion and median misperception amounts to 3.67. This is another puzzle. Although the ODS is apparently attempting to convey a clearly eurosceptic profile, its stance is perceived by a majority of the electorate as pro-EU. Again, the certainty and accuracy of interpretation of parties' EU issue positions tells a great deal about the politicization of the integration conflict (cf. Carmines and Stimson 1989, de Wilde and Zürn 2012). Given that perceptual certainty and accuracy are low in the Czech Republic, the integration conflict in this country appears to be less prominent than is often assumed (see again Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008).

Lithuania displays the worst knowledge scores. Median misperception distance amounts to 3.53, which is huge in light of the limited 11-point scale and the fact that 50% of respondents omitted themselves from the perceptual accuracy calculation by offering no

response (in Bulgaria the non-response rate is even higher at 61%). Further, Lithuanians are more likely to judge parties' general orientation on European matters wrongly rather than correctly. Pure guessing is associated with better expected knowledge scores. This suggests that on average Lithuanians know basically nothing about parties' stances on European matters. For example, the pro-EU ethno-regionalist party of the Polish minority in Lithuania (Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija) is perceived by 60% of the population as being opposed to the EU, only 24% of respondents correctly judge the actual direction, and 58% declare themselves to have no opinion. A final note of caution concerns Latvia. Latvia's average perceptual accuracy is relatively high compared to other post-communist democracies. On the other hand, however, the high non-response rate paired with a marginal net difference in the percentage of correct assessments of parties' directions lends support to the conclusion that the first indicator does not adequately reflect people's understanding of party positions on EU integration. This, as it will be shown in later chapters, is primarily due to the fact that people tend to place parties in the middle of the scale when they are uncertain and it happens that all parties in Latvia included in this study hold positions close to the center.

In sum, we have again observed variances between as well as within countries with regard to the knowledge people possess about parties' EU issue positions. In general, the findings correspond well with what has been found in empirical work conducted by scholars on the Europeanization of party systems, thus lending support to the validity of our measures. Still, there are some notable exceptions contrary to our expectations: the British Conservatives' and the Czech ODS' poor performance in terms of perceived accuracy of their EU integration preferences. Figure 2.10 below provides an overview of European citizens' party knowledge with regard to the EU issue. In line with what has already been observed by van der Brug and van der Eijk (1999), there is a strong negative correlation between perceptual accuracy and uncertainty at -0.72.

Figure 2.10 Perceptual accuracy and uncertainty – the EU integration conflict

perceptual uncertainty (non-response rate)
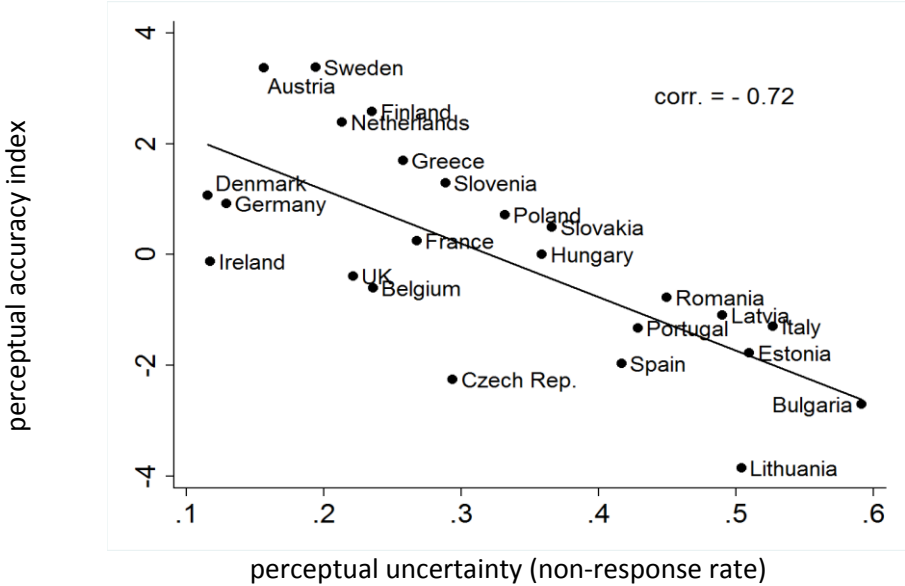
Voters' knowledge of the left-right and the integration conflicts in relation

How does public knowledge of parties' positions relate across the two issues examined? Figure 2.11 a) displays how perceptual accuracy of the left-right conflict relates with perceptual accuracy of the integration conflict across European democracies. In general, the two perceptual accuracy indices appear to correlate positively but insignificantly. In contrast, as displayed in Figure 2.11 b), there is a very strong correlation of +0.82 between response rates for the left-right placement and the EU issue placement questions. Looking at Figure 2.11 a), we derive four types of party systems: 1) systems in which citizens are well informed about parties' positions on both issues; 2) systems where citizens are informed only about parties' preferences in the left-right conflict but lack knowledge of parties' EU issue positions; 3) countries in which citizens misperceive parties' positions in both conflicts; 4) systems in which citizens are informed about European integration but not the left-right conflict.

Figure 2.11 Comparing EU issue and left-right knowledge across countries

a) accuracy

b) uncertainty (non-response rate)
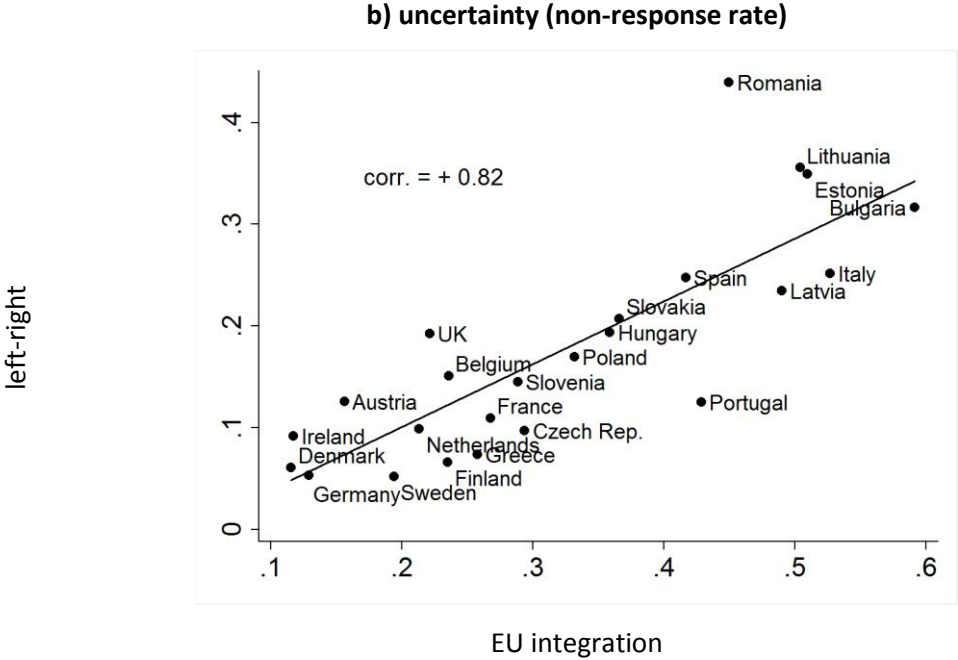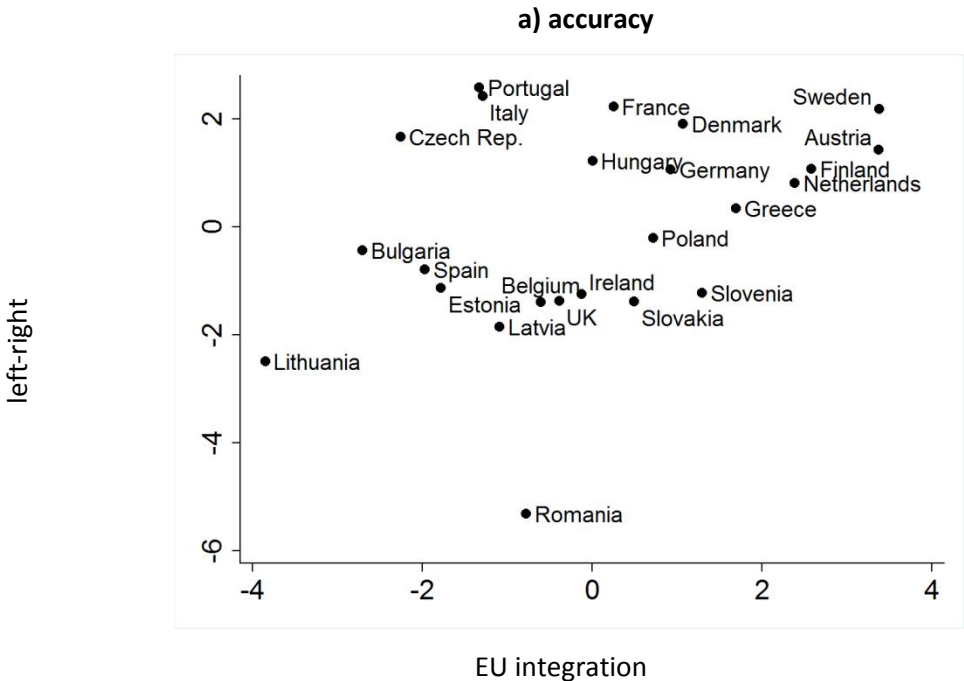
Finland, Sweden, Austria, and the Netherlands are clearly Type 1 countries. In these countries citizens appear to be informed about both issue conflicts equally well. In Italy, Portugal and the Czech Republic citizens are primarily well-informed about parties' left-right positions. In 2009, Italy and Portugal lacked a eurosceptic party with a clear stance on the EU issue which would contribute to an increase in the salience of the integration conflict. Although the Lega Nord has been described as standing in hard opposition to the European Union, the data has shown that the party is not perceived in this way by many Italian voters, and especially by their own supporters. Hence, while Czechs, Italians, and Portuguese are very unclear about how to evaluate parties' EU positions, they are highly aware how to define them in left-right terms.

Spain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia form the third type of systems in which citizens are uninformed about parties' positions on both issues. The presence of Spain in this group would, however, dissolve if we had weighted parties according to their size. In Spain, it's mainly small and regionalist parties which are misperceived, while the two dominating parties are perceived rather well. Among the post-communist democracies, it is interesting to observe that in these countries the party systems are less developed with high volatility rates and high party turnover with numerous splits and fusions. Hence, in these countries, party-voter linkages might either be simply unstable, without any commitment by parties to policy programs, or linkages are based on policy issues divorced from both the left-right as well as the integration conflict, focusing instead on charismatic appeals, patronage or valence issues (Kitschelt et al. 1999). Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia appear to belong to the forth type, where people are relatively better informed about parties' EU issue positions than their left-right positions.

2.3.2 Comparing party knowledge across party families

How does party knowledge vary across party families? Party families describe groups of parties with similar ideological responses to socioeconomic, cultural, or territorial conflicts (Mudde and Mair 1998).[40] I categorized parties into the following families: agrarian, Christian democrat, conservative, the extreme right (nationalist), the extreme left (communist), greens, liberal, (ethno-)regionalist, and social democrat. I rely on the ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2010) as well as on the CHES dataset for cross-validating the categorization of political parties. Where the two sources don't correspond, I classified parties in accordance with recent literature. Tables 2.4 and 2.5 (established democracies), and Tables 2.6 and 2.7 (post-communist democracies) display average knowledge indicator scores for the 9 party families. The tables also include knowledge scores for different party sizes, as party size is expected to be associated with higher non-response rates (see van der Brug and van der EIjk 1999). Party families have been ranked according to their score on a new additive index composed of the two perceptual accuracy variables.[41] The index does not contain the non-response rates because they vary predominantly across countries or individuals but not within countries across parties (regional parties excepted).

Party families in established democracies

The results displayed in Table 2.4 suggest that people are particularly knowledgeable about extreme left parties' left-right positions, and to a lesser extent about those of agrarian and conservative parties. In contrast, regionalist, nationalist and green parties are associated with comparatively unclearly perceived left-right positions. Figure 2.12 denotes a large within-family variance for the regionalist and nationalist party families. The agrarian family consists of only two Scandinavian parties and their scores can be attributed to the idiosyncrasies of Sweden and Finland. In Sweden, most parties have better knowledge scores than the agrarian Centerpartiet. Due to the smallness of the group and its declining relevance (see Hix and Lord 1997) the agrarian family will not be discussed further in this study.

In my data set the extreme left is present in all established democracies apart from Austria and the United Kingdom. These parties perform particularly well in regard to the perceived accuracy of their ideological direction in the left-right conflict. 85.5% of the respondents correctly perceive these parties' tendencies as left-oriented, while only 7.1% of the respondents erroneously place them to the right (average median misperception

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[40] Agrarian parties, on the other hand, are identified on the basis of its constituents and are therefore often divorced from an ideological corset (Mudde and Mair 1998).

[41] To measure the net difference between correct and incorrect (wrong) perception of parties ideological direction, I excluded parties with an actual position between 4.5 and 5.5.

amounts to 1.43). Their good scores are in line with their focus on typical left issues such as labor rights, socioeconomic equality and are probably partly due to the fact that these parties rarely participate in government coalitions where compromises need to be reached. Rovney (2013) has recently observed that experts and voters tend to agree on the radical-left parties' left-right placement more than on those of any other party groups. As shown in the plot, the within-family variance is limited. Only the Belgian PvdA – a tiny party with no legislative seats – constitutes a deviant case associated with particularly low knowledge scores.

Table 2.4 Left-right knowledge across families in established democracies

	number of parties	perceptual accuracy (average median misperception)	perceptual uncertainty (non-response rates)	perceptual correctness (perception of direction)		Index
				Correct	Wrong	
Extreme Left	15	1.43	11.1%	85.5%	7.1%	1.64
Agrarian	2	1.15	4.7%	68.1%	10.4%	1.28
Conservative	11	1.38	11.7%	77.2%	12.8%	1.20
Liberal	12	1.41	12%	63.0%	20.4%	0.91
Christian Democracy	13	1.42	9.7%	68.5%	15.3%	0.61
Others	3	1.14	24.6%	57.0%	16.7%	0.40
Social Democracy	16	1.38	9.8%	56.8%	21.4%	0.09
Extreme Right	13	1.9	12.6%	67.4%	24.4%	-0.38
Green	11	1.9	10.4%	59.6%	16.7%	-0.42
Regional	8	2.01	29.1%	58.1%	25.9%	-0.90
Party Size:						
<5%	26	1.81 (0.81)	19.5%	61.5%	21.7%	
(5 – 15%	38	1.44 (0.59)	9.5%	74.2%	14.2%	
>15 %	33	1.39 (0.44)	8.5%	67.5%	17.3%	
Total	104 / 94	1.55	12.5%	67.6%	17.3%	

Source: European Election Survey 2009 and Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010
Note: The calculation of the correct direction variable requires the exclusion of 2 Christian democrats, 1 far left, 1 liberal, 1 "others".

More surprisingly, far-right parties fall behind the main party families in terms of the perceived accuracy of their left-right profiles. Their misperception amounts to 1.9, only 67.4% of the respondents have correctly placed these parties to the right, while 24.4% of the respondents have wrongly placed the same parties to the left of the center. This result is also

corroborated by Rovney (2013) who notes that experts and voters disagree to a greater extent on the far-right parties' left-right placements than is the case for other party groups. Several possible factors could account for their poor scores. First, radical right parties emphasize issues such national identity, traditions, migration, multiculturalism, and European integration. Thus, they compete mainly on cultural issues to the neglect of socioeconomic issues (Rovney 2013). Second, while Kitschelt (1994; see also Betz 1993) has claimed that far-right parties combine cultural appeals with a neoliberal stance on distributive conflicts, more recently other scholars have argued that nationalist parties such as the FPÖ or the Front National have become increasingly opposed to globalization and neoliberalism (Mudde 1996, 2007; Kriesi et al. 2008; Betz 2002; McGann and Kitschelt 2005). In some countries far-right parties promote an exclusionary, chauvinistic welfare state to the detriment of foreigners (Derks 2006; de Koster et al. 2012). In a similar vein, Mudde (1996) claims that the term "extreme right" is confusing and inappropriate as citizens appear neither to agree on far-right parties' left-right placements nor do such parties explicitly aim to be perceived in those terms.[42] Third, in many European democracies radical right parties gather disproportional support from the working class (Betz 2002; Kriesi et al. 2008). In sum, the low perceived accuracy of nationalists' orientation to the right might be attributed to the extent that left and right are understood in socioeconomic rather than cultural terms.

However, within-family variance is particularly large for nationalist parties. The positions of the Austrian FPÖ and the French FN are perceived much more accurately than those of other nationalist parties such as the Swedish Democrats, the Belgian Vlaams Blok (VB), the British National Party (BNP) and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). For instance, FN is perceived by only 16% of French respondents as left-oriented and almost 80% perceive its right-orientation correctly. We find similarly high scores for the two Austrian far right parties, for the Greek LAOS, the Danish DF and the Dutch PVV. In contrast, 36.5% of the Belgian population mistakenly places VB to the left. BNP and UKIP are misplaced to the left by 42.2% and 32.4%, respectively. Thus, in France and Austria, where a cultural understanding of the left-right conflict dominates (Kriesi et al. 2008; Bornschier 2010), nationalist parties are placed accurately on the left-right scale.[43] In Sweden and the UK, in contrast, the left-right conflict has always been understood in socioeconomic terms.

Green parties are associated with even lower scores of perceptual accuracy compared to the far-right family. Although green parties are often considered to be left given their emphasis on egalitarianism, their supporters' self-placements and their coalitional

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[42] Far-left parties, in contrast, often call themselves explicitly communist or socialist.
[43] In addition, the two left-right dimensions tend to correspond (Kriesi et al. 2008).

preferences for social democrats (Richardson and Roots 1995), they do not seem to be perceived as such by the public at large. In fact, only 59.6% of the respondents perceive green parties' as left-oriented and 16.7% place these parties to the right. In addition, 29% of the respondents place green parties in the center of the left-right scale.

Figure 2.12 Left-right knowledge across and within families in established democracies
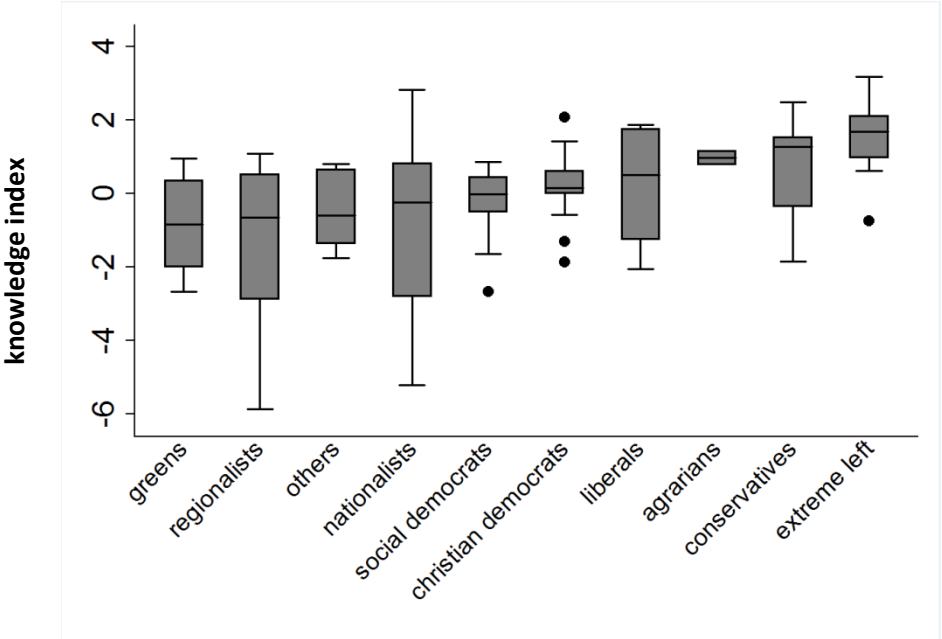
Note: Differences between the scores in the table and entries are due to the fact that non-responses have not been accounted for in this graph.

At the very bottom of the table, together with the greens, we find the regional party family, which exhibits low knowledge values paired with a high within-group variance. In this dataset, the regional group consists of three small Spanish parties (Coalicion Canaria, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, and the Basque Eusko Alkartasuna), the Italian Lega Nord, the Welsh Plaid Cymru, the Scottish National Party and the Finnish Ruotsalainen Kansanpuolue which represents the Swedish minority in Finland. On average, regionalist parties' left-right profiles are misperceived by 2.01, 29.1% of the respondents do not place these parties at all and 25.9% of respondents confuse their ideological directions. To some extent, the low scores are due to the fact that they have been calculated based on the entire country sample. Many respondents have been asked to place regional parties on the left-right or the European integration scale although they do not reside in the areas in which a specific regionalist party effectively competes. However, the regionalist parties also have the least

accurately perceived left-right profile even when calculations are based on sub-country samples or own supporters. The weak scores are in line with the literature as regional parties stress issues of territorial autonomy or ethnic minority rights, and hence issues divorced from socio-economic conflicts (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan and Urwin 1982; Bartolini 2006). In fact, such parties have been able to gain support from various interest groups including trade unions and associations (Bartolini 2006). Scholars observe that the Europarty "European Free Alliance", which is a faction within the European Parliament consisting mainly of regionalist parties, is characterized by a particularly high ideological heterogeneity across its members (see de Winter and Gomez-Reino 2002). Still, various scholars have pointed out that regional parties do often acquire ideological profiles based on socioeconomic issues in addition to the politicized conflict over territorial autonomy (Elias 2007). The high within-family variance as revealed in Figure 2.12, lends support to both positions. For instance, the Italian Lega Nord – often categorized as a far-right party – is a regional party with a relatively accurately perceived left-right position outperforming the social democratic Partito Democratico in the Italian party system. Similarly, the Finnish Ruotsalainen Kansanpuolo is also perceived quite accurately in comparison to other parties within their national party system, although the party competes in less than half of all Finnish constituencies (Caramani 2004). Other regionalist left-right positions, meanwhile, are severely misperceived. For instance, 61% of the Spanish respondents consider the center-right oriented Coalicion Canaria to be left-oriented, and 39% think that the center-left Eusko Alkartarsuna is a rightist party.

Among the established mainstream parties, conservative parties are comparatively successful in presenting an accurately perceived rightist position. Accordingly, only 12.8% of the respondents place these parties to the left while 77.2% are correct in placing them to the right. The within-family variance is limited, with particularly low scores for the Irish Fianna Fail (28.6 % of the respondents place FF to the left) and the Spanish CiU. The positions of other conservative parties are perceived very accurately; the French UMP (87.1% correct), Italian PDL (89.2% correct), Swedish Moderate (92%), Spanish PP (87%) and the Finish KOK (89.8%). In contrast, social democrats score relatively poorly on this account, for which there are various possible explanations. On average, social democratic parties are misperceived by 1.38 points but 21.4% of the respondents mistakenly place these parties to the right. In Greece, more respondents place PASOK to the right (46.3%) than to the left (29.8%). PASOK is a deviant case, but other social democratic parties also struggle to convey a leftist orientation to the electorate. For instance, the German SPD's left-orientation is correctly perceived by 50.9% of the respondents (25% place SPD to the right), the scores for the Irish

Labour are 51.6% vs 30.7%, for the British Labour 52.6% vs 28.4%, for the Belgian SP.A 63.4% vs 23.7%, for the Dutch PvdA 50.9% vs 25%, and for the Portuguese PS 33.9% vs 21.9%.

Table 2.5 EU knowledge across families in established democracies

	perceptual accuracy (average median misperception)	perceptual uncertainty (non-response rate)	perceptual accuracy (perception of direction)		Index
			Correct	Wrong	
Extreme Right	1.55	20.9%	73.8%	16.4%	2.46
Agrarian	1.61	19.7%	58.2%	17.1%	1.86
Extreme Left	2.25	29.7%	57.5%	27.1%	0.74
Christian Democracy	2.43	22.9%	55.5%	25.8%	0.37
Social Democracy	2.33	21.0%	55.0%	24.0%	0.33
Green	2.33	20.7%	48.5%	30.0%	0.24
Conservative	2.60	25.7%	52.9%	27.1%	0.18
Others	2.07	38.2%	41.7%	32.1%	-0.25
Liberal	3.38	21.6%	45.9%	32.6%	-1.20
Regional	3.24	41.5%	30.8%	48.6%	-2.10
Party Size:					
<5%	2.36 (1.02)	32.0%	48.1%	32.9%	
5-15%	2.63 (0.97)	22.6%	56.9%	25.8%	
>15%	2.54 (0.95)	20.0%	57.2%	23.8%	
Total	2.50	25.3%	54.0%	27.6%	

Source: European Election Survey 2009 and Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010

Note: for the calculation of the correct direction variables I excluded several parties which were placed in the center.

Figure 2.13 EU knowledge across and within families in established democracies

Note: The knowledge index score is an additive index based on the standardized values of the two perceptual accuracy indicators.
Higher index scores indicate more accurately perceived EU positions.
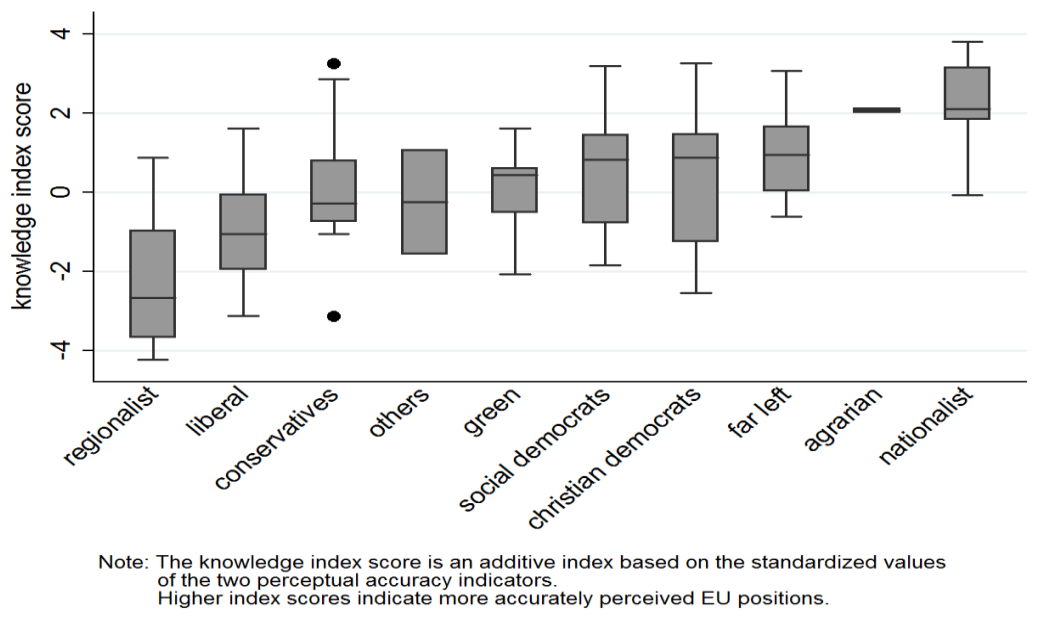
Table 2.5 displays the corresponding results for the European integration issue. Just as ideologies reflect certain core values constraining preferences on concrete socioeconomic issues, they also constrain parties' responses to new political conflicts such as the question over European integration (Hix and Lord 1997; Marks and Wilson 2000). The results partly confirm findings from the extant literature on the Europeanization of party conflicts. The extreme right is the only family whose EU issue position is more accurately perceived than its left-right position. Its average median misperception is only 1.55, while respondents are 5 times more likely to correctly judge a party's directional orientation in the integration conflict. The knowledge scores for the nationalist party family deviate considerably from those of other party types (except the two agrarian parties) as shown in Figure 2.13. The within-family variation is rather limited, though the Greek nationalists Laïkós Orthódoxos Synagermós (LAOS) show markedly inferior knowledge scores as compared to other far-right parties. Even when compared to other Greek parties LAOS has an inaccurately perceived stance towards European integration. Accordingly, 36% of the Greek respondents consider the LAOS to be pro-EU, while median misperception amounts to 2.79. In the survey, the most accurately perceived EU positions among nationalist parties are those of the French FN (0.37 median misperception, 79.9% correct, 12.4% wrong), the British BNP (0.33, 78.8% correct, 13.2% wrong), and the Swedish Democrats (1.03, 84.4% correct, 8.5% wrong).

The far-left party family, another group of parties associated with Euroscepticism, has markedly less accurately perceived preferences regarding European integration. The far-left average median misperception amounts to 2.25, 57.5% of the respondents place far-left parties in the correct direction, but 27.1% of the respondents misperceive these parties' general orientation. Overall, however, the scores of the far-left party group do not differ significantly from those of the mainstream parties. This is an interesting observation as many scholars have asserted that both anti-EU groups (the far-left and far-right) politicize the EU issue contributing to its salience in the political discourse (Marks and Hooghe 2002; Taggart 1998; de Vries and Edwards 2008). The results presented here suggest, however, that the far-left is not particularly successful in conveying their positions in this conflict. In light of their inaccurately perceived stance on European integration, far-left parties should certainly not be considered as owners of the EU issue. There is, however, within-family variation. Accordingly, the Greek communists KKE (77.0% correct), the Swedish socialists Vänsterpartiet (76.9% correct) and the Irish Sinn Fein (70.3% correct) are successful in communicating their opposition towards European integration, which is also the case when they are compared to other parties within their national party systems. Thus, in Greece it has been the extreme left KKE (but not Syriza) rather than far-right parties with the most accurately perceived EU issue position. In Sweden the far-right Swedish Democrats and the far-left have similar accurately perceived positions, while in Ireland Sinn Fein does not face any rivals from the far right. In contrast, in many Southern European countries as well as in the Netherlands the EU preferences of the far-left parties are considerably misperceived. Anti-EU parties such as the Italian Refondazione Communista and Sinistra e Liberta, or the Portuguese Bloco de Esquerda are just as likely to be perceived as anti-EU as pro-EU. In contrast to what de Vries and Edwards (2008) have proclaimed, the Dutch Socialistische Partij (SP) is associated with a very inaccurately perceived anti-EU stance. 35% of the Dutch respondents perceive SP to be pro-EU. In a combination with a comparatively high non-response rate of 21% this amounts to the most inaccurately perceived EU position in the Netherlands. Moreover, 50% of the party's own supporters perceive SP to be pro-EU, while only 36% view them as anti-EU.

The parties with the most inaccurately perceived EU issue positions are regionalist parties and, to a lesser extent, the liberal party family. The weak scores for liberal parties compared to the other mainstream party families is surprising and requires some explanation. The Liberal Alliance together with the liberal Venestre, for example, have the least accurately perceived EU profile in the Danish party system and François Bayrou's Movement Démocrate shows the worst scores in the French system. The same applies to the Vlaams

Liberale en Democraten in Belgium and the FDP in Germany. In the UK, the Liberal Democrats are associated with the worst scores outsides of the two regionalist parties. In general, liberal ideology is consistent with European integration as it furthers individual freedom and contributes to a deregulation of national markets (see Hix and Lord 1997). Accordingly, all liberal parties were supportive of the Maastricht treaty. At the same time, however, liberal parties might start to oppose further integration, just as would conservative parties, to the extent that it would involve regulative measures of the Common Market and thus positive integration (Marks and Wilson 2000).

By far the lowest knowledge index score belongs to the regional party family. Thus, the two territorial parties – the nationalist and the regionalist parties – differ considerably in the accuracy with which their EU preferences are perceived. While European integration clearly subverts what is held dear by nationalist parties, regionalist parties seem to have a rather ambivalent stance towards European integration and de-nationalization. Regionalist parties emerged as a force against the centralizing nation-builders and have since struggled for decentralization and regional autonomy (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini 2006). In this context, scholars have proclaimed regionalist parties to be supportive of the European integration project as it weakens the national states and thus their main opponents in the cleavage-periphery conflict (Hix and Lord 1997; Marks et al. 2004; Bartolini 2006). The European Union offers new opportunity structures for regionalist parties such as the Committee of Regions or the European Parliament which are beyond the national system (Keating 1998; de Winter and Gomez-Reino 2002; Bartolini 2006). At the same time, Brussels has accumulated its own centralized power and could be regarded as an emerging opponent towards efforts for regional autonomy (de Winter and Gomez-Reino 2002). Consequently, other scholars have argued that ethno-regional parties are internally ambivalent towards the integration process which has the potential to decrease party unity and coherence (de Winter and Gomez-Reino 2002). In fact, among the regionalist parties in established democracies only the EU-positions of the Italian LN and those of the Swedish minority party in Finland are perceived correctly by a majority of respondents. In most cases, confusion is the dominating pattern. Only 14% of British respondents, for example, correctly assume Plaid Cymru to be pro-European, while 59% place the party in the opposition camp. Only 19% rightly assume the Scottish National Party to be pro-European, while 56% think that they are against further integration. In Spain, the pro-EU Coalicion Canaria is perceived by 58% as being opposed to the EU.

The other mainstream party families do not differ greatly in terms of voters' knowledge of their EU-profiles. The within-family variances, by contrast, appear to be large. Social

democrats, conservatives and Christian democrats display similar average scores as well as similar within-family variation. Within the conservative party family group two parties stand out. The Finnish conservative KOK is particularly accurately perceived as a pro-EU party with 78% of the respondents placing the party in its correct direction. In contrast, the Spanish CiU is accurately perceived by only 30.7% of the respondents.

So far, several findings stand out. First, the far-left represents the party group with the most accurately perceived left-right orientation. Second, the regionalist parties don't convey an accurately perceived left-right position. Third, the accurate interpretation of nationalist parties' left-right positions appears to depend on countries' prevalent understanding of the left-right conflict. Where left and right refers to the redistributive conflict, nationalist parties are not placed accurately on the left-right scale. Fourth,, among the eurosceptic parties it is the extreme right more than the extreme left which has conveyed a clear stance on the EU issue. It appears that the territorial conflict over European integration might be better incorporated into a nationalist rather than a far-left ideology. Hence, the distinction between extreme left and extreme right party group is misleading, as both ideologies might constitute poles but not of the same political dimension. Fifth, with regard to the EU-issue, it is again the regionalist family which is associated with the lowest public knowledge of their preferences while the liberal party family group also scores significantly lower than most other families.

Table 2.6 Left-right knowledge scores across families in post-communist democracies

	number of parties	perceptual accuracy (average median misperception)	perceptual uncertainty (non-response rates)	perceptual correctness (perception of direction)		Index
			in %	correct	wrong	
Extreme Left	2	1.11	14.0%	0.85	0.08	5.70
Christian Democracy	6	1.83	16.1%	0.56	0.18	1.20
Social Democracy	9	2.11	20.1%	0.71	0.16	0.78
Conservative	11	2.12	23.3%	0.65	0.13	0.22
Green	3	1.56	25.9%	0.25	0.00	-0.10
Others	2	1.50	31.1%	0.51	0.21	-0.36
Agrarian	3	1.54	33.3%	0.43	0.16	-0.91
Liberal	12	1.82	32.2%	0.43	0.18	-1.63
Extreme Right	5	2.25	26.7%	0.55	0.29	-2.07
Regional	5	2.08	36.7%	0.49	0.22	-2.83
Party Size:						
(0-4.9%)	15	1.71 (0.70)	30.0%	0.44	0.18	
(5-14,9%)	20	2.16 (0.76)	24.1%	0.53	0.20	
(15-100%)	20	1.95 (0.54)	23.3%	0.67	0.15	
Total	58	2.00	25.9%	0.56	0.17	

Source: European Election Survey 2009 and Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010

Figure 2.14 Left-right knowledge across and within families in post-communist democracies
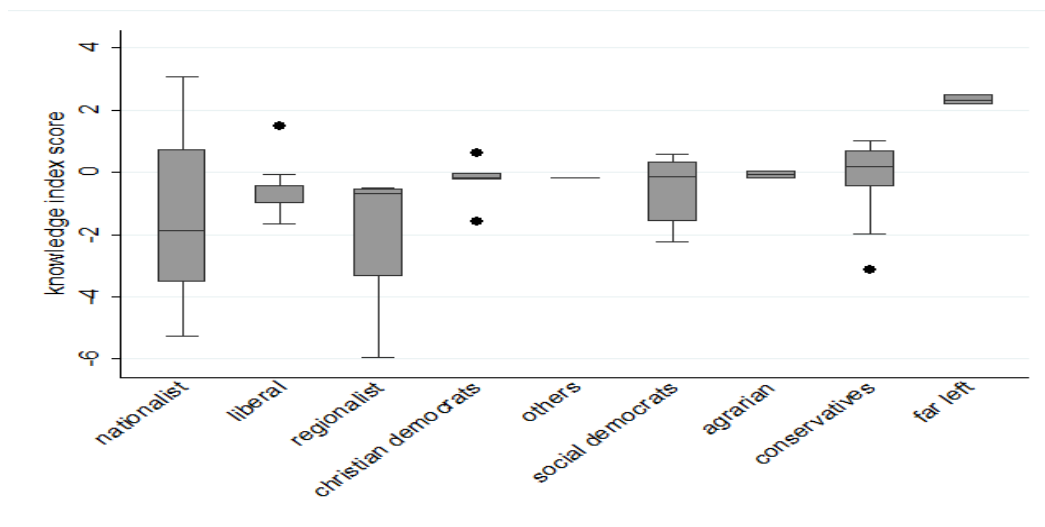
Party families in post-communist democracies

For the sake of completeness, I have compared party knowledge across families in post-communist democracies, although the usefulness of the party family concept for this region is questionable. Nonetheless, there are some noteworthy findings. As shown in Table 2.6 and the corresponding Figure 2.14, citizens in Eastern Europe appear to be most knowledgeable about left-right positions of extreme left parties. For this family, the average median misperception amounts to only 1.11. 85% of the respondents place these parties on the correct side of the left-right divide. Although only two parties in my dataset in the post-communist region belong to this family, their high knowledge scores are in line with the findings for the established democracies.[44]

Nationalist and regionalist parties' low scores attest to what has already been noted for established democracies. Far-right parties' positions are misperceived by 2.25 points, while 26.7% of the respondents misperceive their ideological direction and only 55% place them correctly. Within the nationalist party family, it is the Bulgarian NOA and especially the Hungarian Jobbik with the most accurately perceived left-right profile. Only 6% of Hungarian respondents place Jobbik to the left. This is probably due to the simple fact that "jobb" in Hungarian means "right", while the other far-right parties use labels such as "people" or "nation". In contrast, the Slovakian SNS and especially the Romanian Partidul România Mare (PRM) are associated with inaccurately perceived left-right profiles. Probably due to the party's communist legacy in the Ceausescu regime, the PRM is erroneously perceived as a left-oriented party by 54% of the Romanian respondents and only 36% correctly place PRM to the right. Just like their counterparts in the West, regionalist parties seem to send insufficient and ambivalent cues regarding their positions in the left-right conflict. On average, regionalist parties in the post-communist democracies are misperceived by 2.06 and the non-response rate reaches 36.7%. Regionalist parties are placed on the correct side of the left-right divide in 49% of all observational cases, but 22% place them wrongly. The Hungarian minority party in Romania performs worst. Despite the fact that 52% of the respondents have refrained from placing the party on the left-right scale, its actual position is still misperceived by 4 points. Placed slightly to the right of the center by country experts, 53% of respondents place the party to the left.

The variance between the remaining party families is limited. Christian democrats display comparatively high scores, but are present mainly in more stable and developed post-communist countries. Their high scores might thus be attributed to country-related factors. As communist successor parties, social democrats' left-right preferences are rather well

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[44] These parties are the two orthodox communist parties in Slovakia and the Czech Republic

perceived, even though they have been responsible for large-scale privatization and welfare state retrenchment during their incumbency. Conservatives are again associated with average values and high within-family variation. In contrast to the two Scandinavian agrarian parties, their counterparts in the post-communist region do not reflect the good scores of the former. Furthermore, the liberal parties' poor scores are largely due to the fact that liberal parties are over-represented in Lithuania, a country in which serious public confusion about the left-right conflict prevails.

Table 2.7 EU knowledge across families in post-communist democracies

	Misperception in absolute distance (mean)	Non-response Rate	Perception of Direction		Index
			Correct	Wrong	
Extreme Left	2.43	34.1%	63.9%	19.9%	1.12
Others	1.5	30.8%	47.0%	28.0%	1.12
Christian Democracy	2.47	33.6%	45.7%	32.4%	-0.11
Extreme Right	2.87	41.4%	46.0%	38.2%	-0.39
Social Democracy	3.04	26.9%	49.4%	31.3%	-0.51
Green	2.79	44.8%	50.4%	28.0%	-0.61
Conservative	2.82	42.8%	45.8%	37.3%	-0.67
Liberal	2.94	46.1%	45.6%	35.6%	-0.72
Agrarian	2.45	49.6%	33.1%	46.7%	-1.12
Regional	3.65	49.5%	39.4%	44.2%	-2.02
Total	2.86	41.1%	46.0%	35.5%	

Source: European Election Survey 2009 and Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010

Note: the first variable denotes the country mean of parties' median scores. For the calculation of the correct direction variables I had to exclude 3 parties (1 conservative, 1 green, and 1 nationalist party)

Figure 2.15 EU knowledge across and within families in post-communist democracies

Note: knowledge index based on the two perceptual accuracy indicators
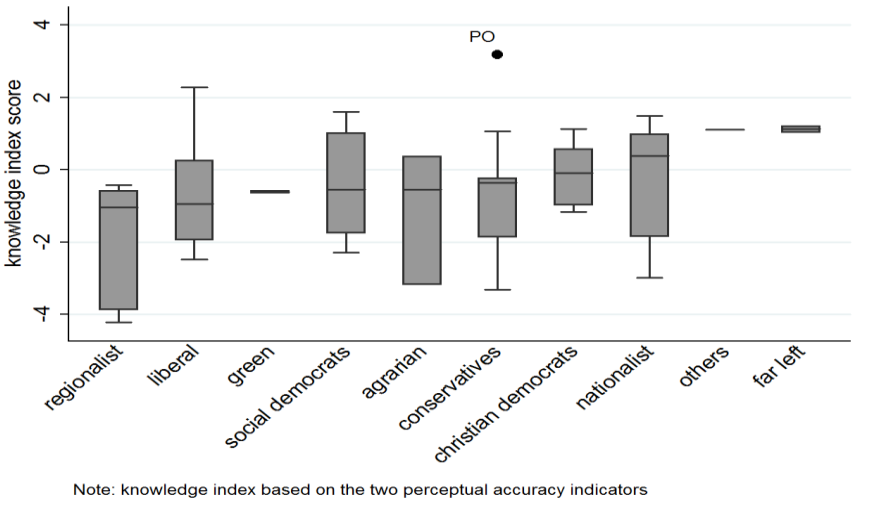
Table 2.7 and Figure 2.15 display the corresponding results for the European integration conflict. Scholars have established that the EU issue has had less impact on the political debates and party systems in Central Eastern Europe than in established democracies in Western Europe (Haughton 2011). Moreover, Euroscepticism and support transcends the left-right spectrum with no family clearly in support or in opposition to European integration (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2004). This study contributes to the current literature as research on the impact of European integration on post-communist party systems is still in its infancy (Lewis and Markowski 2011).

The first observation is that the EU issue positions of far-right parties are no more accurately perceived than those of mainstream parties. Thus, the EU issue positions and tendencies of Christian democrats and the extreme left parties are perceived with a higher degree of accuracy and correctness. However, Christian democrats and extreme-left parties are overrepresented in the more developed and industrialized part of the region, with higher levels of education and more institutionalized party systems. Still, Slovakia is the only post-communist country in which the far-right party's (SNS) position is perceived more accurately than the positions of other parties within the same country. Within most of the other post-communist democracies, however, the far-right parties' EU issue positions are less accurately perceived than those of their opponents.

As in established democracies, liberal and regionalist parties are at the bottom of the table. The liberal parties' poor scores are primarily due to their disproportional presence in Lithuania and Romania, two countries with very low levels of public knowledge about parties'

EU issue positions.[45] The scores for the regionalist family are in line with the results obtained for established democracies. There is something inherent in regional parties' programs that obfuscate their EU issue position. According to the results presented in Table 2.6, regionalist parties are misperceived on average by 3.65 points and a relative majority of respondents place regionalist parties in the wrong direction (39.4% correct vs 44.2% wrong).

In sum, a comparison of both regions endorses the notion that the public is especially well-informed about the extreme left parties' left-right profiles. In contrast, people seem to be particularly confused and uninformed about ethno-regionalist parties' left-right positions. In addition, in both regions radical right parties fall behind the mainstream parties in this matter: people are often confused about their general left-right orientation or are simply without any opinion. With regard to the EU issue, nationalist parties seem to be associated with an accurately perceived stance in the integration conflict in established democracies but not in post-communist democracies. Just like in the left-right conflict, the regionalist parties' actual EU issue positions are also seriously misperceived. Apart from these three party families, the variance across the other families is rather limited. This observation applies to both the Westerns European and the Central Eastern European context, and it seems as if differences between countries matter more. Table 2.8 presents the results of a series of two-way ANOVA tests which summarize the findings discussed in this chapter. To the right, the results are shown for the non-response rate (perceptual uncertainty) as the dependent variable. The F-test scores show clearly that the probability that a respondent places parties (perceptual uncertainty) on either the left-right or the EU issue scale depends predominantly on the country in which she resides. In an ANOVA test higher F-test scores indicate a higher between-group variance than within-group variation. The Table shows that F-test scores are much higher for countries than for party families. Moreover, the variance in the non-response rate across families while controlling for countries is largely attributable to the low response rates for regionalist parties. Perceptual accuracy, in contrast, varies across families about as much as across countries.

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[45] In fact, the four liberal parties with the worst knowledge index scores are all in Lithuania. Liberal parties in other countries rank higher within their national party systems. The ethno-regional parties, on the other hand, are everywhere associated with low scores.

Table 2.8 Two-way ANOVA test

		a) perceptual accuracy		b) perceptual uncertainty	
		Left-Right	EU	Left-Right	EU
Model		7.37	9.18	24.52	36.08
Country	F-test	6.00	6.93	24.70	42.76
	df	23	23	23	23
	p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Family	F-test	5.24	8.77	7.29	4.25
	df	9	9	9	9
	p	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
adj. R^2		0.46	0.50	0.82	0.87
Obs.		143	156	164	164

Note: Perceptual accuracy is measured with the additive perceptual accuracy index. Number of observations for perceptual accuracy is smaller than for perceptual uncertainty because parties located in the center (with positions between 4.5 and 5.5) have been excluded from the analysis.

Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter has compared the level of party knowledge across regions, countries, and party families. We have seen significant differences between regions as well as countries with regard to the level of knowledge that people have about parties' left-right as well as their EU issue positions. First, citizens appear to be generally better informed about parties' left-right profiles than about their preferences for the European integration process. Second, perceived accuracy and certainty of the political conflicts is higher in established democracies than in the post-communist region. Third, variance among families, on the other hand, was rather limited with the exception of radical-right, far-left, and ethno-regional parties. Box plots have furthermore revealed considerable variations within countries as well as party families, suggesting that significant explanatory factors might be due to party-related attributes and behavior.

Throughout the comparison we have encountered some puzzling findings. One of the puzzles was that the EU issue positions of the British Conservatives or the Czech ODS are less accurately perceived than the German CDU's position, even though the integration issue has been much more openly politicized by the former two parties (cf. Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008). It was also puzzling to observe that the Dutch eurosceptic socialist party is perceived by a majority of the national electorate as a pro-EU party. The high country scores for Slovenia in the post-communist context is yet another puzzle, which is in contrast to the description of the Slovenian party system as having limited contestation of the EU issue (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008).

In the following section, I offer a theoretical framework to explain the variance in party knowledge across different analytical levels. The process of knowledge formation might be conceived as an outcome of both the quality and quantity of the supply of political information, on the one hand, and, on the other, voters' types of motivation as well as their cognitive capacities to process information. Hence, knowledge is the result of an inter-play between various explanatory factors located at the systemic, the individual, the party and the relational party-voter level.

Chapter 3

Individual determinants of party knowledge

In this chapter I discuss and examine the impact of individual-level determinants of party knowledge. As it has been shown in the preceding chapter, parties differ in how accurately people perceive their issue positions. Party knowledge varies across countries, party families, parties and issues. Some of these variations, it is argued in this chapter, can be explained by individual-level determinants. The starting point is a discussion about two modes by which perceptions of parties' issue positions are formed. This distinction is attributable to different motivation types; explanatory factors are derived from the dominant type of motivation. The explanatory factors can be categorized into two groups: cognitive components and affective components. The first section of this chapter lays out the theoretical framework of the argument and derives its hypotheses, and the second part turns to the empirical analysis.

3.1 Theories of party knowledge

In the thesis the assumption is made that any behavior, including processing information and forming opinion, is driven by motivation (Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2001). As Mansbridge (1990) asserts, all human action derives in one way or the other from a particular goal which a human seeks to achieve (see also Oakes 1987). These goals are manifold and individuals' desires to achieve them differ in intensity. Motivation can therefore be conceived of as a two-dimensional concept encompassing both aim and strength.[46] Accordingly, people vary in the time and energy they raise for politics, and in the type of motivation that dominates their political reasoning.

The motivational aim of people is of fundamental importance for my theoretical argument. The motivated reasoning theory distinguishes between two broad aims (Lodge and Taber 2006). The first aim is accuracy, according to which citizens are interested in being accurately informed about candidates' and parties' policy profiles. The second aim refers to directional motivation, which aligns with the idea that people are generally inclined to confirm prior beliefs, expectations, and evaluations whenever they draw inferences from political messages.[47,48]

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[46] A goal, which is understood here as motivation, has been defined as a "cognitive representation of a desired endpoint that impact evaluations, emotions, and behaviors" (Fishbach and Ferguson 2007: 491).

[47] Accuracy goals prompt individuals to "seek out and carefully consider relevant evidence so as to reach a correct or otherwise best conclusion", while directional goals induce individuals to "apply their reasoning

Motivational aims come into play at various stages of the inference process (McGuire 1968; Nisbett and Ross 1980). These steps involve decisions concerning whether information should be gathered and processed in the first place and, if so, to what sources and to what topics one should pay attention. Next, once information has been encountered, people face the task of trying to comprehend, to interpret, and to memorize political messages. Finally, in response to survey questions, people try to retrieve pieces of information and integrate them into an adequate answer. In this context, the citizen decides over the validity and the relevance of information in order to form a general impression of where a party stands in abstract ideological or more narrowly defined issue conflicts. The motivated reasoning theory argues that such motivational aims direct our decisions at each stage of opinion formation processes (Taber and Lodge 2006).

3.1.1 Cognitive theory of party knowledge

In many empirical studies, individuals are assumed to be motivated to acquire an accurate understanding of what parties and candidates stand for. Bayesian learning models, naïve scientist models, or normative models view accuracy motivation as the driving force in political reasoning (Fiske and Taylor 1990; Gerber and Green 1998). What has led political scientists to assume, ever since Down's (1957) seminal work, that voters' reasoning is determined by an accuracy motivation? Most of the explanations boil down to the idea that political choices exert an effect on individuals' welfare and this, in turn, motivates voters to collect information and to make informed decisions (Fiske and Taylor 1990; Neuberg and Fiske 1987).[49] The fact that much can be gained and lost in selecting candidates and parties with different policy profiles has by some scholars been seen as the driving force that stimulates citizens to be interested in party politics and to carefully scrutinize the political alternatives. In a similar vein, psychologists attribute the presence of accuracy motivations to people's need to understand peers' behavior in order to predict and influence the environment in which one is embedded (Heider 1958). Kelly (1968) argues that people try to comprehend in order to control and predict their environments, which also includes the democratic process and, eventually, policy outputs. Knowing what parties stand for helps to

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powers in defense of a prior, specific conclusion" (Lodge and Taber 2006: 756). In other words, one goal is the enactment of preferred policies, while the other goal is the confirmation and strengthening of political identities. Thus, Individuals pursue policy-goals and identity-goals.

[48] We lack an understanding of why certain individuals are more inclined to be driven by accuracy goals and other by directional goals. McGraw (2002: 821) states that "citizens bring multiple goals to their thinking about political world, and we have barely scratched the surface in understanding the conditions under which different goals are elicited, as well as the consequences of those goals for political cognitive process."

[49] Neuberg and Fiske (1987: 446) assert that when a person is potentially effected by an outcome, such outcome dependence "…increases perceiver's attention to attribute information with the goal of increasing accuracy".

control such environments. Similarly, a number of communication scholars maintain that humans seek information in order to reduce uncertainty and anxiety (cf. Kuhlthau 1993). What these arguments have in common is that the expected effects of behavior (voting) are seen as the cause for political information acquisition among citizens (Fiske and Taylor 1990).

Assuming that people are accuracy motivated, variation in political knowledge has been attributed, leaving aside contextual factors, to differences in cognitive abilities, general interest in party politics and campaigns, and to active exposure to news media and other forms of political resources (cf. Ajzen and Fishbein 1975; Luskin 1990; Neuman 1986; Alvarez 1997). Dual-process models of opinion formation maintain that the extent to which individuals are attentive to political parties' messages depends on the receiver's ability and motivation (Petty and Wegener 1998). An attenuated version of the accuracy assumption is that people strive for an accurate understanding while trying to minimizing informational costs (Simon 1957; Downs 1957; Page 1978). This assumption relates to Simon's conceptualization of the individual as an information satisfier, satisfied with an amount of information needed to make a more or less reasonable choice (Simon 1957).

Cognitive ability and related concepts such as cognitive capacity, intelligence, and education enable people to better understand, structure, and memorize information (Jerit et al. 2006; Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Luskin 1990; Neuman 1986).[50] These resources serve to make possible the performance of an intended behavior (Ajzen 1991). If the individual is motivated to be accurately informed, ability serves to acquire knowledge. Many studies use level of education as a proxy measure for cognitive ability and provide evidence that education reduces the cost of collecting, reasoning, and memorizing political matters, which ultimately leads to a better understanding of what candidates and parties stand for (Alvarez 1997; Neuman 1986; Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Popkin 1991). Educated people use better cues and better schemata to memorize relevant information more efficiently, and they are interested in a broader range of political issues (Popkin 1991). Using the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems dataset, Dahlberg (2009) finds that higher level of education is significantly associated with a more accurate understanding of parties' left-right positions in a cross-country perspective (for similar findings see van der Brug 1997).

The literature on issue voting has repeatedly pointed out that voters with greater cognitive capacity are more likely to perceive differences between candidates' and parties' policy proposals, and they tend to consider their issue preferences when evaluating political actors (Stimson 1975; Miller et al. 1986; Alvarez 1997). In a similar vein, knowledge on factual

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[50] A person is described as able when it has "sufficient power, skill, or resources to accomplish an object" (see Webster's new collegiate Dictionary 228 (1st ed. 1981).

matters relates with knowledge on candidates' and parties' policy proposals (Sniderman et al. 1991).

Some scholars have established that people acquire more political information whenever an issue is considered relevant or whenever individuals are generally more interested or involved in politics (Chaiken 1980; Krosnick 1990; Luskin 1987; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Ajzen 1991). Political interest and involvement are related concepts and correspond closely to Fishbein and Ajzen's concept of intention, which indicates "how hard people are willing to try,….[or] how much effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform a behavior" (Azjen 1991, 182). People can be interested in politics in general or in a specific issue, and thus be knowledgeable about certain aspects of politics.

In line with the cost/benefit thinking of rational choice approaches, interest in party politics and perceived issue relevance increase the alleged benefit of being accurately informed about parties' policy profiles. In turn, the perceived high benefit of being accurately informed entices greater exposure to political news (Kiesler et al. 1969). Interest in party politics and active exposure to political information often go hand-in-hand. In addition, when individuals perceive issues to be important, they will make greater effort to understand what parties stand for due to the adverse impact of wrong decisions on their welfare (Chaiken 1980; Fiske and Taylor 1990). Low issue importance, in contrast, deters the individual from investing time and energy in gathering appropriate information.

Along the lines of these arguments, various empirical studies have provided evidence that people perceive candidates' positions more accurately when the issue is personally salient to them (Krosnick 1990; Iyengar 1990; but see Price and Zaller 1993) and when they actively expose themselves and pay attention to relevant issue news (Luskin 1990; Jerit et al. 2006; Lau and Redlawsk 2006). In a similar vein, Campbell et al. (1960) have argued that political involvement relates to an increased likelihood of voting and candidate evaluation grounded on issue preferences. However, Zaller (1992) argues that engagement and exposure to news media alone is not sufficient to acquire political knowledge.

Some scholars use the concept of political awareness or political sophistication as a combination of cognitive components which they define as "the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understands what he or she has encountered" (Zaller 1992; Converse 2000). In this sense, political awareness is considered a necessary condition for people to acquire accurate understanding of what parties stand for which, in turn, improves the quality of representation and democracy.

In sum, many studies portray individuals as employing a rationalistic approach to politics. Rational-choice appeals to the primacy of preferences, (materialistic) self-interests have often been assumed to determine these preferences, and accurate understandings of

political offers has been regarded as a precondition enabling people to select candidates and parties with similar policy preferences. In general, people are inclined to know what parties and candidates stand for, at least on issues which are important to them, in order to make a choice which maximizes their utility income. Of course, time, and hence opportunity costs, might reduce motivation to care about parties and policies in the first place, while some will also not have the necessary education to understand politics, and others will not expose themselves to policy information. However, whenever people perceive the stakes of a political decision to be high and information costs to be low they will follow the policy proposals offered by political parties. Voters will collect as much information as is available, they will carefully reason about the validity and relevance of each piece of evidence and, ultimately, people will integrate this information in a way which allows them to accurately calculate the expected utility income they associate with each party.

Based on the theoretical discussion so far, I formulate one general hypothesis and three related sub-hypotheses. Accordingly, it is assumed that individuals who are more involved and interested in politics, better educated, and dispose of more factual knowledge will cognize parties' policy profiles more accurately.

General Hypothesis 1:	*Perceptual accuracy improves with higher levels of political sophistication.*
Hypothesis 1a:	Perceptual accuracy improves with higher political awareness.
Hypothesis 1b:	Perceptual accuracy improves with higher level of education.
Hypothesis 1c:	Perceptual accuracy improves with greater political involvement.

The hypotheses formulated here refer to perceptual accuracy as the aspect of knowledge to be explained. However, the same explanatory variables will be used to examine their impact on the second dimension of political knowledge – uncertainty (Hypotheses 1d-f). In particular, Alvarez and his colleagues have repeatedly shown that the lack of cognitive resources such as education and political interest are significantly linked with lower levels of certainty as regards parties' or candidates' policy positions (Alvarez 1997; Alvarez and Franklin 1994; Glasgow and Alvarez 2000; see also Bartels 1986 and Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

3.1.2 Affective theories of party knowledge: Partisan bias and projection

Before rational-choice approaches began to pervade the academic literature in political science, scholars had noted that individuals tend to confirm prior beliefs and evaluations whenever they reason about politics (Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2001; Taber et al. 2001). In this sense, voters are portrayed as rationalizers of beliefs and evaluations rather than as rational selectors of agents for the policy-making processes (Brody and Page 1972). In particular, they rationalize their party attitudes based on a biased perception of what parties stand for. Political reasoning appears often to entail some tension due to the simultaneous aim of achieving accurate understandings of politics and need to confirm prior attitudes. This tension comes to light, in particular, when people reason about affect-laden sociopolitical concepts such as political actors. Campbell et al. (1960: 133) argued long ago that partisanship "…raises a perceptual screen through which individuals tend to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation". Neglecting the role of affect in politics is one the main deficiencies of scholarship drawing exclusively upon rational choice approaches to exploring human behavior. Reasoning about the disposition of affect-laden sociopolitical concepts cannot be performed solely in semantic ways, but is spiked with affect (Sniderman et al. 1991).

Before proceeding with the theoretical argument, we need to define affect and related concepts. Attitudes can be defined as "associations in memory between an object and an evaluation" (Fazio 1995; Petty and Krosnick 1995; Lodge and Taber 2005). Objects can refer to people, groups and organizations such as parties, to ideologies, issues, symbols, and events. In turn, evaluations differ in strength (strong and weak) and direction (negative and positive). Thus, individuals might have weak or strong attitudes, which are either positive or negative, towards issues (issue attitudes) as well as towards parties (party attitudes). Affect is a term that refers to both enduring as well as short-lived feelings toward an object, while emotions relate to fluid feelings (Fiske and Taylor 1990). People usually experience various types of emotions during their life course, and some have even proven to be generally beneficial for learning (Marcus et al. 2000; McDermott 2004). In this work, however, I limit the focus solely to party attitudes.

Why should we assume human reasoning to be governed by party affect? I discuss three potential answers: 1) affect as the only cue available; 2) cognitive consistency theory; and, 3) social identity theory. First, given the fact that policy programs and legislative decisions are often non-transparent, difficult to follow and, to most people's consideration, uninteresting, some scholars have put forward the view that affect often simply constitutes the only accessible cue by which political actors' issue preferences can be assessed (Brady and Sniderman 1985; Sniderman et al. 1991). A related argument refers to the low stakes in

elections, as the decisive impact of an individual on the electoral outcome is infinitesimal (Green and Shapiro 1994). So why bother to waste time and energy in collecting information if the probability of deciding the electoral outcome is marginal? In order to save time and energy people simply assume that liked parties have similar and disliked parties have dissimilar policy preferences.

A second and more far-reaching explanation is derived from balance theory or cognitive consistency theories (Heider 1958; Festinger 1957). Applied to politics, such theories emphasize the human need to keep in balance a triad consisting of issue attitude, party attitude and the perception of the concerned party's attitude on the same issue. Agreeing with liked and disagreeing with disliked politicians constitute preferred situations. Disagreeing with someone you like is considered unpleasant, and it is in human nature to reduce pain and increase pleasure (Heider 1958; Berelson et al. 1954; Kinder 1978). Such a triadic cognitive system is depicted in Figure 3.1. An example serves to illustrate this cognitive consistency mechanism: a citizen who dislikes further dissolution of national boundaries to the benefit of a more integrated Europe tends to perceive the preferred party to be equally in opposition to European Union integration. Such a perception ensures a balance between party attitude and issue preferences. It is a way to feel comfortable and pleased about your own political identity and your political opinion.

Cognitive consistency theory does not explain how consistency is preserved, and this is where social identity theories offer a third explanation for the impact of affect on human reasoning (Lavine et al. 2012). Social identity theories postulate that individuals divide people into members of in- and out-groups. They identify with a preferred group (in-group) which they view as constitutive of their own self-identity. In order to heighten self-esteem, or to at least preserve a positive self-regard, people tend to believe that their in-groups differentiate positively from out-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979). For this purpose, voters believe that their party outperforms other parties in terms of leadership qualities, governmental performance and also policy profiles (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Kelly 1988; Huddy 2001; Weisberg and Greene 2003; Lavine et al. 2012). Hence, voters want to share the same policy views as their preferred parties. Such a biased party perception serves to "protect the perceived worth and integrity of the self" (Sherman and Cohen 2002, 120). Green et al. (2002, 110) describe partisanship as a "defensive psychological reaction whereby partisans resist political information that paints their group in a negative light", causing citizens to "avoid or ignore information that fails to correspond to their preconceptions".

In line with the problematic integration framework and the uncertainty management theory (cf. Babrow 1992, 2001; Brashers 2001; see also Afifi and Weiner 2004), partisans can also cope with cognitive inconsistency (i.e. when their own party have incongruent issue

preferences) by becoming or remaining uncertain about their party's issue position. While earlier research conceived uncertainty as an important driver of information seeking, these more recent theories emphasize the advantage of uncertainty that allows individuals to manage potentially stressful and unpleasant information. The theory of motivated information management (Affif and Weiner 2004) postulates that information seeking deepends on its expected outcome. To the extent that the outcome of information seeking is expected to be unpleasant, individuals prefer to remain uncertain about parties' actual positions.

Figure 3.1 Cognitive consistency scheme

Voter's Perception of
Party$_k$'s Position on
Issue$_i$

Party$_k$ → Issue$_i$

Voter's attitude
toward Party$_k$

Voter's attitude
toward Issue$_i$

Voter
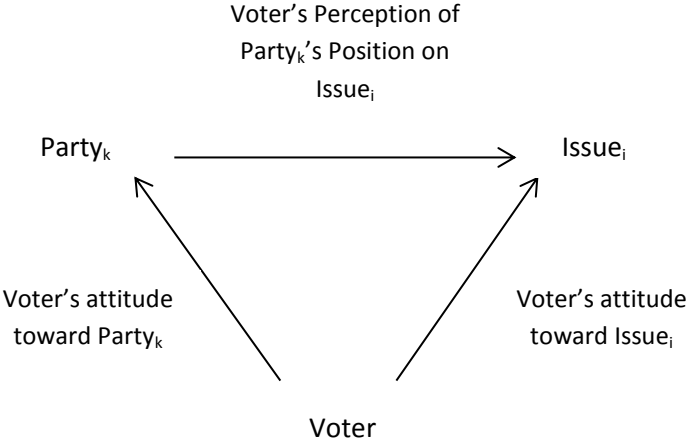
Establishing a balanced structure between party attitude and issue preference by projecting own preferences to the preferred party's policy position refers to a purely affect-driven process. At this point, it is worth discussing the alternative two mechanisms to preserve cognitive consistency: rational selection and persuasion (Campbell et al. 1960; Brody and Page 1972). Again, the differences in how these mechanisms work are best illustrated by reference to Figure 3.1.

Rational selection denotes a choice of a party or candidate based on issue considerations and relates thus to the idea inherent in issue proximity voting models (RePass 1971; Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984). Accordingly, issue attitude combined with accurate perception of the party's stance on this issue will prompt the voter to adjust her party evaluation which, in turn, might lead to a reconsideration of party support (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Nie et al. 1980; Gerber and Green 1999; de Vries 2007). Thus, should the voter misperceive a party's policy position no reevaluation of the political party occurs. Rational selection, often portrayed as the normative model, is representative of a particular kind of

behavior favored by many democratic theories – inter alia the Responsible Party Model – which view elections as instruments to guarantee representatives' responsiveness to citizens' policy preferences. Rational selection is a purely cognitive process. Accordingly, affect for a party is considered to be the outcome of cost and benefit calculation of potential government policies made by the individual (Rahn et al. 1994; Lodge et al. 1989). According to Campbell et al. (1960), this mechanism of cognitive consistency preservation is the least likely to occur, since party identification is formed during adolescence and remains rigid afterwards (see also Green et al. 2002).

Cognitive consistency can also be preserved by adjusting issue attitudes to preferred parties' positions (Brody and Page 1972; Page and Jones 1979; Markus and Converse 1979; Lenz 2009). This process refers to persuasion and occupies a middle ground between affective- and cognitive-driven mechanisms. Accordingly, under the condition that the voter is well-informed about parties' policy offers her party attitudes will affect her issue opinion. Several studies have, for instance, demonstrated that people tend to follow advice proposed by preferred or trusted candidates and parties (Page and Jones 1979; Abramowitz 1980; Markus and Converse 1979; Sniderman et al. 1991; Druckman 2001; Carsey and Layman 2006; Kam 2005; Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010) lending support to the persuasion hypothesis. For some scholars, political persuasion characterizes an educational process in which people become aware of their own interests. Lenz (2009) provides evidence that people refrain from changing party support when they learn their parties' preferred stands but instead accommodate by changing their issue opinion (persuasion). Others, however, condemn persuasion as manipulation exposing the fact that voters' interests are rarely formed exogenously to the process of political competition. Cohen (2003) shows that persuasion often occurs regardless of the policy content of a political argument. Nicholson (2011) uses experimental research to establish that individuals adjust policy views to their preferred candidate's cues, but they would have taken on a different stance, were they not had been provided with source cues (see also Druckman et al. 2013).

Among the three options to preserve cognitive consistency, research has revealed that people are particularly prone to tailor their perceptions in accord with their party and issue attitudes (Granberg 1993; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Judd et al. 1983; Markus 1982). For social identity theorists, the primacy of affect (or identity) in perception formation is driven by the need for positive self-regard.[51] For other scholars, biased perception occurs because it is simply the easiest choice to establish cognitive consistency (Granberg 1993). In fact,

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[51] As strong attitudes are generally regarded as more easily accessible from long-term memory and are therefore seen as more influential in preserving cognitive consistency (Bargh et al. 1992; Fazio 1993)

tailoring perception of what parties stand for to bring it in line with own issue preferences and party attitude is the only mechanism that does not require any political information.[52]

Various studies reveal that party attitudes affect each step in opinion formation. First, individuals tend to seek information which corresponds with what they want to perceive (Arkes and Herkness 1980). Moreover, supporters are generally inclined to pay greater attention to statements made by preferred parties rather than to opposing parties' messages (Donsbach 1991; Marcus 2000; Redlawsk 2001; Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Meffert et al. 2006; Taber and Lodge 2006; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). Furthermore, voters tend to expose themselves selectively to media that is likely to confirm and reinforce prior political beliefs (Lazarsfeld 1948; Chaffee et al. 2001; Stroud 2007). Political messages are also often differently interpreted. Attributional reasoning theories maintain that there is always a possibility that people are disposed to attribute the behavior and statements of political actors to either external circumstances or to dispositional factors (Jones and Nisbett 1971). The preferred party's behavior and statements which are incongruent with supporters' beliefs induce the latter to attribute such statements and behavior to external circumstances (Heider 1958; Shaver 1970). A party's expressed support for European integration might be attributed by EU-skeptical supporters to economic or sociopolitical pressure forcing the party to reluctantly act in this way. In contrast, EU-advocates would accept the same message as a manifestation of an EU-friendly disposition. In line with these observations, Gaines et al. (2007, 962) compellingly argue that "…people can believe almost whatever they want to believe, because the facts rarely confront them."

When people integrate information, pleasant information is more likely to be taken into account (Owens et al. 1979). Evidence tends to be more convincing when it is consistent with prior beliefs (Lord et al. 1979). The relevance of information which is inconsistent with prior attitudes, on the other hand, is often downplayed (Lodge and Taber 2001, 2005). The finding that incongruent information bears less weight than expectations themselves in the evaluation of parties' policy preferences has been described as the conservative bias in information processing (Steenbergen 2001). Individuals also continue to search out consistent information after being confronted with inconsistent messages (Wyer and Ottati 1993) and then give more weight to messages which fit their expectations and evaluations. Often, political information might simply not be accepted at all. In this vein, Zaller (1992) argues that political values and attachment to parties regulate the acceptance and non-acceptance of political information. Counter-arguing describes the phenomenon when people actively engage in presenting counter-evidence simply to confirm their existing party attitudes

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[52] The argument alludes to what Campbell et al. (1960) have in mind: biased perception is most likely because 1) it is not demanding; 2) party identification is assumed to be strong and fixed.

and beliefs (Lodge and Taber 2005; Taber and Lodge 2001; McGraw et al. 2002, Redlawsk 2002). As various studies show, incongruent information is also more easily forgotten (Skowronski et al. 1991; Meffert et al. 2006). In particular, people tend to remember positive information about preferred candidates and negative information about disliked candidates (Meffert et al. 2006; Jerit and Barabas 2012).

Studies using large-N survey data have also examined the impact of party attitudes on political perception (Feldman and Conover 1983; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Merrill et al. 2001). These studies show that party supporters are inclined to perceive their own party's position as close to their own position, while non-supporters pull parties away (Page and Brody 1972; Markus and Converse 1979; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Merrill et al. 2001). Moreover, assimilation effects among supporters have often been deemed to be stronger than contrast effects among non-supporters (Kinder 1978; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Krosnick 2002; Merrill et al. 2001). The literature on projection effects distinguishes between assimilation effects, contrast effects and false consensus effects (Granberg 1993). Assimilation effects occur when supporters exaggerate similarity in policy preferences with their preferred party in order to confirm partisanship (ibid.). Contrast effects refer to exaggerated differences in policy preferences with parties you dislike (ibdi.). Finally, false consensus effects describe human tendency to erroneously believe that their opinion or behavior is relatively common (Ross et al. 1977). Unlike the first two projection effects, which arise from attitudes towards objects (parties), false consensus effects refer to an egocentrically induced bias with no reference to affect towards the judged object (Ross et al. 1977). Projection effects have been studied and observed mainly in the American context (Brody and Page 1972; Granberg and Brent 1974; Granberg 1993; Judd et al. 1983; Franklin 1991). Other studies have compared projections across two or more countries using left-right placement data pinpointing the mediating effect of political systems (Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Merrill et al. 2001; Gordon and Seguera 1997). Drawing upon the EES 2009 dataset, a recent study reports that projection effects exist across all 27 EU member states (Grand and Tiemann 2014). Moreover, projections are stronger for the left-right issue than for the EU issue and are not contingent on the information context (Grand and Tiemann 2014). The political science projection literature, however, has not considered alternative ways to cope with cognitive inconsistency. In particular, voters can remain ignorant (uninformed) and uncertain about a party's issue position in order to cope with cognitive dissonance (cf. Babrow 1992). Remaining uncertain and uninformed about parties' issue positions serves the purpose of preserving party attitudes and identity.

Explanatory factors

In line with theory, I differentiate three affective components which presumably impact party knowledge. The first component consists of the interaction between issue incongruence and party attitude (Feldman and Conover 1983). Issue incongruence refers to dissimilarities in issue attitudes between two actors (voter and party). This interaction term is meant to capture assimilation and contrast effects. Knowledge about a party's policy profile is expected to be a function of an interaction between a voter's party attitudes and issue incongruence between party and voter. In this sense:

Hypothesis 2a: *The more an individual's issue attitude differs from the attitudes of the party one likes, the stronger will the individual misperceive the party's actual issue position.*

Hypothesis 2b: *The more an individual's issue attitude resembles the attitude of the party one dislikes, the stronger will the individual misperceive the party's actual issue position.*

The same explanatory variables are expected to explain perceptual uncertainty (Hypotheses 2c) and 2d)). The literature on projection effects does not stipulate any effect of party attitudes per se, but its effect comes into force only in interaction with attitudinal divergence. From experimental studies and other research we know, however, that individuals are induced to search for information on parties they like to the detriment of information on parties they dislike or towards which they feel indifferent (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Chaffee and McLeod 1973; Price and Tweksbury 1997; Marcus 2000; Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Meffert et al. 2006; see Sears and Freedman 1967 as well as Stroud 2008 for reviews). The reasons for this selective information seeking contingent on party identity can be manifold. Some scholars argue that concepts which are accessible such as party identity are dominant and impact, therefore, on citizen's information seeking (Price and Tweksbury 1997). Others have argued that information conveyed by a liked party is more pleasant and less anger-producing, fostering a more desirable emotional state (Valentino et al. 2008). Mutz (2006) contends that individuals shape their social environment and that this social environment, in turn, filters and influences what information is gathered and discussed. From the supply side point of view, Rohrschneider (2002) notes that parties are inclined to mobilize their supporters rather than trying to persuade opponents as the support of the latter is less likely to be obtained (see also Sniderman 2000). For all these reasons, I expect

positive party attitudes to be associated with greater party knowledge. The hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2e: *Positive party attitudes are associated with greater party knowledge more than negative or neutral attitudes.*

Literature on the false consensus effect suggests, however, that bias to overestimate similarities in policy preferences might be egocentric (Ross et al. 1977; Dawes 1989). Misperception would thus result from the individual's motivation to justify his issue attitudes by proclaiming that the public in general or parties in general are supportive of his own views and beliefs (Ross et al. 1977; Mullen et al. 1985). People also have a tendency to selectively expose themselves to people and media which are likely to share their beliefs and views and this, in turn, will make individuals regard their opinion as commonplace (Ross et al. 1977). Hence, we might expect issue incongruence to increase misperception even if we control for party attitudes as well as the interaction effect between attitudinal divergence and party attitudes.

Hypothesis 2f: *The more an individual's issue attitude differs from the attitudes of a party, the stronger will the individual misperceive the party's actual issue position no matter her party attitudes.*

3.1.3 Interaction between cognition and affect

It has long been commonplace to assume that politically sophisticated citizens have less need to make choices based on affect (Sniderman et al. 1991). Individuals with cognitive resources such as intelligence, education, and political interest have been considered to be less contaminated by affect. Instead, affect should have the greatest impact on those who are less able to call upon further information (Sniderman et al. 1991). As several studies show, people with low levels of political awareness rely more on emotions than on policy preferences when evaluating candidates (McGraw and Steenbergen 1995; Isbell and Wyer 1999). Others, however, note that both well-informed and less-informed citizens are equally affected by partisan bias in information processing (Bartels 2002). Those who have access to neutral political information are no less affected by partisan bias. Bartels (2002: 130) asserts

that "…partisan bias is widespread", but adds that "…its effects are not significantly mitigated or enhanced by access to objective political information."

A crucial turning point in the literature on political decision-making has been the result of empirical insights suggesting a reverse relation between cognition and affect (Zajonc 1980; Damasio 1994). According to these scholars, affect is activated prior to any cognitive engagement and determines how cognitive resources are used. As Marcus (2003, 198) writes: "…with emotion comes the capacity to enact behavior, something of which reason alone is not capable". In particular, reason is employed in order to construct a perception of political conflicts consistent with party affect (Taber and Lodge 2001; Bartels 2008). The intelligent, sophisticated, competent and knowledgeable voter uses reasoning to legitimate a perception of politics which suits her feelings.

The empirical evidence supporting this claim is steadily growing and constitutes a major challenge for many theories of democracy. For instance, political engagement has been found to correlate with selective information processing (Taber, Lodge, and Glathar 2001; Petty et al. 2009; Shapiro and Bloch-Echelon 2007). Martinez (1988) notes that the politically more sophisticated and active citizens are associated with a greater need for a balanced triad between issue preferences, party attitudes and perception of parties' preferences on that issue. Thus, political involvement actually reinforces projection processes (Martinez 1988; Lavine et al. 2012). Hamill et al. (1985) report greater projection effects among better educated and politically involved voters. Lodge and Taber (2005) observe that biased reasoning is strongest among sophisticated citizens with strong issue attitudes (see also Bartels 2008). Lord et al. (1979) observe that people refuse to learn parties' preferences and that intelligence and political sophistication is used to justify prior political beliefs regardless of its correctness. Taber et al. (2009, 153) remarks that "it takes very little sophistication to feel that attitude-congruent arguments are stronger than those that challenge one's priors: the active generation of counter-arguments on the other hand should require more sophistication".

It has even be observed that whenever issue attitudes are perceived as being important individuals tend to succumb to projection effects and thus to biased perception (Granberg 1993; Granberg and Brent 1974; Feldman and Conover 1983; but see Carsey and Layman 2006). Attitude importance might increase the time and energy people spend to elaborate political information (Chaiken 1980), but elaboration does not imply greater accuracy (Petty and Cacioppo 1986) as inferences can be drawn in both directions depending on the underlying motivational aim (Petty et al. 2009; Shapiro and Bloch-Echelon 2007; Lavine et al. 2012; Druckman 2012). In sum, a range of studies suggest that education, knowledge, and interests can in certain circumstances reduce individuals' capacity to accurately perceive

political parties' preferences. In the following sections, cognitive and affective factors will be measured and described and the hypotheses developed above will be empirically examined.

3.2 Empirical analysis of the individual predictors of party knowledge

Drawing upon the EES 2009 dataset, Chapter 2 showed that public knowledge about the left-right conflict and the EU integration issue varies across countries and party families. EES 2009 also comprises a range of items that tap into the most central concepts of my theoretical framework. It includes, for example, factual knowledge items that measure actual political awareness in a relatively adequate way. However, as a measure for party attitudes I use the propensity-to-vote instrument which is not without its flaws.

On methodological grounds, the EES is not well suited to resolve the endogeneity problem inherent in cognitive consistency mechanisms. These problems result in statistical problems related to causal inference (Page and Brody 1970; Carsey and Layman 2006). For instance, an individual's misperception of the preferred party's actual EU issue position might prevent her from reevaluating party support. In such a case, party perception and issue attitude are predictors of party attitudes. An alternative possibility is that party attitude and perception are fixed, while issue attitude is the endogenous variable. In this study, I am constrained to assume that individuals' issue and party attitudes are exogenous to political reasoning, and that perception is the result. Several alternative methodological approaches appear more appropriate to account for the causal mechanisms but we simply lack data that also considers contextual factors. One solution to the problem would be to run an instrumental variable approach, which is rather difficult to accomplish. Alternatively, the problem of endogeneity can be resolved, at least in part, through panel data with a cross-lagged design (Carsey and Layman 2006), but such data is available for only a handful of countries and with a short time span. Finally, experimental design is yet another option (van Houweling and Tomz 2009), but I do not have the means to run experiments. Furthermore, external validity poses a serious problem in such designs. In sum, while there are maybe more adequate methodological approaches to disentangle the causal mechanism responsible for preserving cognitive consistency when people confront incongruent information, but I leave this to future research.

The dependent variable has already been described in Chapter 2. Here, I present the measurements of the individual-level predictors: the cognitive and the affective components. The cognitive components are factual political knowledge, political involvement and exposure to political information, and level of education.[53] The affective components are issue incongruence, party attitude and the interaction term. The exact wordings and measurement scales of the survey items can be found in Table 3A in the Appendix. Given that I have a

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[53] Issue salience will not be considered as the EES 2009 lacks adequate items to gauge this concept.

large sample size and that "missing values" of the dependent variable are used as an indicator for party knowledge, I used list-wise deletion to cope with missing values.

3.2.1 Measuring the cognitive components

My analysis includes three cognitive components labeled as political awareness, political involvement and level of education. Factor analysis has served to ascertain that these components are distinguishable from each other and to identify items which are characteristic of these concepts.

The first factor is *political awareness* – a component which is seen by Price and Zaller (1993) as having a greater impact on the comprehension of political news compared with other components such as self-reported media news exposure or level of educational attainment. Various scholars have proposed measuring political awareness with a battery of factual knowledge questions. Such knowledge captures both the aspect of exposure and understanding of political information (Price and Zaller 1993; Zaller 1992; Hobolt 2009; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010).[54] The EES 2009 employs a battery of seven questions on various aspects of the EU as well as national issues using a true/false format (see Appendix for the question wordings). Political awareness is measured with an additive index based on these seven knowledge items. The score is eventually the percentage of correct answers and takes on values between 0 (no question is correctly answered) and 1 (all questions are correctly answered). False answers as well as "don't know" responses have been both categorized as incorrect responses. Factor analysis largely conforms to the fact that the items tap into the same concept (Kuder Richardson Formula 20: 0.61).[55] As Table 3.1 reveals, respondents get on average around 58% of the knowledge questions right.

A second and distinct component is *political involvement*. The items used to measure the level of political involvement includes the respondent's interest in the European Parliament (EP) elections as well as their reported level of engagement and exposure to political information in the context of the EP election campaigns (which includes talking with friends, reading newspaper articles on the elections, as well as watching television news on the elections). The respondents' general interest in politics belongs to this cluster as well. Thus, these items measure political interests and active exposure, and appear to gauge individuals' general level of political involvement rather than merely their involvement in the run-up to the

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[54] Zaller (1989: 186) states that such a measure is "essentially free of the inherent subjectivity and response set problems that often beset such self-report measures as interest or media us. Second, it is a measure of ideas that have actually gotten into people's heads rather than (as in the case of interest and media use) the mere propensity for ingesting ideas..."

[55] Kuder Richardson Formula 20 is equivalent to Cronbach's alpha but applicable to dichotomous variables. It is a measure for internal consistency reliability.

EP election. Factor analysis confirms that these items load significantly on the same factor while they discriminate against political awareness (Eigenvalue: 2.88; percentage explained variance: 0.12; alpha: 0.76). The problem with such a measure of self-reported exposure to political information is that some people over-report, and they also differ in the kinds of information they expose themselves to (see Price and Zaller 1993).[56] As the items employ different measurement scales, political involvement is measured with an additive index based on their standardized values. The minimal value of the political involvement index amounts to -2.12 and maximal score equals 1.54 (see Table 3.1 for variable description).

Level of education has been identified as a third separate factor. Educational attainment has been often used as an indicator to measure individuals' political competence, although in recent decades it has been criticized on various grounds. In particular, it is not fully clear what exactly educational attainment measures. Still, it is reasonable to include education as one of the main cognitive components as it has often been included in other studies and since it might capture remaining aspects of intelligence and cognitive resources, which have been not captured by the rather imperfect measures of political awareness and involvement. In the EES 2009, there are two measures for level of education. One item asks the respondents for the age at which the respondent has stopped full-time education, while the other variable is based on the ISCED level which is suitable for cross-country comparison. I will use the second variable as a measure for level of education due to the lower number of missing values and its applicability for cross-country comparison. It has a range between 0 and 6 with higher scores denoting higher level of education. The three factors – political involvement, political awareness, and education – represent issue-independent cognitive resources which are presumably required to become knowledgeable about parties' policy profiles. Table 3.1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the three main cognitive factors.

Table 3.1 Description of the cognitive component variables

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
political awareness	24'068	0.58	0.28	0	1
political involvement	24'066	-0.01	0.67	-2.12	1.54
level of education	23'388	3.5	1.35	0	6

Table 3.2 reports the pairwise correlation coefficients between the three factors for the pooled dataset. To account for problems concerning cross-country invariance of relationships, I have additionally conducted bivariate analyses for each country separately

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[56] It makes a difference, furthermore, whether information is obtained through print media or broadcast news (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

(see Table 3B in the Appendix). In general, politically involved citizens tend to display greater political awareness and level of education. These correlations are visible within each country, although varying in strength.

Table 3.2 Correlation between the cognitive components

	Awareness	Political Engagement
Political Involvement	0.326	
Education	0.255	0.189

Cognitive resources vary also across socio-demographic groups and countries (see also Neuman 1986; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). The Tables 3C-F in the Appendix report how levels of cognitive components vary across men and women, social classes, age groups, and individuals with different levels of party attachment. Accordingly, men display significantly higher levels of both political awareness and political involvement, while members from lower social classes are politically less aware, less involved and less educated than members of higher social classes.[57] Age stands in an equivocal relation to cognitive resources as older people are politically more aware and more involved despite their lower level of education. In addition, people reveal significantly higher levels of awareness and involvement when they feel more strongly attached to their preferred political party. Thus, while causal mechanisms are not strictly tested for, the correlation coefficients suggest that affect might be needed for people to engage cognitively in acquiring knowledge on what parties actually stand for. The reciprocal effect is equally likely: cognitive resources and interest in politics enable people to distinguish between political offers. The awareness of these differences, in turn, helps individuals to evaluate parties and to form party attachments.

Cognitive resources, moreover, vary across EU member states, presumably due to differences in political culture, socioeconomic development, media and education systems. A central theme of my dissertation is to examine the impact of contextual and party-related factors on citizens' party knowledge. The estimation of unbiased effects requires inter alia accounting for composition effects. In other words, citizens are comparatively knowledgeable in some countries not because of how the elite communicates, but primarily because of how well equipped citizens are with cognitive resources. Table 3.3 reports country mean average

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[57] Difference in political awareness between the two gender groups is, to a large extent, due to the higher propensity to guess among men (Mondak 1999; Mondak and Anderson 2004).

cognition scores, with countries ranked in descending order according to the average percentage of correctly answered knowledge questions. In general, countries differ significantly with regard to political awareness, involvement and level of education. As the results in the table show, citizens in Slovenia, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Greece, France, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Estonia, Portugal and Hungary are relatively highly knowledgeable about objective facts. These countries display a mean political awareness score of 0.59 and above. A majority of these countries are established Western European democracies (9 out of 12). In contrast, among the 12 countries with a below average level of political awareness, we find seven post-communist democracies (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania), and five established Western European states (Ireland, Italy, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Spain). The F-value equals 98.06 and 8% of the variance in individuals' political awareness can be attributed to country of residence.

Table 3.3 Cognitive resources across EU democracies

Country	pol. involvement		pol. awareness		education	
	mean	sd.	mean	sd.	mean	sd.
Slovenia	0.05	(0.60)	0.71	(0.25)	2.75	(1.31)
Austria	0.35	(0.58)	0.70	(0.24)	3.56	(1.09)
Denmark	0.22	(0.58)	0.67	(0.23)	4.05	(1.24)
Sweden	0.25	(0.56)	0.67	(0.25)	3.79	(1.27)
Greece	-0.08	(0.73)	0.65	(0.25)	3.86	(1.52)
France	-0.13	(0.61)	0.62	(0.27)	3.65	(1.34)
Netherlands	0.03	(0.56)	0.62	(0.26)	3.80	(1.35)
Finland	0.05	(0.57)	0.62	(0.25)	3.85	(1.42)
Germany	0.27	(0.57)	0.61	(0.27)	3.98	(1.09)
Estonia	-0.03	(0.61)	0.61	(0.24)	3.40	(1.29)
Portugal	-0.19	(0.64)	0.61	(0.30)	2.50	(1.70)
Hungary	0.01	(0.72)	0.59	(0.28)	3.38	(1.12)
Slovakia	-0.29	(0.64)	0.58	(0.28)	3.45	(0.91)
Czech Republic	-0.25	(0.69)	0.57	(0.27)	3.59	(0.98)
Ireland	0.31	(0.71)	0.56	(0.26)	3.79	(1.44)
Bulgaria	-0.09	(0.70)	0.55	(0.32)	3.34	(1.12)
Latvia	0.02	(0.64)	0.54	(0.27)	3.63	(1.09)
Lithuania	-0.19	(0.66)	0.53	(0.27)	3.80	(1.28)
Italy	0.11	(0.64)	0.52	(0.27)	3.17	(1.33)
Belgium	-0.12	(0.66)	0.51	(0.25)	3.59	(1.44)
Poland	-0.21	(0.69)	0.50	(0.29)	3.42	(1.27)
United Kingdom	-0.02	(0.67)	0.46	(0.28)	3.35	(1.37)
Spain	-0.13	(0.59)	0.44	(0.28)	3.35	(1.72)
Romania	-0.27	(0.70)	0.37	(0.28)	3.06	(1.32)
Total	-0.01	(0.67)	0.58	(0.28)	3.50	(1.35)
Obs.	24'066		24'068		23'388	
F-value	85.31		96.06		79.04	
adj. R2	0.07		0.08		0.07	

There are also noticeable differences between Eastern and Western Europe with regard to self-reported political involvement. With few exceptions, countries scoring high on political awareness show above average levels of political involvement. Greece, France, Portugal, and Estonia show high mean political awareness scores, but perform relatively poor with respect to conventional political involvement.[58] In contrast, citizens in Italy, Lithuania, and Ireland are relatively involved in party politics, despite comparatively low levels of political awareness. Again, country mean values vary significantly with regard to political involvement (F-value: 85.31; adj. R^2: 0.07). Citizens in Austria (0.35) and Ireland (0.31) appear to be

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[58] As politics in Greece is primarily carried out in the squares and streets of Athens, it should be noted that the factor refers to involvement in orthodox forms of political participation and not in unconventional methods.

comparatively highly involved in politics, while people in Romania (-0.27) and Slovakia (-0.29) tend to be politically apathetic.

With regard to education, Slovenia (2.75) and, again, Portugal (2.50) reveal low levels of education despite high awareness scores, while the Czech Republic (3.59), Latvia (3.63), Belgium (3.59), Ireland again (3.79), and Lithuania (3.80) perform comparatively well on that matter despite their low levels of political awareness. We note a similar East-West divide; country variances are significant with similar F-value scores (79.04) and adj. R^2 (0.07).

In sum, the levels of political awareness, involvement and education are differently distributed across the EU member states.[59] Overall, established democracies tend to score significantly better with regard to all three cognitive resources. In some countries such as Austria, Sweden, and Denmark citizens appear to be particularly well equipped to accurately know what parties actually stand for as they score above average on all three variables. In Romania and Spain, on the other hand, people have few cognitive resources that would enable them to choose parties in line with their policy interests. Thus, the reason why parties' policy preferences are better perceived in some countries than in others should to some extent be attributable to the degree of cognitive skill with which citizens are endowed. These are so-called composition effects which should be accounted for whenever we are interested in unbiased estimates of party- or country-level determinants of citizens' party knowledge.

3.2.2 Bivariate analysis between cognitive resource and party knowledge

Table 3.4 summarizes the correlation coefficient estimates between the cognitive components and the three party knowledge indicators across both issues. The bivariate correlation coefficients are estimated based on the pooled dataset. In order to check for the robustness of the relations the analysis has been replicated for each country separately. Here, the individual respondent is taken as the level of analysis and party knowledge scores have been aggregated onto the individual level.

The most consistent and strongest correlations with party knowledge indicators pertain to political awareness (see also Price and Zaller 1993). In comparison to other cognitive resources, political awareness correlates strongly with all knowledge indicators across both issues. For the EU issue, the correlation coefficients are -0.15 (misperception in absolute distance), 0.17 (correct direction), and 0.23 (response rate). For the left-right issue case the respective values are -0.21, 0.19 and 0.30. Awareness and party knowledge, however, do not correlate significantly in all countries. For instance, in Lithuania the politically aware do

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[59] The correlation coefficients between the country mean scores for the three main cognitive components equal 0.53 (p<0.01) for average level of political awareness and involvement, 0.39 (p=0.057) for political involvement and level of education (awareness engagement), and 0.21 (not significant) for political awareness and average level of education.

not perceive parties' left-right placements more accurately than the politically less sophisticated. As regards the EU issue, the correlations between political awareness and perceptual accuracy fail to reach significant levels in several countries (Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania).

Political involvement relates, as predicted, to party knowledge, although more weakly when compared to political awareness. The difference in relational strength is particularly evident for perceived accuracy, while the correlation with the response rate is just as strong. Thus, the politically involved are comparatively certain about their opinion on where parties stand but they are not particularly accurate when it comes to placing a party on the continuous scale. In the Czech Republic, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania the correlations between political involvement and perceptual accuracy of parties' EU issue positions fail to reach a significant level. Correlation between political involvement and misperception of parties' left-right positions are insignificant in Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Portugal, Hungary, Italy, Spain and the Czech Republic, while it is even significantly positive in Latvia and Lithuania.

We receive similar results for level of education. Education relates more strongly to perceived accuracy as compared to political involvement but weaker as compared to political awareness. It is inferior in terms of its relationship with the response rate when compared to the other two cognitive components. In the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania the correlations for the EU issue are again insignificant. In Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Portugal, Lithuania and Latvia the correlations between knowledge about parties' left-right profile and level of education is insignificant as well.

Overall, cognitive resources relate with party knowledge as expected (in line with Hypotheses 1a) - 1f)). Moreover, the association between cognitive resources and party knowledge varies significantly across countries. In some countries, cognitive capacity and political interest do not enable people to know what parties actually stand for. This appears to be the case especially in post-communist democracies, where level of cognitive resources is not only low but often ineffective for becoming knowledgeable about parties' policy profiles. In these countries, the involved, educated, and politically aware citizens are not rewarded with a better understanding of party politics. In Chapter 5, I will show why citizens with high levels of cognitive resources fail, in some countries, to become better informed about parties' preferences. Eventually, results which I will present later in the thesis will suggest that the link between political sophistication and party knowledge is context-dependent. Finally, the difference between countries with regard to the level of citizens' cognitive resources explains a substantial portion of countries' average party knowledge scores. This finding pertains to both issues and across all three knowledge indicators. Many countries with high levels of

political awareness and education are countries in which the public is well-informed about parties' policy profiles (see Chapter 2).

Table 3.4 Results of a bivariate correlation analysis between cognitive resources and party knowledge

	party knowledge	political awareness	political involvement	level of education
EU	misperception	-0.15	-0.09	-0.13
	correct perception	0.17	0.13	0.10
	response probability	0.23	0.24	0.13
Left-Right	misperception	-0.21	-0.06	-0.19
	correct perception	0.19	0.10	0.12
	response probability	0.30	0.25	0.15

Note: "Misperception" refers to perceptual inaccuracy measured by the absolute distance between the respondent's party placement and the party's actual position. "Correct perception" and "response probability" are both dichotomous variables.

3.2.3 Measuring the affective components

Three affective components have been distinguished in the theoretical part of this chapter: party attitudes, issue incongruence and the interaction term. It has been suggested that party attitudes are to be understood as evaluations of a political party that are positive, neutral, or negative, and which differ in strength.[60] The EES 2009 lacks a variable which is explicitly construed to gauge individuals' party attitudes. I use therefore the propensity-to-vote score (ptv) as a measure for party attitude. The propensity-to-vote question asks respondents to indicate how likely they will ever vote for a party under consideration on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (not at all probable) to 10 (very probably). The exact question reads as follows:

> *"How probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties? Please specify your views on a 11-point scale where 0 means 'not at all probable' and 10 means 'very probable'."*

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[60] The attitudes that people hold towards issues and groups are assumed to be bipolar in the sense that people might be favorable, indifferent or unfavorable towards a particular object. However, people might also be ambivalent towards issues as well as groups, as they might like some aspects of the objects while disliking other aspects (cf. Alvarez and Brehm 2002; Lavine et al. 2012).

In terms of content validity, the ptv variable is not ideal. In fact, low values might mean that the individual will never vote for the party concerned because she dislikes the party or for strategic reasons (e.g. the party is too small to enter parliament). This ambiguity is due to the fact that the question does not directly ask for the respondent's "attitude" but her perceived probability of future electoral support. In this sense, the ptv relates closely to the concept of intended behavior (Ajzen 1991) or more specifically to vote intention. However, scholars have used the ptv item to measure a number of different concepts such as party attachment, party preference, party attitude, intended vote choice, or party utility (cf. Tillie 1995; van der Eijk et al. 2006; Garry 2007; Grand and Tielmann 2014), what seems to reveal a lack in discrimance validity of the ptv item. For example, those who use the ptv as an indicator for party attachment, maintain that by adding the term 'ever', the question refers to an 'unspecified future time span' (Tillie 1995), and therefore the ptv goes beyond mere vote intentions (cf. van der Eijk et al. 2006; Grand and Tielmann 2014). A study by Garry (2007) provides some supporting evidence, as he finds the ptv to correlate closely, in a monotonic fashion, with two other indicators for party identification.[61]

To examine the specificities of the ptv variable more in detail, I draw upon the British Election Study 2015 Internet panel survey data (BES). The BES Internet panel survey data currently comprises 6 waves. Wave 1 took place between February and March 2014, while wave 6 was conducted right after the national elections in May 2015 (see Fieldhouse et al. 2015 for more information). I derived three important empirical findings from analyzing the BES panel data. First, as shown in Table 3G in the Appendix, over the course of about one and a half years the ptv scores are highly stable. The correlation coefficients between the individuals' ptv scores for a particular party measured in wave 1 and in wave 6 are very high (between 0.86 and 0.69). Such a correlation analysis does not consider measurement errors, and the correlation coefficients tend therefore to underestimate the stability of party attitudes (see Green et al. 2002). Yet, the correlation coefficients suffice to illustrate the main findings, and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to dwell further on the assessment of the stability of the ptv.[62] To explore the *relative* stability of ptv scores, I examined similar correlations for the respondents' EU issue attitudes and their perceptions of parties' EU issue

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[61] The alternative survey items usind in Garry (2007) were: (1) generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a v very strong supporter of … / a fairly strong supporter of… / a slightly strong supporter of…. / neither a supporter nor a opposed to…./ slightly opposed to…. / fairly opposed to….. / very strong opposed to…. ; (2) Generally speaking, do you usually feel very close / fairly close / slightly close / neither close nor distant /slightly distant / fairly distant / very distant

[62] Moreover, the time span between wave 1 and 6 is certainly not very long, and ptv scores would be presumably less strongly correlated over the course a more extended time period. On the other hand, the UK has also witnessed a very unstable political environment during this time (e.g. the 2015 EP election, the 2015 national elections, the ongoing migration crisis, and rise of the UKIP).

positions. The most important observation is that party attitudes as measured with the ptv variable are highly stable compared to respondents' EU issue attitudes and especially to their perceptions of parties' EU issue positions (see Table 3H in the Appendix). This corroborates the idea that party attitudes as measured with the ptv function as the unmoved mover rather than as the moved 'unmover' (Johnston 2006).

Second, as shown in Table 3I in the Appendix, the ptv correlates strongly (and in a monotonic fashion) with the like-dislike item values (correlation coefficients range between 0.86 and 0.69). Hence, low ptv scores appear to reflect negative and high ptv scores appear to reflect positive party attitudes. Even in the case of a relatively small party such as the UKIP, which competes in a majoritarian electoral system (where strategic voting is more of an issue), the correlation coefficient reaches 0.78.

Finally, in order to clarify the relationship of the ptv item to latent concepts such as party attitudes and identity, I have conducted a factor analysis with principle-component factoring using an oblique rotation (the promax command in Stata 14).[63] A factor analysis was conducted for each of the four largest parties in terms of vote shares (the Conservatives, Labour, the UKIP, and the Liberal Democrats) based on each party's partisans. Partisans were identified with the following question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?" Furthermore, the BES includes a battery of items for the measurement of party identity based on to those commonly used in the social identity theory literature (Huddy et al. 2015). The provision of these items allows me to examine whether the ptv item loads on party attitude or party identity. Overall, the set of variables include three party identity items (I conducted a factor analysis beforehand with party identity items only and retained the three items with the highest factor loadings), the like-dislike and ptv items, a party identity strength variable, and an additive index for party enthusiasm.[64] The results from the factor analyses are presented in Table 3.5 below, while each variable (question wordings and the response options) is described in the Appendix (Table 3J).

Across all four parties examined, the Kaiser criterion suggests to retain two factors, which together account for 60.8 – 65.9% of the total variance. Given that all three identity measures consistently load on the first factor, this factor can be identified as party identity.[65] The ptv item, in contrast, together with the like-dislike item as well as the enthusiasm index always

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[63] Very similar results were obtained with alternative rotation methods (e.g. oblimin or varimax)

[64] The BES data comprises two dichotomous variables to gauge a respondent's pride (1=yes; 0 = no) and hope (1=yes; 0 = no) toward each of the four political parties. Following Markus et al. (2000), I treat both discrete emotion types as constitutive of enthusiasm. Thus, a partisan's enthusiasm toward her own party is measured with an additive index based on these two dichotomous variables (2 = both emotions are felt; 1 = only one emotion is felt; 0 = none of the two emotions is felt).

[65] The party identity strength variable also tends to load more consistently on the identity factor.

load on the second factor which can be identified as party attitude. The results provide strong evidence in support of the notion that party attitudes and party identity are two distinct concepts, even though both are positively associated (correlation coefficients between both factors range between 0.35 and 0.49). The ptv variable, in turn, relates to party attitude rather than to identity (presumably also not to party attachment which is usually considered a constitutive component of party identity). Moreover, party attitude as measured with the ptv has a lot in common with party affect as measured with the enthusiasm index, as both variables consistently load on the same factor. Finally, the results appear to be highly robust because the same two-factor solution is found across all four parties.[66]

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[66] The same results were obtained with the identical variables but measured in different panel waves (results not shown).

Table 3.5 What does the ptv item measure? The results of factor analyses with an oblique rotation

	Con		Lab		LibDem		UKIP	
	Fact. 1: Identity	**Fact. 2: Attitude**	**Fact. 1**	**Fact. 2**	**Fact. 1**	**Fact. 2**	**Fact. 1**	**Fact. 2**
"we" and "they"	0.87		0.90		0.60		0.89	
criticism	0.68		0.79		0.72		0.83	
my party	0.91		0.92		0.91		0.92	
like-dislike		0.73		0.73		0.83		0.72
ptv		**0.86**		**0.91**		**0.82**		**0.90**
enthusiasm		0.74		0.75		0.83		0.61
pid strength	0.49		0.46	0.34	0.68		0.30	0.61
Eigenvalue (Fact. 1)	3.00		3.46		3.11		3.19	
Eigenvalue (Fact. 2)	1.26		1.15		1.44		1.39	
Total variance explained	60.8%		65.9%		64.9%		65.5%	
Correlations between Factors[a]	0.40		0.49		0.35		0.38	
Obs.	644		649		152		105	

Source: BES Internet panel survey 2015
Note: Factor loadings <0.3 are not displayed. Rotation was done with the promax command in Stata 14. Partisans were identified with the following question: "Generally speaking, so you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?". The items are described more in detail in the Appendix. All items apart from the like-dislike indicator (measured in wave 1) were measured in wave 4.
[a] calculated based on varimax (orthogonal) rotation

To summarize the main findings derived from this empirical analysis based on the BES panel data: (1) the ptv is a measure for party attitude rather than for party identity, for (2) it correlates highly with the like-dislike variable but not as much with the item scores commonly used to measure an individual's social identity (Huddy et al. 2015); yet, (3) party attitudes as measured with the ptv are very stable, and more stable than respondents' EU issue attitudes and their perceptions of parties' EU issue positions; finally, 4) party affect relates closely to party attitude (the ptv item and the enthusiasm index load on the same factor) but not as much to party identity.

Figure 3.2 summarizes the distribution of the ptv scores for all respondents who have placed the concerned party on the EU issue scale in the EES 2009. Since only respondents with a party attitude and placement are considered, we could presumably rule out the possibility that a ptv score of zero is due to lack in knowledge of the concerned party's existence. As the graph shows, the distribution is heavily skewed towards zero. In 37% of all observational cases respondents have stated that they will never vote for the party concerned. The overall mean ptv score equals 3.26 (median = 2). When smaller parties are excluded (parties getting less than 5% of the national election votes), the overall mean ptv score increases slightly to 3.63 (median = 3). In the subset without small parties around 32% of all observational values are at the zero point. Thus, overall people tend to have a predominantly negative attitude towards political parties and country differences are marginal (with relatively low scores in Eastern Europe).

Figure 3.2 Distribution of propensity-to-vote scores (party attitudes)
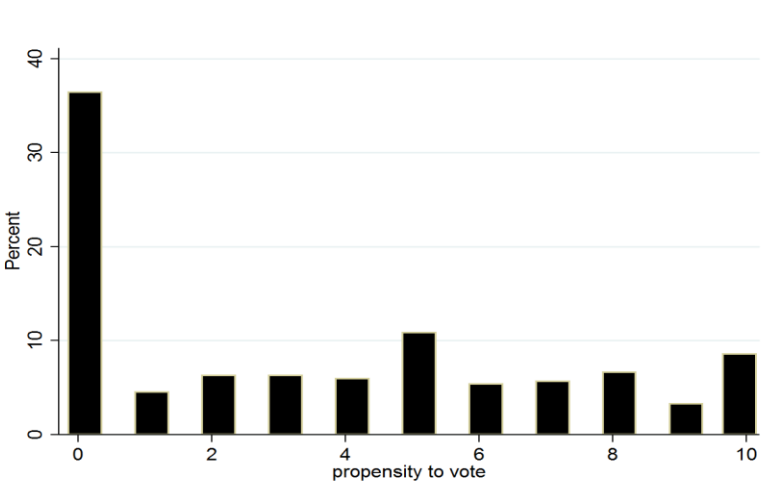
Issue incongruence is measured with two dichotomous variables that indicate whether the respondent and the party concerned share the same side of an issue conflict (matched preferences) or whether they have contrasting issue positions (mismatched preferences). In the EES 2009, respondents were asked to place themselves on the 11-point EU issue conflict scale and the left-right scale with a range between 0 and 10. In a similar vein, parties were placed by experts on both issue dimensions, which were rescaled to obtain the same range. Respondents with a self-placement between 0 and 4 and parties with an actual position between 0 and 4.5 have matched preferences. By the same token, when the respondent's self-placement is between 6 and 10 and the party's actual position is between 5.5 and 10, they are equally considered to have matched preferences. Mismatched preferences are obtained when the respondent and the party share contrasting positions. For

example, when the respondent's position is somewhere between 6 and 10 and the party's actual position is between 0 and 4.5.

While an association between of issue congruence and perceptual accuracy is conceivable (false consensus), the main theoretical argument is that issue incongruence affects perceptual accuracy mainly in interaction with party attitudes. It is not uncommon to have negative party attitudes despite matched policy preferences and vice-versa. Table 3.6 reports the probability of respondents having matched and mismatched preferences on both issues and for each ptv score. With respect to the EU issue, the results in the table suggest that negative party attitudes (ptv = 0) are not associated with a relatively higher probability of having mismatched preferences (38%) as opposed to having matched preferences (43%). However, respondents with positive party attitudes (ptv = 10) are significantly more likely to have matched (51%) as opposed to mismatched (29%) preferences. With regard to the left-right conflict, however, party attitudes and policy preferences are much more in line. Accordingly, negative party attitudes are associated with a higher probability of having mismatched preferences (47%) than matched preferences (29%). In contrast, when party attitudes are positive (ptv = 10), shared ideological tendencies are about six times more likely (66%) than contrasting views (11%). Hence, people supporting a political party tend to have much more in common in terms of left-right ideology than EU integration preferences (van der Eijk et al. 1999; de Vries 2007). Table 3.7 summarizes the measurements of the affective components.

Table 3.6 Issue congruence and party attitudes (propensity-to-vote)

	issue congruence	Ptv										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
EU	matched	0.43	0.44	0.42	0.43	0.45	0.44	0.48	0.48	0.50	0.51	0.51
	mismatched	0.38	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.35	0.32	0.31	0.31	0.29	0.30	0.29
Left-Right	matched	0.29	0.32	0.33	0.33	0.34	0.38	0.46	0.50	0.56	0.62	0.66
	mismatched	0.47	0.43	0.41	0.36	0.35	0.28	0.28	0.23	0.18	0.15	0.11

Note: Entries denote the probability of matched and mismatched preferences for various party attitudes. Party attitudes are measured with the propensity-to-vote score. Issue congruence is measured with a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent and the party share the same ideological tendency or whether they have contrasting views. Political parties with an actual position in the center have been excluded.

Table 3.7 Description of the affective components

Concept	Measurement	Scale
party attitudes	*propensity-to-vote score:* "How probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties? Please specify your views on a 11-point scale where 0 means 'not at all probable' and 10 means 'very probable'."	0-10
issue congruence	*matched preferences:* whether or not the respondent places herself on the same side of the ideological conflict as the party's actual position according to country experts	dichotomes variable: 1 = yes; 0 = no
issue incongruence	*mismatched preferences:* whether or not the respondent places herself on the opposite side of the ideological conflict to the party's actual position according to country experts.	dichotomes variable: 1 = yes; 0 = no
projection effects	two interactions between the propensity-to-vote variable and each one of the two dichotomous variables measuring issue (in-)congruence	0-10

Source: EES 2009 and CHES 2010

3.2.4 Cross-tabulation analysis of the relationship between affect and party knowledge

As a pre-cursor to the more complex and sophisticated multilevel analysis, I here examine the relationship between party knowledge and the affective components by drawing upon cross tabulation analysis. For the sake of a better illustration, party attitudes have been regrouped as follows: "negative" (ptv: 0 to 4), "indifferent" (ptv = 5), and "positive" (ptv: 6 to 10). Issue incongruence has been categorized into: matched, mismatched, and neither.

In each of the Tables 3.8 a) - c), the mean scores of a party knowledge variable are presented for different combinations of issue incongruence and party attitudes. On the left side of the table the results for the left-right conflict are shown. The equivalent results for the EU issue are presented to the right. The analysis has been conducted on the basis of the pooled data set. Each cell includes a mean average party knowledge score, standard deviation in parentheses for Table 3.6 a) only, and the percentage of observational cases that apply to the relevant combination of issue incongruence and party attitude.

In each table, the final rows display mean average party knowledge scores (including the number of observational cases) across different party attitudes (negative, indifferent and positive) independent of issue incongruence. In line with Hypothesis 2e, the results suggest that positive party attitudes are generally associated with higher party knowledge compared to negative party attitudes. This pattern is particularly visible for the EU integration conflict. Thus, parties' actual EU issue positions are misperceived by 3.21 when party attitudes are negative, but only by 2.50 when attitudes are positive. There is a 62% probability that a party is placed in the correct direction when party attitudes are positive. This probability is reduced to 49% when attitudes are negative. Finally, the response rate goes up from 69% to 81% when respondents' party attitudes are positive rather than negative. However, the link between uncertainty and ptv could go either way. In other words, uncertainty (non-placement) could explain low ptv-scores (see Alvarez 1997; Glasgow and Alvarez 2000).[67] The correlations between party attitudes and party knowledge in reference to the left-right conflict are weaker.

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[67] These authors, however, cannot explain why this association depends on whether or not voter and party share ideological tendencies.

Table 3.8 The results of a cross-tabulation analysis of the relationship between party knowledge and affect

a) misperception

| | | party attitude | | | | party attitude | | | |
| | | left-right | | | | EU | | | |
		negative	indifferent	positive	Total	negative	indifferent	positive	Total
issue incongruence	matched	2.51	1.71	1.62	2.04	3.18	2.49	2.10	2.74
		(2.05)	(1.36)	(1.33)	(1.84)	(2.35)	(1.75)	(1.71)	(2.16)
		18,1%	*4,1%*	*17,0%*	*42'227*	*24,8%*	*4,7%*	*15,1%*	*44'181*
	neither	2.26	1.86	1.99	2.13	3.16	2.78	2.57	2.79
		(1.76)	(1.42)	(1.53)	(1.66)	(2.26)	(1.79)	(1.77)	(2.07)
		15,3%	*3,5%*	*6,7%*	*27'555*	*12,6%*	*2,8%*	*6,2%*	*21'464*
	mismatched	1.88	1.91	2.60	1.99	3.28	3.20	3.16	3.29
		(1.86)	(1.48)	(1.93)	(1.62)	(2.53)	(2.22)	(2.23)	(2.42)
		27,1%	*2,9%*	*5,1%*	*37'842*	*21,9%*	*3,4%*	*8,5%*	*33'406*
	Total	2.16	1.82	1.88	2.04	3.21	2.79	2.50	2.95
		(1.76)	(1.42)	(1.54)	(1.79)	(2.42)	(1.95)	(1.94)	(2.24)
		65'153	*11'398*	*31'073*	*107'624*	*58'732*	*10'779*	*29'540*	*99'251*

b) probability of correctly estimating a party's ideological tendency

| | | left-right | | | | EU | | | |
		negative	indifferent	positive	Total	negative	indifferent	positive	Total
issue incongruence	matched	0.55	0.66	0.85	0.69	0.50	0.58	0.75	0.59
	neither	0.64	0.53	0.55	0.60	0.46	0.41	0.55	0.49
	mismatched	0.79	0.51	0.41	0.71	0.49	0.39	0.45	0.48
	Total	0.68	0.57	0.70	0.67	0.49	0.48	0.62	0.53
		65'153	*11'398*	*31'073*	*107'624*	*58'732*	*10'779*	*29'540*	*99'251*

c) probability of placing a party on the issue scale

| | | left-right | | | | EU | | | |
		negative	indifferent	positive	Total	negative	indifferent	positive	Total
issue incongruence	matched	0.79	0.90	0.95	0.87	0.66	0.74	0.82	0.72
		20.1%	*4.0%*	*15.8%*	*48'801*	*27.5%*	*4.6%*	*13.4%*	*61'841*
	neither	0.82	0.88	0.91	0.85	0.70	0.75	0.80	0.73
		16.5%	*3.5%*	*6.5%*	*32'466*	*13.2%*	*2.7%*	*5.7%*	*29'403*
	mismatched	0.92	0.94	0.96	0.93	0.73	0.77	0.80	0.75
		26.0%	*2.7%*	*4.7%*	*40'884*	*21.9%*	*3.2%*	*7.7%*	*44'536*
	Total	0.85	0.89	0.93	0.88	0.69	0.75	0.81	0.74
		76'512	*12'586*	*33'053*	*122'151*	*84'893*	*14'323*	*36'564*	*135'780*

Note: Negative party attitudes (ptv<5), indifferent (ptv=5), positive party attitudes (ptv>5). To calculate the probability of correctly estimating a party's ideological direction, parties with actual positions in the center (4.5-5.5) have been excluded.

The last columns in each table (for each issue) show how party knowledge scores differ across the three issue incongruence categories (matched, neither and mismatched). With regard to the EU issue, party knowledge is higher when the individual and the party share preferences. Accordingly, the misperception when preferences are matched is much lower (2.74 versus 3.29) and the probability of placing a party in the correct ideological direction is higher (57% vs. 48%). The response rate, however, is slightly higher among those cases where respondents and parties have mismatched preferences. For the left-right issue conflict, party knowledge does not seem to be associated with issue incongruence. While false consensus seems to be present in the EU integration conflict (Hypothesis 2f), this is not the case in the left-right conflict. In the EU issue case there is a tendency among people to pull parties' positions towards their own ideal position irrespective of party attitudes. Given that most parties are supportive of the integration process, this tendency implies that EU-skeptical respondents misperceived parties' position to a greater extent than EU-proponents.

Up to this point, the empirical results suggest several things. First, parties' positions are more strongly misperceived with respect to EU integration than with respect to the left-right conflict. Second, parties' EU issue positions are subject to false consensus and party attitude bias. That is, people know better what a party stands for when they have matched preferences and a positive party attitude. Third, the percentages indicating the frequency of observations in each cell reveal that party attitudes and issue positions are more consistent in the left-right than the integration conflict. As a result, in the integration conflict a large number of people have a need to restore cognitive consistency through biased perception of parties' issue positions.

However, when we analyze the interaction effects we note that projections appear to be more prevalent in the left-right conflict. *The left-right conflict:* When the party and the voter share left-right orientation (matched preferences) misperception is higher among those with negative party attitudes (misperception is 2.51; probability of placing the party in the correct direction is 55%) than among those with positive party attitudes (1.62; 85%). In the case of mismatched preferences, misperception is greater among respondents with positive party attitudes (2.60; 41%) than among those with negative party attitudes (1.88; 79%). In line with the asymmetry of contrast and assimilation effects hypothesis (Krosnick 1990), the differences in perceptual accuracy as a function of issue incongruence is particularly dominant when party attitudes are positive. In addition, the response probability is greater when party attitudes and ideology correspond. For instance, among respondents with a negative party attitude the placement probability is higher when left-right orientation is mismatched (92%) rather than matched (79%). When party attitudes are positive, people are just as likely to place the party on the left-right scale irrespective of issue congruence (95%

vs. 96%). This is an interesting finding because it shows that individuals who feel pressured to project might refuse to reveal their opinion on the party's left-right placement or be uncertain about it.

The EU integration conflict: When preferences are matched, the party is misperceived by 2.10 (75% correct) when party attitudes are positive, but by 3.18 (51% correct) when attitudes are negative. In contrast, among the observations with mismatched preferences party knowledge is almost unaffected by party attitudes. The asymmetry between assimilation and contrast effect is also evident in the EU issue conflict. Among respondent-party observations characterized by negative attitudes, the party knowledge indicator scores are almost unaffected by issue distance. Placement probability is also dependent on the combination of party attitudes and issue incongruence. When respondents have negative party attitudes they are more likely to place the party on the EU issue scale when preferences are mismatched (73%) rather than matched (66%). When attitudes are positive, in contrast, placement probability is slightly higher when preferences are matched (82% vs. 80%).

In sum, the party attitude bias (that is to say, that people are better informed about parties they like) as well as the false consensus effect appear to be more common in the EU integration conflict. In contrast, projections are more prevalent in the left-right conflict. Still, it should be added that projections have less implication for the left-right as opposed to the EU conflict because party attitudes correspond well with voters' left-right self-placements but less with their EU issue attitudes. The cross tabulation results have moreover revealed that voters can simply refuse to place parties on the issue scale whenever issue preferences and party attitudes don't match (Hypotheses 2c-2d).

3.2.5 Multilevel analysis

In this section I employ a more sophisticated method accounting for the simultaneous correlations between the cognitive and affective components, on the one hand, and party knowledge, on the other hand, as well as for the multilevel character of the observational units. With the multilevel analysis I account for the fact that observational units are not independent. Thus, error terms are most likely dependent on characteristics of groups in which observational units are nested (Steenbergen and Jones 2002). By taking account of the multilevel character of the data we get more accurate estimates of the error terms (Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Fielding and Goldstein 2006). Several decisions related to this methodological approach had to be taken.

First, to run a multilevel analysis the levels need to be identified. At first sight, two possibilities appear plausible. The first solution is a nested three-level model, while the second solution is a cross-nested four level model (see Table 3.9). In both models, the lowest level of analysis pertains to a relational level between a respondent and a political party within a country (level 1). In the nested three-level model, party-respondent relations are nested within the respondent herself which constitutes the middle-level (level 2). Finally, the highest level in this multilevel structure is the country in which the individuals are grouped (level 3). The cross-nested four-level model would reflect the data structure more accurately but, unfortunately, such a model is not identifiable. In a cross-nested model the relational party-voter observation (level 1) is nested within the country (level 4). The relational variable, however, is grouped in both an individual (level 2a) as well as a specific party (level 2b). The individual gives an assessment on several parties competing within the country, while a party is being judged by several individuals. Therefore, neither is the individual nested in a party, nor is a specific party solely nested in one individual. Rather, both levels are crossed with one another. However, such a model is not identifiable because each observation at the lowest level is nested in a unique combination of party and respondent. For this reason I opt for the nested three-level model.

Second, multilevel analysis bears the advantage that the unexplained variance of the dependent variable can be decomposed into partial variances at each analytical level. Such partition of the total variance permits one to examine how predictors reduce variance at various analytical levels. In the three-level model we can observe how variance at each of the three levels declines by adding predictors into the equation.

In a third methodological decision, the dependent variables are the three party knowledge indicators (perceptual accuracy, correct perception of the ideological direction and the placement probability) in combination with the two policy issues (left-right and European integration). Hence, the multilevel analysis has been conducted with six (3x2) different

dependent variables. For the purpose of presenting the results in a comprehensible way, this chapter mainly discusses the results with perceptual accuracy as the dependent variable. However, any deviation or interesting finding with the alternative dependent variables will be reported.

Table 3.9 Levels of analysis

		Nested three-level model	Cross-nested four-level model
levels of analysis	level 1	party-respondent relation	party-respondent relation
	level 2	individual	individual
	(level 2b)	-	(party)
	level 3	country	country

Forth, as regards the sequence of the analytical steps I follow the recommendations suggested by Hox (2002) and Snijders and Bosker (2012). Accordingly, I first estimate an empty-model decomposing the total unexplained variance into partial variances for each level. This model serves as a baseline to which other models are compared. In particular, it allows for measuring the proportional reduction in unexplained variances resulting from the inclusion of predictors. The notation for the empty three-level model reads as follows (Snijders and Bosker 2012):

$$perceptual\ accuracy_{ijk} = \beta_{0jk} + R_{ijk} \quad (1)$$
$$\beta_{0jk} = \delta_{00k} + U_{0jk} \quad (2)$$
$$\delta_{00k} = \Upsilon_{000} + V_{00k} \quad (3)$$

The right side of equation (1) lists first the intercept β_{0jk}, understood as the intercept in respondent j within country k. The equation also includes the residual R_{ijk} at the lowest level (the party-respondent relation i nested within respondent j and in country k). Equation (2) specifies that the intercept β_{0jk} is contingent on the average intercept at country level (δ_{00k}) and the random effects U_{0jk} at the respondent-level (jk). Finally, equation (3) illustrates that the intercept δ_{00k} depends on the overall intercept and the residuals across countries. Each random effect has zero mean and a variance specified to be uncorrelated with the variances

of the other random effects. The total variance consists of the three partial variances: R_{ijk}, U_{0jk}, V_{00k}.

$$perceptual\ accuracy_{ijk}$$
$$= \Upsilon_{000} + \beta_1 * awareness_{0jk} + \beta_2 * involvement_{0jk} + \beta_3$$
$$* education_{0jk} + \beta_4 * ptv_{ijk} + \beta_5 * matched_{ijk} + \beta_6 \qquad (4)$$
$$* ptv * matched_{ijk} + \beta_7 * mismatched_{ijk} + \beta_8$$
$$* ptv * mismatched_{ijk} + V_{00k} + U_{0jk} + R_{ijk}$$

The next analytical step is to estimate a random-intercept model with predictors, where the slopes of the coefficients for these predictors are fixed to zero. The random-intercept model serves to examine how much variance in the dependent variable can be explained at all analytical levels by including the cognitive and affective variables into the equation. Equation (4) specifies the model with the individual cognitive and the relational affective predictors. The cognitive components *awareness, involvement,* and *education* are invariant with the respondent, while the affective variables can vary within the respondent.

The third step would be to add random slopes for predictors of *substantive* interests. Random slopes for predictor variables reveal whether the coefficients vary significantly across higher-level groups. Such variances of slopes would point to possible cross-level interactions, to which I turn in Chapter 5. Hox (2002) and Snijder and Bosker (1999) recommend to use the random slope model to discuss the impact of predictors and to assess improvement in model fit. However, the complexity of the three-level model combined with the need for parsimony urges a decision regarding for which variable at what analytical level a random slope should be added. A useful way to reduce the range of possible random slopes is to use them only given a theoretical reason; this will be the subject of Chapter 5. Model estimations are done using restricted likelihood estimation, which is particularly relevant when a relatively small number of countries and parties are examined (Snijders and Bosker 2012; Brown and Draper 2000).

A few additional remarks are necessary. First, I have decided to estimate three different models in addition to the empty model. Accordingly, the first model is the empty model, which is followed by the model with only the cognitive components. The third model includes only the affective components, whereas the forth model is the full model encompassing both the cognitive as well as the affective components. Second, the two additional dependent variables are dichotomous and, hence, the assumption of a normal distribution is obviously violated (Hox 2002). Consequently, I drew upon gllamm in Stata 12 using a binomial error

distribution, linking the equation with a logit function. Finally, I include two additional control variables: the party's positional extremity and the respondent's positional extremity.[68]

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[68] Respondents with a self-placement at the extremes of the scale appear to have a different understanding of the issue scales as compared to respondents placing themselves near the center (Krosnick 2002).

Table 3.10 How the cognitive and affective components relate to public knowledge of parties' EU issue positions

	empty model		control-variables model		cognition-only model		affect-only model		cognition & affect full model	
	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
Fixed-effects parameters										
political awareness					-0.610***	(0.045)			-0.640***	(0.044)
political involvement					-0.084***	(0.017)			-0.053*	(0.017)
education					-0.101***	(0.008)			-0.090***	(0.008)
propensity-to-vote (ptv)							-0.077***	(0.004)	-0.077***	(0.004)
matched preferences							-0.421***	(0.039)	-0.388***	(0.038)
ptv*matched							-0.055***	(0.005)	-0.055***	(0.005)
mismatched preferences							-0.332***	(0.039)	-0.302***	(0.039)
ptv*mismatched							0.068***	(0.005)	0.063***	(0.005)
respondent extremity			0.067***	(0.006)	0.070***	(0.006)	0.127***	(0.008)	0.125***	(0.007)
party extremity			0.284***	(0.006)	0.284***	(0.006)	0.314***	(0.006)	0.314***	(0.006)
Constant	3.019***	(0.096)	2.013***	(0.096)	2.743***	(0.097)	2.372***	(0.097)	3.069***	(0.098)
Random-effects parameters										
var(country)	0.217	(0.064)	0.206	(0.060)	0.182	(0.053)	0.204	(0.060)	0.181	(0.053)
var(respondent)	1.070	(0.020)	1.084	(0.020)	1.024	(0.020)	0.985	(0.018)	0.932	(0.018)
var(residual)	3.795	(0.019)	3.681	(0.020)	3.683	(0.019)	3.553	(0.020)	3.554	(0.018)
Model-fit estimates										
Log Likelihood	-205'020.8		-203'797.1		-203'532.3		-201'811.4		-201'577.5	
BIC (random intercept)	410'087.3		407'662.9		407'167.7		403'748.8		403'275.3	

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001. Notes: The variable "matched preferences" corresponds to those observations where the respondent and party share either a pro-EU position (postitions above 5.5) or an anti-EU position (positions below 4.5): "mismatched preferences" describe cases where both the respondent and the party have contrasting opinions on EU integration. For this analysis, parties located in the center of the scale (positions 4.5-5.5) have been excluded. Number of observations: 24 countries, 16'939 respondents, 94'528 party-respondent relations.

136

The EU issue

Table 3.10 presents the estimates of a series of multilevel models for the EU issue case. The estimation of the empty model with misperception of parties' EU issue positions reveals a mean intercept value of 3.019. The total variance is estimated to be 5.082 and can be decomposed as follows: 0.217 (4.27%) at country level, 1.07 (21.05%) at the individual level and 3.795 (74.68%) for the relational party-respondent level. The intercept value of 3.019 is fairly large given the scale size but misperception varies considerably across countries, respondents, and parties. The numbers of observations are as follows: 94'528 party-respondent relations nested in 16'393 respondents, which for their part are nested in 24 countries. BIC reveals the model fit which equals 410'087.3. By adding predictors to the model in a systematic manner, we can know the contribution of these factors to the explanation of the partial variances. The variance of the response rate is differently decomposed suggesting that the placement probability is largely a function of individual and country characteristics and less dependent on party attributes apart from the factor size (see Chapter 2).

The results for the model with the controls are displayed in the next columns. Both coefficients are significant and contribute to the explanation of the variance at country as well as the relational level. The cognition-only model adds the three cognitive components. In line with hypotheses 1a)-c), all cognitive factors appear to be significantly associated with misperception. Similar results are obtained with the alternative correct directional placement variable. However, as shown in Table 3K in the Appendix, the coefficient for education is not positively associated with placement probability when we control for the effect of the other two cognitive components. As presented in Table 3.10, the coefficient for political awareness is -0.610, for political involvement -0.084, and for the level of education -0.101.[69] As the cognitive factors are correlated, it is interesting to estimate the change in misperception when the values of all three cognitive components are altered from a low (5th percentile for each cognitive variable) to a high level (95th percentile).[70] When an individual is endowed with little cognitive skills, estimated misperception amounts to 3.65 (while keeping the controls at mean values), but it declines to 2.52 when all cognitive components reach a high level. In a similar vein, the politically unsophisticated have a 40.4% predicted probability of placing a party in the correct direction, while the predicted probability of placing the party on

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[69] The coefficient size for political involvement remains small when the alternative dependent variable (correct direction) is used.

[70] Low level of cognition: awareness = 0.14; engagement = -1.17; education = 1. High level of cognition: awareness = 1; engagement = 1.07; education = 5.2.

the scale is 66.2%.[71] For the politically sophisticated respondents, however, the equivalent scores are 66.2% (probability for a correct directional placement) and 73.8% (placement probability).[72] Hence, the maximal effects are -1.13 (misperception), +25.8% (correct directional placement probability), and +7.7% (placement probability). Table 3.11 summarizes the expected results contingent on the respondent's level of cognition. Moreover, as shown in Table 3.13 a great deal of the variance explained by cognitive factors happens at the country-level and to a lesser extent at the respondent level.[73] For obvious reasons, the variance at the lowest level remains relative to the model with the controls unexplained.[74] Compared to the controls-only model, model fit improves as BIC is reduced by 495.2 points.

Table 3.11 The expected results for different levels of cognition – the EU issue

	cognitive resources	
	low	**high**
Misperception	3.65	2.52
Predicted probability of placing a party in its correct direction	40.4% [39.0-42.0%]	66.2% [65.2-67.4%]
Predicted probability of placing a party on the issue scale	66.1% [65.0-67.2%]	73.8% [73.1-74.3%]

Note: The expected results are calculated based on the results of the full model, while the remaining variables are kept at their mean value. A low level of cognition comprises the 5th percentiles of three cognitive components, while a high value entails the 95th percentiles. 95-% confidence intervals are displayed in parentheses, and were calculated with simulations using the command ci_marg_mu in Stata 12.

The affect-only model comprises solely the three affective components (the two issue incongruence variables, propensity-to-vote, and the interactions) plus the two control variables. Issue incongruence is captured with two dichotomous variables: matched (yes = 1 / no = 0) and mismatched preferences (yes = 1 / no = 0). Respondents who have placed themselves at the center of the scale serve as the reference category. The issue

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[71] The predicted probabilities are derived from the multilevel logistic model using gllamm. The equivalent predicted placement probability based on a one-level model with clusters for countries is 56.5% [95%-CI: 49.7-63.3%].

[72] These estimates are based on a multilevel logistic model using gllamm. A one-level model with a pooled dataset and clusters for countries results in a predicted placement probability of 89.0% [95%-CI: 85.2-92.7%]. The sample is does not include those who have not placed themselves on the issue scale.

[73] The explanation of the variance can be calculated by the following formula: (variance empty model – variance model 1) / variance empty model.

[74] This lack in reduction of the variance at the lowest level is perfectly comprehensible as the cognitive component variables are understood in this analysis as level-2 variables.

incongruence variables have furthermore been interacted with the propensity-to-vote variable. As the estimated results presented in Table 3.10 suggest, an increase in ptv by one unit is associated with a reduction in misperception by 0.077 points for respondents with neither matched nor mismatched preferences. The coefficients for matched and mismatched preferences are -0.421 and -0.332, respectively. The two interaction terms are significantly associated with misperception and have the following coefficients: -0.055 when preferences are matched and +0.068 when preferences are mismatched. Thus, for all those respondents with matched preferences vis-à-vis the party assessed, perceptual accuracy improves as a result of positive party attitudes by -0.132 per one unit change in ptv (-0.077 - 0.055 = -0.125). Accordingly, when an individual and party share the same side in a conflict, estimated misperception amounts to 3.17 when ptv equals zero and 1.85 when ptv reaches its highest level. This result is fully in line with the projection effect hypothesis 2b. Similar results are obtained when we calculate predicted probabilities of the correct directional placement variable: predicted probabilities equals 49.6% when ptv is low, but 78.8% when ptv is high (see Table 3.12). These results are in line with theoretical expectations.

Table 3.12 Expected party knowledge depending on issue congruence and party attitudes – the EU integration issue

issue congruence	party attitudes	
	ptv = 0	ptv = 10
matched	49.6% [48.4-50.8]	78.8% [77.7-79.8]
mismatched	52.1% [51.0-53.3]	41.7% [40.2-43.3]

Note: Entries are predicted probabilities of placing a party in its correct tendency. Probabilities were calculated based on the estimations presented in Table 3K in the Appendix. 95%-confidence intervals (in parentheses) were computed with simulations using the command ci_marg_mu in Stata 12.

In contrast to what we would expect from theory, projections are not visible for the cases with mismatched preferences (hypothesis 2a). If we add the slope for the ptv variable and the slope for the interaction with ptv and mismatched preferences, we obtain the slope for propensity-to-vote in the case of mismatched preferences, which equals only -0.009. Consequently, when an individual and a party have contrasting views, estimated misperception is 3.26 when party attitudes are negative, and 3.17 when party attitudes are positive. The results with the alternative dichotomous variable (see Table 3.12) are more in

line with theory but still weak: the predicted probability of correct placement is 52.1% when party attitudes are negative and 41.7% when party attitudes are positive.[75]

Finally, higher propensity-to-vote scores are significantly linked to a more accurate perception of where parties stand in the integration conflict. A one unit increase in ptv is associated with a reduction in misperception by -0.077 points for individuals placed in the center of the integration scale and by -0.132 points for individuals with matched preferences with the party concerned, while it does not relate to a change in perceptual accuracy in those observational cases where preferences are mismatched. This is strong evidence for hypothesis 2e), according to which individuals are better informed about the party's policy profile the more the party is liked. Similar findings were obtained when using the other knowledge variables, as well as when we replace the propensity-to-vote variable with a dichotomous variable distinguishing between supporter and non-supporter. Overall, the fit of the model improves considerably compared to the cognition-model (BIC: 403'748.8). As shown in Table 3.13, the affective factors explain some of the variance at the individual (7.9%) as well as the lowest level (6.7%), but nothing at the country level. Overall, the affect-only model explains a larger portion of the total variance than the cognition-only model.

Furthermore, we observe "projection effects" to exist also with regard to the placement variable. Thus, whenever issue and party attitudes are not in line, respondents appear to be less likely to place a party on the scale. Given the originality of this finding, the results are summarized in Figure 3.3 for both issues (the graphs are based on the estimations presented in Table 3K in the Appendix). In general, higher ptv scores are associated with a higher probability of placing a party on the EU integration issue as well as on the left-right scale. However, this is particularly the case when preferences are matched (solid line) and less so when preferences are mismatched (dashed line). In consequence, respondents with a high ptv score are more likely to place a party on the scale when ideological tendencies match. By contrast, whenever party attitudes are negative a respondent is more likely to place a party when both share contrasting rather than similar ideological views. This finding is an important contribution to the literature on projection effects (cf. Markus and Converse 1979; Conover and Feldman 1983, 1989) as it points to alternative ways how partisans might cope with cognitive inconsistency. Further support for the validity of this result comes from an analysis based on the British Election Study 2015 Internet panel survey data (waves 1 – 6). I have estimated a series of dynamic random-effect probit models drawing upon this dataset. The description of the model as well as the estimated results (see Tables 3L – 3N) are

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[75] Thus, while the decline in misperception understood in absolute terms challenges theoretical expectation, the reduction in the probability of correctly placing a party in its appropriate tendency is weak but in line with the project effect hypothesis.

presented in the Appendix. The BES data is particularly well suited for a robustness check for two reasons. First, the survey asks the respondents directly about their party placement certainty for the EU issue. Second, the panel structure of the data allows to make more valid causal statements. The results, which are described in the Appendix, forcefully reveal two additional options how partisans cope with mismatched issue preferences to preserve party attitudes: 1) they can be uncertain about their own parties' positions; 2) they can have no opinion at all on where their parties stand.

Figure 3.3 Partisan biased perceptual uncertainty

European integration

left-right
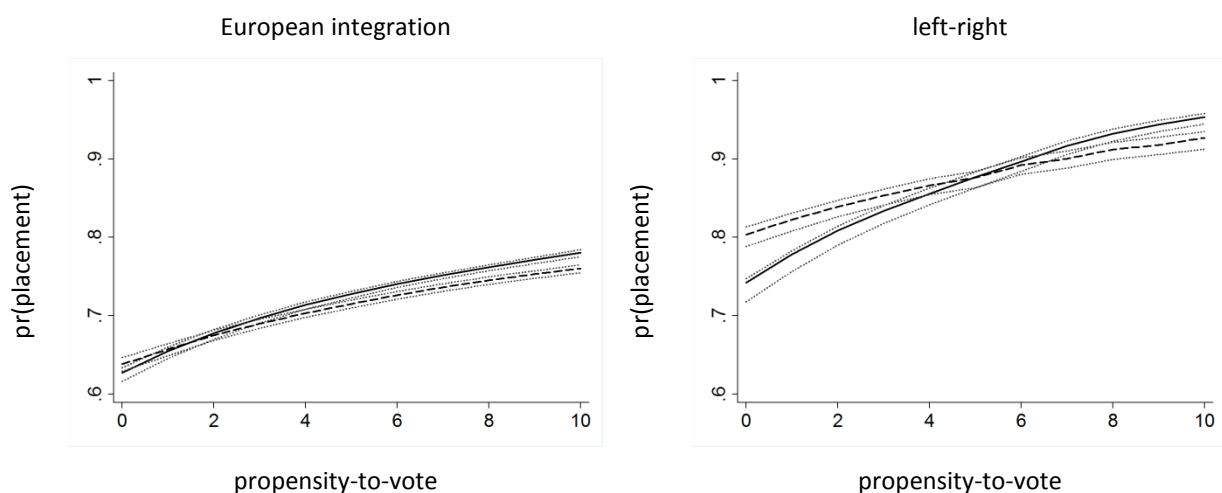
Note: Dashed lines stand for mismatched preferences and the solid line for matched preferences. Predicted probabilities were derived from the logistic random-intercept three-level model using gllamm. The lines denote the predicted probability that the party is placed the issue scale.

Finally, the full model estimates the simultaneous correlations between the cognitive and affective components, on the one hand, and misperception, on the other hand. The coefficients remain similar compared to the one estimated in the previous models. Model fit improves again despite the larger number of predictors (BIC: 403'275.3). The variances explained at each level relative to the empty model are as follows: 16.6% at country level, 12.9% at individual level, 6.4% at relational level, and 8.2% in total.

In order to cope with eventual problems of non-normal distribution as well as heteroskedasticity of the residuals, I have estimated additional models with the alternative binary correct placement variable as well with the log transformed dependent variable. However, normal probability plots of the standardized residuals at level 1 and 2 do not point to any violation of these assumptions (Snijders and Bosker 2012). Still, both models have been estimated as part of the model diagnostic but the results (significance and direction of the variables) do not change as a result of such model specifications. The effects of the explanatory variables are, moreover, linear. The model has also been estimated with random

slopes, but this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, it will be shown that the effects of the cognitive components as well as propensity-to-vote are context-dependent. Adding such random slopes to the model would, however, improve model fit.[76]

How do we interpret the results presented in this section? Cognitive as well as affective components impinge upon our perception of where political parties stand in the conflict over European integration. In line with extent literature, higher levels of political awareness, education, and political involvement relate to lower misperception and to higher probability of placing a party on the EU issue scale (cf. Alvarez 1997; Alvarez and Franklin 1994). Moreover, these factors explain not only variance across respondents but first and foremost across countries. This finding, in turn, contributes to the literature on policy-based party competition (cf. Adams et al. 2004). In particular, it suggests that the effect of such strategies might vary across countries depending on the amount of cognitive resources and motivation their citizens are endowed with. A political party's shift in issue positions might have considerable consequences in countries where the public is generally well informed and attentive to politics, but the same strategic move won't be recognized and will therefore have no effect in countries where people are not receptive to parties' policy promises.

The results for the affective components are more difficult to grasp. In general, the affect-only model explains a greater part of the total variance than the cognition model. In line with the argument that citizens are more exposed to information on preferred parties, respondents appear to be generally better informed about preferred parties' EU profiles rather than about those of other parties. Their party-placement is more accurate and they are more likely to place the party on the scale. Projection effects occur as well, but primarily when respondents and parties have matched preferences. When preferences for EU integration are mismatched, misperception does not seem to depend on respondents' party attitudes. A possible explanation for this difference might be that people are generally better informed about parties they like irrespectively of whether they share the same policy preferences or not. Interestingly, "projection effects" are also present when the placement variable is analyzed. This, in turn, suggests two things. First, the projection effects with regard to the perceptual accuracy variable is probably underestimated and would be more extensive if respondents were either encouraged more strongly to place parties on the EU issue scale or, alternatively, if I had imputed the missing values. Secondly, it seems that voters have three possibilities to preserve party identity and attitudes in case of incongruent issue preferences with the supported party: 1) they misperceive the party' position by systematically placing the party closer to their own position; 2) they refuse to place the party; or, 3) they are uncertain

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[76] For instance, when we add a random slope for awareness at country level, the fixed coefficient is almost unaffected at -0.61, but the slopes vary considerably across countries ranging between +0.03 and -1.28.

about its actual position. To test the robustness of my finding, I have conducted an additional analysis based on the BES 2015 Internet panel data. The findings, which are presented in the Appendix, fully corroborate my argument. Accordinly, both *placement certainty* and *placement probability* constitute two alternative options to cope with cognitive inconsistency in order to preserve party attitudes. Finally, in the EU issue case misperception is higher when preferences are mismatched rather than matched.

Table 3.13 Explained variances at different levels – the EU issue

Levels	controls-only	cognition-only	affect-only	full
country	5.1%	16.1%	6.0%	16.6%
respondent	-1.3%	4.3%	7.9%	12.9%
residual	3.0%	3.0%	6.4%	6.4%
Total	2.2%	3.8%	6.7%	8.2%

Note: The explained partial variances are derived from the same models as presented in Table 3.9 but using maximum likelihood estimation.

The left-right issue

A similar pattern occurs regarding the perceptual accuracy of parties' left-right positions, with a few noteworthy differences. As shown in Table 3.16, the results of the empty model analysis indicates a mean intercept of 2.066, while the total variance of 3.132 can be decomposed as follows: 0.119 (3.8%) at country level, 0.691 (22.06%) at respondent level and 2.322 (74.14%) at relational level. Thus, total variance is smaller compared to the EU issue case, while its relative decomposition is similar. Adding the two control variables to the model reduces variance at the individual and the relational level. Model fit is 392'592.8 BIC.

The results for the cognition-only model show that political involvement is not associated with misperception whatsoever once we control for the effect of the two other cognitive components. Higher levels of misperception due to higher levels of political involvement are not observed when the dichotomous correct placement variable is used as the dependent variable.[77] Furthermore, political involvement corresponds with a higher probability of placing a party on the left-right scale (see Table 3K in the Appendix). Thus, the relationship between political involvement and party knowledge appears to depend on whether we are interested in perceptual accuracy or uncertainty.

With regard to the results presented in Table 3.16, we can note that the coefficient for political awareness is -0.752 and for education -0.131. Political awareness and level of education correlate negatively with left-right misperception to a similar degree as in the case of the integration issue. While keeping the controls at their mean values, estimated misperception amounts to 0.63 when political awareness and level of education is high, but it increases to 1.83 when the individual is endowed with few cognitive resources. The difference in estimated misperception between the highly politically sophisticated and the less sophisticated is, therefore, similar to that in the EU issue case. I get similar results for the other dependent variables. As summarized in Table 3.14, a respondent with few cognitive resources has an estimated probability of 49.4% to correctly place a party with respect to its ideological tendency, while the predicted placement probability amounts to only 70.2%. In contrast, someone with high levels of cognitive resources is associated with an 80.9% chance to be correct and a predicted placement probability which equals 96.5%.[78] As seen in Table 3.17, variances are explained (relative to the models with the control variables)

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[77] Thus, strongly involved people exaggerate party placements by more often putting parties at the extremes of the scale, but they do not err any more than others when it comes to parties' ideological directions.
[78] These estimates are taken from a three-level logistic random-intercept model. I obtain similar results when a logit model is estimated with the pooled data and country clusters.

at country and at the individual level, but not at the relational level. Overall, model fit improves considerably (BIC: 391'281.6).

Table 3.14 Expected party knowledge for different levels of cognition – the left-right issue

	Cognitive resources	
	low	high
misperception	1.83	0.63
predicted probability of placing a party in its correct direction	49.4% [48.0-50.8]	80.9% [80.1-81.7]
predicted probability of placing a party on the issue scale	70.2% [67.9-72.3]	96.5% [96.1-97.0]

Note: The expected results are calculated based on the results of the full model and by keeping the remaining variables at mean value. A low level of cognition comprises the 5th percentiles of three cognitive components, while a high value entails the 95th percentiles. 95-% confidence intervals are displayed in parentheses, and were calculated with simulations using the command ci_marg_mu in Stata 12.

The next two columns in Table 3.16 present the results for the model with the affective components and the two control variables. The estimated results are generally in line with theoretical predictions. The coefficient for propensity-to-vote is only -0.037. When we consider respondents with matched preferences (-0.456) misperception is reduced by -0.093 points per one unit change in ptv. Thus, estimated misperception among individuals with matched preferences vis-à-vis the party concerned reaches 2.29 when party attitudes are negative (51.1% probability of placing the party in the correct direction). In line with theory, perceptual accuracy improves when ptv is particularly high. Estimated misperception amounts to 1.36 and the predicted probability of placing the party in its correct ideological direction is 87.6%. Among respondents with mismatched preferences, a one unit change in ptv is associated with an increase in misperception by 0.074 points. Estimated misperception is thus 1.68 when party attitudes are negative (82.1% predicted probability of placing a party in the correct direction), but 2.42 when party attitudes are positive (28.2% correct direction).[79] Table 3.15 summarizes the results for the dichotomous correct direction placement variable.

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[79] Projection effects are a problem for both spatial proximity voting models as well as direction voting models (Rabinowitz et al. 1989; MacDonald et al. 1995)

Table 3.15 Expected party knowledge depending on issue congruence and party attitudes – the left-right conflict

	party attitudes	
preferences	ptv = 0	ptv = 10
matched	51.1% [50.0-52.4]	87.6% [86.9-88.2]
mismatched	82.1% [81.3-82.8]	28.2% [26.5-29.8]

Note: Entries are predicted probabilities of placing a party in its correct direction. Probabilities were calculated based on the estimations presented in Table 3K in the Appendix. Confidence intervals (in parentheses) were computed with simulations using the command ci_murge_mu in Stata 12.

In the left-right case, party attitudes and issue incongruence as such have no clearly discernible association with perceptual accuracy. Clearly present, however, are projections for respondents with both matched as well as with mismatched preferences. The coefficients for the two interaction terms are -0.044 and 0.105, respectively. Overall, projection are more extensive compared to the EU integration issue (compare also the results presented in Tables 3.12 and 3.15). Relative to the empty model, variance is reduced by 10.1% at country level, 16.4% at the individual level, and 2.7% at the relational level (see Table 3.16). Compared to the EU issue case, the affective components explain a considerable portion of the variance across countries and parties. Model fit improves considerably (BIC is 389'258.7). Moreover, as Figure 3.3 shows, such project effects are also present for the binary placement variable. Just like for the EU issue, respondents are more likely to place a party on the left-right continuum whenever ideological orientation and party attitudes are in line (Table 3K in the Appendix contains the corresponding estimates). The fact that this phenomenon has already been observed for the EU issue and in the analysis based on the BES Internet panel data (see Appendix) provides additional empirical evidence in support of the hypothesis that varying placement probability and certainty constitute two alternative options to cope with cognitive inconsistency. I have estimated a similar dynamic random-effect probit model with the binary left-right party placement variable (1= the respondent placed the party on scale; 0 otherwise) as already done for the EU issue. As presented in Table 3N in the Appendix, the results fully corroborate my theoretical argument.

The full model includes all eight variables. In comparison to the estimates from the partial models, coefficients remain similar in size and significance. Model fit improves compared to the other models despite the larger numbers of predictors (BIC: 384'804.9). The full model explains 16.8% of the variance in perceptual accuracy at country level, 25.3% at individual level, 2.6% at relational level, and 8.2% in total. In sum, the analysis brings to the fore that a great portion of the variance in the perceptual accuracy of the left-right conflict across countries is to a large extent due to individual-related factors. Cognitive components and projections are at work explaining, moreover, a considerable portion of the variance at the

individual and, to a lesser extent, at the relational level. The diagnostic of the model assumptions show that normal distribution of the residuals is a greater problem than for the EU issue, but running the same model with the log-transformed dependent variable or with the binary correct placement variable does not change the coefficients in any substantial way. The fixed effects are linear and using random slopes improves model fit, a topic that will be dealt with in Chapter 5.[80]

In sum, cross-country variance in perceptual accuracy can partly be attributed to cross-country differences in citizens' cognitive and affective endowments. As these factors impinge on the perceptual accuracy of parties' issue positions, this study suggests that policy-based strategies of party competition might in some countries be more effective than in others. Moreover, I found stronger projection for the left-right dimension as opposed to the EU integration issue. This is intriguing. On the one hand, the left-right conflict is a salient dimension of party competition, and unsurprisingly, as shown in Chapter 2, voters place parties on the left-right scale fairly accurate. Yet, left-right placements are subject to projection to a greater extent than EU issue party placements. Finally, as a major contribution to the projection literature, my research revealed that party placement probability and certainty are two alternative means to manage cognitive inconsistency.

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[80] A model with random slopes for awareness across countries leaves the fixed parameter for awareness unchanged but, depending on the country, the coefficients vary between +0.03 and -1.28 (for the EU issue), and +0.02 and -1.38 (left-right).

Table 3.16 How cognitive and affective components relate to perceptual accuracy of parties' left-right positions

	empty model		controls-only		cognition-only		affect-only		full	
	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
Fixed-effects parameters										
political awareness					-0.752***	(0.032)			-0.685***	(0.033)
political involvement					-0.001	(0.013)			0.012	(0.012)
education					-0.131***	(0.006)			-0.115***	(0.006)
propensity-to-vote (ptv)							-0.037***	(0.003)	-0.037***	(0.003)
matched preferences							-0.456***	(0.028)	-0.371***	(0.028)
ptv*matched							-0.056***	(0.004)	-0.055***	(0.004)
mismatched preferences							-1.066***	(0.022)	-0.973***	(0.027)
ptv*mismatched							0.111***	(0.004)	0.108***	(0.004)
respondent extremity			0.097***	(0.004)	0.093***	(0.004)	-0.005	(0.005)	0.221***	(0.006)
party extremity			0.120***	(0.005)	0.119***	(0.005)	0.109***	(0.005)	0.108***	(0.006)
Constant	2.066***	(0.071)	1.600***	(0.077)	2.525***	(0.077)	2.015***	(0.070)	2.818***	(0.072)
Random-effects parameters										
var(country)	0.119	(0.035)	0.136	(0.040)	0.122	(0.036)	0.107	(0.031)	0.099	(0.029)
var(respondent)	0.691	(0.011)	0.666	(0.012)	0.585	(0.011)	0.578	(0.011)	0.516	(0.010)
var(party-respondent)	2.322	(0.011)	2.306	(0.011)	2.308	(0.011)	2.260	(0.011)	2.261	(0.011)
Model-Fit estimates										
Log Likelihood	-196'780.5		-196'261.8		-195'588.9		-194'565.9		-193'994.2	
BIC	393'607.1		392'592.8		391'281.6		389'258.7		388'149.9	

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Notes: The variable "matched preferences" corresponds to those observations where the respondent and party are both either right- (positions above 5.5) or left-oriented (position below 4.5), while "mismatched preferences" describe cases where both the respondent and the party have a contrasting ideological views. Number of observations: 24 countries, 19252 respondents and 102'070 party-respondent relations.

Table 3.17 Explained variances at different levels – the left-right issue

	controls	cognition	affect	cognition & affect
Country	-14.3%	-2.5%	10.1%	16.8%
Individual	3.6%	15.3%	16.4%	25.3%
Party-Respondent	0.7%	0.6%	2.7%	2.6%
Total	3.9%	4.1%	4.2%	8.2%

Note: The explained partial variances are based on the same model as presented in table 3.12 with maximum likelihood estimation.

Interaction: Cognitive resources and projections

The remainder of this chapter examines to what extent cognition moderates the association between the affective components and party knowledge. I focus only on political awareness as the sole cognitive component. Do people who are relatively interested in politics and well-informed about neutral political facts succumb to projection to a greater extent than others? For this purpose, I have estimated a model with the following explanatory variables: respondent's positional extremity, party's positional extremity, awareness, propensity-to-vote, matched preferences, the interaction term between matched preferences and propensity-to-vote, mismatched preferences, and the interaction between mismatched preferences and propensity-to-vote. To examine whether awareness attenuates or reinforces projection I have interacted awareness with the two interaction terms. Thus, the model includes two triple interactions. Furthermore, interaction analysis also requires the inclusion of interactions between awareness and the constitutive terms (ptv, matched preferences, and mismatched preference). The results for both issue conflicts are presented in Table 3.18. For a more easily intelligible interpretation of the interactions, Figures 3.4 and 3.5 summarize the results in graphical format. I have again estimated a three-level model but with random slopes for propensity-to-vote and the two issue congruence variables at the respondent level. Furthermore, identity covariance matrices have been used due to convergence problems. Finally, for each issue conflict I have estimated one model without the interactions with the awareness variable and another model excluding only the two triple interaction terms to examine improvement in model fits. The respective BICs are presented in the last three rows.

Table 3.18 How cognition moderates partisan biased perception

	EU		left-right	
	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
fixed effects				
awareness	-1.004***	(0.082)	-0.965***	(0.057)
propensity-to-vote	-0.154***	(0.011)	-0.059***	(0.008)
matched	-0.526***	(0.068)	-0.316***	(0.052)
ptv*matched	-0.028*	(0.014)	-0.077*	(0.010)
mismatched	0.074	(0.070)	-1.220***	(0.048)
ptv*mismatched	0.051**	(0.015)	0.184**	(0.011)
respondent extremity	0.129***	(0.005)	0.233***	(0.004)
party extremity	0.315***	(0.006)	0.106***	(0.006)
interactions with awareness				
ptv*awareness	0.114***	(0.018)	0.030*	(0.012)
matched*awareness	0.135	(0.101)	-0.079	(0.078)
ptv*matched*awareness	-0.049*	(0.021)	0.022	(0.015)
mismatched*awareness	-0.558***	(0.103)	0.292***	(0.071)
ptv*mismatched*awareness	0.021	(0.023)	-0.111***	(0.017)
constant	3.009***	(0.111)	2.593***	(0.075)
random effects				
var(country)	0.221	(0.064)	0.099	(0.029)
var(respondent, variables)	0.010	(0.0004)	0.003	(0.0002)
var(residual)	4.239	(0.022)	2.732	(0.013)
model fit parameters				
log likelihood	-211'247.7		-203'344.6	
BIC	422'690.7		406'986.3	
BIC (without tripple interactions)	422'670.7		407'030.0	
BIC (without interactions with awareness)	422'840.2		406'983.5	

Note: The estimates are derived from a three-level model with random slopes for matched, mismatched preferences, and the ptv variable at level 2 (respondent). For the EU issue: number of countries: 24, respondents: 17'446; party-voter dyads: 97'439. For the left-right case: 24 countries, 19'807 respondents, and 105'117 party-voter dyads.

Figure 3.4 How political awareness moderates partisan biased perception– the EU issue
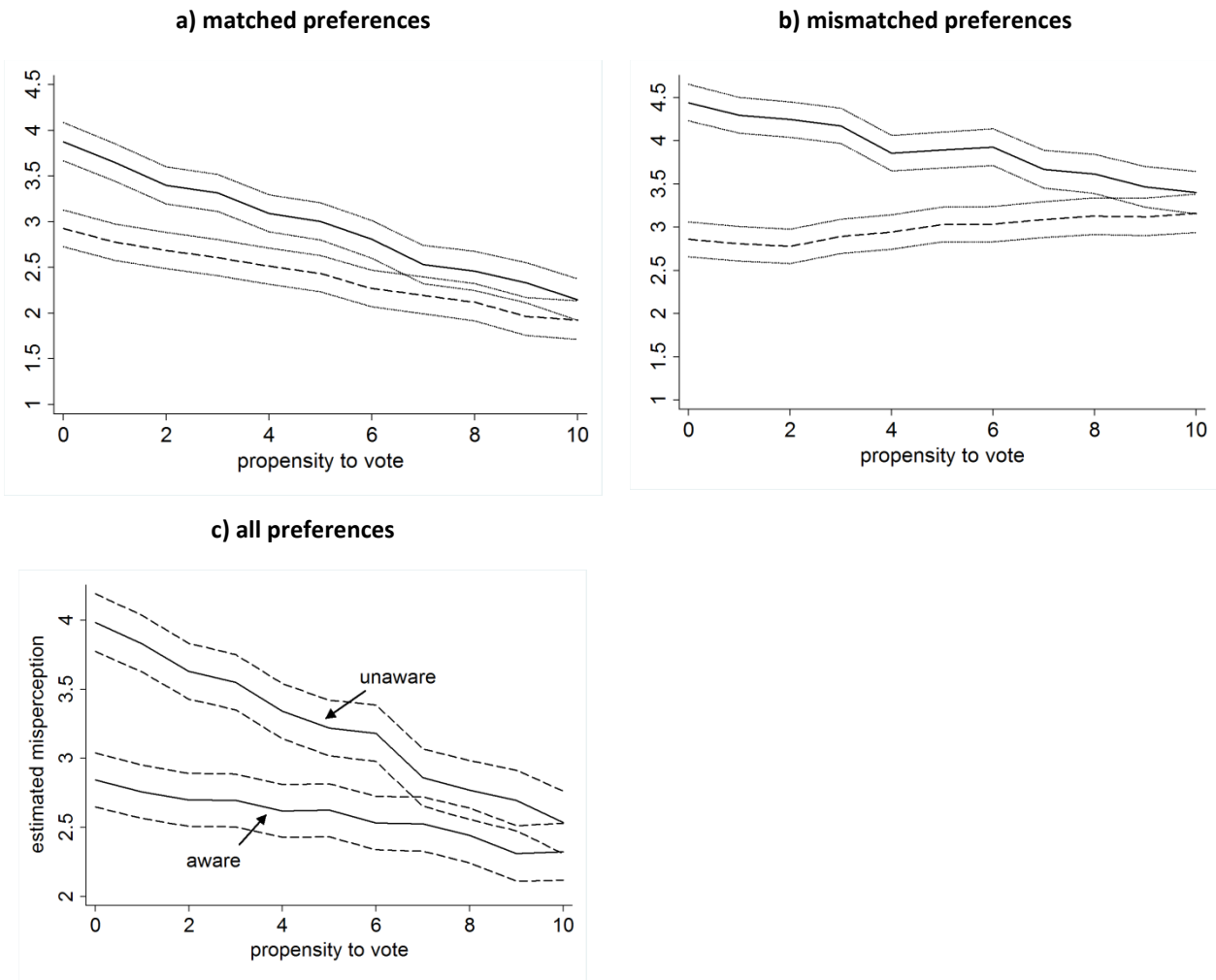
a) matched preferences

b) mismatched preferences

c) all preferences

Note: The solid lines are the predicted values for the unaware (awareness score is 0), while the dashed line shows the value for the highly aware (awarness = 1).

The EU issue

As shown in Table 3.18 and Figures 3.4 a) to c), political awareness appears to moderate the association between affect and perception. On closer inspection, however, two patterns stand out. First, it appears that unaware respondents are disproportionatey better informed about liked parties. This finding is confirmed when the alternative party knowledge variables are used. Second, a comparison of Figures 3.4 a) and b) reveals that it is the politically unaware, in particular, who misperceive parties' EU issue positions when they have mismatched preferences regarding European integration. Presumably, less aware respondents pull parties towards their own placement irrespective of their party attitudes – something that could be interpreted as the false consensus being more prevalent among the

politically unaware. These findings are corroborated by the results of the model with the dichotomous correct placement variable.

In Table 3.18 we see that the triple interactions between awareness, propensity-to-vote and the matched (-0.049) or the mismatched preference variable (+0.021) are either insignificant or barely significant. Hence, projections seem neither to be attenuated nor reinforced by political awareness. However, the interaction between awareness and propensity-to-vote (0.114), on the one hand, as well as between awareness and the mismatched preference variable (-0.558) on the other hand, are highly significant and substantively large. This suggests that even though awareness does not moderate projections, it moderates the association between party knowledge and the other affective components. As shown in Figure 3.4 c) (all preferences), perceptual accuracy improves as ptv increases for the politically unaware to a much greater extent than for the political aware individuals regardless of whether ideological views are similar or not.

Figure 3.4 a) would indicate the occurrence of projection if the slope decreased. In contrast, in Figure 3.4 b) an increasing slope would point to the existence of projection. This appears to be the case only for the politically aware (dashed line). The curve runs, however, much more steeply for the politically unaware when preferences are matched, suggesting stronger projections among the politically unaware. This is, however, mainly due to the fact that the politically unaware are disproportionatey better informed about liked as opposed to disliked parties (see the declining solid lines). Accordingly, when we focus on respondents with mismatched preferences the results differ. In fact, there is a result that contradicts the projection effect hypothesis for the politically unaware: misperception declines (i.e. perceptual accuracy improves) despite higher ptv scores whenever the unaware voter and party have mismatched preferences on European integration. Given that the coefficients for the triple interactions are weak, while the interactions between awareness and the two constitutive components (ptv and mismatched preferences) are strong, the goodness of model fit is highest for the model which contains only the interactions between awareness and the constitutive components (BIC: 422'670.7).

In sum, in the EU integration conflict projections (that is to say, the need to perceive a liked party as having similar political views and disliked parties to have contrasting opinion) seem to be more systematically present among the politically aware. This finding would corroborate the notion that cognition is used to achieve directional rather than accuracy goals (Lodge and Taber, 2000). Yet, the results are not unequivocal. In particular, the perception formation of the politically unaware is influenced by other affective components rather than being subject to systematic projections. They succumb to a greater extent to false consensus and especially to selective exposure. Hence, it is mainly the politically unaware who are

disproportionately better informed about preferred parties' EU issue positions than about those of disliked parties. In general, the question as to whether selective exposure is subject to individual and contextual factors is still contested (Stroud 2008; Garrett 2009). The results presented here suggest that some interest and awareness on the part of citizens is required to overcome such a bias in information acquisition. I obtained the same results when replacing the ptv variable with the dichotomous supporter/non-supporter variable and when using the binary correct placement variable, which corroborates this finding. Similar results pointing in the same direction were obtained for the placement probability variable, although the coefficients were not significant.

Figure 3.5 How political awareness moderates partisan biased perception – the left-right issue
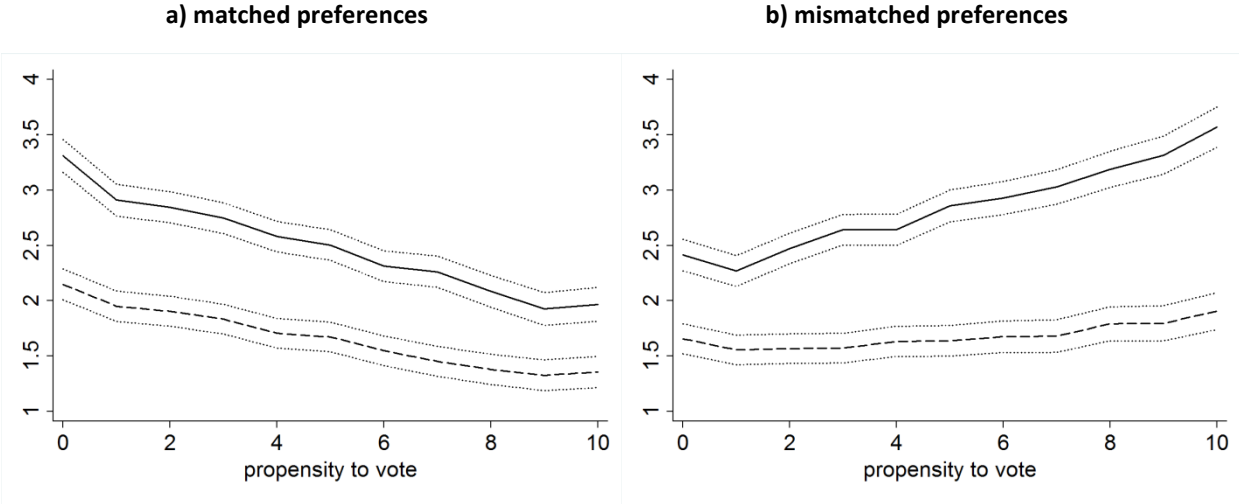
a) matched preferences   b) mismatched preferences

Note: The solid lines are the predicted values for the unaware (awareness score is 0), while the dashed lines show the value for the highly aware (awarness score equals 1)

The left-right issue

The pattern is different for the left right issue, for which projections appear to be stronger and systematically present among the politically unaware. Figure 3.5 a) and b) summarize the results which are displayed in Table 3.18. Among observations with matched preferences, the curve for the politically unaware (solid line) runs much steeper than the one for the politically aware (dashed line). When preferences are mismatched, the curve for the unaware respondents increases, whereas the flat dashed line suggest that perceptual accuracy is almost unaffected by party attitudes among the highly aware. Thus, the triple interactions (+0.022 and -0.111) together with the results presented in Figures 3.5 a) and b) suggests that projections in the left-right conflict are clearly more pervasive among politically unaware

respondents. Moreover, even stronger results pointing in the same direction were obtained when the alternative correct placement variable was used or when the ptv variable was replaced with a dichotomous variable distinguishing the supporter from the non-supporter. At the same time, I have found no evidence for selective exposure or biased information-seeking in the left-right conflict being more prevalent among less sophisticated voters. Still, the fit of the model with triple interactions remains slightly inferior to the model without interactions with the awareness variable (BIC: 406'986 vs. 406'984).[81]

In sum, in the left-right case cognitive resources seem to help individuals in reducing misperception which is due to projection. The results show that projections are stronger among the politically unaware as opposed to those who dispose of greater political awareness. In the left-right conflict, however, politically sophisticated voters have less need to project. As several studies show, ideological left-right orientation is strongly associated with party attitudes and choice and this is, moreover, particularly the case among politically sophisticated voters. The case is different in the European integration conflict, where politically aware and involved citizens appear to have a greater need to project.

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[81] With a random-intercept model without random slopes, BIC (415'887.2) is markedly smaller for the model with the two triple interactions than for the model without the interactions with the awareness variable (BIC is 416'064.2).

Summary of Chapter 3

In this chapter, I examined how citizens' cognitive and affective components relate to their knowledge about parties' EU issue and left-right positions. As a second step, in light of the extant literature, I tested whether projections are more prevalent among the politically aware. Projections refer to the notion that voters project their own issue positions onto parties which they like, while they exaggerate the distance between their own self-placement and those of parties they dislike. I found that cognitive resources – especially political awareness – matter. First, they enable people to hold an opinion about parties' issue positions and, secondly, they help individuals to accurately place parties on both the EU issue and the left-right scale. Moreover, cognition factors not only explain variance in party knowledge at the individual but also at the country level. The fact that, in some countries, parties' issue positions are less accurately perceived can be attributed to the difference in the levels of political awareness and interest in politics on the part of citizens. In consequence, in countries where voters' level of political awareness and interest is low policy-based strategies of party competition might be a less successful strategy. This finding should be accounted for in the research on the effects of parties' policy shifts (e.g. Adams et al. 2004, 2006, 2011). At the same time, I have hinted at the variance of the effect of the cognitive components across countries. As Chapter 5 will show, the relation between cognition and party knowledge is context dependent. In particular, in some countries motivation and ability do not enable people to place parties on issue scales more accurately.

The relationship between the affective components and party knowledge is more complex to grasp, and it differs across the two issues examined. In the EU issue case, we note that people – especially those who are less aware – place parties more accurately the more those parties are liked. In line with a large literature, party attitudes appear to bias how we gather and process information on political parties. One of the results is that, individuals are generally better informed about parties which they like (e.g. Lau and Redlawsk 2006). This result is reflected in the empirical findings presented in this section. It is robust, and it appears to be particularly evident for less sophisticated voters. Moreover, citizens also tend to succumb to false consensus: EU-opponents as opposed to supporters deem parties to be more EU-skeptical. These effects do not exist to the same extent in the left-right case. In contrast, projections appear to be more present in the left-right as opposed to the EU integration conflict (see Grand and Tiemann 2014 for a similar finding). Such projections occur with regard to both perceptual accuracy and uncertainty, and they both appear to be stronger in the left-right conflict as opposed to the EU issue case. Thus, the placement probability is also subject to projections. This finding is a largely ignored phenomenon, and it is an important contribution to the literature on projection effects, which so far has focused

(implicitly or explicitly) on perceptual accuracy (cf. Markus and Converse 1979; Conover and Feldman 1983, 1989). The finding has been corroborated by an additional study based on the BES 2015 Internet panel survey. 1) Misperceiving the party's actual position, 2) not placing the party on the issue scale, and 3) being uncertain about the party's actual issue position are three different options that voters dispose of to preserve their party attitudes in case of inconsistent issue preferences (i.e. matched issue preferences with a disliked party or mismatched preferences with a liked party). Moreover, my empirical results also brought to light that with regard to the left-right issue projections are stronger among the less aware. Even though my findings do not provide a robust answer, projections and other forms of partisan baised perception (party attitude bias) don't appear to be more prevalent among the politically aware electorate (this finding is in line with Bartels 2002).

Anticipating the next chapter, the analysis so far has shown that some of the differences in perceptual accuracy and certainty across parties and countries are attributable to the cognitive and affective resources with which citizens are endowed. These factors need to be considered when we examine the impact of the party system and party attributes.

Chapter 4

Political parties and party knowledge

In this chapter, I examine the impact of political parties on party knowledge. What voters might possibly know about political parties' policy profiles depends on the quantity and quality of political information conveyed by parties and other politically motivated actors - information that is often filtered through various media channels (Franklin 1991; Alvarez 1997; Conover and Feldman 1989). Different societal actors, such as friends, family members, and religious and other associations, also influence our political opinions and impressions.

Political parties are considered to be the most important source that influences our voting behavior and our perceptions on where political parties stand (Weber 1947; Norris et al. 1999). I argue that parties employ three policy-related strategies of competition: 1) position-taking; 2) the manipulation of issue salience; and, 3) a politics of ambiguity. Taken together, these strategies form an information environment which impedes or facilitates perceptual accuracy of parties' policy preferences (Franklin 1991). What people might possibly know about parties' policy preferences depends to a large extent on how parties use these various policy-based linkage-possibilities in order to mobilize the electorate. In concert with the strategies chosen by all political parties competing for the same legislative seats, these aggregated statements shape the level of clarity of the political context in which the voter must find her way.

In the literature the term "clarity" is often used by scholars when they refer to the importance of the political context for voters to choose in line with their own interests (Dalton 1985; Key 1966). Scholars have studied various concepts that refer to one or the other aspect of political clarity: party system or party institutionalization, clarity of responsibility, campaign intensity and politicization of political issues, to mention only a few. The politicization of an issue is a concept that comes fairly close to what I have in mind. It is a contested concept that describes a combination of issue polarization and salience (de Wilde 2011). What is important to bear in mind is that political clarity results from the total information which is passed on to the electorate. In abstract terms, such information varies in quantity and quality.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first section introduces political parties' strategies and postulates their effects on citizens' party knowledge. Next, I discuss the conceptualization and measurement of issue salience followed by a comparison of issue salience across countries. The same is done for each of the other two concepts; issue

polarization and policy ambiguity. In the two final sections, I first examine bivariate relations between the party-related factors and party knowledge. Second, I estimate a multivariate multilevel analysis to examine the simultaneous effects of party- and individual-level predictors.

4.1 Parties' competition strategies and the dissemination of information

A considerable amount of information about politics either originates directly from what parties say or do, or it is transmitted by the media. Parties disseminate information about their policy preferences through behavior such as roll-call voting (Levendusky 2009), symbolic gestures, choice of coalition partners (Fortunato and Stevenson 2013) and the policies implemented while in government. Information is also disseminated through language. Language can be understood as everything that a party says or writes and is in most countries particularly concentrated in the period prior to elections. It includes press communiques, campaign speeches, official party programs, TV and radio debates as well as interviews. Political language is also expressed after election campaigns such as parliamentary speeches, interviews, or information that is accessible on parties' websites.

Some political messages target the whole nation, while others are tailored to a specific audience, or for a particular region or electoral district. Parties communicate in different arenas, in the legislature, during election campaigns. In this context, it is important to reiterate that in European democracies political parties campaign in local, national, and in the European Parliament elections. It is not always the same information that parties pass on to voters across these different elections, arenas, or regions.

The three strategies that parties employ to mobilize voters – position taking, issue salience manipulation, and a politics of ambiguity – together constitute the information environment in which, or on the basis of which, voters form their perceptions. Some scholars argue that parties are purely rational actors seeking to gain votes. To them the information environment stems from the deliberate choices made by parties which are contingent on parties' goals (Cox and McCubbins 1993).[82] Others would question whether a party's policy profile as presented to the electorate is a deliberate choice in an effort to maximize political power, arguing instead that a party program is fixed as it reflects deep and enduring societal conflicts (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In such purely sociological approaches to party competition, parties are strongly tied to deep societal divisions and the policy packages which they offer in elections are invariable.

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[82] Party goals can be manifold (Müller and Strom 1999). In the rational-choice approach to party competition, parties are assumed to be interested first and foremost in votes and offices, and only secondarily in policies, which often are merely a means to an end (Downs 1957). However, some parties give, due to their organizational structure and their history, greater priority to policies over office- and vote-seeking goals (Kitschelt 1989).

The truth is often to be found somewhere in between these two paradigms. With regard to policy-related strategies, it has been argued that parties are freer to manipulate ambiguity and salience rather than position (Budge and Farlie 1983). Moreover, parties are less restricted in choosing sides on issues which are unrelated to an established ideological conflict (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hix and Lord 1997; Benoit and Laver 2006). To some extent, the conflict over EU integration could be perceived as a conflict which is unrelated to established ideological conflicts. In a similar way, a new conflict over immigration and related cultural issues could, in some countries, be detached from the established socioeconomic conflict, enabling parties to take sides at their own discretion (Meguid 2005).

Citizens will become knowledgeable about a political party's policy profile to the extent that parties disseminate clear information about their issue positions. Whether we assume political parties to be office-, vote-, or policy-seeking, parties convey policy information only to the extent that it serves a purpose.[83] At the same time, they tend to withhold information that jeopardizes their goals. My research draws upon the CMP data to measure the clarity in parties' policy profiles. While so far no research based on the CMP data has been conducted to investigate how issue salience and policy ambiguity relate to party knowledge, a number of scholars have been rather sceptical about voters' ability to respond to shifts in parties' policy promises as measured with the CMP data (Adams et al. 2011, 2014, Fortunato and Stevenson 2013).

Position-taking and the polarization of an issue

Apart from the observation that due to various constraints parties do not move around n-dimensional issue spaces as they wish (cf. Robertson 1976; Grofman 2004; Adams et al. 2004; Adams et al. 2005), existing literature lacks any empirical understanding of how parties effectively manage to shift their policy positions.[84] On a similar note, we must be aware of the simple fact that positions by themselves are not informative; rather, they must be communicated to the electorate. Positions are not a means of communication but the outcome of a combination of policy-related messages – especially manipulation of issue salience and politics of ambiguity.

However, we could account for the possibility that through policy differentiation – i.e. when a particular party takes on a different stance from all the other parties' positions – parties' policy preferences become visible. If parties take on different positions on an issue, the issue becomes polarized. Issue polarization denotes the degree of issue difference as reflected in

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[83] There are various other voter-party linkages which do not involve policies and are nevertheless effective in mobilizing voters such as clientelism, personalized campaigns, or populism (Kitschelt 2001.

[84] We might conceive of different instruments at the disposal of parties to shift their issue positions such as issue framing, moderation in tone, blurring, or (de-) emphasizing.

the policy proposals of competing parties (Sartori 1976; Klingemann 2005).[85] The bigger the differences are, the more is a party system considered to be polarized on that particular issue.

Research has found that divergent positions, as espoused by competing parties, make it more likely that parties will convey more information concerning their preferences (Key 1966; Schattschneider 1960; Dahl 1961; Sani and Sartori 1983). In consequence, polarization increases the clarity of the political offer, which allows voters to express their preferences by choosing candidates and parties with proximate policy profiles (Carmines and Stimson 1989; van der Eijk and Franklin 2004; de Vries 2007). Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996: 369) have pointed out that parties have no incentive to compete on the EU issue if there is a lack of inter-party policy differences on European matters. As recent studies on US politics report, the observed increase in ideological polarization between the Republican and the Democratic parties has enabled many voters to place parties correctly on the liberal-conservative scale (Hetherington 2001) as well as on more specific issue dimensions (Layman and Carsey 2002; Murakami 2008). In addition, polarization increases the attention that parties and media, as well as the public, pay to the issue concerned, while preferences on the issue receive a greater weight in party evaluation (Carmines and Stimson 1980).[86] For instance, it has been observed that the media pays less attention to the EU issue if parties do not differ in their opinion on European integration (Schuck et al. 2011). Using survey data for several Northern European countries as well as the CSES data set, Dahlberg (2009) has found that left-right polarization is associated with greater agreement among voters as to where political parties stand in left-right terms.

Overall, issue positions need to be communicated. Nevertheless, political clarity and thus party knowledge necessitates that parties communicate contrasting issue positions. The effect of polarization on party knowledge might be summarized as follows: 1) polarization makes people perceive an issue to be important; 2) this perceived importance gives people incentives to be particularly attentive to information concerning that issue, and this attention in turn leads to a more informed understanding of what the party actually stands for as well as greater certainty of their perceptions; 3) a more accurate understanding makes it more likely that parties will be judged and evaluated according to their policy positions; 4) projection effects (contrast- & assimilation effects, as well as false consensus effects) are expected to be less pronounced; and, 5) the media pays greater attention to the issue concerned and diffuses more issue-relevant information to the public.

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[85] For Sartori, polarization denotes two things: ideological distance between parties and the ideological intensity of the system (Sartori 1976: 111).
[86] To draw the link to the priming literature, polarization primes a certain issue and therefore makes it more accessible to people in their opinion- and decision-making (Iyengar and Kinder 1989).

Issue salience

The second strategy is issue salience manipulation with which parties attempt to direct public attention to particular issues.[87] Issue salience refers to the emphasis parties put on concerned specific issue and can be understood in either absolute or relative terms (Green-Pedersen 2007). The first type of issue salience refers to the absolute amount of information available on a particular issue, while the second type concerns the emphasis an issue receives relative to the attention devoted to other topics. Issue salience differs in degree; some parties might refuse to express a position on an issue, others may shy away from discussing the issue, while others may instead push the discussion on that issue by stressing it in their party programs, campaign speeches, interviews, and debates. The agenda-setting literature points to the limited capacity of public attention, speeches, and programs (Miller 1956), and it is in light of this limited capacity that issue salience is most adequately conceived in relative terms (see also Jones and Baumgartner 2004).

According to issue salience theory, party competition is not understood in spatial terms with parties taking different positions on the same issues, but as issue-oriented with parties emphasizing particular issues with which they try to win votes (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Green-Pedersen 2007). Parties attempt to raise the salience of issues on which they are considered to be competent by the public (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996), or where they are likely to have congruent preferences with their supporters (Ray 2003; Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Walgrave et al. 2012). Parties which are perceived as significantly more competent to resolve certain issue problems are said to own that issue (Petrocik 1996). The issue-salience strategy serves to increase the importance that voters attach to issues owned by the party, which in turn affects their decision-making as they lend more weight to their preferences on that issue in their calculations (Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989).

At the same time, parties usually de-emphasize or blur their positions on issues which are owned by their competitors (Riker 1996; Rovney 2012; but see Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Sigleman and Buell 2004; Jerit 2008; Sides 2006).[88] While established parties have strong incentives to stick to issues on the basis of which they have competed for and mobilized

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[87] Manipulation is here understood as a party's deliberate decision regarding the relative amount of issue-specific information conveyed to the electorate.

[88] On this note, recent literature casts doubt on the assumption that parties and candidates always talk passed one another (Sigleman and Buell 2004; Jerit 2008; Sides 2006). Some parties become particular successful in shaping the content of a political debate, and this systemic salience of a particular issue might, in turn, force other parties to express their views on the issue concerned (Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). Pressing issues might dictate what parties' campaign statements allude to (Sigleman and Buell 2004; Jerit 2008). New issues might become important for voters exogenously to party politics, and parties refraining from taking position risk to be regarded as incompetent (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). It is also advantageous for parties to participate in a debate at an early stage of a new salient issue by trying to frame that issue to their own favor (Jerit 2008).

voters, new and small parties act as issue entrepreneurs placing new issues on the political agenda – deliberately ignored by established parties – in order to draw a new conflict line into the political landscape (Schattschneider 1960; Riker 1982; Carmines and Stimson 1989; de Vries and Hobolt 2012). While Budge and Farlie (1983) argued that party competition is mainly about issue salience, and while Daalder (1984, 101) asserted that if competition is about issue salience then a "space of electoral competition" ceases to exist, more recently scholars have attempted to combine both methods of vote-seeking (Meguid 2005, 2008; Tavits 2007; Wagner 2012). Parties position themselves on issue conflicts by choosing both direction and level of extremeness, and they decide on how much attention they want to devote to each issue. However, manipulation of issue salience is often considered to be the easier strategy of adjusting policy profiles to changing preferences of electorates when compared to changing policy positions (Budge and Farlie 1983; Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Mainly in the US context, several studies report that issue emphasis by candidates and parties improves voters' knowledge about where these actors stand in issue conflicts (Franklin 1991; Alvarez and Franklin 1994; Alvarez 1997).

Policy ambiguity

The third policy-related strategy is policy ambiguity. The concept of ambiguity refers to "*the quality of being open to more than one interpretation*" (Oxford Dictionaries).[89] By policy ambiguity I refer to inconsistency in the content of parties' policy promises. That people encounter ambiguous information as regards a party's policy standpoints has to do with the fact that a party does not behave in the same ways across space, time, and issues. In the real world, political information is often presented in a very vague and ambiguous manner.[90] Given the prevalence of ambiguity in politics, it is rather surprising that only little scientific attention has been given to its proper conceptualization and to the investigation of its causes and to its effects. In the American context – known as the literature on obfuscation – this issue has received its well-deserved attention (Shepsle 1972; Campbell 1983; Tomz and van Houweling 2009). More recently, scholars have also investigated parties' positional ambiguity in the European context (Rovney 2012, Lo et al. 2014; Somer-Topcu 2014).

Policy ambiguity comes in various forms. First, political parties are organizations consisting of many career-oriented parliamentarians each connected to different interests groups and, depending on the country's electoral system, often accountable to different constituencies. In an effort to accrue personal popularity, such party members might at times be prompted to diverge publically from the official party line. The result is internal party dissent over the issue

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[89] definition to be found on http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ambiguity
[90] In the context of American presidential elections Page (1978:. 152) notes that "the most striking feature of candidates' rhetoric about policy is its extreme vagueness".

concerned, which can even lead to the formation of factions and party splits. Scholars have, for instance, described how the EU integration conflict has resulted in the formation of factions among the established political parties in Scandinavian countries (Johansson and Raunio 2001; Aylott 2002). Second, situational circumstances induce parties to behave inconsistently across the various arenas in which they act. For example, in parliaments, as well as the international arena, parties need often to moderate and compromise on certain policy issues to reach other goals – compromises which at times deviate from the promises they have promulgated in the electoral arena.

Even if we assume party unity and focus exclusively on political communication during a particular election campaign, there are various ways in which parties confuse the electorate by disseminating ambiguous policy proposals. In this context, some scholars have dealt with policy shifts – inconsistent information across time.[91] My focus is rather on how parties disseminate ambiguous information as regards their issue preferences during specific election campaigns. Whenever political parties comment on a certain topic, they can declare their opposition, their support, or a neutral stance. Policy ambiguity results when a party expresses both positive as well as negative statements on the same issue. Such general questions as to the party's placement on the left-right or the European integration scales leave sufficient room for ambiguous positions (Bartolini 2005).[92]

What are the parties' incentives to disseminate ambiguous information? For some scholars, a politics of ambiguity has been seen as a futile strategy to win elections (Alvarez 1997; Adams et al. 2004; Enelow and Hinich 1981). However, such arguments rest on the assumption that voters are risk-averse. The argument is as follows: if the candidate has an unclear proposal, people are uncertain about what that candidate will do once in government and, because they are risk-averse, they minimize uncertainty by selecting parties or candidates with a clearer policy program. Along these lines of reasoning, Ferrara and Weishaupt (2004) have argued that parties which are internally divided on the EU question, perform systematically worse in EP elections, where the EU issue appears to be more important than in national elections. They mention two possible explanations for their findings: 1) internal dissent leads to uncertainty on the part of voters as to what the party actually stands for in policy terms, which (because voters are risk-averse) reduces the expected utility of a party; and, 2) Internal dissent renders the party to appear unattractive or

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[91] Policy shifts have been found to have both positive and negative effects on a party's vote share depending on the policy issue at stake (Tavits 2007). Negative effects of policy shifts, it is often argued, are due to loss in credibility or uncertainty on the part of voters (Adams et al 2004).
[92] As already discussed in Chapter 2, both the EU and the left-right topics constitute abstract issue dimensions with multiple meanings

incompetent. In contrast, if we assume people to be risk-acceptant then ambiguity turns out to be a promising strategy (Shepsle 1972).

We might, however, distance ourselves from this distinction between risk-averse and risk-acceptant decision-making, by arguing that ambiguity often favors political parties because it allows supporters with diverging views to succumb to projection effects (Page 1978; Tomz and van Houweling 2009; Gabel and Scheve 2007). It is this possibility that prompts Brody and Page (1972) to argue that "in many cases, or even in all cases, ambiguity might profit a [party] more than any single specific position could". This argument rests on the assumption that voters are primarily motivated to preserve party identity. If they are confronted with ambiguous information as regards their preferred party's stance, they selectively accept confirming information – information that confirms their identity – while ignoring incongruent information. In the context of American elections, Tomz and van Houweling (2009) performed an experimental study to illustrate that parties with ambiguous cues provide sufficient information to their adherents with diverging opinion to justify their positive party attitudes. In this sense, a politics of ambiguity is not a vote-maximizing strategy but a necessary strategy to preserve support in situations where adherents diverge in opinion (Page 1978; Campbell 1983). In the context of growing individualization and particularization of societal interests and identities, parties reach out to an increasingly heterogeneous electorate by deemphasizing potentially conflictive issues or by presenting ambiguous policy profiles (ibid.). Thus, the politics of ambiguity is a defensive strategy, because it inhibits parties from trying to persuade voters (but see Somer-Topcu 2014).[93] It does not provide voters with any clear cues based on which supporters could form their issue attitudes.

In sum, parties not only have to decide on where to position themselves in various issue conflicts, but they also decide what issues to emphasize and which not. Furthermore, they decide on which issues they wish to obfuscate. What people might possibly know about parties' policy preferences inevitably depends on how parties use these various linkage-possibilities in order to mobilize the electorate. In concert with the strategies chosen by all political parties competing for the same legislative seats, these aggregated actions produce the political clarity of the context in which the voter must find his way. In what follows, the measurement of issue salience, issue polarization and issue ambiguity will be discussed. Next, I compare salience, ambiguity, and polarization across countries and party families. I then proceed with the analysis of the relation between political clarity pertaining to the information environment and public party knowledge.

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[93] In a very recent study, Somer-Topcu (2014) claims that parties with blurred left-right appeals as perceived by the electorate tend to gain votes during elections. She infers from her results that broad and thus ambiguous appeals are electorally rewarding for parties. In reality, however, she only measures the ambiguity of appeals as perceived by the electorate.

4.2 Issue polarization: Measurement and comparison

Measurement of issue polarization

Issue polarization has been measured by scholars in various ways. The first decision concerns the choice of positional data. In Chapter 2, I have argued that expert survey data suit best to measure parties' issue positions and that the Chapel Hill Expert Survey dataset is particularly suitable as it covers a broad range of countries on various specific issues. Next, we need an aggregate measure for inter-party issue divergence. The combined issue distances between parties' positions have been measured in three ways: 1) range (Sani and Sartori 1983; Ware 1996); 2) unweighted measures of dispersion (Klingemann 2005); and, 3) weighted measure of dispersion (cf. Hazan 1995; Alvarez and Nagler 2004; Ezrow 2007; Dalton 2008).

Range was used by Sani and Sartori (1983) as a measure for polarization. It calculates the ideological distance between the two extreme (but systemically relevant) parties on both sides of the ideological spectrum. This measure was criticized on two grounds: 1) it ignores all parties and their interrelations located between the two extreme parties; and, 2) the existence of a single, minor party positioned far away from all its competitors has a tremendous effect on the polarization score.

The other two measures differ on whether or not to include party weights. The unweighted measures of issue-specific polarization treat all parties equally. The advantage of this measure, as argued by Evans (2002), is that it does not conflate party-specific with system-specific variables. One problem of unweighted measures is that polarization substantively declines when two extreme parties on the same end of an issue conflict join forces to create a new party. In a similar vein, very tiny parties might greatly contribute to issue polarization when it differentiates from all the other parties. For these reasons, scholars using unweighted measures of issue polarization distinguish between relevant and irrelevant parties excluding the latter from their measurement (Sartori 1976; Sani and Sartori 1983). There is, however, no straightforward way on a theoretical basis to distinguish relevant from irrelevant parties.[94] Therefore, most scholars rather arbitrarily employ a certain vote share as thresholds to define and to identify relevant parties (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Norris 2004). Although considered as arbitrary (Sani and Sartori 1983) this is the most adequate method because 1) the concept of relevance as developed by Sartori (1976) refers explicitly only to the

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[94] It seems to me, moreover, that the definition of relevance should in the end depend on the concept which we intend to measure or on the political arena on which the scholar is focusing. In Sartori's (1976) seminal work on party systems, for instance, the criterion of relevance was developed having in mind the dispersion of political power within national parliaments. Relevance is there understood as a combination of strength and coalition-bargaining potential. The operationalization was, moreover, developed for political systems "*that have entered the stage of structural consolidation*" (Sartori 1976:. 111).[94] I contend that the criterion to define a relevant party by setting a vote share threshold is arbitrary, but so is Sartori's criterion.

governmental/legislative arena, and not to the electoral arena, and 2) the criteria to identify relevant parties are not applicable to unconsolidated systems. I set the threshold at 2 percent of the electoral votes.[95] Accordingly, all parties which have reached at least 2 percent of the votes and above in national or EP elections at some point during the last decade are counted as equally weighted relevant parties. I prefer, furthermore, this index over the weighted version as it correlates more strongly with public knowledge about parties' EU issue positions as well as media attention on the EU issue.

More recently, scholars have used weighted measures taking vote shares as weights (Hazan 1995; Alvarez and Nagler 2004; Ezrow 2007; Dalton 2008). If issue-specific polarization is meant to cast light on the intensity of issue conflict, so the argument goes, than is seems to be reasonable to weight parties based on their visibility. Party size is then often used as a proxy for visibility. One weakness is that it becomes impossible to know whether change in issue polarization is due to changes in vote shares or in issue distances between parties (Evans 2002). The other criticism relates to the fact that visibility might be less a function of size rather than of other party attributes, such as extremeness or issue salience (Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989; Sartori 1976).

Take, for example, the EU debate in other European countries which has been primarily championed by smaller fringe parties. Due to their aggressive effort to bring this new issue on the political agenda, they have become particularly visible in the media and political debate despite their initial small size as measured in national vote shares. Their visibility is best captured by their issue-emphasizing and activism, and less so by mere party size. Now, salience has already been accounted for as a party attribute and, thus, it seems more reasonable to separate analytically issue salience from polarization.

In the end, it is an open question as to what extent a party's influence on the political debate correlates with its size (Ezrow 2007). Thus, I employ both an unweighted and weighted polarization measure for both issues. For the most part, the weighted measure of polarization will serve solely as a robustness check. I use national vote share to capture party visibility. However, due to missing data I have added vote shares from EP elections.[96] The measurement formula of the unweighted index of polarization is the standard deviation over relevant political parties' issue positions (one might alternatively calculate unweighted polarization as suggested by Klingemann (2005)). The weighted measure of party system's

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[95] For instance, the Swedish Democrats and the UKIP are clearly visible in the political arena precisely because of their extremeness and despite their small size.
[96] Moreover, in some countries electoral alliances are very common. The vote share of a political party affiliated to an electoral alliance has been calculated based on the vote share won by the alliance weighted by the seat share that the party under consideration occupies in the lower chamber of the parliament.

166

polarization is taken from Alvarez and Nagler (2004) (see also Ezrow 2007; for a similar measure see Hazan 1995). The formulae for both measures are as follows:

unweighted measure of polarization $\quad = \quad \dfrac{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(p_{ik}-p_k)}}{N}$

weighted measure of polarization $\quad = \quad \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{N} v_i * (p_{ik} - wp_k)^2}$

N denotes the number of parties in a country, v symbolizes the vote share of party i, p_{ik} denotes the position of party i on issue k, wp_k is the weighted mean position of all parties in a country on issue k, while p_k denotes the unweighted mean position of all parties in country on issue k. Thus, the weighted mean position of a "party system" is influenced mainly by the issue positions of larger parties. Four issue dimensions will be considered: the EU integration issue, the general left-right conflict, the socioeconomic left-right conflict, and the cultural left-right conflict.

Comparison: Issue polarization across countries

Table 4.1 reports the unweighted issue-specific polarization scores for each country. The first column shows the unweighted polarization scores for the EU issue; the second column reports the polarization scores for the overall left-right conflict, followed by the polarization scores of the cultural as well as the socioeconomic left-right issue, respectively.

The overall mean EU issue polarization equals 1.44 and the standard deviation amounts to 0.40. For the established democracies the mean score equals 1.56, while in Eastern Europe mean polarization is slightly smaller at 1.23. The correlation between the unweighted and the weighted measure is rather strong (coefficient is 0.821) which lends support to the validation of the measure. As the table reports, EU issue polarization is lowest in Spain (0.61) followed by Estonia (0.80) and Romania (0.96). Poland is the only post-communist country that figures among the top seven countries, while among the eight least polarized systems we find only three established democracies: Spain, Germany, and Italy (Lees 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2004; de Vries 2007). At the other end, we find democracies with a highly polarized EU issue. The three countries with the most polarized conflicts are France (2.11), Denmark (2.02) and Sweden (1.94).

The overall left-right issue polarization is considerably larger with a mean average score of 2.16 and a standard deviation of 0.51. The correlation between the weighted and unweighted left-right polarization measures corresponds to 0.702. With regard to this dimension, post-communist democracies are once again noticeably less polarized compared to established democracies (1.86 versus 2.41). The most polarized party conflicts on this dimension are to be found in Greece (2.99), Belgium (2.91) and France (2.85). The least polarized conflicts are in Romania (1.14), Bulgaria (1.42) and Lithuania (1.64). None of the post-communist countries reaches the Western European average and among established democracies only Spain (1.7) and Finland (1.61) have scores below the Eastern European average.

As already reported in Chapter 2, the usage of one single all-encompassing left-right scale for post-communist countries might not be adequate because the two left-right issue conflicts stand in a reverse relation to each other (Kitschelt 1995; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Marks et al. 2007). In the consolidating democracies, parties with a leftist stance in the cultural conflict often politicize to the right with regard to socioeconomic issues. Consequently, if experts are forced to place parties solely on one single left-right dimensions, they will either tend to place parties close to the center or they will disagree placing parties at opposite ends, with the overall effect that the parties' mean placements are again close to the center. The result, of course, is low left-right polarization for post-communist countries. Analyzing polarization scores of the two left-right dimensions separately might yield a completely different picture.

Theoretically, post-communist countries might be highly polarized on both left-right issue conflicts, but not on the single general left-right dimension.

The results in the table show, however, that post-communist countries remain less polarized no matter whether we are concerned with the cultural (2.45 versus 1.82) or with the socioeconomic conflict (2.22 versus 1.84).[97] With regard to the cultural issue the overall mean is 2.45. Portugal (3.29), Italy (3.08) and Greece (3.01) have the most polarized cultural conflicts followed by two post-communist countries: Hungary (3.00) and Slovenia (3.01). The least polarized cultural conflicts are to be found in Latvia (0.58), Estonia (1.63) and Romania (1.71). For the socioeconomic issue the mean value equals 2.07. Portugal (3.08), Belgium (2.83) and the Czech Republic (2.63) have the most polarized socioeconomic issue conflicts, whereas that issue is least polarized in Slovenia (1.05), Hungary (1.35) and Poland (1.39).

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[97] The regional difference is not significant for the cultural conflict (F-Test: 2.73; p <0.113), but it is significant for the socio-economic conflict (F-Test 5.59; p<0.027).

Table 4.1 Issue polarization scores across countries

Western European countries	EU integration	left-right overall	culture	economy & welfare	post-communist countries	EU integration	left-right overall	culture	economy & welfare
Austria	1.73	2.48	2.48	1.95	Bulgaria	1.43	1.42	1.78	1.85
Belgium	1.46	2.91	2.71	2.83	Czech Republic	1.6	2.14	1.88	2.63
Germany	1.00	2.04	1.72	2.3	Estonia	0.8	1.63	1.63	2.19
Denmark	2.02	2.48	2.46	2.61	Hungary	1.50	2.20	3.00	1.35
Spain	0.61	1.7	2.17	1.87	Lithuania	1.08	1.64	1.85	1.74
Finland	1.56	1.61	1.93	1.75	Latvia	1.12	1.68	0.58	1.6
France	2.11	2.85	2.66	1.82	Poland	1.92	2.3	2.69	1.39
UK	1.75	2.63	2.56	2.19	Romania	0.96	1.14	1.71	1.85
Greece	1.88	2.99	3.01	2.28	Slovakia	1.18	2.13	2.22	2.3
Ireland	1.43	2.32	2.00	2.32	Slovenia	1.14	1.69	3.01	1.05
Italy	1.21	2.49	3.08	2.13					
Netherlands	1.6	2.27	2.38	1.89					
Portugal	1.59	2.9	3.29	3.08					
Sweden	1.94	2.11	1.79	2.02					
West	1.56	2.41	2.45	2.22	East	1.23	1.86	2.03	1.84
Mean	1.44	2.16	2.27	2.04	Mean	1.44	2.16	2.27	2.04
Std.	0.4	0.51	0.62	0.47	Std.	0.4	0.51	0.62	0.47
Min	0.61	1.14	0.58	1.05	Min	0.61	1.14	0.58	1.05
Max	2.11	2.99	3.29	3.08	Max	2.11	2.99	3.29	3.08

Note: The entries are unweighted polarization scores. Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010

4.3 Issue salience: Measurement and comparison

Measurement of issue salience

Issue salience will be measured with manifesto data. There are at least four reasons which speak for the use of manifesto data: 1) broad country and time coverage; 2) significant correlation with expert survey data; 3) the fact that "manifestos are the only direct and clear statements of party policy available to the electorate and directly attributable to the party as such." (Robertson 1976: 72); and, 4) Manifesto data are explicitly construed for the measurement of issue salience rather than position (see also Wagner 2012).

Other scholars have employed various alternative methods to measure issue salience, such as expert judgments (cf. Ray 1999; Marks et al. 2006; Benoit and Laver 2006), public opinion, and media content analysis (Kriesi et al. 2008). In addition, scholars have also cross-validated measures of issue salience derived from various approaches (Benoit and Laver 2006, 2007; Marks et al. 2007; Netjes and Binnema 2007; Helbling and Tresch 2011). In its favor the use of expert survey data has its broad country coverage as well as its strong correlation to manifesto data. Media coverage data has been employed on a cross-country comparative basis in Kriesi et al. (2008). This data, however, covers only a few countries. In addition, scholars employing various data reduction techniques have observed that the media content analysis constitutes separate dimensions, while expert and manifesto measures correspond more strongly (Helbling and Tresch 2011). Moreover, if we are interested in party politics and we try to explain their chosen strategies based on their motives, then media data might be inappropriate as it is well known that the media filters and selects according to their own opportunities and interests.

Issue salience measured with manifesto data is done as follows: I calculate the percentage of statements devoted to a particular issue relative to the total number of all statements made by the party in question (McDonald and Mendes 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006). The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) for national elections and the European Manifesto Project (EMP) for European Parliament elections have collected parties' manifestos and coded each quasi-sentence in a detailed manner. The CMP data and the EMP data are freely accessible and can be obtained from https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/ (CMP) and www.piredeu.eu (EMP), respectively. The data report for each issue category the amount of quasi-sentences as a percentage of the total sum of quasi-sentences. Thus, the CMP approach directly measures the relative salience of a specific issue rather than party positions and, consequently, it suits particularly well the purpose of measuring salience.

In total, the CMP data counts 57 categories and the question which remains is which categories belong to which issue? For the EU issue that is not a problem as there are solely two categories (per108 and per110). The category per108 refers to "favorable mentions of

the European Community in general: desirability of expanding the European Community and/or of increasing its competence; desirability of the manifesto country joining or remaining a member" (Budge et al. 2001: 223) and the category per110 refers to "hostile mention of the European Community; opposition to specific European policies which are preferred by European authorities" (Budge et al. 2001: 223). For the European Parliament election a similar content analysis of party manifestos has been conducted (Braun et al. 2010). Several particularities of the EMP data are worth mentioning. Parties refer much more to EU related issues during EP election campaigns than is the case for national elections (Veen 2011). Thus, as regards the EU issue, it might be argued that citizens become acquainted with parties' EU preferences especially in the run up to EP rather than national elections where EU issue is less emphasized. Second, the coding scheme includes many more categories referring to EU related issues. To compute EU issue salience for each party running in the EP elections, I add all favorable as well as hostile mentions of the European Union (for more detail see Braun et al. 2010). The categories based on which the issue salience values are measured are shown in Table 4.2. In sum, to measure EU issue salience I have chosen manifesto over expert data and EP over national elections.

The left-right conflict, in contrast, is more abstract and includes a greater variety of issue categories. The most severe problem in gauging left-right issue salience using manifesto data is the fact that the terms left-right are differently understood across countries and time. Scholars have coped with this problem by using either an inductive or deductive approach. I prefer the latter as comparing countries is easier conducted when an "a priori" approach is employed. An inductive identification of issue dimensions is based on empirical methods such as factor analysis. The deductive approach to identify issues rests either on political theory (Jahn 2010) or country experts' understanding of the left-right dimension (Benoit and Laver 2006). Political theory or country experts tell us a priori what issues are to be regarded as constitutive of the left-right conflict, and positions and salience scores are measured accordingly. Based on this approach various scholars have measured parties' left-right issue salience using CMP data (Klingemann et al. 2006; Klingemann 2005; Stoll 2010; Jahn 2010; Meguid 2005). What is most striking about the categories employed to measure the salience or position of parties' left-right profiles based on a deductive approach is the fact that researchers often do it differently, but at least in a transparent manner.

Using a theoretical approach we might start off by referring to Bobbio (1996), to whom the ideal of equality is the main principle which differentiates left from right. Left issues include all those issues which, in one way or the other, increase equality, right issues thus are issues which reduce equality either by justifying inequality as given by nature and God (conservatism), or by treating inequality as self-imposed and conceiving of individual freedom

172

of choice as a higher value. I also consider the new left-right issues pertaining to issues such as "law and order", "nationalistic way of life", and "opposition to multiculturalism", since these issues are constitutive of a conflict which is about status, rights, and therefore also equality. Table 4.2 below summarizes the coding of the issues into seven categories. The first column lists the issues which are considered to belong to the conflict over economy and welfare. The socioeconomic issue salience is measured with the categories planned-, mixed- and market-economy (401-407, 409, 412-415), privatization (4011, 4014, 4013, 4121-4124, 4131, 4132), welfare state expansion and welfare state limitation (502-507, 701, 702). The second column lists issues which belong to the cultural left-right conflict. Cultural issue salience is measured with the categories 601 – 608.[98] For the sake of completeness, the table also includes the categories that are affiliated with foreign policy issues, decentralization issues and issues referring to individual freedom and democracy. These issues are considered as non-left-right policy issues, although they are counted by some scholars as left-right issues (cf. Klingemann 2005). In addition, the table includes the categories which describe valence issues.[99] In sum, while the measurement of the left-right issue salience rests on the CMP data, EU issue salience is measured using the EMP data. Finally, it is important to note that by merging the EES 2009, the CHES 2010, the EMP and the CMP data the number of parties (and countries in the CMP case) is reduced.

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[98] See Meguid (2005) for a similar measurement.

[99] Stokes (1963: 373) notes that "the question of whether a given problem poses a position- or valence-issue is a matter to be settled empirically and not on a priori logical grounds." Other scholars, instead, have defined valence issues on a prior ground (Clark 2009). I opt for Clark's approach because defining valence issues empirically across all 24 states would be difficult to accomplish. Clark (2009) defines valence issues as issues revolving around competence and efficiency of governmental parties (303), corruption (304), and general desirable economic goals such as infrastructure (411), productivity (410), and economic goals (408). I add the category "negative mood" (3051 and 6061).

Table 4.2 The coding of issue categories of the manifesto data

economy and welfare issues	cultural issues	EU issue (CMP)	EU issue (EMP)	foreign policy issues	freedom and democracy	valence issues	decentralization
Planned or mixed economy: **404**, 405, 406, 409, **412, 413**, 415	Cultural libertarianism: 602, 604, 607	European Integration Positive: 108	EU in general: 110, 108; Financing the EU: 1101b, 1101a; Transfer of power to the EU: 3011, 3021;	Peace and détente: 103, 105, 106, 107	Freedom and Human Rights: 201; Democracy Positive: 202,	Government Efficiency Positive: 303; Political corruption negative: 304; Political Authority Positive: 305; Economic goals: 408; Productivity positive: 410; Technology and Infrastructure positive: 411.	De-centralization positive: 301; Centralization positive: 302
Market economy: **401**, 402, **403**, 407, **414**	Traditional morality and law and order: **601, 603**, 605, **606**, 608	European Integration Negative: 110	Competences of the European Parliament: 207, 206; Competences of the European Commission: 309, 308; Competences of the European Council: 311, 310; Support for qualified majority in European Council	Military Stength & Internationalism negative: 104, 109	Constitutionalism Positive: 203; Constitutionalism Negative: 204		
Welfare state, expansion: 502, 503, 504, 506, 701			3111, 3101; Competences for the European Court of Justice: 313, 312;		2021-2023, 2031-2033, 2041		
Welfare state, limitation: **505**, 507, 702							
Subcategories for CEE countries *need to integrate those subcategories to the categories applied to the established democracies*							
Communist positive: 3052, 3055; Communist negative: 3053; Rehabilitation and Compensation: 3054	Cultural Autonomy for Minorities negative: 6081		Competences for other EC/EU institutions: 315, 314; European Central Bank: 3151, 3141; EC/EU			Public Situation (Negative): 3051 Identification of a general crisis in country: 6061	
Against Privatization and pro State-Ownership: 4121, 4122, 4123, 4124, 4131, 4132; Privatisation Positive: 4011, 4014, 4013	Cultural Automoy for Minorities: 6071, 6072		enlargement: 317, 3162b, 3163b, 3171, 316, 3162a,3163a, 3161; criticizing the complexity of the EC/EU political system:				
Against Control of Economy: 4012			318b, 318a; EC/EU structural fund: 4011, 4041; European				
Private Ownership in Education and Welfare: 5041, 5061			Monetary Union: 4087, 4086				

Notes: The numbers denote the categories employed in the CMP coding scheme (or in the EMP for the EU issue). The bold numbers refer to categories which are undisputed a priori as right or left. Foreign policy issues and issues pertaining to human rights and democracy cannot be established as either left or right on an a priori basis. Issues pertaining to decentralization and EU integration are most clearly not to be considered as constitutive of the left-right conflict.

Issue salience across countries

How salient are the various issues across countries? Table 4.3 reports country mean issue salience scores around the year 2009. The results suggest that in 2009 the EU issue has been least emphasized in Italy (EMP: 5.93%; CMP: 0.36%) followed by Spain (10.69%; 2.22%) and the Czech Republic (11%; 1.45%). Thus, prior to the onset of the economic crisis, it was common to neglect the EU issue in political debates in Southern Europe (apart from Greece). In Italy, in particular, the EU was a non-issue in political debates, despite a polarized public opinion (33% in opposition; 19% indifferent; 48% in favor).[100] In contrast, in countries such as the UK (27.71%; 2.92%), Slovakia (27.60%; 3.39%), the Netherlands (24.62%; 3.04%) and France (21.13%; 5.13%) a comparatively considerable amount of space in parties' policy programs has been devoted to the integration issue especially during EP election campaigns. Country dummies explain around 19% of the variance in EU issue salience in EP elections. Moreover, while Lewis and Markowski (2011) have argued that the EU issue has been largely absent in political debates in Central Eastern Europe, I see no difference in EU issue salience (neither with the CMP nor with the EMP data) between post-communist and established democracies.[101]

The socioeconomic issues have remained the most salient issue category in party manifestos across European countries. However, party systems vary considerably in this regard. Socioeconomic issues receive comparatively little attention in the Netherlands (24%), Spain (26%) and Poland (29%), while it dominates the party system agendas in Finland (49%), Sweden (45%), Austria (43%) and Slovakia (42%). Thus, in the Scandinavian countries socioeconomic left-right issues are around twice as salient as in the case of the Netherlands and Spain. Around 39% of the variance across socioeconomic issue salience in individual parties' manifestos is due to country differences, while no differences are to be found between the East and the West.

Countries don't vary as much in terms of cultural issue salience (R^2 = 19%; F-Test (country dummies) = 1.75; F-Test (party family) = 10.81). Cultural issue salience has much more to do with what family the party is a member of than in what country or region a party competes. The average issue salience across parties is highest in the Netherlands 21.92%, Italy 15.94% and Hungary 15.80%. In Spain, Portugal and Ireland cultural left-right issues are relatively unimportant. If we combine both the socioeconomic and the cultural left-right issue salience scores, we note that left-right issues are relatively unemphasized in Spain (35.2%),

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[100] Public opinion data on the integration issue are taken from the EES 2009.

[101] Benoit and Laver (2006) collected expert survey data for the time period 2002-2003, reporting that parties give greater importance to the EU issue in post-communist countries compared to parties in established democracies. This finding contradicts the prevalent view in the literature (Lewis and Markowski 2011; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008).

Poland (39%), the UK (40%) and Romania (40.3%). In Poland, Spain and Romania a lot of attention is given to valence issues to the detriment of left-right issues.[102] The low salience of left-right issues in the UK and Spain is also partially explained by the high salience of issues related with decentralization.[103]

In sum, in some countries parties strongly emphasize left-right issues, while in other cases left-right issues are almost inexistent. Country scores indicate systemic salience of an issue bundle (see Steenbergen and Scott 2004), but we should be aware of the distorting effect small parties might have on the calculation of these values. Overall, the differences in what policy issues are being emphasized in the party manifestos between the new and established democracies are negligible. Apart from the difference in valence issue salience (23.72 % in the East compared to 18.36% in the West), there is a remarkable resemblance between the party programs across both regions. It is as if political parties in new democracies have taken on the manifestos from the more experienced parties in the West. What can also be taken from the table is the observation that EU issue is more prominent in the EP manifestos than in national election campaigns. Until 2009, the EU issue seems to have been politicized predominantly in EP elections.

Table 4A (in the Appendix) reports the issue salience scores across different party families around the year 2009. In line with previous findings, far-right parties differ from other party families in terms of the greater attention they devote to both the integration issue during EP elections campaigns (their mean issue salience score is 37.98%) as well as the cultural issue in the run-up to national elections (mean score is 26.94%) (cf. Rovney 2013).[104] However, far-right parties in new democracies devote much less attention to the EU issue in their manifestos (mean EU issue salience score is 27%) than they do in the West (43%). All the other party families, in contrast, remained relatively silent on the EU issue. Strikingly, the low salience scores for the far-left (11.40%) stands in stark contrast to what has been propagated by scholars who see both the far-right as well as the far-left as championing the EU issue (Hooghe et al. 2002; Taggart 1998; Sitter 2001). Moreover, the pattern differs for the EU issue in national elections where far-right combats predominantly migration,

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[102] In Poland (31%), Bulgaria (29%) and Portugal (29%) valence issues occupy a relevant share of parties' programs.

[103] Budge et al. (1987) argue that the left-right ideology is the dominant political conflict in those countries "where there is no overriding preoccupation with national identity or security" (see also Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

[104] Rovney (2013) also uses CMP data to illustrate that far-right parties emphasize socioeconomic issues to a lesser extent but they stress cultural issue more than other party families.

multiculturalism, and the decline of the "national way of life" and traditions.[105] Far-right parties give only little attention to EU-related issues during national election campaigns.

The salience of cultural issues during national election campaigns also varies across party families. The far-right stands out with 26.94 %, while the extreme-left (6.68%) and green parties (6.72%) seem to avoid discussing these issues in their party programs. It is mainly the left-oriented parties that deemphasize cultural issues, while right-of-the-center parties have above-average cultural issue salience scores (see again Table 4A in the Appendix). In contrast, socioeconomic issues have mostly been mentioned by the extreme-left (45.78%) and social democrats (42.02%), a political conflict which tends to be relatively neglected by regional (29.09%) as well as far-right parties (30.97%). In general, left-oriented parties emphasize socioeconomic issues more than right-leaning parties (see again Rovney 2013). In sum, country and party's ideological background appear to influence what issues are emphasized in its program

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[105] That far-right parties particularly stress the EU issue during EP elections while it focuses on the immigration issue during national election is to some extent ironic given that the European parliament is not responsible for deciding on the course of integration (Mair 2007).

Table 4.3 Average issue saliences by countries

Countries	EU (EMP)		EU(CMP)		Economy & Welfare		Culture		Valence	
	mean	sd.	mean	sd.	mean	sd.	mean	sd.	mean	sd.
Belgium (EMP: 12 parties/CMP: 11 parties)	20.78	(10.90)	2.38	(1.60)	34.92	(11.94)	12.62	(7.35)	21.11	(5.91)
Czech Republic (4/5)	11.00	(5.20)	1.45	(0.91)	37.39	(5.35)	12.56	(2.93)	22.16	(4.43)
Denmark (6/7)	14.70	(14.72)	3.14	(4.54)	30.27	(12.41)	12.89	(12.33)	20.34	(9.91)
Germany (6/6)	17.27	(7.49)	3.50	(0.95)	36.47	(6.90)	9.78	(5.67)	19.42	(4.21)
Estonia (4/5)	17.42	(8.18)	3.37	(1.52)	40.51	(11.37)	13.46	(7.80)	16.39	(2.92)
Greece (6)	13.26	(3.68)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Spain (6/7)	10.69	(10.84)	2.22	(0.79)	26.00	(6.10)	9.20	(3.65)	25.34	(4.82)
France (6/6)	21.13	(19.48)	5.13	(1.48)	39.91	(10.31)	11.17	(9.61)	13.14	(7.25)
Ireland (5/5)	11.55	(2.13)	1.28	(0.23)	37.64	(4.76)	8.39	(2.52)	18.26	(6.75)
Italy (6/5)	5.93	(6.75)	0.36	(0.56)	36.41	(5.33)	15.94	(6.90)	27.75	(9.39)
Latvia (2)	20.50	(1.32)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Lithuania (7)	14.87	(11.63)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Hungary (5/5)	17.74	(5.82)	1.90	(1.02)	39.94	(7.35)	15.80	(6.63)	20.64	(4.97)
Netherlands (8/10)	24.62	(15.19)	3.04	(1.45)	23.86	(9.07)	21.92	(13.21)	13.24	(4.98)
Austria (4/5)	20.00	(13.36)	4.95	(2.80)	43.20	(4.42)	16.39	(6.69)	12.13	(3.72)
Poland (4/4)	14.51	(7.81)	3.29	(2.62)	28.78	(6.75)	10.19	(5.25)	31.16	(10.87)
Portugal (5/5)	21.11	(9.00)	2.70	(1.46)	40.11	(10.27)	7.66	(2.57)	28.82	(8.78)
Slovenia (4/7)	20.01	(10.72)	1.35	(0.79)	34.10	(3.90)	9.06	(5.29)	28.35	(9.02)
Slovakia (6/6)	27.60	(20.25)	3.39	(1.79)	41.88	(10.89)	15.20	(8.10)	15.04	(2.81)
Finland (8/8)	15.90	(11.26)	3.58	(3.42)	49.20	(8.71)	11.33	(6.54)	12.18	(5.55)
Sweden (7/8)	11.81	(6.55)	1.76	(1.57)	45.03	(8.71)	13.71	(9.16)	12.61	(5.54)
UK (8/3)	27.71	(26.89)	2.92	(1.00)	30.24	(6.75)	9.72	(3.38)	21.95	(4.78)
Bulgaria (3/5)	16.21	(1.33)	1.68	(2.29)	34.28	(18.99)	16.82	(17.53)	29.20	(24.57)
Romania (5/5)	16.02	(5.39)	1.91	(0.55)	29.79	(9.54)	10.51	(3.01)	28.2	(12.11)
Established democracies (93/86)	17.43	(13.77)	2.84	(2.30)	36.12	(11.35)	12.90	(8.71)	18.36	(8.19)
New democracies (44/42)	17.73	(10.62)	2.24	(1.62)	36.06	(10.25)	12.88	(7.88)	23.72	(11.58)

Note: EMP stands for European Manifesto Project data in 2009. CMP denotes the manifesto data for the national election in and prior to 2009.

4.4 Policy ambiguity: Measurement and comparison

Measurement of policy ambiguity

I propose a new and original way to measure policy ambiguity using manifesto data. While scholars have often employed standard deviation of experts' party placements as a proxy for gauging positional ambiguity (Campbell 1983; Rovney 2012; Grand and Tiemann 2014), or even relied on public survey data to measure the level of ambiguity in parties' appeals (Somer-Topcu 2014), my measure relies directly on statements made by political parties during election campaigns.[106] Scholars using standard deviation as a proxy for positional ambiguity argue that higher deviation indicates a more ambiguous preference. The problem inherent in such a measure, however, is that we are left uncertain as to what standard deviation actually indicates (Marks et al. 2007). Apart from policy ambiguity, various factors feed into the standard deviation value, such as party age, party size, issue salience and party cohesiveness to name just a few.Standard deviation of experts' placements as a measure of policy ambiguity clearly lacks discriminatory validity since it conflates a whole range of different characteristics and behavior types that should be operationalized and measured separately. Instead of using standard deviation, I present a measure for policy ambiguity that taps directly into parties' statements by relying on manifesto data.

I propose to measure policy ambiguity by examining how consistently parties express either support or opposition to a certain issue. An elegant illustration of my measurement of policy ambiguity can be obtained when we use issue salience and "*issue position*" on the European integration issue as derived from the European Manifesto Project (EMP) data as the two axes of a two-dimensional space (see Figure 4.1).[107] The vertical axis presents parties' EU issue salience scores, while the horizontal axis displays parties' positions. While the measurement of salience was presented in the previous section, the position score can be obtained by subtracting the percentage of negative from the percentage of positive statements about the EU and European integration. Both parties' position and their issue salience scores allow us to plot parties as dots in this graph.

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[106] Rovney (2012) uses standard deviation but controls for issue salience and party size.

[107] The idea for measuring ambiguity with manifesto data is taken from Kaplan (1972) who differentiates public attitudes with regard to ambivalence and indifference. The same measurement can be transposed to parties' policy preferences.

Figure 4.1 Measuring policy ambiguity with manifesto data
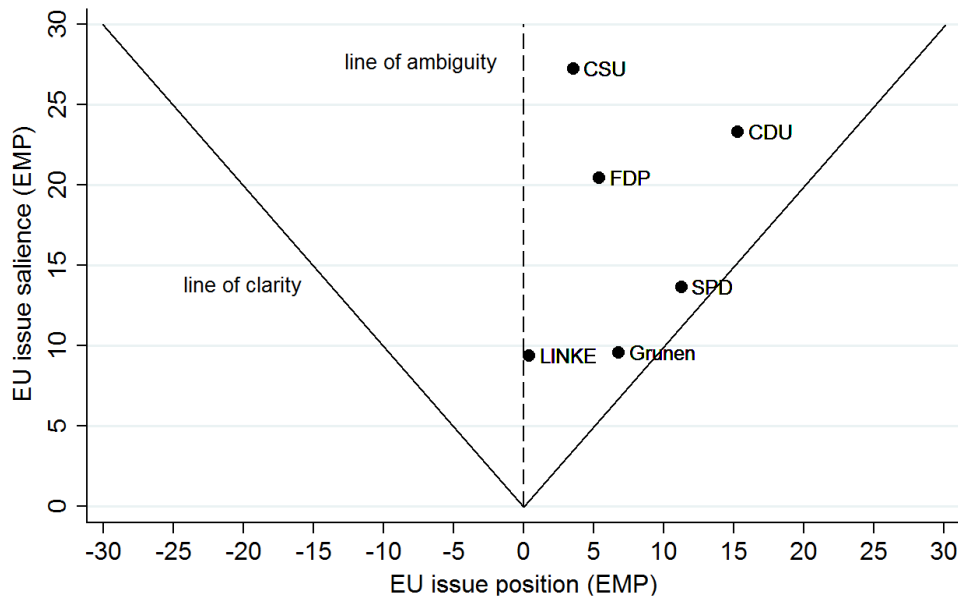
Note: EU issue salience and position are measured using the European Manifesto Project data. The dashed line corresponds to the line of ambiguity, while the solid line represents the line of clarity.

I have plotted the German parties during the 2009 EP elections to illustrate the measurement. Within the graph there are two solid lines ('the lines of clarity') and one dashed line ('the line of ambiguity'). The two solid lines in the graph represent all possible EU issue positions which are consistently either pro-EU or anti-EU. For instance, if there are either only negative or only positive statements on EU-related issues in a party's program, the absolute value of the party's position corresponds to its salience value score. We call this solid line *the line of clarity*. The Green party (Die Grünen) and the social democrats (SPD) are in close proximity to this line. Their support for EU integration appears to be unambiguous, although the Green party puts less emphasis on the EU issue during EP election campaigns.

The extreme left party's stance on EU integration (Die Linke), in comparison, is characterized by low salience and high ambiguity. The dashed line represents all policy programs in which the negative and positive statements on the EU balance each other out. The dashed line is named *the line of ambiguity*. The closer a party approaches *the line of ambiguity* and the more distant it is from *the line of clarity*, the more ambiguous the party's position on European integration. This instrument enables us to simultaneously compare

different parties as well as the same party across different time points with regard to its issue position, salience and ambiguity.

In addition, this graph makes possible distinguishing between different types of center parties (see Daalder 1984). In the same vein, it should be noticed that within the CMP framework issue positions can be combined with different levels of salience. A party whose position is located in the center bottom region is indifferent towards the issue concerned – it devotes little attention to this issue in its manifesto. Parties located in the center upper region have an equally centered position. Still, its position differs fundamentally from those which are simply indifferent. Such parties devote a lot of attention to the issue, but they do this inconsistently, balancing out negative and positive statements. As a result, they acquire a salient yet ambiguous stance. Hence, the center position in the Comparative Manifesto project (CMP) or the European Manifesto Project (EMP) framework of analysis might mean two things: 1) indifference, or, 2) ambiguity towards an issue. In the German case, it is the CSU in particular that conveys both a salient and ambiguous stance towards EU integration to the electorate.

I propose a measure of ambiguity which is 1) independent from the party's issue salience or position score by 2) considering the horizontal distance of a party's program to the *line of ambiguity* relative to the sum of both horizontal distances: the distance to the *line of ambiguity* and the distance to the *line of clarity*. Such a measure can be construed based on the following formula, a measure ranging from 0 (maximal consistency) to 1 (maximal ambiguity):

$$\text{ambiguity}_{\text{ik}} = \frac{(\text{salience}_{\text{ik}} - |\text{position}_{ik}|)}{\text{salience}_{\text{ik}}}$$

$$\text{ambiguity}_{\text{ik}} = 1 - \frac{|\text{position}_{ik}|}{\text{salience}_{\text{ik}}}$$

Thus, a party that makes 10 positive and zero negative statements in its program obtains a positional score of +10 and a salience score 10. If we insert both values into the equation, the resulting ambiguity scores amounts to 0 $[0 = 1 - \frac{|10|}{10}]$. A score of zero indicates that the party has a consistent position on the EU issue. In contrast, a party that makes five positive and five negative comments on EU integration, receives a position score of zero and an issue salience score of 10. The result is a highly ambiguous policy profile with the maximal score of 1 $[1 = 1 - \frac{|0|}{10}]$.

Given that this policy ambiguity measure is new, I will discuss its validity prior to conducting country and family comparisons. For this purpose, Table 4.4 below reports the correlation coefficients between the policy ambiguity measures for both issues, on the one hand, and a series of policy profile measures taken from either the CHES dataset or from the two manifesto datasets, on the other hand.

For the EU issue, the series includes the standard deviation of experts' party placements, degree of internal party dissent according to country experts, the parties' positional extremity resulting from experts' placements, issue salience as measured with the EMP data, and issue importance as assessed by country experts. The results of the correlation analysis reveal that policy ambiguity as measured with the manifesto data correlates positively with the standard deviation measure (0.260) as well as with internal party-dissent (0.192) as derived from the CHES dataset. Hence, as expected experts disagree on a party's actual placement when a party's EU profile is ambiguous. Interestingly, internal party dissent is associated with a more ambiguous party stance on EU integration. Notably, the strongest correlation coefficient (-0.371) pertains to the relation between issue extremity and policy ambiguity. Two possible explanations for this finding are plausible: 1) should experts disagree over the party's placement due to its ambiguous preference, the party's final mean placement will be located around the center, and, 2) as an expert is confronted with an ambiguous profile, he or she tends to place the party close to the center. Finally, while the policy ambiguity measure does not correlate significantly with issue salience as derived from the manifesto data, it correlates negatively with the CHES issue importance measure (-0.195). That is, parties with an ambiguous policy position are considered by experts to be giving less importance to the EU integration issue.

With regard to the EU issue, overall the correlation coefficients lend some support to the validation of my policy ambiguity measure. Although the coefficients are not particularly sizeable, they suggest convergent validity – they correlate as expected with variables that presumably measure concepts that are related to each other. In particular, in light of the size of the correlation coefficients, parties with an ambiguous profile tend to be placed closer to the center, and experts disagree to a greater degree on their position.

The results differ for the left-right issue. The correlation between the left-right ambiguity inherent in a party's policy program and the standard deviation of experts' party placements on the left-right scale are insignificant but expectedly signed (0.173). The correlation with issue extremity is also insignificant but expectedly signed (-0.147). Finally, with regard to the overall left-right issue, salience and ambiguity don't correlate at all. Parties that pay little attention to left-right issues are not more ambiguous than parties that stress left-right issues in their manifestos. However, as shown in Table 4.5, there exists a strong significant and

negative correlation between cultural issue salience and ambiguity (-0.377) and, similarly, negative but weaker correlation between socioeconomic issue salience and ambiguity. Figure 4A (see in the Appendix) displays the according scatter plots. These findings are in line with previous empirical research showing that issue emphasizing is negatively associated with obfuscation of the very same issue (Rovney 2012).

Table 4.4 Pairwise correlations between policy ambiguity and related variables

	EU policy ambiguity		left-right policy ambiguity	
	corr.	s.e.	corr.	s.e.
standard deviation	0.260**	(0.001)	0.173	(0.082)
internal party dissent	0.192*	(0.020)	n.a.	n.a.
extremity	- 0.371***	(0.000)	-0.147	(0.141)
salience (EMP /CMP)	0.018	(0.830)	0.017	(0.868)
salience (experts)	- 0.195*	(0.018)	n.a.	n.a.

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. Standard deviation, internal party dissent, salience (experts), and positional extremity are taken from the CHES data set. Issue salience (EMP & CMP) derive from the European Manifesto Project and the Comparative Manifesto project data. Number of observation: 150-146 for the EU issue, and 100-103 for the left-right issue.

Table 4.5 Correlation between salience and ambiguity for the two left-right issues

	left-right (socioeconomy) policy ambiguity		left-right (culture) policy ambiguity	
	corr.	s.e.	corr.	s.e.
issue salience (CMP)	-0.181	(0.072)	-0.377***	(0.000)

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Comparing policy ambiguity across countries and party families

In this section policy ambiguity is compared across countries and party families. Since very little prior comparative work on policy ambiguity exists, not much can be told about trends and country differences. Based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, some scholars have observed growing internal dissent on EU-related issues mainly among mainstream parties (Edwards 2007; Gabel and Scheve 2007). On theoretical and empirical grounds we have reason to assume that parties convey ambiguous policy preferences for issue which are owned by other parties (Rovney 2012). Thus, parties stress issues on which they have a comparative advantage. In contrast, a party tends to neglect or to convey ambiguous cues when an issue is owned by a competitor. In this vein, parties are ambiguous when they try to hold together heterogeneous views within the political party and its electorate. The EU issue is precisely such an issue for most mainstream parties. Scholars assert that many mainstream parties are internally divided over the European integration process (Aylott 2002; Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Gabel and Scheve 2007; Edwards 2008). In this context, Helbling et al. (2010) observe that fringe parties have a more consistent attitude towards Europe while mainstream parties are more likely to be ambivalent on EU matters.

Figure 4.2 EU issue ambiguity across and within countries

established democracies   post-communist democracies
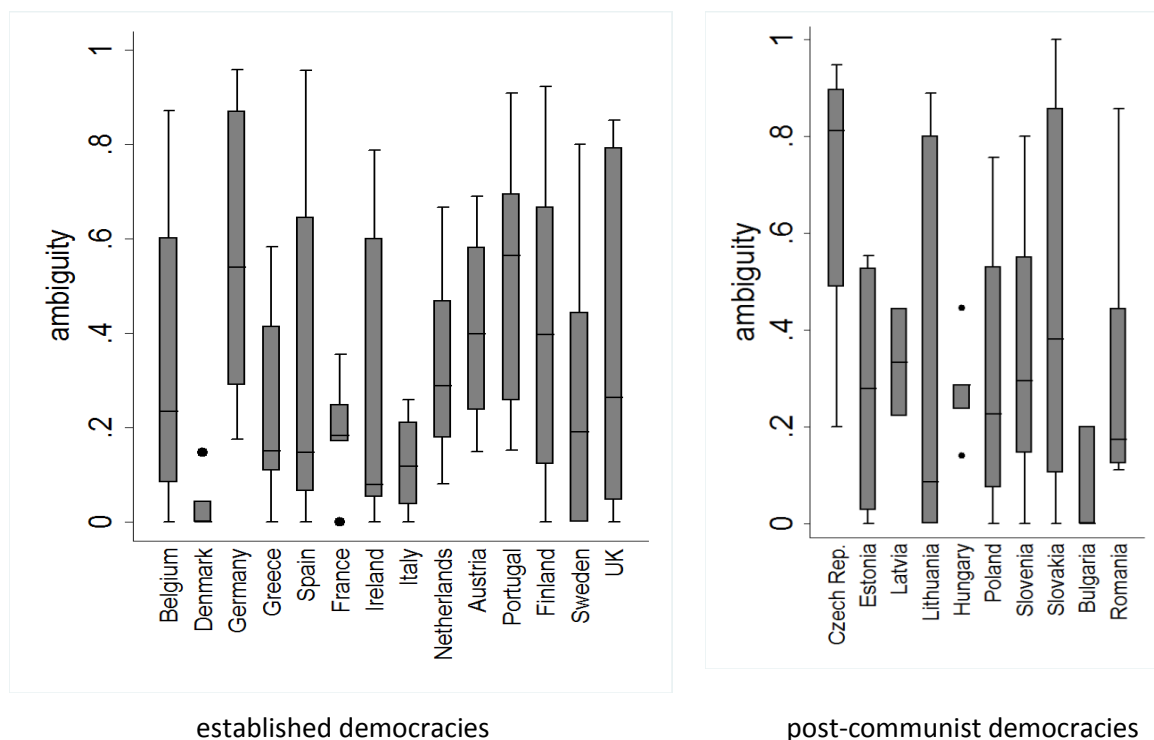
Figure 4.2 shows the variance in parties' policy ambiguity towards European integration across and within countries. The measures are based on the EMP data and countries are grouped in established and post-communist democracies. The overall mean policy ambiguity score equals 0.33 (standard deviation 0.30). As the graph shows, there is neither a significant difference between the two regions nor is the between-country variance large. The most notable observation is that the variances within countries are relatively sizeable. In accordance with the figure, a one-way analysis of variance reveals that parties' policy profiles don't vary across but rather within countries (the F-value (1.18) is insignificant ($p > 0.28$); adj. $R^2 = 0.03$). The country mean average EU policy ambiguity scores are highest in Germany (0.56), Portugal (0.51) and, especially, the Czech Republic (0.69) – parties are systematically closer to 1 in these three countries. In contrast, parties in Denmark (0.03), France (0.19), Italy (0.12) and Bulgaria (0.07) have a more consistent stance on the EU issue. In these countries, parties tend to consider integration to be either bad or good and nothing in between. From the previous chapter we know that parties in Italy or Bulgaria paid little attention to the EU issue up until the 2009 EP election while, for example, in France or Denmark the issue was salient in parties' manifestos. This example shows that parties might be both consistent and silent on a certain issue. Alternatively, a party might have an ambiguous and nevertheless a salient position on the same issue.

Figure 4.3 Left-right ambiguity across and within countries

established democracies   post-communist democracies
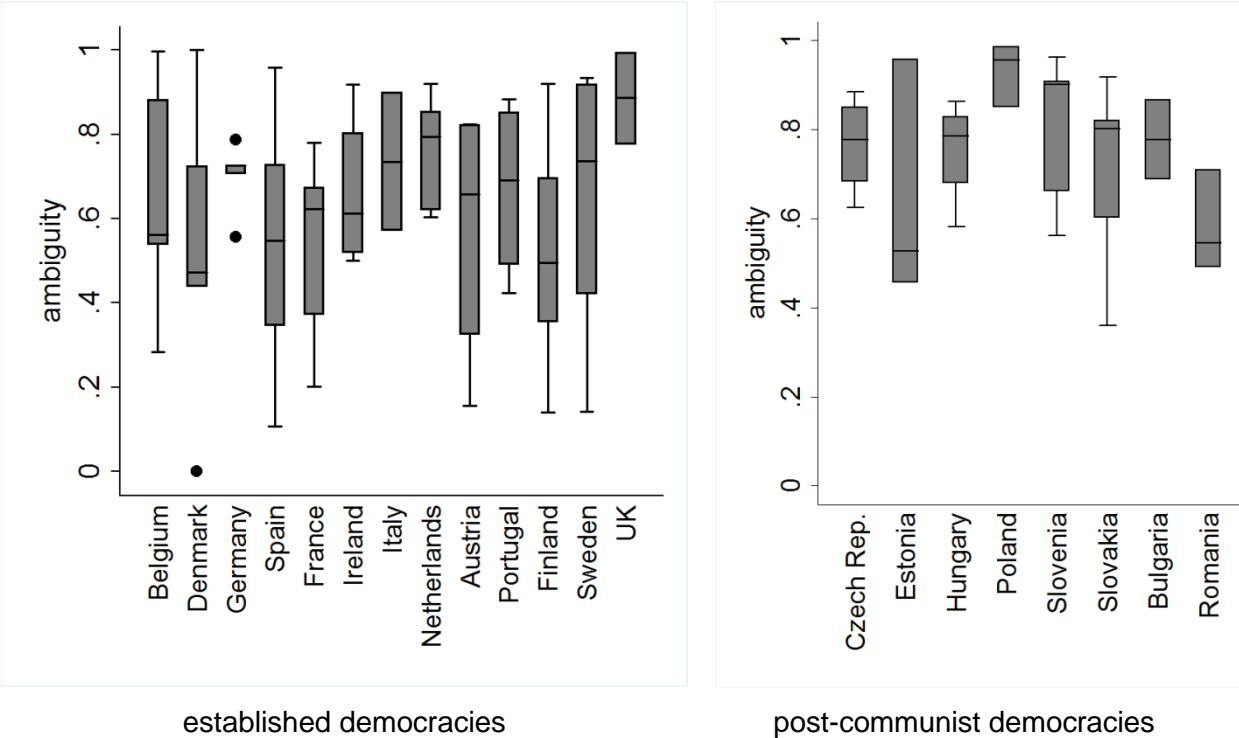
Figure 4.3 compares parties' ambiguity scores with regard to the overall left-right issue across countries. The results suggest that ambiguity in the left-right conflict as derived from parties' manifestos is actually much higher than in the EU issue conflict. Country mean average scores are all decisively closer to 1 than for the EU issue. The overall mean score amounts to 0.67 (standard deviation is 0.23). This is, in my view, a highly surprising finding. As we know from Chapter 2, voters encounter little difficulty in placing parties accurately on the left-right scale – i.e. they perceive them similarly to experts. This public knowledge coexists with the fact that parties' left-right positions are highly ambiguous as presented in their policy programs. Manifesto data has been often used to measure parties' left-right positions, but it has been completely neglected how ambiguous these 'positions' are. In Poland (0.93) and the UK (0.89) parties present particularly ambiguous left right preferences for potentially different reasons that are not easy to grasp in a systematic manner. The most remarkable observation as revealed in the graph is the difference in left-right ambiguity between parties in post-communist and those in established democracies. In line with the arguments made by other scholars (cf. Marks et al. 2007), in post-communist democracies parties have significantly more ambiguous positions with regard to the overall left-right issue conflict. This is supported by a one-way ANOVA test with the region dummy as predictor (F-value: 5.36; p<0.02). This significantly higher level of ambiguity in post-communist

democracies applies also to the economic left-right issue but not if the focus is set on the cultural left-right conflict.

How does policy ambiguity differ across party families? With regard to the EU issue we should expect more ambiguous profiles among mainstream parties than among fringe parties (cf. Helbling et al. 2010). Evidence against this claim is provided in Figure 4.4. The box plot graph includes parties from established democracies only, as it is in these countries where a link between party family and policy ambiguity is expected to be most evident. In general, the variances within party families are considerably larger than the variance across party families. The extreme left party group has the most ambiguous position on EU integration with a mean average score of 0.42. Parties belonging to this 'famille spirituelle' hold more ambiguous positions towards European integration than parties from any other party family. In addition, within the Christian Democrats there are two outliers: the German CSU and the Portuguese Centro Democrático e Social (CDS). So, in contrast to observations made in the literature, one fringe party group – the extreme left – is not at all unequivocally opposed to the European integration process.

What about the fringe party group on the other end of the left-right divide? As the graph reveals, nationalist parties generally do not seem to have a less ambiguous stance than mainstream parties. The mean EU policy ambiguity score for radical right parties in established democracies is 0.26, for liberal parties the score is 0.23 and for conservative parties the score is 0.24 despite the large within-family variance. Among nationalist parties, the True Finns (0.06), Party for Freedom (0.08), the British National Party (0.00), and the United Kingdom Independence Party (0.09) show the most consistent anti-EU profile, while the two Belgian parties Vlaams Belang (0.89) and Lijst Dedecker (0.55), as well as the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally (0.41) hold an ambiguous stance towards European integration. Overall, clarity is to be understood as a combination of both salience and unambiguity. Nationalist parties differ from remaining parties as regards the relative amount of attention (issue salience) they devote to EU-related issues (see Table 4A in the Appendix), but not with regard to the consistency of their statements (policy ambiguity).

Figure 4.4 EU issue ambiguity across and within party families
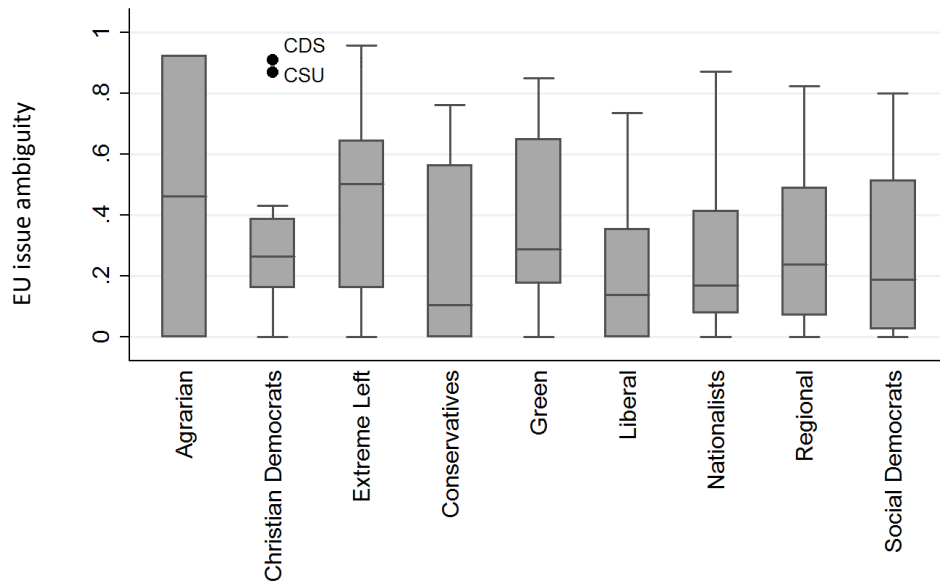
Figure 4.5 Left-Right ambiguity across and within party families
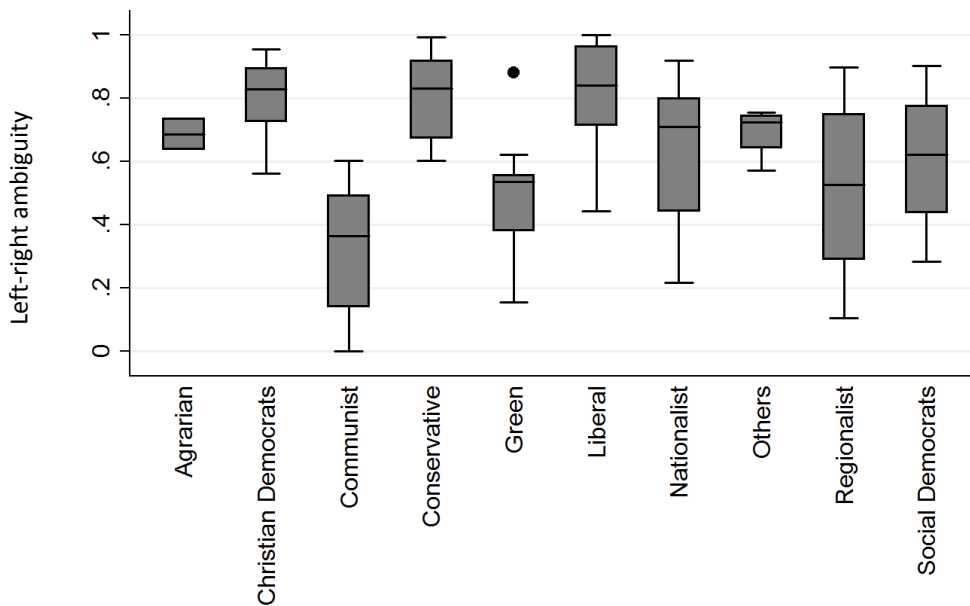
For the left-right case, the focus is again on parties in established democracies. In comparison to the EU issue, the variance in left-right ambiguity within party families is rather small (see Figure 4.5). We find, instead, a significant variance between families. The most striking observation with regard to differences in overall left-right ambiguity across party families is that left-leaning parties are less ambiguous than right-leaning parties. The Greens (whose mean score is 0.50) and the extreme left party family (0.32) show the most consistent

profiles. This is in line with the literature that argues that left-leaning parties are more policy-oriented and ideologically-minded (Przeworski and Sprague 1986; Kitschelt 1994). In contrast, the conservatives (0.81), the Christian democrats (0.78), the liberals (0.83) and the nationalists (0.75) appear to have policy programs which are highly ambiguous with regard to the general left-right conflict.[108] The ambiguous profile of the conservatives is puzzling as the conservative ideology is right-oriented with regard to both the cultural and the socioeconomic dimensions. The social democrats take on a middle ground. It is plausible that this middle ground is due to "third way"-politics that many larger left-of-the-center parties have adopted in the last two decades (Giddens 1998; Blyth and Katz 2005). The Labour party – the most prolific evidence of third way politics – scores very highly on this matter (0.78), along with the Dutch Partij van de Arbeid (0.85) and the Portuguese Partido Socialista (0.82).

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[108] It is important to add, however, that this difference in ambiguity between left- and right-oriented parties is even more apparent in the socioeconomic conflict.

4.5 Bivariate analysis between the party-related predictors and party knowledge

In the theoretical part of this chapter, I have laid out how issue salience, polarization, and ambiguity is expected to impinge upon public party knowledge. Together they create an information environment that - so the argument goes - facilitates or disables citizens from knowing what parties stand for. The following section serves to empirically examine this hypothesis. In advance of the multilevel analyses, I present and discuss the bivariate correlations between the knowledge scores for the two issues and the party-related factors.

Salience

Does issue salience relate to voters' knowledge about parties' policy preferences? To provide an answer for this question, I calculated the mean average knowledge scores for each political party. In addition, I have calculated the median misperception as well. Table 4.6 presents the results of bivariate correlation analyses.

The first row presents the correlation coefficients between socio-economic issue salience and the three party knowledge indicators. Parties devoting disproportional attention to conventional left-right issues in their programs are perceived more accurately in terms of their left-right position. Such parties are on average significantly less misperceived in terms of the absolute distance (coef. is -0.28)[109], they are more likely to be placed in the correct direction (0.24), and the response rate is higher for parties emphasizing socioeconomic issues (0.28). Thus, the coefficients are all significant and in line with theoretical expectations. They remain significant even when country effects are controlled for. The fact that coefficients are significant across all three knowledge variables renders the finding particularly robust: people know more about parties' left-right positions when socioeconomic left-right issues are emphasized in their programs.

In contrast, emphasizing cultural issues is not linked with greater knowledge about the party's left-right position among the electorate. The correlation between the first knowledge indicator and cultural issue salience is even positive (+0.15): cultural issue salience is associated with greater misperception of the party's actual left-right position. However, it makes a difference whether the mean or median average misperception is used. The correlation between the median misperception and cultural issue salience is insignificant and amounts to -0.02. Similarly, the other two coefficients are also insignificant. In general, it seems that voters are not more knowledgeable about the party's left-right position when cultural left-right issues are emphasized. This is, however, likely to be due to the fact that cultural issue salience is negatively correlated with socioeconomic issues. The multivariate

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[109] There is practically no difference depending on whether the average mean or the median misperception is used.

analysis will reveal whether cultural issue salience relates to a better understanding of a party's left-right position when we control for the effect of socioeconomic issue salience.

The third row shows the correlation coefficients between the overall left-right issue salience score and the three knowledge scores. Accordingly, parties emphasizing left-right issues tend to be placed more accurately (-0.18). The correlation is even stronger and significant when the median misperception is used (-0.29). They are, moreover, highly likely to be categorized in the correct direction (+0.34) and voters are more likely to place such parties on the left-right continuum (+0.28).

Table 4.6 Bivariate correlations between issue salience, issue polarization, and party knowledge

	Left Right			EU		
	Misper- ception[a]	Correct Direction[b]	Response Rate[c]	Mispercep- tion	Correct Direction	Response Rate
Salience (Economy & Welfare)	- 0.28*** N = 96	0.24* N = 85	0.28** N = 96			
Salience (Culture)	0.15 N = 96	0.11 N = 85	0.00 N = 96			
Salience Left-Right Overall	-0.18 N = 96	0.31*** N = 85	0.28** N = 96			
Salience EU (CMP)				-0.14 N = 96	0.29** N = 92	0.15 N = 96
Salience EU (EMP)				-0.18* N = 137	0.34*** N = 132	0.13 N = 137
Polarization	-0.10 N = 164	0.14 N = 143	0.56*** N = 164	-0.33*** N = 164	0.39*** N = 143	0.58*** N = 143

Notes: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001
[a] average mean misperception of a political party's position;
[b] proportion of voters who placed the party in the correct direction;
[c] proportion of voters with an opinion on party's placement.

How does issue salience relate to public knowledge on parties' actual EU issue position? In line with theoretical expectations, significant correlations exist mainly when the EMP measure is used. While the coefficient with the response rate is insignificant, party knowledge correlates significantly with EU issue salience in terms of misperception (-0.18) and correct directional placement (0.31). The median misperception correlates even more strongly and amounts to -0.27. These correlation coefficients remain significant even when country effects are accounted for.

On closer inspection, the relationship between EU issue salience and perceptual accuracy appears to not be linear. Above a threshold of around 30%, parties' positions are systemically more accurately perceived. Below this threshold parties vary in terms of

perceptual accuracy. In fact, many parties' positions are perceived accurately despite the low attention they give to EU-related issues in their party programs. In this sense, high EU issue salience is a sufficient but not a necessary condition for party knowledge.[110] However, this is mainly due to the fact that many people place parties in the middle of the scale when they are uncertain and parties in the center are parties that deemphasize the EU issue. Once we control for the extremity of a political parties' EU issue positions as well as other variables the relation appears to be linear.

Polarization

At the bottom of Table 4.6, one finds preliminary evidence for the impact of polarization on party knowledge for both issues. The table displays the correlation coefficients for the unweighted polarization measures. The results suggest that citizens are better informed about parties' issue positions the more parties diverge on the issue concerned, but the correlation appears to be much stronger for EU issue polarization than for left-right polarization. The correlations are not significant for left-right issue polarization with regard to the first two knowledge indicators. When the median misperception variable is used, the correlation is somewhat stronger and significant, reaching -0.18. Issue polarization appears to correlate significantly with the response rate (+0.56). That is to say, in countries in which the party system is polarized with regard to the left-right issue people are much more likely to place parties on the left-right scale.

In contrast, the correlations are highly significant if we look at the EU issue. In countries in which the EU issue is polarized, voters place parties more accurately on the EU issue scale (coefficient are -0.33 and + 0.39) and they are more likely to place parties on the scale in the first place (+0.58).[111] Figure 4.6 below illustrates the link between issue polarization and party knowledge scores. In the EU case, the relation between issue polarization and party knowledge runs linearly. In general, more polarization is associated with more accurate party placements and higher response rates. In the left-right case, the relationships are non-linear; as polarization increases misperception declines up to a certain point but misperception increases again thereafter. Parties' left-right positions are most accurately perceived in countries with average left-right polarization scores. Sweden, Denmark, and Austria are points in case. For the response rate, the relationship is curve-linear as well. From a polarization score of 2 upwards, response rates do not increase. Where polarization is

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[110] A great majority of parties that emphasize the EU issue by more than 30% are radical right parties.
[111] Overall, the results are confirmed by a replication of the analysis with the 2004 data set. EU issue polarization increases public knowledge on where parties stand. When parties present diverging views on the integration issue, people become more certain and more accurate in their placements. The effect of left-right polarization is comparatively weak.

particularly low, however, response rates are also comparatively low. I have looked at this non-linear relationship more closely and found that the association between left-right polarization and perceptual accuracy is more strongly linear if we run a multivariate analysis. This is mainly due to the coincidence that the CMP data significantly reduces the number of parties. Among these omissions there are two countries (Lithuania and Greece) and many parties which negatively affect this relationship. Thus, with the larger sample the relationship is non-linear but when the missing parties in the CMP data set are excluded the relationship turns out to be linear and significant.

Figure 4.6 Party knowledge and issue polarization

EU issue

left-right conflict
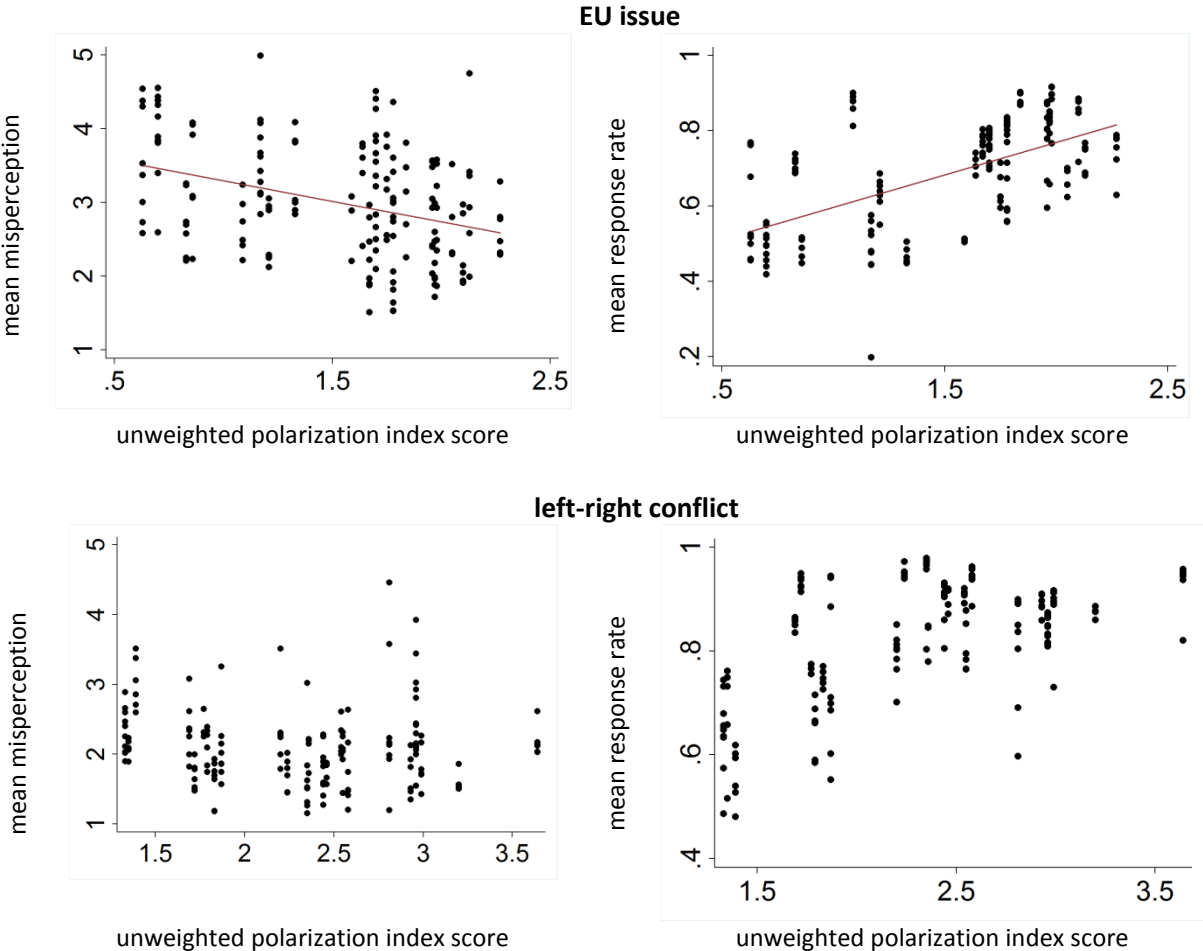
Ambiguity

Does policy ambiguity affect party knowledge? This section gives a preliminary answer to this question. The answer is provided by presenting and discussing pairwise correlation coefficients between my policy ambiguity indicator and the three knowledge variables across both issues. In addition, the same relationships have been analyzed by replacing the ambiguity measure with related variables such as the standard deviation of experts' party placements and the internal dissent measure taken from the CHES dataset. Pairwise correlation coefficients between policy ambiguity and the party knowledge measures aggregated onto the party-level are displayed in Table 4.7.

The results are puzzling at best. Policy ambiguity is negatively correlated with the first misperception variable and the negative correlations are confirmed with the alternative measures for ambiguity (the coefficients are -0.23, -0.14 and -0.30, respectively).[112] The negative correlations also apply to the median misperception variable. That is, parties with an ambiguous profile are placed more accurately than parties with a consistent stance on an issue. However, and in line with theoretical expectations, parties with an ambiguous profile are less likely to be placed in the correct direction of the conflict (the corresponding coefficients are -0.11, -0.18 and -0.24). Moreover, there is no negative correlation between policy ambiguity as measured with manifesto data and response rate. Voters are not less likely to place parties on the EU issue scale simply because their stance in this conflict is ambiguous. Parties with an ambiguous profile as well as parties with a highly consistent stance in the integration conflict are just as likely to be placed on the issue scale. This finding is confirmed when the alternative internal dissent variable is used but not when the standard deviation variable is used. A higher deviation is associated with a lower response rate (-0.20). The equivocal results render the interpretation of these findings troubling. Generally, policy ambiguity does not confuse the electorate, as one might think. Parties with an ambiguous profile happen to be parties that are located by experts close to the center. The center of the scale is the position that respondents tend to use to place parties on an issue scale when they are uncertain. In general, parties with an ambiguous profile are placed in the center and this is an accurate placement.

The left right case tells the reverse story. First, the correlation between the policy ambiguity measure based on the manifesto data and the first two knowledge variables is insignificant but expectedly signed (+0.18 and -0.12).[113] On average parties are misplaced by voters more strongly when their program is ambiguous rather than consistent. This finding is powerfully confirmed by the alternative ambiguity indicator based on the standard deviation

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[112] The correlation with median misperception is slightly weaker at -0.15.

[113] The correlation with the median misperception is, however, reduced to + 0.03.

of country experts' party placement is used. The correlation coefficients are all strong and expectedly signed (0.29 and -0.31). With regard to the response rate, there is no correlation with ambiguity as measured with manifesto data but the correlation is strongly significant and expectedly signed when the standard deviation measure is used (-0.45). The correlations between the standard deviation measure and the party knowledge variables remain significant even when we control for country fixed effects.

In sum, the results from the bivariate correlation analysis suggest that ambiguity does not confuse voters with regard to how parties ought to be placed on the issue scale. In line with theoretical expectations, voters have more trouble correctly evaluating the parties' overall direction. However, they are more accurate in placing a party with an ambiguous profile close to its actual position. The case is somewhat different for left-right conflict, where ambiguity is not significantly related with party knowledge. In fact, the standard deviation score correlates significantly, though I have argued that standard deviation is not an adequate measure for policy ambiguity.

Table 4.7 Bivariate correlations between ambiguity and party knowledge

	left-right			EU issue		
	misperception[a]	correct direction[b]	response rate[c]	misperception	correct direction	response rate
ambiguity	0.18 *N = 99*	-0.12 *N = 88*	0.01 *N = 99*	-0.23* *N = 135*	-0.11 *N = 130*	0.04 *N = 135*
internal dissent	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-0.14 *N = 164*	-0.18* *N = 156*	0.05 *N = 164*
stand. deviation	0.29*** *N = 164*	-0.31*** *N = 143*	-0.45*** *N = 164*	-0.30*** *N = 164*	-0.24** *N = 156*	-0.20* *N = 164*

Notes: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001
[a] average mean misperception of a political party's position;
[b] share of voters who have placed the party in the correct direction; parties with a center position (4.5-5.5) were excluded.
[c] share of voters with an opinion on the party's placement.

4.6 Multilevel analysis

In the previous section, I presented pairwise correlation coefficients between issue salience, polarization and ambiguity, on the one hand, and the three knowledge scores for both issues on the other hand. In this section, I examine the simultaneous effects of these predictors as well as of the individual-level variables. For this purpose, I have estimated a series of multilevel random-intercept models to account for composition effects. Table 4.8 reports the results for the EU issue and Table 4.11 reports the results for the left-right issue. The models were estimated by using restricted likelihood estimation. In each of the two tables the first column presents the results of a model with individual-level predictors. Model 2 includes only the country- and party-level predictors, while model 3 adds up all variables. The tables also include the results for logistic random-intercept models with the other two dichotomous dependent variables. In addition, Tables 4.9 and 4.10 display the explained variances which were calculated based on maximum likelihood estimation.

From Chapter 3 we know that in some democracies - notably in Spain and Romania - citizens are comparatively less aware and less interested in politics. As shown in Chapter 2, misperception of where parties stand in issue conflicts is particularly widespread in these two countries. Chapter 4 has brought to light that issue polarization and salience are low as well for both issues in these two countries. The multivariate analysis serves the purpose to examine whether the effect of the contextual factors is spurious if the effects of individual-level predictors are controlled for, and vice versa.

Table 4.8 The effect of party-related factors on perceptual accuracy and uncertainty – the EU issue

| | perceptual accuracy | | | | | | correct direction | | placement probability | |
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 3 | | Model 3 | |
	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
awareness	-0.641***	(0.045)			-0.643***	(0.045)	0.711***	(0.050)	0.930***	(0.090)
engagement	-0.060***	(0.017)			-0.056***	(0.017)	0.131***	(0.019)	0.331***	(0.038)
education	-0.095***	(0.008)			-0.094***	(0.008)	0.070***	(0.009)	-0.70***	(0.017)
ptv	-0.077***	(0.004)			-0.084***	(0.004)	0.040***	(0.005)	0.177***	(0.011)
matched pref.	-0.393***	(0.041)			-0.042***	(0.040)	0.135**	(0.201)	0.200*	(0.085)
mismatched pref.	-0.302***	(0.041)			-0.277***	(0.041)	0.201***	(0.046)	0.322***	(0.086)
ptv*matched	-0.050***	(0.005)			-0.050***	(0.005)	0.117***	(0.006)	0.046***	(0.013)
ptv*mismatched	0.066***	(0.006)			0.069***	(0.006)	-0.082***	(0.007)	-0.019	(0.014)
respondent's extremity	0.122***	(0.008)			0.121***	(0.008)	0.014	(0.008)	-0.016	(0.017)
salience			-0.015***	(0.001)	-0.016***	(0.001)	0.025***	(0.001)	0.018***	(0.001)
ambiguity			0.040	(0.029)	0.030	(0.028)	-0.294***	(0.031)	0.102	(0.058)
extremity			0.338***	(0.008)	0.360***	(0.007)				
vote share			-0.006***	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)	0.005***	(0.001)	0.043***	(0.001)
issue polarization			-0.496**	(0.177)	-0.492**	(0.156)	0.440**	(0.148)	2.265***	(0.050)
constant			3.124***	(0.288)	4.039***	(0.258)	-2.109***	(0.245)	-1.183***	(0.114)
var(country)	0.191	(0.057)	0.167	(0.051)	0.130	(0.040)	0.116	(0.035)	1.152	(0.046)
var(respondent)	0.891	(0.019)	1.100	(0.021)	0.928	(0.019)	0.925	(0.028)	21.228	(0.352)
var(respondent-party)	3.754	(0.021)	3.725	(0.021)	3.585	(0.020)				
countries	24		24		24		24		24	
respondents	16'897		16'897		16'897		16'897		20'634	
relations	80'941		80'941		80'941		80'941		104'706	
log likelihood	-174'737.6		-175'412.7		-173'274.1		-50489.3		-27177.64	
BIC	349'622.1		350'927.1		346'751.6		101'159.40		54'540.22	

Standard errors in parentheses: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Looking at the results for the EU issue as presented in Table 4.8, we note that the coefficients for issue salience and polarization are significant and expectedly signed, while the coefficient for issue ambiguity fails to reach a significant level. The results from the full model reveal that the coefficient for issue salience is -0.016 and highly significant. Thus, a change from the 5th percentile (3.9%) to the 95th percentile (38.9%) is, ceteris paribus, associated with a reduction in misperception of 0.56 points. Issue ambiguity fails to exert the theoretically expected effect on perceptual accuracy, even when issue extremity is accounted for. The coefficient for issue polarization is -0.492. Thus, an increase in polarization from 0.61 (Spain) to 2.11 (France) is, ceteris paribus, associated with a reduction in misperception of -0.74 points. While the coefficient for party size is insignificant, the coefficient for issue extremity is highly significant amounting to 0.360. Thus, a party placed by experts at either ends of the scale is on average misperceived by 1.44 points more than a party with an actual position at either 4 or 6. In fact, issue extremity has the strongest effect and explains a large portion of the variance.

The estimated misperception of an individual with average cognitive resources and propensity-to-vote, with a self-placement in the center of the scale (neither matched nor mismatched preferences) is 2.83 when the EU issue is depolarized (Spain) and issue salience low (5th percentile, 3.9%), while the probability of placing the party in its correct tendency is around 37.8%. Misperception is greatly reduced, down to 1.53, when issue salience is high (38.9%) and the integration conflict is polarized (France), and the probability of placing the party in its correct direction is 61.3%.[114] Overall, model fit (BIC: 346'751.6) improves considerably relative to the partial models. As summarized in Table 4.9, the model explains 47.2% of the variance at country level, 12.8 % at individual level, 7.4 % at the party-respondent level and 10.0% in total. Relative to the individual-predictors-only-model variance at country level is substantively explained.

The sensitivity of the estimated results has been checked in several additional ways. First, the coefficients for salience (0.025) and polarization (0.440) remain significant even when the alternative perceptual accuracy variable (correct direction) is used (see Table 4.8). The coefficient for ambiguity (-0.294) is significant as well, which suggests that voters are less likely to place a party in its correct tendency when the party's profile is ambiguous. Second, I estimated the same model with the issue salience and the internal dissent variable taken from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. While the effect of salience remains significant, internal

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[114] Predicted probabilities of placing parties in the correct direction are derived from a logistic multilevel model. These are the average predicted probabilities for those parties with polarization, salience, and ambiguity scores below the 25th percentile and above the 75th percentile. The corresponding 95%-confidence intervals are 59.7-63.0% and 36.1-39.4%. When I set the polarization, salience, and ambiguity scores at their 5th and 95th percentile, I obtained similar predicted probabilities with pooled data and country clusters: 36.9% [95%-C.I.: 31.7-42.0%] and 69.9% [C.I.: 65.3-74.4%).

dissent is positively associated with misperception. Thus, ceteris paribus, internal dissent leads to greater misperception among the electorate. Next, party family dummies were included to see whether parties can deliberately inform citizens through issue emphasizing or whether they are constrained by their ideological background. The coefficient for issue salience and polarization remain significant but are substantively weaker (-0.009 and -0.362). Thus, it appears that parties can deliberately inform citizens about their stance in the EU integration conflict through issue emphasizing and polarization. Next, I added a regional dummy variable (West=1; East=0), a variable for the electoral system, and the effective number of political parties to capture party system fragmentation in order to see whether these factors would change the results (see Dahlberg 2009).[115] The regional dummy variable leaves the coefficient for issue salience unaffected, while the coefficient for issue polarization is still significant but reduced to -0.383. The coefficient for the regional dummy variable is insignificant when issue polarization is controlled for. Party system fragmentation is not significantly associated with misperception, nor are the coefficients for issue salience (-0.016) or polarization (-0.463) substantially affected by its inclusion. The same pertains to the electoral system. In proportional systems respondents are just as able to place parties accurately on the EU issue scale as in majoritarian or mixed systems when we control for cognitive factors, issue polarization, and issue salience. Finally, I excluded one country at a time to see whether my results are distorted by a specific country, but the effects of salience and polarization always remained significant. These results show that parties can inform voters regardless of the institutional settings in which they are embedded (Franklin 1991).

I have estimated the full model with the response rate as the dependent variable using gllamm. The results are displayed in the final column. Similar to perceptual accuracy, both issue salience (0.018) and polarization (2.265) are positively associated with a higher probability of placing political parties on the EU issue scale. At the same time, issue ambiguity does not exert a significant effect on the probability of placing a political party on the same scale. The predicted probability of placing a party on the scale is estimated to be 85.1% when the issue is highly politicized (keeping the other variables at their corresponding mean values) and 76.1% when the EU issue is depoliticized.[116]

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[115] Using the CSES dataset, Dahlberg (2009) finds a positive correlation between party system fragmentation and voters' agreement on where parties stand in left-right conflicts.

[116] These are the predicted probabilities derived from a multilevel random intercept logistic model. For their computation I took the averaged predicted probability for observations with polarization and salience scores within their 10th percentile, and for observation with polarization and salience scores within their last quartiles, respectively. The 95%-confidence intervals are 84.4-85.6% and 75.3-76.7%. The predicted probabilities derived from a logistic model with pooled data and country clusters differ: 86.5% [C.I.: 83.3-89.8%] when issue polarization and salience is set at their 95th percentiles, and 67.4% [C.I.: 50.3-74.5%] when polarization and salience is set at their 5th percentiles (while keeping all other predictors at their mean values).

An unexpected result from this analysis is that issue ambiguity does not confuse the electorate. Whereas the effect of issue salience and polarization is significant and robust, issue ambiguity is, throughout a series of analyses, insignificant. It appears that political parties with an ambiguous profile are placed around the center, and this is precisely where they are placed by country experts. Only with the predicted probability of placing a party in its correct direction is ambiguity significantly and negatively associated. Furthermore, and in contrast to issue salience and polarization, ambiguous policy stances do not evoke more uncertainty as revealed by voters' placement probability.

Table 4.9 Explained variances at each level – the EU issue

	individual-level predictors	full
country	17.7%	47.2%
respondent	13.4%	12.8%
party-respondent	6.3%	7.4%
total	6.2%	10.0%

Note: The individual-level predictors include the cognitive and affective components as well as respondent's positional extremity. The models were estimated using maximum likelihood estimation.

Table 4.10 Explained variances at each level – the left-right issue

	individual-level predictors	full
country	40.2%	46.4%
respondent	24.8%	25.5%
party-respondent	1.4%	2.4%
total	9.5%	10.3%

Note: The individual-level predictors include the cognitive and affective components as well as respondent's positional extremity. The models were estimated using maximum likelihood estimation.

The same analysis has been conducted for the left-right conflict. I again estimated a series of nested three-level models and the results are presented in Table 4.11. Looking at the estimated results from the full model (model 3), we note a negative association between socioeconomic issue salience and the public misperception of parties' left-right stances (-0.010). Thus, an increase in the salience of socioeconomic issues from the 5th (18.75%) to

the 95th percentile (53.73%) corresponds with a reduction in misperception of only 0.35 points on an 11-point scale. Instead of reducing misperception, cultural issue salience seems to relate positively with misperception (0.005). Cultural issue salience seems to increase misperception even when we control for a range of other variables such as economic issue salience. Moreover, there is no significant correlation between left-right ambiguity and left-right misperception, even when we control for a range of different variables. The coefficient for left-right polarization is expectedly signed (-0.262) but only weakly significant. Accordingly, misperception declines by around 0.48 points when a country with a depolarized left-right conflict (Romania, 1.14) is compared with a system with a highly polarized left-right conflict (Portugal, 2.99). Finally, the coefficients for both control variables are significant. Larger parties tend to be perceived less accurately than smaller parties (0.004), while positional extremity is associated with greater misperception (0.080). The coefficient for positional extremity, however, is much smaller as compared to the one for the EU issue case.

If we changed the values of socioeconomic issue salience and polarization from the 5th percentile to the 95th percentile while setting the remaining variables at their mean values, estimated misperception would decline from 2.97 to around 2.11. Given that among the theoretically relevant contextual factors only these two are significantly associated with misperception, a difference in perceptual accuracy of 0.86 points is all we see. As displayed in Table 4.10, the full model explains around 46.4% of the country-level variance, 25.5% is explained at the level of the respondent, 2.4% at the relational level and 10.3% in total. However, compared to the individual-predictors-only model, the improvements in variances explained at each level is very small. Hence, model fit of the full model improves only marginally (BIC: 232'235.1) relative to the model with the individual-level variables (BIC: 232'586.4).

The estimated coefficients are, moreover, sensitive to model specifications. I conducted robustness checks similar to those conducted for the EU issue case. For example, I controlled for the additional effect of several controls one at a time: party family, regional dummy, district magnitude and party system fragmentation. In addition, I estimated the same model leaving out one country at a time. Furthermore, the full model has been rerun with the log-transformed dependent variable as well as with the alternative binary correct placement variable (results are shown in Table 4.11). When we employ the log-transformed variable, the results remain practically unaffected. They differ, however, when the dichotomous correct placement variable is used.

The coefficient for issue polarization remains practically unaffected (-0.275) when the effect of party system fragmentation is controlled for, a factor which does not related with

misperception in a significant manner (but see Dahlberg 2009). As shown in Table 4.11, issue polarization is also significantly associated with a higher probability that a party is placed in its correct ideological tendency (coef. equals 0.106). However, issue polarization does not improve party knowledge significantly when we control for the region (East vs. West), when we exclude Romania from the sample, or when the weighted left-right polarization index is employed.

Socioeconomic issue salience relates, as expected, with party knowledge in a fairly robust manner. For example, the coefficient remains significant when we add each of the country-level controls separately, when party family is controlled for, or when we use the alternative dependent variables. The effects of cultural left-right issue salience as well as ambiguity are puzzling and largely contingent on the dependent variable. As the results in Table 4.11 shows, controlling for the effects of other factors the coefficient for both variables are significant and expectedly signed when the correct directional placement variable is used. Thus, parties that emphasize cultural left-right issues (coef. equals 0.033) as well as parties with less ambiguous left-right policy statements (coef. equals -0.752) are more likely to be placed in the correct left-right tendency, but they are not placed more accurately on the continuous left-right scale. Accordingly, keeping the remaining variables at their mean values the predicted probability to place a party in its correct direction is around 75.7% when the left-right positions are clearly communicated, while probability declines to 65.6% when the information environment is poor.[117]

The last column displays the results for the placement probability. Both issue salience scores appear to increase the placement probability. The coefficient for the socioeconomic issue salience equals +0.035 and for cultural issue salience the equivalent parameter is +0.030. The coefficient for issue polarization barely misses a significant level, while left-right ambiguity is clearly not significant. Thus, it seems that people are generally more certain and more ready to place a political party on the left-right scale when left-right issues are politicized in a democracy. The predicted probability of placing a party on the left-right scale is estimated to be around 87.7% when polarization and issue salience is low, but it increases

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[117] Predicted probabilities were computed by drawing upon the estimates from a logistic random-intercept three-level model as presented in Table 4.13. Left-right positions are considered to be clearly communicated whenever the combined left-right salience score as well as the issue polarization score is above mean value, while left-right ambiguity is below the mean. Information environments are considered to be poor when ambiguity is above average and left-right salience and polarization is below average. I took the average predicted probabilities for these two groups. The corresponding 95%-confidence intervals are 74.3-77.1% and 64.1-67.1%, respectively. I run the same model with pooled data and country clusters. The results differ: predicted probability equals 53.6% [45.6-61.2%] when polarization and issue salience scores are set at their 5th percentiles, while ambiguity is set at its 95th percentile; predicted probability equals 86.6% [81.2-92.0%] when polarization and salience scores are set at their 95th percentiles, while ambiguity is set at its 5th percentile.

to 97.8% when polarization and salience reach a high level.[118] In contrast, parties that convey highly ambiguous left-right profiles are not less likely to be placed on the left-right scale than parties which offer fairly consistent policy programs in left-right terms. In addition, larger parties are more likely to be placed on the left-right scale (coef. equals 0.051).

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[118] The predicted probabilities were estimated based on pooled data with country clusters with salience and polarization set at their 5th and 95th percentiles. The corresponding 95%-confidence intervals are 84.2-91.1% and 96.8-98.8%, respectively. Predicted probabilities derived from a multi-level model are as follows: 93.3% [C.I.: 92.6-94.0%] and 95.5% [C.I.: 95.0-96.0%].

Table 4.11 The effect of party-related factors on perceptual accuracy and uncertainty – the left-right issue

	perceptual accuracy						log-transformed		correct direction		placement probability	
	model 1		model 2		model 3		model 3		model 3		model 3	
	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
awareness	-0.631***	(0.034)			-0.625***	(0.034)	-0.193***	(0.011)	0.731***	(0.048)	3.652***	(0.194)
engagement	0.005	(0.014)			0.006	(0.014)	0.001	(0.004)	0.071***	(0.019)	0.873***	(0.073)
edu	-0.108***	(0.006)			-0.108***	(0.006)	-0.034***	(0.002)	0.104***	(0.009)	0.114***	(0.038)
ptv	-0.042***	(0.003)			-0.038***	(0.003)	-0.009***	(0.001)	-0.066***	(0.005)	0.199***	(0.015)
matched	-0.477***	(0.032)			-0.486***	(0.025)	-0.175***	(0.010)	-0.605***	(0.048)	1.794***	(0.175)
mismatched	-0.941***	(0.031)			-0.940***	(0.031)	-0.277***	(0.010)	1.155***	(0.048)	2.255***	(0.175)
ptv*matched	-0.035***	(0.004)			-0.037***	(0.004)	-0.010***	(0.001)	0.289***	(0.007)	0.098***	(0.022)
ptv*mismatched	0.098***	(0.005)			0.102***	(0.005)	0.026***	(0.002)	-0.207***	(0.008)	-0.001	(0.024)
respondent's extremity	0.229***	(0.006)			0.230***	(0.006)	0.074***	(0.001)	-0.069***	(0.009)	-0.003	(0.036)
economy salience			-0.011***	(0.001)	-0.010***	(0.001)	-0.002***	(0.0003)	0.016***	(0.001)	0.035***	(0.004)
cultural salience			0.006***	(0.001)	0.005***	(0.001)	0.001*	(0.0004)	0.033***	(0.002)	0.030***	(0.005)
ambiguity			0.052	(0.032)	0.061	(0.032)	-0.017	(0.010)	-0.752***	(0.055)	-0.158	(0.152)
extremity			0.063***	(0.008)	0.080***	(0.008)	0.015***	(0.002)				
vote share			0.001*	(0.001)	0.004***	(0.001)	0.002***	(0.0002)	0.008***	(0.001)	0.051***	(0.003)
issue polarization			-0.346*	(0.115)	-0.262*	(0.115)	-0.085*	(0.036)	0.106***	(0.025)	0.210	(0.128)
const.	2.916***	(0.069)	2.947***	(0.323)	3.543***	(0.275)	1.458***	(0.086)	-0.917***	(0.095)	-1.814***	(0.363)
var(country)	0.077	(0.025)	0.104	(0.034)	0.073	(0.024)	0.007	(0.002)	0.057	(0.004)	0.603	(0.054)
var(respondent)	0.521	(0.012)	0.704	(0.014)	0.526	(0.012)	0.045	(0.001)	0.517	(0.027)	11.704	(0.385)
var(respondent-party)	1.803	(0.012)	1.811	(0.012)	1.785	(0.012)	0.193	(0.001)				
countries	21		21		21		21		21		21	
respondents	16'770		16'770		16'770		16'770		16'770		17'714	
relations	64'252		64'252		64'252		64'252		64'252		69'555	
log likelihood	-116'221.2		-117'687.9		-116'012.4		-43525.33		-35'234.6		-10'963.6	
BIC	232'586.4		235'486.5		232'235.1		87'261.01		70'657.3		22'116.72	

Standard errors in parentheses: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Summary of Chapter 4

The results presented in this chapter suggest that the policy-relevant information conveyed by political parties generally matters. Policy statements and systemic factors (issue polarization) forge an information environment which enables voters to know more accurately what parties actually stand for. Such information serves voters to evaluate and chose parties in line with their own issue preferences. In contrast, in information-poor environments voters are left alone in figuring out what political parties stand for. The inevitable consequence is that citizens are utterly uninformed or misinformed about parties' policy profiles.

However, not all party behavior is equally informative and obfuscating. Issue ambiguity, for instance, does not appear to increase misperception among voters in a significant manner. Instead, voters simply place such parties in the center where they actually belong. Nor does ambiguity relate to the response rate which would indicate greater uncertainty. Only with regard to the correct directional placement variable did I find a significant association between ambiguity and party knowledge in both issue conflicts. In contrast, party knowledge with respect to perceptual accuracy and certainty generally improves when an issue is polarized, while the case of issue salience is more nuanced.

Parties inform voters about their preferences for EU integration when they stress the EU-related issue in their manifestos. This finding is robust and stands even when a series of different robustness checks are conducted, including controlling for parties' ideological backgrounds. For the left-right issue, however, only socioeconomic issue salience is positively associated with party knowledge, and this association withstands a series of robustness checks. Parties that stress socioeconomic issue are placed more accurately and are more likely to be placed on the left-right scale. The effect of cultural issue salience is less clear-cut. It increases the probability that a party is placed on the left-right scale and it increases the probability that this party is placed on the correct side of the left-right divide, but it does not improve perceptual accuracy of the party' left-right positions even when the effects of other factors are controlled for.

Thus, parties do not inform voters about their actual left-right position simply by emphasizing cultural left-right issues or by presenting a less ambiguous left-right profile. This is an important finding. A large body of work argues that parties shift their left-right positions to increase or to preserve vote shares using their policy programs (cf. Adams et al. 2004; Ezrow 2007; Ezrow et al. 2011). More recently, scholars have also started to examine the consequences of such policy shifts. In line with spatial models of party competitions, parties are interested in communicating their policy shifts or positions. Inevitably, this necessitates that voters perceive such shifts and positions accurately. However, recent studies derived from the CMP analysis question whether respondents' perceptions respond to parties' actual

shifts in positions as communicated in their manifestos (see Adams et al. 2011 for the left-right case, and Adams et al. 2014 for the EU integration issue). My contribution to this literature is the finding that parties cannot inform voters about their actual left-right as well as their EU issue position by presenting a less ambiguous policy stance. Furthermore, only socioeconomic issue salience relates with perceptual accuracy regarding the party's actual left-right placement, while the effect of cultural issue salience is contingent on the dependent variable examined.

In the next chapter, I turn to cross-level interaction effects. It is conceivable that individuals are affected in how they form their impression of the political offer by contextual factors such as issue salience, ambiguity, and polarization. This is the theme of the next chapter, where I examine the extent to which affect- and cognition-driven impression formation depends on contextual factors.

Chapter 5

The relationship between cognition, party affect, and party knowledge conditional upon the information environment

5.1 Theoretical argument

In this chapter, I examine the extent to which the relationship between cognition and affect, on the one hand, and party perception, on the other hand, is contingent upon the information environment. In anticipation of the results, citizens endowed with cognitive resources such as a general interest in politics, high level of education and political awareness become better informed about parties' policy preferences than others whenever an issue is politicized. The knowledge gap between politically sophisticated and unsophisticated citizens widens as information becomes richer. This finding applies primarily to perceptual accuracy and not to perceptual certainty as measured by placement probability. Furthermore, projection effects do not appear to be contingent on the information environment. Two hypotheses will be tested: 1) the association between cognitive resources and perceptual accuracy (uncertainty) depends on the clarity of an issue; and, 2) The association between the affective components and party knowledge is contingent on the political clarity of an issue.

Chapter 3 introduced the individual predictors of party knowledge and examined their associations empirically. It was shown that both cognitive as well as affective components relate to our knowledge of where political parties stand on issue conflicts. In Chapter 4, we saw that also political parties' behavior matters for citizens' party knowledge. Whenever parties disseminate sufficient and clear information in their manifestos, and whenever parties disagree on issues, people become generally better informed about the political offer. Chapter 5 examines who responds to the information conveyed by political parties by analyzing cross-level interactions. To what extent does the information environment impact on the extent to which cognitive and affective components shape our beliefs on where political parties stand? Overall, perception formation is a process of interaction. Individual attributes moderate the effect of political messages, while the impact of affective and cognitive individual-level factors is moderated by the information environment (issue salience, level of ambiguity and issue polarization).

Cognition and the information context

Research on political communication has established that the reception and understanding of political messages requires a certain level of political involvement and political awareness (Zaller 1992; Gilens 2001; Classen and Highton 2006; Hobolt 2007; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). On this view, only sophisticated citizens – those who are interested and politically aware – are expected to receive and respond to political information. Politically unsophisticated voters will not respond to political information. In consequence, political information that is disseminated by political parties increases the knowledge gap between social groups endowed with extensive cognitive resources and those with few cognitive resources (Tichenor et al. 1970; Holbrook 2002; Nadeau et al. 2008). By the same token, the sophisticated citizen is expected to be more accurately informed than others about parties' policy profiles only to the extent that the information context is favorable (Zaller 1992; Jerit et al. 2006). If systems and parties disseminate no information or highly ambiguous information, cognitive resources can hardly be used to forge an accurate understanding of parties' standpoints. In their seminal book *The Pathologies of Rational Choice*, Green and Shapiro (1994) comment that the political context might be decisive for the extent to which rational-choice explanations work. Under the assumption that individuals prefer to be represented by parties with similar policy views, information-rich environments enable them to pursue their aims based on accurate information. If, on the other hand, information is absent, people will neither be motivated to be accurate, nor will they have the chance to employ their cognitive resources to acquire an accurate understanding of what parties stand for (Kuklinski et al. 2001). No deliberate persuasion takes place, and consequently people will neither learn their parties' positions nor will they have the possibility of adjusting or changing party support. Thus, politicized issue conflicts motivate citizens to gather issue-relevant information and to process information accurately in order to judge parties based on these issues (Kuklinksi et al. 2001).

Information rich environments provide information that is accessible for people's opinion formation but also increase the perceived importance of information, thus motivating people to become accurately informed (Kuklinski et al. 2001). In this context, it is also reasonable to expect that the knowledge gap between sophisticated and unsophisticated citizens narrows as policy-related information accumulates. In a similar vein, scholars have made the argument that social groups who are generally endowed with less political information are more likely to select parties as if they were fully informed when an issue is politicized (Althaus 2003). In consequence, in information-rich environments low political awareness, low interest in politics and low levels of education might not hinder the individual to be well-

informed about what parties stand for (Kuklinski et al. 2001; Holbrook 2002; Althaus 2003).[119] Politicization of an issue leads to greater media attention which provides voters with plenty of information that allows even the less aware to become familiar with parties policy preferences. Thus, the knowledge gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" could just as well decline in information-rich environments (see Althaus 2003). According to Althaus (2003, 192), "[l]evels of general political knowledge remain stable over time, but this knowledge can become a less important determinant of attitude structures when news coverage directs public attention toward particular issues". In addition, Holbook (2002) has observed that knowledge gaps do not always increase as this mechanism varies across issues (see also Bonfadelli and Friemel 2012). Zaller (1992) contends that political information contributes to an increase in knowledge gaps, but argues that it is likely that even the less aware will be exposed and receptive to political information (see also Stroud 2008, Jerit et al. 2006, Iyengar et al. 2010 for similar observations). In this study, I test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5a:	*The positive association between an individual's cognitive resources and her party knowledge weakens, as policy information conveyed by parties becomes clearer*

Affect and the information context

The association between party attitude and knowledge can also vary across information context. It has been argued that when information is poor or ambiguous, affective components intrude on how people arrive at their perception of party politics (Feldman and Conover 1983, 1989; Brody and Page 1972; Zaller 1992; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010; Huckfeldt et al. 1998; Tomz and van Houweling 2009). Without information individuals cannot rely on cognitive resources to acquire and understand information that is simply not there. In such situations people react in at least three possible ways (Zaller 1992; see also Gabel and Scheve 2007): 1) people are uncertain and thus less likely to have a perception of where a party might stand; 2) people place parties close to the center – the safe guess option; or, 3) people use prior beliefs and predispositions as the only short cut available. In a similar vein, ambiguous information renders partisan-biased perception possible (Page and Jones 1979; Huckfeldt et al. 1998; Tomz and van Houweling 2009). That is, low and blurred information –

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[119] Hoolbrook (2002) has analyzed the information conveyed during six presidential elections campaigns and finds that debate can sometimes even reduce the knowledge gap with regard to knowledge about the candidate's issue positions.

low salience, policy ambiguity and inter-party agreement – induce individuals to place parties in accordance with one's party attitude. In a recent study, Somer-Topcu (2014) uses survey data and the left-right placement question to establish that ambiguous appeals induce voters to succumb to projections to a greater extent than appeals which are more consistent.

Yet, social identity theories maintain that individuals are inclined to preserve cognitive consistency in order to strengthen their self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner 1979). In fact, as research shows it is not self-evident that the abundance of incongruent information (for example, EU-skeptics encountering pro-EU statements from a party they identify with) alone automatically leads to a revision in party attitudes (Jerit and Barabas 2012; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). Even the same pieces of information are often processed differently across individuals simply to fit them in line with their party sentiments (Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon 2008, 122: Burden and Hillygus 2009; Jerit and Barabas 2012). Various scholars have shown that even in high information environments plenty of information exists that can be selectively filtered out to bring issue attitudes and party evaluation in line (Kam 2005; Mondak 1993; Zaller 1992). Jerit and Barabas (2012) have compiled several opinion surveys and conducted media content analysis to show that partisan bias is considerable even when media coverage of an issue is high. A recent study on the contextual factors of projection effects on the EU issue suggests that contrast and assimilation effects occur independently of the context – affect works unsystematically rather than systematically (Grand and Tiemann 2013). Taber and Lodge (2012, 249) note that "defense of one's prior attitude is the general default when reasoning about attitudinally contrary arguments, and it takes dramatic, focused intervention to deflect people off a well-grounded attitude". The question is: what is a "dramatic, focused intervention"? And, as Redlawks and colleagues (2010) argue, there is a "tipping point" at which motivated reasoning comes to an end and decisions which are in line with an accurate understanding of parties' policy preferences are more likely. In other words, at some point incongruent information becomes so overwhelming that motivated reasoning is simply not feasible.

Cognitive consistency can be preserved through another mechanism – issue attitude adjustments. Individuals adopt the positions propagated by their supported party, learning is the consequence and, in turn, there is no need for projecting (Lenz 2009). As several studies have shown, such issue attitude adjustments are more likely when the political context provides them with sufficient information. For instance, Druckman et al. (2013) observe that polarized issue environments incite individuals to form issue opinions based on party attitudes rather than on "substantive information" (see also Slothuus and de Vreese 2010; Bullock 2011; Nicholson 2011). Bolsen et al. (2014) observe that individuals are less likely to follow party cues when the party is internally divided. In particular, all experimental studies I

am aware of show that voters' opinions move towards those propagated by their preferred party once they are exposed to statements sponsored by their party.

I expect another affective component to impinge upon party knowledge, contingent upon the political context; there are reasons to assume that party attitude bias on party knowledge is more common in situations in which information is scarce. Generally, supporters are more interested and informed about their own party's program. When information is abundant, however, the chances are greater that someone will be exposed to and receive information on opponents' standpoints as well (Zaller 1992). For instance, Zaller (1992: 139) writes that "Most people…are simply not so rigid in their information-seeking behavior that they will expose themselves only to ideas that they find congenial. To the extent selective exposure occurs at all, it appears to do so under special conditions that do not typically arise in situations of mass persuasion". Therefore, we have reasons to assume that citizens will be disproportionately better informed about the policy preferences of those parties which they like and support especially when the issue is not politicized.

In sum, I test whether the affective model has a stronger explanatory power in those systems and with regard to those parties which are characterized by low quantity and quality of information. According to the partisan bias literature, however, the counter-hypothesis is that affective models work across all political contexts in similar ways, independent from the level of information. In systems characterized by a high level of information clarity, so the argument goes, individuals will always find some evidence which would support their views, while they simply ignore or downplay information that would jeopardize their party identity. The following hypotheses will be examined:

Hypothesis 5b:	*The positive association between positive party attitudes and party knowledge weakens, as policy information conveyed by parties becomes clearer.*
Hypothesis 5c:	*Projections weaken, as policy information conveyed by parties becomes clearer.*

5.2 Methodological approach and empirical findings

In terms of the method used, I estimated a multilevel model with interactions between the individual-level predictors and each of the political clarity factors separately. The model includes random slopes for one predictor that is allowed to vary across a higher level group. Political awareness is used as the only cognitive component and is interacted with a series of country- and party-level factors because, as we have seen in Chapter 3, political awareness is the most reliable measure for cognitive capacity. In all models, I control for the effect of parties' as well as respondents' positional extremity, and for the constitutive affective components (propensity-to-vote and both issue divergence variables – matched and mismatched preferences). I estimated nested three-level models. When the context-dependency of the cognitive model is explored, a random slope for awareness has been built in which is allowed to vary across countries when the interaction effect between issue polarization and political awareness is analyzed. In a similar vein, random slopes are used for the party-level factors, which are allowed to vary across the respondent whenever I examine the interaction between political awareness and a party-level factor. Given the low number of countries, I have used restricted likelihood estimation – a rather conservative estimation with a tendency to type II errors (Snijders and Bosker 2012). Unless otherwise specified, an unstructured covariance matrix has been used.

Table 5.1 The relationship between political awareness and perceptual accuracy contingent on party-related factors – the EU issue

	polarization	salience	ambiguity	full
fixed components				
cognitive component				
political awareness	-0.208	-0.634***	-1.084***	-0.380
	(0.206)	(0.061)	(0.057)	(0.226)
political context				
issue polarization	-0.348*			-0.284*
	(0.138)			(0.128)
issue salience		-0.011***		-0.013***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
ambiguity			-0.574***	-0.516***
			(0.064)	(0.065)
issue extremity	0.309***	0.352***	0.297***	0.348***
	(0.125)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)
cross-level interactions				
awareness*polarization	**-0.344****			**-0.341***
	(0.125)			**(0.133)**
awareness*issue salience		**-0.008****		**-0.007****
		(0.003)		**(0.002)**
awareness*ambiguity			**0.959*****	**0.957*****
			(0.096)	**(0.098)**
constant	3.333***	2.988***	3.052***	3.554***
	(0.225)	(0.102)	(0.097)	(0.213)
random components				
var(country)	0.087	0.201	0.175	0.072
	(0.031)	(0.060)	(0.052)	(0.027)
var(country: awareness)	0.047			0.054
	(0.029)			(0.032)
var(respondent)	0.891	1.473	1.563	1.539
	(0.017)	(0.040)	(0.036)	(0.035)
var(resp.: party factor)		0.001	0.851	0.798
		(0.000)	(0.055)	(0.052)
var(party-respondent)	3.551	3.437	3.545	3.505
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
number of observations	102'323	87'974	87147	87147
model fit				
BIC	435'750.6	374'843.7	372'476.3	371'649.9
BIC (with a constant sample)	373'481.4	371'304.3	372'476.3	371'649.9
BIC (with unstr.covar., without interact.)	373'473.0	371'294.7	372'505.9	371'715.3
BIC (random intercept model with interact.)	373'470.7	376'162.2	-	-
BIC (random intercept model without interact.)	373'473.7	376'154.5	-	-

Note: The dependent variable is misperception measured in absolute distance; standard deviation is displayed in parentheses. The model is a three-level nested model. In case of polarization, the model includes a random slope for awareness across countries; for salience and ambiguity, it includes a random slope for these two party-level variables across respondents. The models control for the constitutive terms of the affect model and for the respondent's positional extremity (coefficients not shown). See Appendix for the table containing all estimates.

5.2.1 Results: The relationship between cognitive resources and party knowledge contingent on the information context

As can be drawn from Table 5.1, cognitive resources help individuals to form an accurate impression of what a political party stands for in the integration conflict, especially when the political environment provides sufficient and clear information.[120] First, the interaction effect between EU issue polarization and political awareness on perceptual accuracy has been examined. The coefficient for awareness fails to reach a significant level and amounts to only -0.208. The coefficient for the polarization index equals -0.348. Of central concern is the coefficient for the interaction term, which is significant at -0.344. Taken together, it appears that cognitive components matter less in systems in which parties agree on the integration process, whereas it is of a much greater help in those systems in which parties disagree. For example, the estimated effect of political awareness on misperception is estimated to be -0.42 in countries with low issue polarization, such as in Spain, but augments to the double of its size in countries such as France where the EU issue is highly polarized (est. coefficient is -0.96). However, a series of robustness checks have been conducted and their results suggest that the coefficients are sensitive to modifications in the model. Significance still holds when we drop one country at a time to check for potential leverage effects, when we conduct the same analysis with the alternative binary dependent variable, or with the logarithm of the continuous misperception variable. However, the cross-level interaction coefficient is not significant when awareness is replaced with the education variable or when the weighted polarization index is employed. In addition, the model fit (BIC: 373'470.7) improves relative to the model without the interaction term (BIC: 373'473.7) only when the random intercept model is estimated.

Given that only 24 countries are included, the results of a country-respondent interaction analysis might be considered unreliable. Low statistical power due to the low number of countries is more likely to result in estimated effects that are statistically insignificant (Aguinis et al. 2013). In general, all results show in the same direction and it could therefore be argued that political information in form of issue polarization is first and foremost received by those endowed with cognitive resources. Moreover, when the same analyses are conducted using maximum likelihood estimations instead of the restricted maximum likelihood estimations, most of the interaction coefficients turned out to be significant. Finally, model fit for the random-intercept model is better in the model with the interaction as opposed to the model without the interaction term. Given that all results of the robustness analysis show in

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[120] The table does not show the estimates for some of the control variables and the covariances. See the full table in the Appendix.

same directions, we could infer that polarized issue conflicts are first and foremost to the benefit of those who are interested and aware.

Next, I discuss the interaction between issue salience and political awareness. The coefficient for political awareness is -0.634 and for salience -0.011. The interaction coefficient between political awareness and issue salience is expectedly signed and significant (-0.008). Thus, when issue salience is low (3.9 %) the maximal effect of awareness on misperception is -0.63, but the effect is -0.92 when issue salience is high (38.9%). The association between cognition and party knowledge conditional on party's issue salience appears, however, not to be very robust, as revealed by the results of the sensitivity analysis. On the one hand, model fit improves relative to the model with issue polarization, but not relative to the model without the interaction term, even when the random-intercept model is used. On the other hand, the interaction effect is highly significant when the party variable is replaced with the EU issue importance measure taken from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, when the alternative dependent variable is used, or when political awareness is replaced with the education or the political involvement variable. Overall, these results corroborate the notion that political awareness reduces misperception the more the issue is emphasized by the party.

Significant and robust interaction effects on misperception are obtained for political awareness and policy ambiguity. The coefficient of the interaction term equals 0.959. Political awareness reduces misperception by -1.084 points when ambiguity is zero, while it makes almost no difference when ambiguity reaches its maximum. Again, similar robustness checks have been conducted and all corroborate the same finding. For example, I replaced the policy ambiguity measure with the internal dissent measure from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. The results obtained with the alternative ambiguity measure yields statistically significant results in line with the previous finding. Furthermore, model fit improves relative to the model without the interaction term even for a random-intercept model with random slopes and an identity covariance matrix. Overall, ambiguity appears to confuse only those who are willing and able to process information. In contrast, political parties' clear stances on issue positions are not recognized by the politically unaware.

Finally, the results presented in the final columns show that all interaction terms remain significant when they are analyzed simultaneously. Results from a Wald test confirm that all interactions contribute to a substantial improvement in model fit. The estimated misperception (while keeping the control variables at their mean values) in a high-information environment (issue polarization = 2.13; issue ambiguity = 0; issue salience = 38.9%) is accordingly 1.8 when the respondent is endowed with a high level of political awareness but 3.2 when political awareness is low. In contrast, in low-information environments (polarization = 0.63; issue ambiguity = 1; issue salience = 3.8%), misperception among the politically

highly aware is 3.9 and 3.6 for the politically least aware. BIC with an unstructured covariance matrix for the full model is substantially lower (371'649.9) relative to the partial models as well as relative to the full model without the interaction terms (371'715.3).[121] The interaction coefficients remain significant with the alternative dependent variables, pointing to the robustness of the results.[122]

The results presented in this section support the idea that political parties can inform individuals about their policy preferences to the extent that individuals are able and willing to acquire and understand political information. The findings support what Key (1966, 7) noted more than fifty years ago: "*in the large the electorate behaves about as rationally and responsibly as we would expect, given the clarity of the alternatives presented to it and the characters of the information available*". In a similar vein, "*political parties […] have the potential to educated citizens and enable them to make more carefully considered choices*" (Chong and Druckman 2007: 637). At the same time, information-rich environments widen the knowledge gap between those equipped with high levels of political awareness and those with low levels of political awareness (Zaller 1992; Gilens 2001; Classen and Highton 2006; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). Consequently, the more salient and clearer political information becomes, the disproportionately better informed are those social groups who are endowed with higher levels of political awareness; in other words the rich versus the poor, the non-workers compared to the working class, and men as opposed to women. The cross-level interaction effects with political awareness are displayed in Figure 5.1.

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[121] Larger and highly significant interaction effects are obtained when the logarithm of the continuous misperception variable is used.

[122] Two parties have an EU issue salience score of zero. These two parties have, therefore, missing values for the ambiguity score. Dropping these two parties from the sample probably explains why the BIC improves when the constant sample is used (374'483.7 vs 371'304.3).

Figure 5.1 The relationship between political awareness and misperception conditional upon the information context – the EU issue
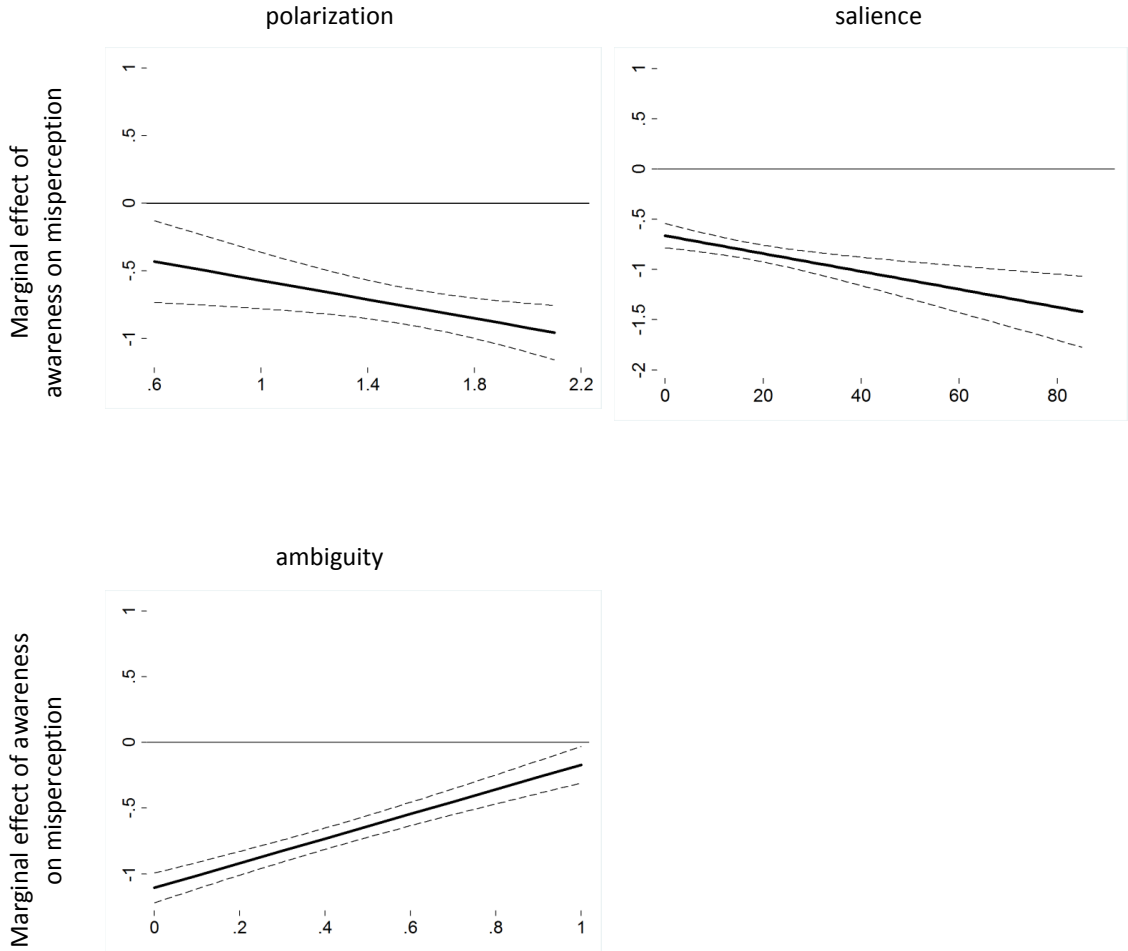
Note: The solid lines denote the change in misperception in case of a one unit increase in awareness (maximal effect) across different information context. The dashed lines display the 95%-confidence intervals.

Table 5.2 The relationship between political awareness and perceptual accuracy contingent on party-related factors – the left-right issue

	polarization	salience (eco)	salience (cult)	ambiguity	full
fixed part					
cognitive component					
political awareness	-0.071 (0.267)	-0.615*** (0.106)	-0.642*** (0.049)	-0.753*** (0.069)	0.285 (0.398)
political context					
issue polarization	-0.007 (0.154)				-0.248 (0.182)
issue salience (eco)		-0.007*** (0.002)			0.003 (0.002)
issue salience (cult)			0.021*** (0.002)		0.022*** (0.003)
ambiguity				0.354*** (0.065)	0.155*** (0.029)
issue extremity	0.154*** (0.004)	0.123*** (0.006)	0.102** (0.006)	0.125*** (0.006)	0.116*** (0.006)
cross-level interactions					
awareness*polarization	-0.333** (0.120)				-0.151 (0.158)
awareness*issue salience (eco)		-0.005 (0.003)			-0.013*** (0.003)
awareness*issue salience (cult)			-0.011** (0.004)		-0.021*** (0.004)
awareness*ambiguity				-0.048 (0.095)	
constant	2.233*** (0.366)	2.340*** (0.104)	1.927*** (0.087)	1.919*** (0.092)	2.269*** (0.439)
random components					
var(country)	0.199 (0.062)	0.117 (0.038)	0.130 (0.042)	0.127 (0.041)	0.179 (0.062)
var(country: awareness)	0.105 (0.038)				0.114 (0.045)
var(respondent)	0.550 (0.010)	2.321 (0.122)	0.390 (0.024)	0.311 (0.017)	0.925 (0.155)
var(resp.: party factor)		0.001 (0.0001)	0.002 (0.0001)	0.528 (0.035)	0.001 (0.000)
var(party-respondent)	2.248 (0.010)	1.765 (0.011)	1.733 (0.011)	1.790 (0.011)	1714 (0.011)
number of observations	119'955	75'213	75'213	77'117	75'213
BIC	455'580.3	272'332.3	271'817.8	n.a.	271'649.9
BIC (unstr. covariance without	455'573.1	272'314.4	271'807.1	n.a.	271'629.6
BIC (with constant sample)	272'832	272'332.3	271'817.8	n.a.	271'649.9

Note: The dependent variable is misperception measured in absolute distance; standard deviation is displayed in parentheses. The model is a three-level nested model. In case of polarization, the model includes a random slope for awareness across countries; for salience and ambiguity, it includes a random slope for these two party-level variables across respondents. The models control for the constitutive terms of the affect model and for the respondent's positional extremity (coefficients not shown). See Appendix for the table containing all estimates.

Left-right

Do similar findings pertain to the left-right conflict? Are the political aware relatively better informed about parties' left-right profiles the more polarized the left-right conflict, the more salient left-right issues, and the more consistent parties' left-right positions are? As can be interpreted from Table 5.2, the coefficient for the interaction term between left-right polarization and political awareness is significant and expectedly signed (-0.333). Both the coefficient for political awareness (-0.071) and issue polarization (-0.007) are insignificant. Hence, it appears that the impacts of issue polarization and awareness on perceptual accuracy are conditional upon each other. The differences in estimated misperception between the highly aware and unaware citizens in countries with a low-polarized left-right conflict such as Bulgaria or Romania are comparatively small (2.24 versus 2.73).[123] Misperception declines as the left-right issue becomes more polarized, but this is primarily the case for the politically aware. Hence, in a country with a highly polarized left-right conflict estimated misperception amounts to only 1.45 for the highly aware but it is 2.64 for the unaware. I have compared the fits of the models with and without the interaction term using different covariance matrices as well as the random-intercept model only. Accordingly, model fit improves (BIC: 455'639.6) relative to the model without the interaction term (BIC: 455'669.7) only when the random intercept model is estimated. In addition, the results appear to be sensitive to model re-specifications. While the coefficient of the interaction term remains significant when political awareness is replaced with the education variable or when each country is excluded one at a time, it barely misses significance when the weighted polarization index is used. The coefficient is, furthermore, insignificant when the alternative dependent perceptual correctness variable is employed, although the coefficient points in the same direction. Given the small number of countries as well as the fact that all interaction coefficients point in the same direction, the association between political awareness and perceptual accuracy seems to be contingent on the polarization of the left-right issue conflict.

In contrast to the EU issue, the interaction effect between political awareness and left-right issue salience on perceptual accuracy is not straightforward for we have seen that higher cultural issue salience is associated with greater misperception. Hence, I ran two interaction models, one with socioeconomic issue salience and the other with cultural issue salience. As the results displayed in Table 5.2 suggest, only the interaction term between political awareness and cultural issue salience is significant with its coefficient reaching -0.011. Moreover, the interaction is very robust as the coefficient is even stronger when the education variable is used or the dichotomous variable of perceptual accuracy is employed

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[123] Estimated misperception, while keeping all other control variables at mean value.

as the dependent variable. Given that emphasis on cultural issues generally seems to confuse voters about a party's left-right position, political awareness only reduces the resulting misperception. In other words, parties that emphasize cultural issues are first and foremost misperceived by politically less aware citizens. Accordingly, a one unit increase of awareness (maximal effect) on misperception is -0.642 points when cultural issue are completely neglected and -1.082 when cultural issues are salient (40%).

From Chapter 4, we know that it is mainly right-oriented parties, and especially nationalist parties, that stress cultural issues. In contrast to left-oriented parties, right-oriented parties appear to be associated with a less accurately perceived left-right position. As this interesting finding deserves to be analyzed more thoroughly, I have calculated the effects of awareness on misperception for each main party family in established democracies separately using both perceptual accuracy variables (no significant results were obtained for the response rate). As shown in the first column of Table 5.3, political awareness is associated with a reduction in misperception by around 2.49 points for nationalist parties, while the coefficients for awareness for the other party families is decisively smaller.[124] The results for the dichotomous perceptual accuracy variable are displayed in the second column. The association between political awareness and correct placement probability is larger for right-oriented parties and, among them, particularly for the liberal (+49.4) and the nationalist parties (+48.7). Overall, it seems that everyone is well informed about the left-oriented parties' left-right positions but it takes political awareness to work out where the right-oriented parties stand.

Table 5.3 The relationship between political awareness and misperception across party families

	misperception	correct direction (in %)
social democrats	- 0.99***	+ 11.9 n.s.
far left	- 0.63**	+ 13.4 *
green	- 0.77***	+ 18.7 **
regionalist	- 0.74	+ 12.1 n.s.
liberal	- 1.21***	+ 49.4 ***
Christian democrats	- 0.93***	+ 31.8 ***
conservative	- 0.99**	+ 33.5 ***
nationalist	- 2.49**	+ 48.7 ***

Note: these estimations are based on the Western European countries sample. The table entries display the maximal effect of awareness, while keeping the other variables at median value. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; ***p<0.001; n.s. = not significant.

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[124] Table entries denote maximal effects of awareness on misperception, while keeping the values of the remaining variables at median level. The results derive from a model with pooled data, with clusters for countries, and controlling for the same individual-level predictors as used in the other models.

In order to estimate the model with the interaction between political awareness and left-right ambiguity, I had to fall back on the identity covariance matrix due to convergence problems. One way or the other, the interaction coefficient is not significant. Left-right ambiguity is associated with greater misperception (coefficient = 0.354), and this applies to both the politically aware and unaware individuals (interaction coefficient = -0.048).[125]

The results, presented in the final column, include all interaction terms that were significant or barely significant in the partial models. The multilevel model uses an unstructured covariance matrix with random slopes for awareness at country level and cultural issue salience at the respondent level (I use no random slope for economic issue salience since both cultural and economic issue salience correlate fairly strongly at 0.25). While the interaction with issue polarization loses significance, it still points in the correct direction. The interaction coefficient with cultural issue salience (-0.021) remains significant, whereas the economic issue salience interaction coefficient (-0.013) gains significance. Keeping all remaining variables at mean value and varying only the three relevant contextual variables influences the coefficient for awareness as follows: in information-rich environments (polarization = 3.2; economic salience = 56%; cultural salience = 24%) awareness relates to a reduction in misperception by 1.43 points, in information-poor environments (polarization = 1.35; economic salience = 20%; cultural salience = 3%), in contrast, the maximal effect of awareness amounts to only -0.24 points. The full model shows a better model fit (BIC: 271649.9) relative to the partial models. A Wald test suggested, furthermore, removing the interaction terms between awareness and polarization in order to improve model fit. The model is nonetheless dissatisfying as there is no improvement in model fit observable relative to the model without the cross-level interactions.[126] Still, the coefficients for the interactions between awareness and both issue salience scores remain significant when alternative perceptual accuracy variables are used (correct direction and the log-transformed misperception variable).

Overall, the results suggest that individuals with a high level of political awareness tend to place parties more accurately on the left-right scale compared to individuals with a low level of awareness, especially when the environment conveys clear and sufficient political information. They are more knowledgeable as polarization and economic issue salience increases, and less confused by cultural issue salience. However, when it comes to policy

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[125] Finally, I have interacted political awareness with the party's positional extremity. The interaction coefficient is highly significant and reaches -0.189. Parties at the extremes are particularly accurately perceived by those citizens who are politically aware, while in the case of parties with an actual position close to the center political awareness matters much less.

[126] An improvement in model fit relative to the model without the interaction effects is obtained only when the combined issue salience indicator (economic and cultural left right issues) is interacted with political awareness (BIC: 272666.6 vs. 273080.9).

ambiguity, the politically aware do not seem to be better able to place parties with a coherent left-right profile any more accurately. Figure 5.2 summarizes the main cross-level interaction effects. Moreover, a similar model has been conducted with the binary placement variable (perceptual uncertainty), but I found no significant interactions either for the EU issue or for the left-right issue (Table 5A in the Appendix presents the according estimates). Hence, the difference in the predicted portability of the politically aware and the unaware placing parties on the EU issue or the left-right scale is unaffected by the information environment.

Figure 5.2 The relationship between political awareness and misperception conditional upon the information context – the left-right conflict
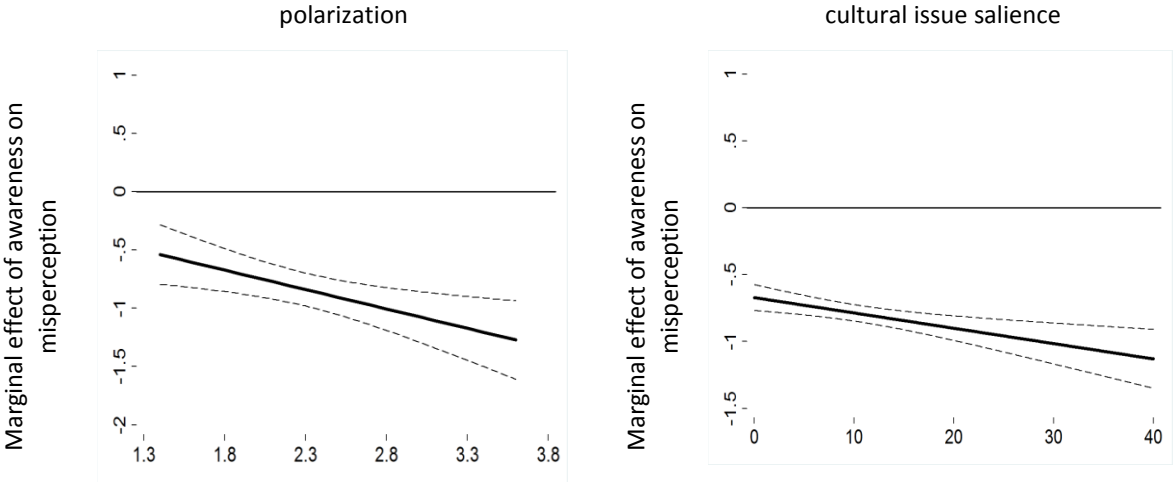
Note: The solid lines denote the change in misperception in reaction to a one unit increase in awareness (maximal effect) across different information context. The dashed lines display the 95%-confidence intervals.

5.2.2 Results: The relationship between party attitudes and party knowledge contingent on the information context

Affect influences how we come to our perceptions of where political parties stand in issue conflicts, but does its association with party knowledge depend on the political context? In what follows, I provide evidence which suggests that projections are not contingent upon the political context (see Grand and Tiemann 2014 for a similar finding). I do find, however, that party attitudes are differently associated with both perceptual accuracy as well as certainty, depending on the political context. Positive party attitudes relate generally with higher party knowledge, and the difference in knowledge compared to those with negative party attitudes is especially large in countries with low levels of polarization, or for parties which do not pay great attention to the relevant issue. The analysis of the relationship between the affective components of impression formation and perceptual accuracy contingent on the political context is highly complex and for this reason I pursue the analysis in two steps. First, I examine the conditional effect of propensity-to-vote contingent upon levels of issue polarization, salience, and ambiguity. Next, the interaction effects between party attitudes and issue congruence on perceptual accuracy across different information environments will be analyzed. Even though the focus rests with perceptual accuracy as the dependent variable, occasionally I provide the results for the equivalent analysis with the binary placement variable.

Party attitude biased information acquisition

Voters tend to acquire more information about parties or candidates they like or support (Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Taber and Lodge 2006). This "party attitude bias" results in citizens being unequally informed about the political offer: they are better informed about parties they like and less well informed about parties they dislike. I suggest that this pattern depends on the context. In particular, this bias is expected to be smaller in information-rich environments. In other words, when information is abundant even individuals with negative party attitudes will know fairly well what the party concerned stands for, even with little effort (Zaller 1992).

To test this hypothesis, I have estimated several models in which propensity-to-vote has been interacted with issue polarization, salience and ambiguity. The dependent variable is level of misperception, while the control variables include issue divergence (matched and mismatched preference dummies), respondent's positional extremity, party's positional extremity and political awareness. The results for the European integration case are presented in Table 5.4. In the first column, we note that the coefficient for the ptv variable is -0.266, while the coefficient for the interaction term is +0.120. Thus, a one unit increase in ptv relates to a reduction in misperception by -0.190 points when EU issue polarization is

particularly low (0.63), whereas the marginal effect of a one unit increase in ptv is reduced to -0.01 when polarization is high (2.13). This finding seems to be robust, as similar significant interaction coefficients are obtained when the dependent variable is replaced with the dichotomous variable, or when the weighted polarization measure is used. The interaction coefficient points in the same direction but is insignificant when the dependent continuous variable is log-transformed. The model fit improves relative to the model without the interaction term only when the random-intercept model is estimated. The marginal effect of propensity-to-vote on misperception conditional on the level of issue polarization is displayed in Figure 5.3.

A similar finding pertains to EU issue salience and propensity-to-vote. Accordingly, a one unit increase in ptv is associated with a reduction in misperception by -0.161 points when EU issue salience is only 3.9% (5th percentile). Thus, a maximal increase in ptv is associated with a reduction in misperception by around 1.77 points. When EU issue salience reaches 38.9% (95th percentile), however, the conditional association between ptv and misperception declines to +0.049. In addition, the inclusion of the interaction term improves model fit (BIC with interaction term: 372'968.2; BIC without interaction term: 374'409.9). As suggest by the results of a series of sensitivity analyses, the finding appears to be highly robust. The robustness checks included the replacement of the dependent variable, the log transformation of the continuous misperception variable and the use of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey EU issue importance variable. As displayed in Figure 5.3, the positions of parties that emphasize the EU issue in their campaigns are more accurately perceived by their opponents than by their supporters. However, when an issue is neglected or deemphasized it is predominantly the supporters which are better informed about the party's standpoints.[127]

The interaction coefficient differs when we turn to the ambiguity measure. The coefficient for propensity-to-vote is -0.088, whereas the coefficient for the interaction term is +0.036. Thus, high ptv scores are associated with lower misperception especially when parties provide consistent information (ambiguity equals zero), but ptv makes less of a difference when ambiguity is high. Model fit (BIC: 371'771.8) improves slightly relative to the model without the interaction term (BIC: 371'781.5), but it is subject to model specification.

The final column displays the results of the full model. All interaction coefficients remain significant. Model fit (BIC: 368'513.9) improves relative to the partial models as well as relative to the model without interaction terms (BIC: 369'805.3). In particular, the interactions between issue salience and polarization, on the one hand, and propensity-to-vote, on the other hand, are highly robust. For someone with positive party attitudes (ptv = 10) estimated

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[127] It should be reminded that the effect for awareness, education and political involvement has been controlled for.

misperception is 2.95 when polarization and issue salience is high, and 1.93 for someone with negative party attitudes (ptv = 0). In contrast, when polarization and issue salience is low, the difference in estimated misperception is much larger. Accordingly, the estimated misperception for those with a negative party attitude is 4.45, while for those with a positive party attitude estimated misperception is only 1.87. The results are summarized in Figure 5.3.

Table 5.4 The relationship between party attitudes and perceptual accuracy conditional upon the information context – the EU integration issue

	polarization	salience	ambiguity	full
fixed-effects parameters				
affective component				
propensity-to-vote	-0.266***	-0.184***	-0.088***	-0.361***
	(0.044)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.047)
political context				
polarization	-0.986***			-0.885***
	(0.212)			(0.188)
issue salience		-0.034***		-0.034***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
issue ambiguity			-0.498***	-0.171***
			(0.043)	(0.038)
extremity	0.323***	0.359***	0.301***	0.365***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
cross-level interactions				
ptv*polarization	0.120***			0.100**
	(0.027)			(0.029)
ptv*salience		0.006***		0.006***
		(0.0002)		(0.0002)
ptv*ambiguity			0.036***	0.047***
			(0.007)	(0.007)
constant	3.876***	2.897***	2.873***	4.721***
	(0.344)	(0.097)	(0.093)	(0.307)
random-effects parameters				
var(country)	0.245	0.162	0.170	0.187
	(0.074)	(0.048)	(0.051)	(0.058)
var(country: ptv)	0.004			0.004
	(0.001)			(0.001)
var(respondent)	0.918	1.753	1.751	1.607
	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.034)
var(respondent: ptv)		0.021	0.020	0.015
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
var(party-respondent)	3.478	3.283	3.402	3..291
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.019)
number of obs.	102'323	87'974	87'147	87'147
model fit				
BIC	434'220.9	372'968.2	371'771.8	368'513.9
BIC without interaction	434'218.4	374'409.9	371'781.5	369'805.3
BIC (constant sample)	371'131.4	369'521.1	371'771.8	368'513.9

Note: The dependent variable is misperception measured in absolute distance; standard deviation is displayed in parentheses. The model is a three-level nested model. The ptv variable is allowed to vary across countries when it is interacted with polarization, while it varies across respondents when interactions with party-level variables are examined. The models control for the constitutive terms of the affect model and for the respondent's positional extremity (coefficients not shown). Party attitude is measured with the propensity-to-vote variable.

Figure 5.3 The relationship between party attitudes and misperception conditional upon the information context
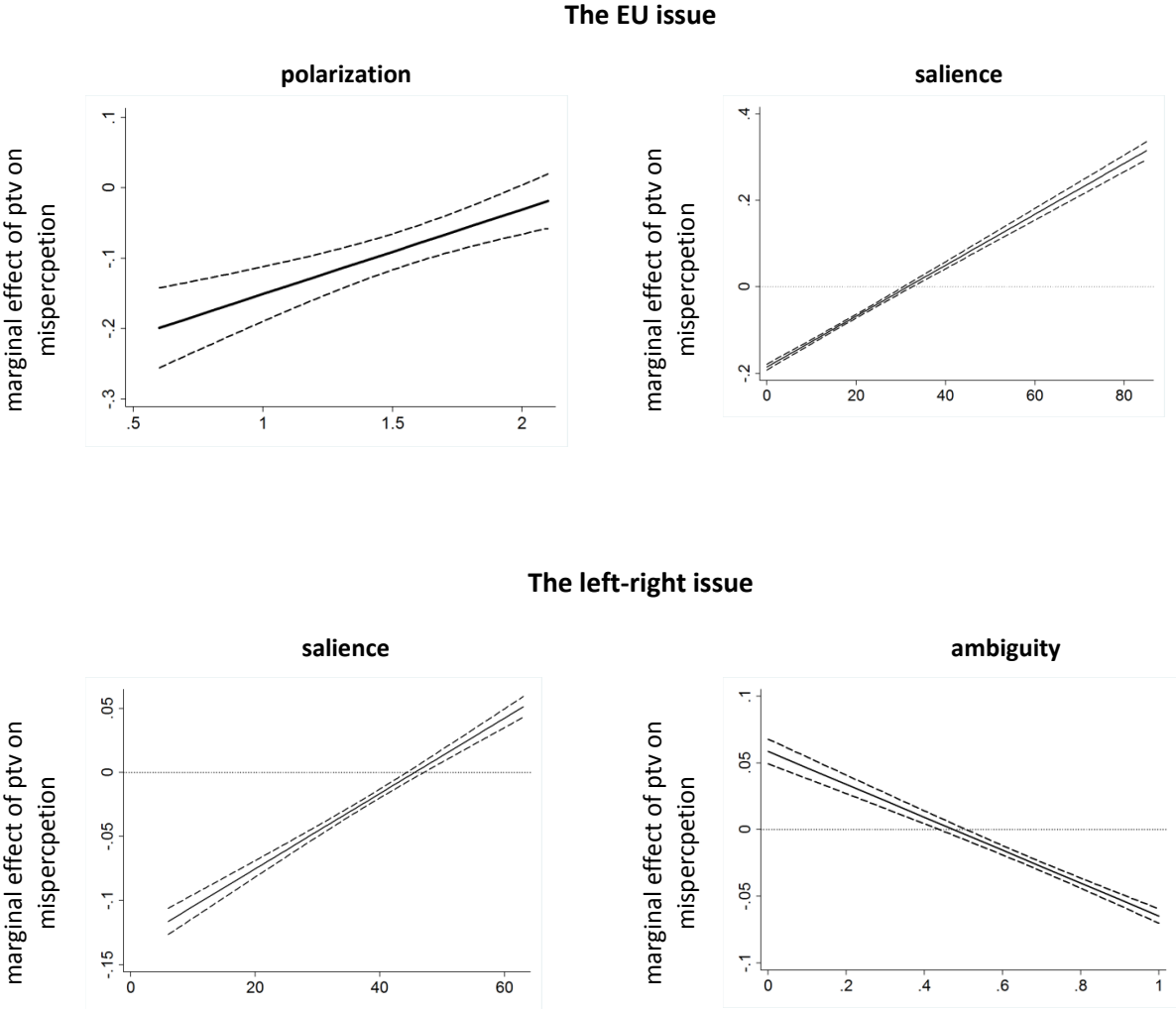
The EU issue

polarization

salience

The left-right issue

salience

ambiguity

Note: The solid lines denote the change in misperception in reaction to a one unit increase in propensity-to-vote across different information context. The ptv is an 11-point scaled variable which gauges party affect. The dashed lines display the 95%-confidence intervals.

Table 5.5 The relationship beween party attitudes and perceptual accuracy conditional on the information context – the left-right issue

	polarization	salience (eco)	ambiguity	full
fixed-effects parameters				
affective component				
propensity-to-vote	-0.046	-0.134***	0.059***	-0.164***
	(0.028)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.035)
political context				
polarization	-0.222			-0.486**
	(0.126)			(0.143)
issue salience		-0.020***		-0.018***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
issue ambiguity			0.812***	0.707***
			(0.035)	(0.039)
extremity	0.158***	0.128***	0.128***	0.145***
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
cross-level interactions				
ptv*polarization	0.006			0.042**
	(0.011)			(0.014)
ptv*salience		0.003***		0.003***
		(0.0002)		(0.0002)
ptv*ambiguity			-0.124***	-0.107***
			(0.007)	(0.008)
constant	2.727***	2.883***	1.575***	3.419***
	(0.300)	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.342)
random-effects parameters				
var(country)	0.138	0.115	0.127	0.115
	(0.042)	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.038)
var(country: ptv)	0.001			0.001
	(0.0004)			(0.0004)
var(respondent)	0.556	0.855	0.865	0.831
	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
var(respondent: ptv)		0.005	0.005	0.004
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
var(party-respondent)	2.235	1.760	1.760	1.747
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
number of obs.	119'955	75'213	77'117	75'213
model fit				
BIC	455'142.7	271'785.9	278'907.4	271'172.7
BIC without interaction	n.a.	272'127.8	279'239.9	271'699.8
BIC (constant sample)	272'476.0	271'785.9	271'773.8	271'172.7

Note: The dependent variable is misperception measured in absolute distance; standard deviation is displayed in parentheses. The model is a three-level nested model. The ptv variable is allowed to vary across countries when it is interacted with polarization, while it varies across respondents when interactions with party-level variables are examined. The models control for the constitutive terms of the affect model and for the respondent's positional extremity (coefficients not shown). See Appendix for the table containing all estimates. Party attitude is measured with the propensity-to-vote variable.

As shown in Table 5.5, a similar pattern is found in the left-right conflict. While there is no significant interaction effect between issue polarization and propensity-to-vote, voters with positive party attitudes perceive the concerned party's left-right position more accurately than those with more negative attitudes, especially when the economic issue salience is low and left-right ambiguity is high. Thus, as shown in the salience-model the coefficient for ptv is -0.134 when issue salience is zero, -0.071 when issue salience reaches 20.9% (5th percentile), but turns out to be positive (amounting to +0.036) when issue salience is 56.5% (95th percentile). However, the interaction effect is reversed when ptv is interacted with cultural issue salience (results not shown).

Similarly, the results for the ambiguity-model reveal that a one unit change in propensity-to-vote is associated with an increase in misperception by +0.059 when ambiguity equals zero, but a reduction in misperception by 0.06 points occurs when ambiguity is high (0.96, 95th percentile). These interaction coefficients withstand a series of robustness checks.

Furthermore, the full model estimates the simultaneous effect of all three cross-level interactions. The results reveal that all three interaction terms are significant. In fact, the model fit improves substantially (BIC: 271'172.7) relative to the same model without the interaction terms (BIC: 271'699.8) and relative to the partial models with single interaction terms despite the larger number of parameters. The results don't differ when the misperception variable is log transformed. The estimated misperception for someone with a high ptv score (10) equals 1.53 in a high-information environment (polarization = 2.99; issue salience = 56.5%; ambiguity = 0.16), but 3.04 in a low-information environment (polarization = 1.69; issue salience = 20.1%; ambiguity = 0.96). In contrast, estimated misperception for someone with a low ptv score (0) amounts to 2.1 in a high-information environment but to only 0.88 in a low-information environment.

In sum, positive party attitudes are associated with a better understanding of what the party concerned stands for. The party attitude bias hypothesis relates with the notion that supporters are better informed about their party's policy profiles than about policy proposals offered by the opponents. When an issue is politicized – the issue is polarized and emphasized in parties' manifestos – the supporters' advantage relative to non-supporters diminishes. With regard to the left right conflict, the ptv is more weakly associated with lower misperception the more parties emphasize economic issues or the less ambiguous their left-right appeals. The argument is that in low-information environment it takes more dedication and attention to find out what a political party stands for, and this dedication is most likely common among respondents with positive attitudes towards the political party concerned.[128]

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[128] There is an ongoing debate regarding the conditions which make selective exposure more likely to occur (Stroud 2008, Garrett 2009). In line with the observations made by other scholars, the findings presented in

Moreover, a similar pattern occurs with regard to placement probability. Figure 5.4 illustrates the predicted probabilities of placing a political party on both issue scales depending on party attitudes and the information environment (the results of these models are presented in Table 5A in the Appendix). For instance, when the EU integration conflict is politicized (solid line) there is little difference in placement probability between someone with a high and someone with a low ptv score. This appears to be even more pronounced in the left-right case, where the solid line runs basically flat. However, the difference is considerably larger when the informational level is low (dashed lines). This pattern applies to both the EU and the left-right issue. Whenever the EU or the left-right conflict is highly politicized, respondents with low ptv scores are about as likely to place a party on the corresponding scale as someone with a high ptv score. In low information environments, however, supporters appear to be considerably more certain about parties' policy offers as revealed by their higher predicted probability of placing the party in this conflict. In sum, supporters are disproportiontely better informed about their party's policy profile in terms of both accuracy and certainty when the level of politicization is low. As soon as the level of politicization is high, the difference in placement accuracy and certainty between supporters and opponents dissipates.

Figure 5.4 Party attitudes and placement probability contingent on the information context
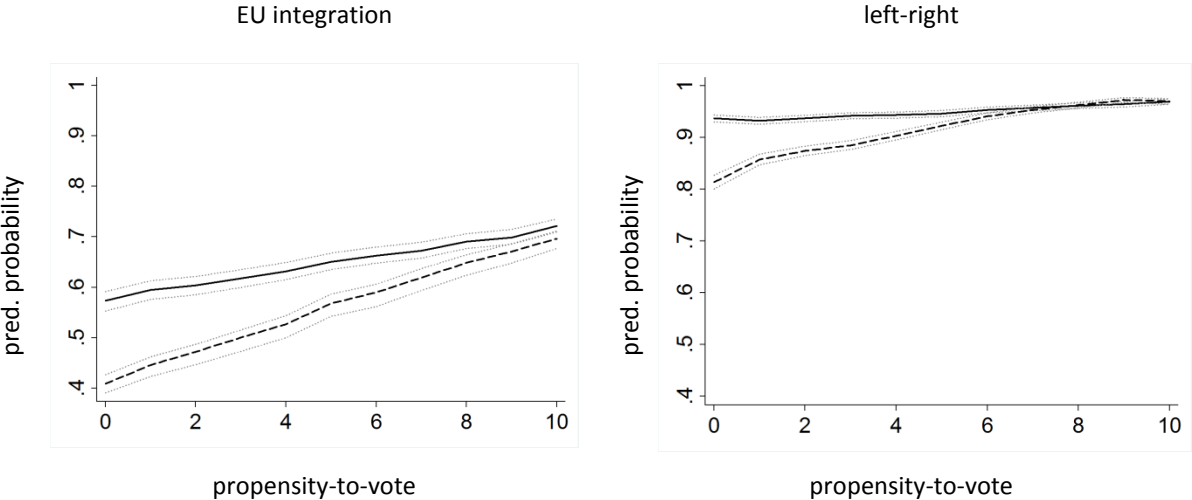
Note: Predicted probabilities were calculated based on a random-intercept three-level model using gllamm. The solid line shows the estimated misperception in high-information environments, while the dashed line does the same for low-information environments. See Table 5A in the Appendix for the estimated results.

this section suggest that in high-information environments party attitudes are without consequences for selective information acquisition, while in low-information environments party attitudes correlate considerably with party knowledge. This pertains to both the left-right and the EU integration conflicts.

Projections and the information context

Let me now turn to projections conditional on the information environment. Chapter 3 has shown that whenever an individual and the party share similar policy preferences, positive party attitudes are associated with lower misperception, while negative party attitudes are associated with greater misperception. This is evidence for the presence of projection effects as voters pull and push parties in correspondence with their party attitudes. However, does the provision of rich and clear information reduce projections, or are projections context-independent?[129]

Table 5.7 reports the estimation results of the same model but for two different samples. One sample consists of only party-voter dyads with matched preferences, while the other sample contains only party-voter dyads with mismatched preferences. The main coefficient of interest is the interaction term between issue clarity and propensity-to-vote. Issue clarity is an additive index based on parties' issue polarization, salience, and ambiguity scores. If we expect political information to attenuate projections, the coefficient for the interaction terms should be signed as follows (see Table 5.6): a) when preferences are mismatched, the coefficient for ptv should be positively signed, while the coefficient for the interaction term should be negatively signed; and, b) when preferences are matched, the coefficient for ptv is expected to be negatively, and the one for the interaction term should be positively signed. The expected directions of the coefficients are summarized in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Expected directions of the coefficients

	matched preferences	mismatched preferences
propensity-to-vote	**-**	**+**
clarity	**-**	**-**
ptv*clarity	**+**	**-**

However, as the results presented in Table 5.7 reveal, the coefficients of the interaction terms are all positively signed irrespective of whether preferences are matched or mismatched and regardless of the issue. For the EU issue, the coefficient for propensity-to-vote is -0.025 in the sample with mismatched preferences, whereas the interaction coefficient is +0.111. Hence, when information is scarce (clarity index score set at the 5th percentile) a one unit increase in ptv relates with a decrease in misperception of 0.155. In contrast, when

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[129] There is no easy answer to this question, and I have attempted to tackle this topic in several ways. They all, however, bring about the same negative findings.

information is abundant (clarity index score is set the 95th percentile) a one unit increase in ptv is associated with an increase in misperception of 0.133.[130] Thus, whenever preferences are mismatched, projections appear to exist only in information-rich environments. Figure 5.5 forcefully illustrates the relationship between estimated misperception and propensity-to-vote contingent upon the information context. According to the projection hypothesis, among party-voter dyads with mismatched preferences misperception is expected to increases as party attitudes become more positive. Figure 5.5 shows, however, that this appears to be the case only when the issue is politicized (solid line). In information-poor environments (dashed line), in contrast, estimated misperception is reduced as party attitudes become positive.

However, for the sample with matched preferences the coefficient for the ptv variable is -0.134, whereas the coefficient for the interaction term is + 0.079. Accordingly, in high-information environments a one unit increase in ptv is associated with a decrease in misperception of only 0.021, whereas in low-information environments the slope for the ptv variable equals -0.226. In this case, projections seem to be stronger in information-poor environments. Figure 5.5 shows that among party-voter dyads with matched preferences projections are much stronger in low-information (dashed line) as opposed to high-information environments (solid line). That is, when issue polarization as well as salience of the party concerned is low, perceptual accuracy is strongly affected by party attitudes. That is much less the case in information-rich environments. Hence, this result suggests that information prevents individuals from succumbing to projections. Overall, the context certainly seems to matter, but its effect appears to be unsystematic in the sense that projections are stronger in low-information environments only when preferences are matched, but they are weaker (non-existent) when preferences are mismatched.

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[130] The 5th percentile corresponds to a clarity index score of -1.17, while the 95th percentile corresponds to a score of +1.43.

Table 5.7 Projection and the information context

| | EU | | | | LR | | | |
| | mismatched | | matched | | mismatched | | matched | |
	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
fixed-effects parameters								
propensity-to-vote	-0.025	(0.018)	-0.134***	(0.016)	0.028*	(0.014)	-0.071**	(0.011)
awareness	-0.946***	(0.072)	-0.692***	(0.054)	-0.766***	(0.046)	-0.647***	(0.041)
resp.' extremity	0.223***	(0.011)	0.031***	(0.009)	0.224***	(0.008)	0.245***	(0.007)
party's extremity	0.403***	(0.012)	0.284	(0.010)	0.032***	(0.011)	0.052***	(0.011)
clarity	-0.458***	(0.037)	-0.472***	(0.036)	-0.235***	(0.027)	-0.529***	(0.044)
ptv*clarity	0.111***	(0.008)	0.079***	(0.006)	0.052***	(0.008)	0.061***	(0.006)
constant	2.189***	(0.161)	2.720***	(0.110)	1.661***	(0.090)	1.822***	(0.095)
random-effects paramet.								
var(country)	0.503	(0.156)	0.218	(0.068)	0.123	(0.041)	0.146	(0.050)
var(ptv; country)	0.007	(0.003)	0.006	(0.002)	0.004	(0.001)	0.002	(0.001)
var(respondent)	3.333	(0.076)	2.863	(0.065)	0.888	(0.029)	2.285	(0.064)
var(ptv; respondent)	0.065	(0.002)	0.042	(0.002)	0.041	(0.002)	0.026	(0.001)
var(residual)	2.405	(0.029)	2.304	(0.024)	1.204	(0.017)	1.366	(0.020)
Obs	28'556		36'355		24'137		25'408	
BIC	122'157.2		148'537.6		84'452.34		89'478.99	

Note: Clarity is an additive index consisting of parties' polarization, issue salience, and ambiguity scores. For the left-right case I have excluded cultural issue salience.

A similar pattern has been found for the left-right case, as the interaction coefficients are positively signed in both samples (0.52 and 0.61, respectively). The results are summarized in Figure 5.6. Overall, I found no clear indication for whether projections are stronger in low-information environments or not. Instead, is seems to matter whether preferences are matched or mismatched. When preferences are matched, the steep dashed line suggests that projections are stronger in information-poor environments. When preferences are mismatched, however, misperception seems to react more strongly to party attitudes in information-rich environments. Again for the low-information environment case, we find results contradictory to the projection effect hypothesis. If we look at both figures, one striking pattern is that positive party attitudes relate with higher levels of knowledge about parties' standpoints, particularly when an issue is not politicized (the dashed lines). Another striking observation, when we compare Figures 5.5 and 5.6, is the similar pattern across both issues. I consider two possible mechanisms that could account for this "non-finding". As suggested by various scholars, the politicization of an issue provides voters with issue-specific information that makes parties' policy preferences more visible. As a result, scholars have often taken it for granted that projection effects are less likely in such information-rich environments (cf. Page 1978; Conover and Feldman 1989). At the same time, as argued by

Krosnick (2002), politicization renders issues to appear as more relevant. In case of cognitive inconsistency, issue importance causes a greater discomfort, which, in turn, increases the pressure to succumb to projection as a way to preserve cognitive consistency. The empirical results presented in this section align with the latter argument as well as with recent research providing evidence that projections are not damped due to the abundance of information (cf. Jerit and Barabas 2012).

Figure 5.5 Projection and the information context – The EU issue
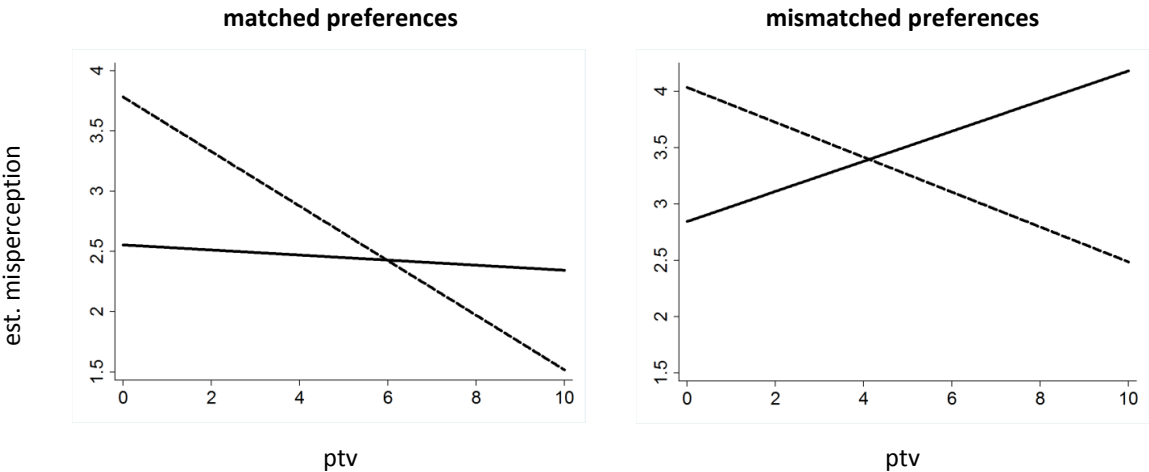
Note: The solid line shows estimated misperception when the level of information is high, while the dashed line summarizes estimated misperception for low-information environments. The estimations are derived from the results presented in Table 5.7.

Figure 5.6 Projection and the information context – The left-right conflict
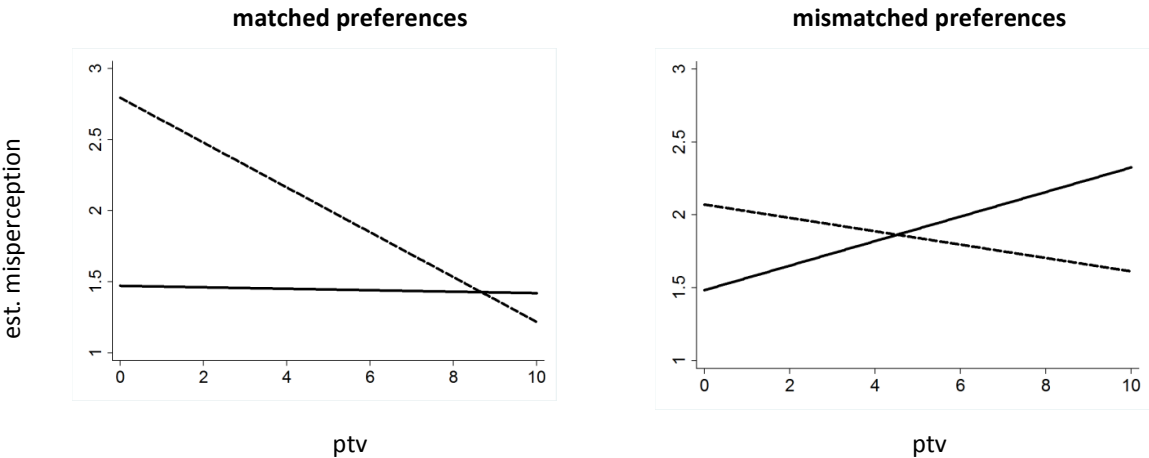
Note: The solid line shows estimated misperception, when the level of information is high. The dashed line summarizes estimated misperception, when the level of information is low. The estimations are derived from the results presented in Table 5.7.

Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter, I examined whether the information environment impacts how the cognitive and affective components of impression formation, on the one hand, and party knowledge, on the other hand, relate to each other. In agreement with the knowledge-gap literature (Tichenor et al. 1970; Zaller 1992), the results showed that awareness is positively associated with party knowledge, particularly when political parties convey a lot of relevant information. Yet, this appears to pertain only to perceptual accuracy, whereas no context-dependent associations were found between political awareness and placement probability. The investigation of the knowledge-gap thesis by considering various dimensions of party knowledge (perceptual accuracy and certainty) and political information (quality and quantity) remains, however, a promising topic for future research.

As regards the affective components, the results presented in this chapter reveal that voters with positive party attitudes are better informed about a party's policy offer when information is scarce. When information is abundant, positive party attitudes do not relate with higher knowledge of political parties' policy profiles. This finding, which applies to both perceptual accuracy as well as perceptual certainty, contributes to the literature on partisan biased selective exposure and information acquisition by highlighting the relevance of the information enviornment (cf. Stroud 2008, Garrett 2009). In general, cross-country comparative studies can contribute to this literature by investigating the contextual factors of selective exposure.

When it comes to projections, however, the case seems to be more complex. Generally, when preferences are matched projections appear to be stronger in information poor environments. When preferences are mismatched, however, projections are stronger in information-rich environments. This pattern is present in both issue conflicts. Overall, I found no clear evidence in support of the hypothesis that projections are more likely to occur in information-poor environments. This 'non-finding' is intriguing. On the one hand, it corroborates the findings made in studies based on cross-sectional survey data and media content analysis (cf. Jerit and Barabas 2012). On the other hand, it contradicts the assumptions commonly made in the projection literature (cf. Conover and Feldman 1989), the ambiguity literature (cf. Page 1978; Rovney 2012), and the empirical insights gained from experimental research (cf. Tomz and van Houweling 2009).

Conclusion

In representative democracies, governments should enact policies that correspond with voters' interests and their preferences (Miller and Stokes 1963). As envisaged by the responsible party model, this requires among many other things that voters are well informed about parties' policy offers (Thomassen 1994; Schmitt and Thomassen 1997, 1999). Thus, in such a model of political representation party knowledge is a central requirement that makes representation possible. Apart from the normative relevance of political knowledge, voters' perceptions of politics and their accuracy is of practical importance to political parties. Sometimes, it appears to be electorally more rewarding for a political party to have its actual position on an issue conflict to be misperceived by citizens (Page 1978; Tomz and van Houweling 2009). At other times, however, political parties seek to get their messages and positions comprehensively across (Downs 1957; Adams et al. 2006). In this thesis, I have investigated the extent to which parties' success in having their positions accurately or inaccurately perceived hinges upon individuals' as well as parties' attributes and behavior. The focus was on the EU integration and the general left-right issue conflicts across EU member states.

Chapter 2 began with the conceptualization and measurement of party knowledge. In general, we can discern two types of knowledge that theories of representative democracy deem important, if popular sovereignty is what democracies should strive for. First, citizens should be knowledgeable about who holds the responsibility for enacted policies and their (likely) consequences for society's, as well as their own, well-being (Rudolph 2003; Tilley and Hobolt 2011). This kind of knowledge enables individuals to assign blame and credit accurately and, hence, to reward and punish effectively for past governmental performances. Such political behavior, in turn, would make accountability work (Przeworski et al. 1999; Andeweg 2003). Second, individuals are required to be informed about political parties' policy offers. Such knowledge in combination with a voting behavior that conforms to the prospective issue voting model contributes to an improvement in policy representation as voters choose parties with similar policy preferences (cf. Thomassen 1994; van der Eijk et al. 1999; Alvarez 1997). This thesis has dealt with the second type of political knowledge. In addition, I maintained that knowledge about parties' policy profiles comprises two dimensions of relevance to political behavior: perceptual accuracy and certainty. In particular, knowledge guides behavior only to the extent that the individual is certain about that which she knows (Fazio and Zanna 1978). I used data from the European Election Survey 2009 and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010 to measure perceptual accuracy of parties' left-right and EU issue positions. Perceptual accuracy was measured by the absolute distance between the

experts' mean party placement and the respondent's party placement, while perceptual certainty was measured with a binary variable indicating whether or not the respondent placed a party on an issue scale.

The empirical part began with a comparison of countries and party families with regard to perceptual accuracy and certainty of parties' left-right and EU issue positions. I found that misperception and uncertainty for both issue conflicts is considerably higher in the post-communist region than in Western Europe. I also looked at differences in knowledge across party families, noting that left-of-the-center parties, especially far-left parties, are generally more accurately perceived in left-right terms than their opponents to the right. In contrast, the radical-right and regionalist parties in particular have left-right positions that are often not accurately placed. However, the case is completely the reverse in France and Hungary, where a cultural rather than socio-economic understanding of the left-right conflict dominates. Thus, the left-right placement accuracy scores for radical-right parties, as it has been argued, appear to be contingent on a country's dominant understanding of this general left-right conflict. The radical-right parties' positions are, however, most accurately perceived with respect to the EU issue. Regional parties, for their part, are associated with highest misperception and uncertainty scores on both issues.

This chapter has also brought to light some puzzling findings as regards the perceived clarity scores for specific parties. Particular noteworthy was the observation that (as for the year 2009) public misperception of parties' EU issue positions is particularly high for the Conservatives in the UK, the conservative ODS in the Czech Republic, and the socialist party in the Netherlands. As reported in various studies, these parties are considered to be highly interested in politicizing the European integration conflict (Evans 1998, 2002; Kriesi 2007; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008; de Vries and Edwards 2010). Notwithstanding these parties' efforts to politicize the EU issue, they appear not to be successful in informing the electorate about their actual issue position. The politicization of the EU issue at the elite level has not trickled down to the minds of the electorate, given that voters' perception does not appear to correspond well with what experts perceive. In contrast, the EU issue position of Merkel's CDU, which many see as a typical case of a party that seeks to sweep this issue under the carpet, has been found to be perceived fairly accurately. This observation should be understood as a snapshot because over the past turbulent years a lot has changed in Europe with regard to the politicization of the integration process.

In Chapter 3, I introduced two models of party knowledge formation which build upon contrasting assumptions about the voter's dominating motivational aim. One model assumes individuals to be accuracy seeking and maintains that variance in party knowledge is due to differences in ability and level of political interest (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Gerber and

Green 1998, 1999; Alvarez 1997). The other model assumes that individuals seek to preserve and to strengthen existing party identities and attitudes, and hypothesizes that party knowledge is subject to a combination of the level of congruence between the voter's and the concerned party's issue position as well as the respondent's party attitude. The interaction term between issue congruence and party attitude was meant to capture projection effects, a phenomenon well studied in political science (Brody and Page 1972; Markus and Converse 1979; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Granberg 1993). Projection effects refer to the voter's need to preserve party identification by perceiving liked parties' positions accurately whenever their issue positions match, and to misperceive in case of contrasting policy preferences. Moreover, I discussed a range of strong theoretical arguments for a correlation between party attitudes and party knowledge. In particular, selective exposure is aligned with the notion that voters are more exposed and thus better informed about parties which they like rather than about disliked parties (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Zaller 1992; Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Stroud 2008; Garrett 2009).

Chapter 3 found that cognitive factors such as education, political awareness, and engagement improve perceptual accuracy on both issues. Moreover, and in line with the findings reported in other studies, these cognitive resources increase the predicted probabilities that parties are placed in issue conflicts in the first place (cf. Bartels 1986; Alvarez and Franklin 1994). Overall, individuals endowed with cognitive resources are more accurately informed and more certain about parties' EU and left-right issue positions. Even though this is surely not an entirely new argument and finding, the results from the multilevel analysis has brought to light that a considerable extent of variance in party knowledge across countries, and particularly between Eastern and Western Europe, can be attributed to differences in citizens' level of cognitive resources across the EU member states. The between-country variances for both issues were partially explained with these individual-level factors. This finding has two implications. First, my study suggests that research on policy-based party competition (cf. Adams et al. 2006, 2009, 2011; Tavits 2007) has to account for cross-country differences (and cross-party differences) in voters' level of political awareness and engagement. Policy-shifts – as a means to win votes – might not be as effective in countries where voters' level of political awareness is low as opposed to those countries where citizens' level of cognitive resources is high. Secondly, my dissertation also speaks to the research on the macrolevel predictors of political knowledge. Given that political awareness tends to be lower in countries characterized by low issue salience and low issue polarization, an analysis produces biased estimates if such compositional effects are not accounted for.

Regarding the affective components of impression formation, we have seen that perceptual accuracy, as well as placement probability, is subject to projection. This was the case for both issues, although such partisan biased perception appears to be stronger for the left-right conflict. In most European democracies left-right is the dominant issue conflict and, less surprisingly, individuals are less in need of succumbing to projection as their party attitudes correspond well with their own left-right self-placement. Still, whenever the respondent's left-right self-placement doesn't correspond with her preferred party's actual left-right position, projections occur to a greater extent than I found to be the case for the less salient European integration conflict. The finding that projections are actually more prevalent in the salient left-right conflict intrigues, and the explanation of this variation opens avenues for future research. While more information should reduce the scope for projections, high salience of an issue conflict might also raise the pressure for cognitive consistency and, thus, for projection (Festinger 1957; Krosnick 2002).

The most important contribution to the literature on project effects from Chapter 3, however, is the finding that the probability of placing a party on an issue scale is not spurious, but is partly subject to the same mechanisms that lead to biased and, thus, to inaccurate perceptions. This finding is robust, as it holds true for both issue conflicts. Future studies on projection effects should take this selection bias into account, and they should reflect on how to deal with missing perceptual data. A list-wise deletion of missing values without the separate analysis of non-placements or without some sort of imputation is likely to result in an underestimation of projection effects. At the same time, the findings reveal that alternative strategies to preserve party identification and attitudes can be applied whenever issue and party attitudes are inconsistent. These alternative strategies have been largely neglected by the political science projection literature (see Granberg 1993 and Krosnick 2002 for reviews). Given the revelance of this finding for the projection literature, I conducted a robustness check by drawing upon the BES 2015 Internet panel survey data. The estimated results of the dynamic random-effect probit models in conjunction with the findings presented in Chapter 3 suggest that individuals actually dispose of three different possibilities to cope with cognitive inconsistency: they can have 1) a *biased perception*, 2) *no perception*, or 3) an *uncertain perception* of a party's issue position.

Another important finding that is linked to party attitudes is the fact that individuals are disproportionatey better informed about the issue positions of parties which they like. This appears to be primarily the case for the less salient EU issue and occurs mainly among politically less aware individuals. The politically sophisticated are rather similarly well informed about all parties' policy offers irrespective of their party attitudes. In contrast, unequal knowledge about parties' EU issue positions due to selective exposure appears to

be the case primarily for politically less aware individuals. Finally, I found no evidence of the notion that projections are more prevalent among politically aware individuals (but see Taber and Lodge 2006; Taber et al. 2009). Instead, in the left-right conflict projections tend to be even more prevalent among the politically unaware.

Chapter 4 reviewed theories of party competition and argued that parties employ three policy-based strategies of party competition. Parties either i) position themselves in conflicts, ii) manipulate the salience of an issue, or iii) decide on the level of ambiguity in their issue positions. These strategies, employed by all parties, together shape the level of policy clarity of a political system. While issue polarization, which occurs whenever parties take on diverging positions on the same issue, has been measured with expert survey data, I drew upon manifesto data to gauge salience and ambiguity. In particular, I developed and presented a new way to measure policy ambiguity based on manifesto data. The comparative manifesto project has created a fascinating dataset that is widely used to analyze and compare party policy programs across a large number of countries and parties dating back to the end of WW II. At the same time, policy ambiguity is a phenomenon that has only recently regained the attention of a growing body of scholars on European politics who seek to empirically examine its causes and consequences (Lo et al. 2014; Rovney 2012, 2013; Somer-Topcu 2014). With this new measurement of policy ambiguity – a promising field for future studies on party politics – we can fall back on an accessible and widely used dataset to describe the development in ambiguity over a time period of around 70 years, to compare countries and parties, and to study its causes and consequences for voting behavior, opinion formation and party support.

One of the most disturbing findings when analyzing the manifesto-based measure of left-right ambiguity is the fact that parties' left-right profiles are extremely ambiguous. Given the extent of left-right ambiguity it could reasonably be questioned whether it is meaningful to study parties' left-right positions (and the shifts in positions as well as their electoral consequences) by drawing upon manifesto data as has been done by a small circle of highly prolific scholars (see Adams 2012 for a review). Still, there is considerable variance in left-right ambiguity across parties and countries. Left-right ambiguity appears to be more prevalent in post-communist democracies as well as among right-of-the-center parties, while it is comparatively low in Western democracies and among the radical left (Kitschelt 1995; Marks et al. 2006). EU issue ambiguity, in contrast, is decisively lower and varies within countries and party families than across them. In particular, a comparison of the level of ambiguity in parties' EU profiles across families reveals that nationalist parties do not differ significantly from other party families in this regard. What differentiates nationalist parties

from other parties is the emphasis they devote to their anti-EU stance rather than their consistency.

The effects of issue polarization, salience and ambiguity on party knowledge have been examined by drawing upon multilevel analysis to account for composition effects. The empirical findings suggest that issue polarization and salience tend to be associated with a better public understanding of parties' issue positions. The predicted probabilities of placing parties on an issue scale are higher and their placements are more accurate whenever issues are polarized and salient. This finding pertains to both the general left-right as well as the European integration issue. However, one should distinguish between cultural and socio-economic left-right issue salience, as cultural left-right issue salience informs voters only about the party's ideological tendency but not about its actual position on the continuous left-right scale. In addition, no empirical evidence was found in support of the hypothesis that policy ambiguity leads to greater misperception and uncertainty (cf. Page 1976).[131] Instead, parties with an ambiguous profile tend to be placed in the center, and that is exactly where parties are placed by experts. Overall, the empirical findings support the notion that parties can inform voters through their programs irrespectively of the institutional settings and regardless of voters' attributes (Franklin 1991). Nevertheless, not all types of behavior or policy-based strategies of party competition are equally informative or confusing. This finding has also implications for the literature, which draws upon the CMP data to study the effects of parties' left-right shifts (cf. Adams et al. 2006). I argued that positions are not informative, and that parties need to communicate their positions by manipulating the issue salience as well as the ambiguity of their policy profiles. It appears, however, that parties do not succeed in conveying a more accurately perceived left-right profile by either emphasizing cultural left-right issues or by providing a less ambiguous left-right profile.

A burgeoning literature in political science investigates how political behavior depends on the political context. This was the topic of Chapter 5, which examined how cognition and affect relates to political knowledge contingent on the information environment. While the context-dependent effect of cognitive resources on political knowledge has been broadly covered in studies of political communication (Tichenor et al. 1970; Nadeau et al. 2008, Holbook 2002; Jerit et al. 2006; Iyengar et al. 2010), rather little is so far known about the conditional effect of party affect (but see Huckfeldt et al. 1998; Tomz and Houweling 2009; Jerit and Barabas 2012; Druckman et al. 2013). The empirical evidence suggested that political awareness is positively associated with perceptual accuracy of parties' EU issue

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[131] Although it appears that voters confronted with ambiguous profiles are less able to place parties in the correct direction, I found no evidence for a positive association between ambiguity, on the one hand, and misperception and perceptual uncertainty, on the other hand.

positions especially when the issue is polarized as well as emphasized by the political party. Furthermore, the politically aware are better informed about the parties' issue positions particularly when their profiles are unambiguous. The results for the left-right conflict pointed in the same direction.

Second, positive party attitudes are associated with more accurate party placements particularly in environments characterized by low issue polarization and salience. In contrast, whenever parties provide sufficient amounts of information, citizens seem to be equally well informed about parties' policy offers irrespective of their party attitudes. This appears to be the case for both issues and for both dimensions of party knowledge – accuracy as well as certainty. Thus, positive party attitudes are associated not only with higher perceptual accuracy but also with higher predicted placement probabilities, mainly when the level of issue politicization is low. Overall, this thesis contributes to the literature on selective exposure (for recent reviews see Stroud, 2008 and Garrett, 2009) by identifying the importance of two conditions which increase the likelihood of a positive relationship between positive party attitudes and a better understanding of parties' issue positions: low level of political awareness and low levels of issue politicization. In general, my claim is that this literature can benefit a lot from cross-country comparative studies by investigating the contextual factors of partisan baised information acquisition and selective exposure.

Finally, projections appear not to be systematic, given that they are not less prevalent in systems where issue-specific information is abundant (Jerit and Barabas 2012). Instead, it appears, at least in light of the empirical data at hand, that projections are equally prevalent regardless of the context (Guido and Tielmann 2014). This 'non-finding' remains counter-intuitive and contrary to the assumptions commonly made in the political science literature (cf. Conover and Feldman 1989, Rovney 2012) and to empirical findings based on experimental designs (cf. Tomz and van Houweling 2009). Overall, more research is needed to investigate how the information context intrudes on individuals' projection mechanisms.

Despite the large amount of empirical work conducted throughout this thesis, many unanswered questions remain which future studies will need to address. One research gap concerns the methodological approaches to investigate perception formation and other related issues. We can close another gap by gathering more data. A final point and a promising topic for future research concerns policy ambiguity.

As regards the methodological approach, this study used a cross-sectional comparison combined with multilevel analysis. Several datasets have been merged in order to examine the simultaneous effects of the information environment shaped by political parties, the individual-level predictors, as well as the cross-level interaction effects. One main problem with such a methodological approach relates with the endogeneity and the dynamic

mechanism that underlies processes of cognitive consistency. A promising endeavor to solve these problems is to complement this approach with additional alternative methods, such as experiments and panel data analysis. Accordingly, one hypothesis has been examined by drawing upon the BES 2015 Internet panel survey data. Most of the recent studies on opinion formation and identity preservation, however, employ experimental designs, which help to identify individuals' reactions to specific treatments (cf. Druckman et al. 2013). Such designs do not only support researchers in disentangling causes and effects, but it allows them to design and isolate the theoretically relevant aspect of a campaign message. By randomly assigning subjects to a control and a treatment group, differences in average response between both groups can be attributed to the treatment. Indeed, such a procedure allows making causal inferences and thus contributes to an improvement in internal validity. With respect to the external validity, however, experimental methods are vulnerable given that experimental settings poorly reflect real-world conditions (see also Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). In reality, political information is often complex and abundant, individuals' social environments differ and attention is inevitably selective. Perception formation is a multi-stage and on-going process while experiments, by contrast, often capture responses a few seconds after exposure to the treatment. Such a process comprises not only exposure but also attention, acceptance, aggregation and the memory of information. The duration of experimental effects, moreover, are rarely examined or reported in such studies. This problem of external validity, in turn, could account for the fact that context-dependent projections are likely to be observed in experimental settings (e.g. Tomz and Houwelin 2009) but not in cross-sectional studies (e.g. Jerit and Barabas 2012).

Panel data is another option for disentangling the processes of cognitive consistency. Panel data has been employed mainly in the US, where scholars used dynamic simultaneous equation models in an attempt to disentangle the three strategies that voters might use to preserve cognitive consistency (Page and Jones 1979; Markus and Converse 1979; Carsey and Layman 2006). This is certainly one way forward, but things become inherently more complicated when the same approach is used for countries with a multiparty system. Furthermore, panel data are available for only a small range of countries which often comprise only a few time waves and distinct question items. We need coordinated panel surveys which are conducted simultaneously across several countries using the same questions in order to better understand the dynamic processes of party attitudes, issue attitudes and perception formation under different information environments and institutional settings. More variance can also be achieved through an increase in the number of issue placement questions.

Another gap concerns the conceptualization and measurement of policy ambiguity as well as party knowledge. Policy ambiguity is a concept that, despite its prominance in real-world politics, has not received the academic attention that it deserves. Policy ambiguity, or political confusion more generally conceived, is something that needs to be better conceptualized, operationalized and measured. I offered one way to measure a particular aspect of political ambiguity, and internal-party dissent over the EU integration issue as included entailed in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey is another highly valuable measurement of political confusion. Other measurements need to be developed in order to capture the full nature of ambiguity and to comprehensively examine its causes and electoral consequences.

With regard to party knowledge, I found the distinction between perceptual accuracy and certainty particularly useful. While perceptual accuracy describes the resemblance of the voter's opinion to experts' opinion or objective facts, perceptual certainty is something more subjective and more adequately measured through self-report (Alvarez and Franklin 1994). Unfortunately, the European Election Survey as well as most of the national public opinion surveys do not entail questions items which are specifically designed to capture respondents' perceptual certainty, despite empirical evidence for its impact on human behavior (cf. Bartels 1986).

Finally, a considerable amount of funding and time has been invested in analyzing the effects of the semantic information that is contained in parties' and candidates' campaign messages. The manifesto project, for instance, is all about grasping the semantic policy-related content of parties' policy programs. We have seen that this information enables individuals to form an accurate understanding of partisan conflicts over policy issues. At the same time, it has been established that opinion and impression formation is subject not only to accuracy motivation but also to directional goals – to the preservation of existing beliefs and party identification. How can parties succeed in making directional more important than accuracy goals, and vice-versa? This is a crucial but still insufficiently studied question.[132] What parties do in public, the symbols they use, the rhetoric they employ – all this behaviour is full of emotionalizing elements that are likely to prime party identification and to activate directional goals in information processing. In the same vein, the idea that parties and other political actors construct social and political identities is not new (Sartori 1969), but we are still lacking a precise understanding of and empirical evidence for such political agency in identity building and preservation (Huddy 2003; McGraw 2002).

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[132] Bolsen et al. (2013) established that the priming of directional goals in opinion formation is less likely when the voter's preferred party is internally divided over the issue.

V. Data sources

European Election Voter Study 2009:

van Egmond, M., W. van der Brug, S. Hobolt, M. Franklin, and E. V. Sapir. 2013. *European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study.* Advance Release, 7/4/2010, (www.piredeu.eu).

2010 Chapel Hill expert survey (raw data):

Bakker, R., C. de Vries, L. Hooghe, S. Jolly, G. Marks, J. Polk, J. Rovny, M. Steenbergen, and M. Vachudova. 2015. „Measuring party positions in Europe The Chapel Hill expert survey trend file, 1999–2010". *Party Politics* 21(1): 143–152.

Comparative Manifesto Project:

Volkens, A., P. Lehmann, T. Matthiess, N. Merz, S. Regel, and A. Werner. 2014. *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR).* Version 2014b. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB).

European Manifesto Project:

Braun, D., S. Mikhaylov, and H. Schmitt. 2010. *European Parliament Election Study 2009, Manifesto Study.* Gesis Data Archive, Cologne. ZA5057 Data file Version 1.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.10204

British Election Study 2015 Internet Panel Survey:

Fieldhouse, E., J. Green, G. Evans, H. Schmitt, C. van der Eijk, J. Mellon and C. Prosser. 2015. *British Election Study, 2015: Internet Panel Survey [computer file]*, July 2015.

VI. Bibliography

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VII. Appendix

Chapter 3

Table 3A Question wordings for political awareness and involvement

Variable	Wordings	Measure
political awareness		
	"Now some questions about the European Union and [the respondent's country of residence]. For these questions, I am going to read out some statements. For each one, could you please tell me whether you believe they are true or false? If you don't know, just say so and we will skip to the next one."	
item 1	Switzerland is a member of the EU	1 = correct answer;
item 2	The European Union has 25 member states	0 = false answer or
item 3	Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament.	"don't know"
item 4	Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union	
items 5 - 7	These questions are country-specific	
political involvement		
News	"In a typical week, how many days do you follow the news?"	0 - 7 days
watching	"How often did you do any of the following during the four weeks before the European election? How often did you:…"	0 = never; 1 =
reading	a) watch a program about the election on television?	sometimes; 2 = often
talking (about EP elections	b) read about the election in a newspaper?	
	c) talk to friends or family about the election?	
interest in EP elections	"Thinking back to just before the elections for the European Parliament were held, how interested were you in the campaign for those elections: very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?"	0 = not at all; 1 = a little; 2 = somewhat; 3 = very
general interest in politics	"To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?"	0 = not at all; 1 = a little; 2 = somewhat; 3 = very

Source: EES 2009

Table 3B Correlations between the cognitive components within each country

Country	awareness / involvement	awareness / involvement	education / awareness
Belgium	0.27***	0.21***	0.19***
Czech Republic	0.26***	0.18***	0.18***
Denmark	0.32***	0.14***	0.11***
Germany	0.32***	0.27***	0.22***
Estonia	0.21***	0.25***	0.12***
Greece	0.31***	0.28***	0.09**
Spain	0.34***	0.36***	0.24***
France	0.35***	0.22***	0.10**
Ireland	0.33***	0.19***	0.17***
Italy	0.30***	0.28***	0.25***
Latvia	0.25***	0.22***	0.16***
Lithuania	0.28***	0.32***	0.24***
Hungary	0.28***	0.24***	0.20***
Netherlands	0.38***	0.29***	0.17***
Austria	0.28***	0.17***	0.10***
Poland	0.37***	0.28***	0.20***
Portugal	0.29***	0.34***	0.22***
Slovenia	0.31***	0.27***	0.07*
Slovakia	0.27***	0.30***	0.16***
Finland	0.32***	0.18***	0.10**
Sweden	0.32***	0.10***	0.15***
United Kingdom	0.33***	0.21***	0.14***
Bulgaria	0.39***	0.40***	0.29***
Romania	0.33***	0.42***	0.28***
established democracies	0.33***	0.25***	0.19***
post-communist democracies	0.31***	0.26***	0.17***

Note: *** p<0.001; ** p<0.01; * p>0.05

Table 3C Cognitive resources and gender

gender	political awareness	political involvement	level of education
female	0.53	-0.06	3.48
	(0.28)	(0.66)	(1.36)
male	0.64	0.05	3.53
	(0.27)	(0.67)	(1.34)
Total	0.58	-0.01	3.5
	(0.28)	(0.67)	(1.35)
t-value	-30.48	-12.77	-2.92

Note: Entries are mean values for the pooled data, while standard deviation is shown in parentheses. The number of observation amounts to around 24'000. Source: EES 2009.

Table 3D Cognitive resources and social class

social class	political awareness	political involvement	level of education
working class	0.50	-0.13	2.82
	(0.28)	(0.68)	(1.23)
	5'913	*5'913*	5'801
lower middle cass	0.57	-0.10	3.28
	(0.28)	(0.66)	(1.32)
	3'491	*3'491*	3'416
middle class	0.60	0.04	3.75
	(0.27)	(0.65)	(1.28)
	11'323	*11'322*	11'015
upper middle class	0.68	0.17	4.37
	(0.25)	(0.63)	(1.15)
	2'155	*2'155*	2'065
upper class	0.63	0.14	4.30
	(0.27)	(0.68)	(1.38)
	317	*317*	300
Total	0.58	-0.01	3.51
	(0.28)	(0.66)	(1.35)
	23'199	*23'198*	22'597
F-value	221.42	130.80	829.26
Adj. R2	0.04	0.02	0.13

Note: Class membership is the perceived class membership. Source: EES 2009

Table 3E Cognitive resources and age

age	political awareness	political involvement	level of education
18 - 29	0.52	-0.26	3.56
	(0.27)	(0.69)	(1.16)
30- 39	0.54	-0.18	3.91
	(0.28)	(0.66)	(1.21)
40 - 49	0.57	-0.08	3.75
	(0.27)	(0.64)	(1.24)
50 - 59	0.59	0.04	3.54
	(0.27)	(0.63)	(1.34)
60 and above	0.61	0.17	3.13
	(0.29)	(0.64)	(1.46)
Total	0.58	-0.01	3.50
	(0.28)	(0.67)	(1.35)
F-value	76.60	356.71	273.07
Adj. R2	0.01	0.06	0.04

Note: Entries are mean values for the pooled data, while standard deviation is shown in parentheses. Source: EES 2009.

Table 3F Cognitive resources and party attachment

party attachment	political awareness	political involvement	level of education
not at all	0.52	-0.30	3.43
	(0.29)	(0.67)	(1.31)
sympathizer	0.60	0.05	3.73
	(0.26)	(0.61)	(1.32)
fairly closer	0.62	0.22	3.59
	(0.26)	(0.59)	(1.35)
very close	0.64	0.45	3.49
	(0.27)	(0.62)	(1.39)
Total	0.58	0.01	3.52
	(0.28)	(0.66)	(1.35)
F-value	129.05	276.84	28.78
Adj. R2	0.02	0.11	0.01

Source: EES 2009; survey question: "Do you feel yourself to be very close to [the respondent's preferred] party, fairly close, or merely a sympathizer?"

Table 3G The stability of ptv scores

	ptv - Con	ptv - Lab	ptv - LibDem	ptv - UKIP
	wave 1	wave 1	wave 1	wave 1
wave 2	0.91	0.87	0.78	0.81
	(N=6288)	*(N=6287)*	*(N=6285)*	*(N=6328)*
wave 3	0.90	0.84	0.77	0.82
	(N=5164)	*(N=5170)*	*(N=5176)*	*(N=5197)*
wave 4	0.88	0.84	0.74	0.79
	(N=5131)	*(N=5129)*	*(N=5127)*	*(N=5167)*
wave 5	0.87	0.82	0.70	0.77
	(N=5191)	*(N=5184)*	*(N=5181)*	*(N=5217)*
wave 6	0.86	0.82	0.69	0.77
	(N=5155)	*(N=5150)*	*(N=5141)*	*(N=5196)*

Source: BES 2015 Internet Panel Data.

Note: Entries denote pair-wise correlation coefficients between ptv scores measured in panel wave 1 and ptv scores measured in waves 2-6.

Table 3H The stability of EU issue attitudes and perceptions of parties' EU issue positions

waves	EU attitude (BES)	EU attitude (EES)	percept. (Con)	percept. (Lab)	percept. (LibDem)	percept. (UKIP)
	wave 1	wave 1	wave 1	wave 1	wave 1	wave 1
2	0.75	0.72	0.50	0.46	0.49	0.33
	(N=11288)	*(N=10188)*	*(N=9202)*	*(N=8758)*	*(N=8769)*	*(N=9528)*
3	0.76	0.76	0.48	0.45	0.50	0.34
	(N=9487)	*(N=8667)*	*(N=7737)*	*(N=7309)*	*(N=7308)*	*(N=7967)*
4	0.76	0.75	0.49	0.47	0.52	0.35
	(N=9331)	*(N=8492)*	*(N=7571)*	*(N=7161)*	*(N=7028)*	*(N=7814)*
5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n.a.	n.a.
6	0.74	0.74	0.45	0.46	0.48	0.33
	(N=9396)	*(N=8475)*	*(N=7600)*	*(N=7162)*	*(N=7064)*	*(N=7846)*

Source: BES 2015 Internet Panel Data.

Note: Entries denote pair-wise correlation coefficients between values measured in panel wave 1 and values measured in waves 2, 3, 4, or 6. Similar correlations were obtained when using the alternative EU placement item (BES).

Table 3I The correlation between the ptv and the like-dislike scores

	Con	Lab	LibDem	UKIP
	ptv (wave 1)			
like (wave 2)	0.86	0.83	0.71	0.78
	(N=6'240)	*(N=6'244)*	*(N=6'225)*	*(N=6'202)*
	like (wave 1)			
ptv (wave 2)	0.84	0.81	0.69	0.79
	(N=6'352)	*(N=6'355)*	*(N=6'344)*	*(N=6'201)*

Source: BES 2015 Internet Panel Data.

Note: Entries denote pair-wise correlation coefficients between ptv scores measured in wave 1 or 2, and like-dislikes scores for the same party measured in wave 1 or 2.

Table 3J The description of the variables used in the factor analysis

Variable	Question	Response Options
"we" and "they"	"When I speak about this party, I usually say 'we' instead of 'they'"	1 = "strongly disagree"; 2 = "disagree"; 3 = "agree"; 4 = "strongly agree"
criticism	"When people criticize this party, it feels like a personal insult"	1 = "strongly disagree"; 2 = "disagree"; 3 = "agree"; 4 = "strongly agree"
my party	"When I speak about this party, I refer to them as 'my party'"	1 = "strongly disagree"; 2 = "disagree"; 3 = "agree"; 4 = "strongly agree"
pid strength	"Would you call yourself very strong, fairly strong, or not very strong party [X supporter]?"	1 = "not very strong"; 2 = "fairly strong"; 3 = "very strong"
enthusiasm	"Now we would like to know something about the feelings you have towards each of the parties. Which of these emotions do you feel about each of the parties? Tick all that apply…"	2 = proud and hopeful 1 = proud or hopeful 0 = neither proud nor hopeful

Source: BES Internet Panel data (wave 1 – 6)

Table 3K How cognition and affect relates to (correct) placement

	EU integration				Left-Right			
	placement (1=yes; 0=no)		correct placement (1=yes; 0 = no)		placement (1=yes; 0=no)		correct placement (1=yes; 0 = no)	
	coef.	s.e	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
Fixed-effects parameters								
political awareness	0.84***	(0.08)	0.71***	(0.04)	2.93***	(0.14)	0.80***	(0.04)
political involvement	0.06***	(0.01)	0.03***	(0.01)	0.11***	(0.01)	0.01**	(0.003)
education	-0.09**	(0.01)	0.06***	(0.01	0.10***	(0.02)	0.09***	(0.01)
propensity to vote (ptv)	0.23***	(0.01)	0.03***	(0.004)	0.26***	(0.01)	-0.07***	(0.004)
matched preferences	0.24**	(0.07)	0.08	(0.04)	0.75***	(0.11)	-0.57***	(0.04)
ptv*matched	0.05**	(0.01)	0.13***	(0.01)	0.11***	(0.01)	0.29***	(0.01)
mismatched preferences	0.36***	(0.07)	0.19***	(0.04)	1.42***	(0.11)	1.06***	(0.04)
ptv*mismatched	-0.03*	(0.01)	-0.08***	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.02)	-0.19***	(0.01)
resp.'s extremity	-0.02	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	0.039	(0.02)	-0.07***	(0.01)
Constant	0.90***	(0.08)	-0.95***	(0.05)	0.17***	(0.13)	-0.04	(0.04)
Random-effects parameters								
var(country)	0.39	(0.02)	0.87	(0.02)	0.73	(0.05)	0.73	(0.05)
var(respondent)	18.81	(0.30)	0.12	(0.01)	8.09	(0.18)	8.09	(0.18)
var(party-respondent)								
Model-fit estimates								
log likelihood	-33765.836		-59675.149		-21701.993		-57105.651	
obs	125'290		94'528		112'872		102'070	

Note: The entries show the estimated results of a three-level random-intercept logistic model using gllamm.

283

Appendix: Partisan biased placement probability and certainty - results from an analysis based on the British Election Study 2015 Internet panel survey data.

Argument

To corroborate the findings presented in Chapter 3, an analysis drawing upon the BES 2015 Internet Panel Survey data (Waves 1-6) has been conducted. The projection literature has predominantly relied on panel data, and it has repeatedly been reported that party placements are a function of self-placements and candidate (party) attitudes (cf. Brody and Page 1972; Markus and Converse 1979; Conover and Feldman 1983, 1989). This literature, however, has omitted to discuss and analyze how party supporters could rely on alternative ways to preserve partisanship in spite of mismatched issue preferences. Chapter 3 has shown that voters are less likely to place a preferred party in an issue conflict whenever they and their party have incongruent issue positions. Having no opinion (being uninformed) on a preferred party's issue position turns out to be an alternative way to preserve party attitudes and to cope with the pressure for cognitive consistency. The BES Internet panel data is suitable for a robustness check of this finding. First, it entails items on both party placement as well as placement certainty. Second, the panel structure of the data allows for making more valid causal statements by circumventing (at least to a limited extent) the endogeneity problem inherent in cross-sectional data. The empirical evidence, presented in this section, supports the notion that voters employ two additional strategies to cope with cognitive inconsistency: (1) they can be *uncertain* about a party's position; and (2) they can hold *no opinion* at all on a party's issue position.

Data and Variables

The BES Internet panel survey data currently comprises 6 waves. Wave 1 took place between February and March 2014, while wave 6 was conducted right after the national elections in May 2015. In each panel wave, around 30'000 people were interviewed, and 16'799 respondents took all of the six waves (see Fieldhouse et al. 2015 for more information). However, the actual numbers of observations in some of my estimations are considerably smaller for various reasons. First, the survey entails two different questions to gauge a respondent's EU issue attitude and her EU issue party placements. Respondents, however, received not more than one of the two possible questions. Second, in each wave respondents were assigned either to the propensity to vote or the like-dislike item, but never

to both. Finally, the EU party placement certainty questions were asked only to a subsample in only four panel waves. The variables are summarized below:

party attitude (predictor)		
like-dislike "How much do you like or dislike each of the following parties?"	11-point scale: 0 = "strongly dislike"; 10 = "strongly like"; 9999 = "don't know"	
Ptv	11-point scale: 0 = "very unlikely"; 10 = "very likely"; 9999 = "don't know"	
EU issue attitude (predictor)		
EU issue attitude (EES) "Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it has already gone too far. What is your opinion? And where would you place the following parties on this scale?"	11-point scale: 0 = "Unification has already gone too far"; 10 = "Unification should be pushed further"; 9999 = "don't know"	
EU issue attitude (BES) "Some people feel that Britain should do all it can to unite fully with the European Union. Other people feel that Britain should do all it can to protect its independence from the European Union. Where would you place yourself and the political parties on this scale?"	11-point scale: 0 = "unite fully with the European Union"; 10 = "protect our independence"; 9999 = "don't know"	
placement certainty (dependent variable)		
certainty "And how certain are you of the position of the parties on the scale above?"	1 = "not at all certain"; 2 = "somewhat certain"; 3 = "very certain" ; 9999 = "don't know"	
placement probability (dependent variable)		
placement	0 = "don't know"; 1 otherwise	

Source: BES Internet Panel data (wave 1 – 6)

Model

I estimated a series of dynamic random-effect (ordered) probit models separately for four parties: The UKIP, the Conservatives, Labour, and the Liberal Democrats. In order to cope with the initial value problem and the unbalanced panel structure of the data (Wooldridge, 2005; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2013), the dynamic random-effect probit model to be

estimated includes the lagged and the initial dependent variables. The dependent variable ($certainty_{it}^*$) is the three-point scaled placement certainty variable for individual *i* at time period *t*. After placing parties on the EU issue scale, respondents were asked to indicate how certain they were about each party's placement (1 = "not at all certain"; 2 = "somewhat certain"; 3 = "very certain"). Furthermore, Wooldridge's model also requires the lagged values, initial values, and the within-means of the constitutive components ($EU\ attitude_i$ and ptv_i) of the interaction. The within-means do not comprise the initial values (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2013). Due to high over-time consistency of respondents' ptv scores as well as the short panel, only the lagged values of the interaction (but not the within-means and initial values) were included. The model was estimated with xtprobit (placement probability) and xtoprobit (placement certainty) with Stata 14 using robust standard errors. The main model (1) and the auxiliary model (2) can be specified as follows:

$$
\begin{aligned}
certainty_{it}^* = \ & \beta_1 * EU\ attitude_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 * ptv_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 \\
& * EU\ attitude_{i,t-1} * ptv_{i,t-1} \\
& + \beta_4 * certainty_{i,t-1} + \beta_5 * Wave_2 \\
& + \beta_6 * Wave_3 + c_i + \mu_{it}
\end{aligned} \tag{1}
$$

The model assumes the three predictors ($EU\ attitude_{i,t-1}$, $ptv_{i,t-1}$, $EU\ attitude_{i,t-1} * ptv_{i,t-1}$) to be strictly exogenous and conditional on the individual-specific unobserved effect c_i (Wooldridge 2005; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2013). The model further includes dummies for each wave, while μ_{it} is the time-dependent error term. The individual-specific unobserved effect, in turn, is captured with the auxiliary model, which is written as:

$$
\begin{aligned}
c_i = \ & \alpha_0 + \alpha_1\ certainty_{i,1} + \alpha_2 \overline{EU\ attitude_i'} + \alpha_3 \\
& * EU\ attitude_{i,1}' + \alpha_2 \overline{ptv_i'} + \alpha_3 * ptv_{i,1}' + a_i
\end{aligned} \tag{2}
$$

The auxiliary model entails individual *i's* initial dependent variable ($certainty_{i,1}$), her initial EU issue attitude ($EU\ attitude_{i,1}'$), and her initial ptv score ($ptv_{i,1}'$). In addition, the auxiliary model includes the within-means of the respondent's EU attitude ($\overline{EU\ attitude_i'}$) and her ptv ($\overline{ptv_i'}$), while a_i is the time-persistent unobserved individual effect.

Results

    Of central importance is the coefficient of the interaction term (β_3). I expect β_3 to be significant and signed as predicted by theory. In particular, the sign is expected to depend on the party's EU issue position. The same model has been separately estimated for each of the four main parties: The UKIP and the Conservatives are the two anti-EU parties, while Labour and the Liberal Democrats are both considered to be pro-EU (according to respondents' mean party placements). As the results presented in Table 3L reveal, placement certainty appears to be subject to the interaction effect of party attitude and EU issue attitude. The coefficients for the interaction term (in bold font) are positively signed and significant in the case of both anti-EU parties (+0.016 and +0.007), whereas for the two pro-EU parties the coefficients are significant but negatively signed (–0.014 and –0.024).

Table 3L Partisan biased placement certainty – The EU issue

	Anti-EU parties		Pro-EU parties	
	UKIP	Con	Lab	LD
certainty (t — 1)	—0.08	—0.02	0.09	0.15
	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
certainty (t = 0)	0.89***	0.82***	0.78***	0.96***
	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.15)
anti-EU (t — 1)	—0.004	—0.04	0.09**	0.07*
	(0.035)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
anti-EU (t = 0)	—0.02	0.01	—0.04	—0.02
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
anti-EU (Mean)	—0.04	0.06	0.07*	0.03
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
ptv (t — 1)	—0.08	—0.02	0.10**	0.12**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)
ptv (t = 0)	—0.09*	0.002	—0.05	0.03
	(0.04)	(0.045)	(0.04)	(0.04)
ptv (Mean)	0.10*	—0.05	0.03	—0.05
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
anti-EU * ptv (t — 1)	**0.016****	**0.007***	**—0.014****	**—0.024****
	(0.005)	**(0.003)**	**(0.003)**	**(0.004)**
wave 2	—0.25**	—0.07	—0.22**	—0.06
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)
wave 3	—0.39***	—0.06	—0.15	—0.19**
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
cut1	—0.69*	0.20	1.09***	1.31***
	(0.28)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.23)
cut2	0.89**	2.41***	3.13***	3.29***
	(0.27)	(0.23)	(0.25)	(0.27)
obs	2'736	2'598	2'495	2'451
groups	1'633	1'542	1'483	1'465

Source: BES Internet Panel Waves 1-6.
Note: Estimation conducted with xtoprobit in Stata 14; wave 4 is the reference.
certainty: 1 = "not at all certain"; 2 = "somewhat certain"; 3 = "very certain"
anti-EU: 0 = "unite fully with the European Union"; 10 = "protect our independence"
ptv: 0 = "very unlikely"; 10 = "very likely"

In line with my expectations derived from the problematic integration theory and the uncertainty management theory (Barbow 1992; Brashers 2001), supporters perceive their own parties' EU issue positions with lower certainty whenever their issue preferences are mismatched. In contrast, their perceptual certainty is significantly higher in case of congruent EU issue attitudes. According to the results, supporters of the Conservatives (+0.016) and the UKIP (+0.007) are significantly more certain about the EU issue positions of their parties, the more opposed they are themselves to European integration. In contrast, Labour (coef. = -0,014) and LibDem supporters (coef. = - 0.024) place both pro-EU parties with higher certainty, the more positive their own EU issue attitudes are. Thus, even with an alternative placement certainty variable and panel data, the findings presented here corroborate the empirical evidence provided in Chapter 3.

I conducted a similar analysis with the alternative dependent variable - the binary placement probability variable – and the results are displayed in Table 3M. The largest number of observations was retained by replacing the ptv with the closely related like-dislike variable, while the alternative EU issue attitude item (BES) was used to measure self- and party placement. Again, the interaction coefficients are all significant and signed as expected. Hence, supporters of the UKIP and the Conservatives are more likely to place their own party on the EU issue scale, whenever they concur with their own party's negative view on European integration (the interaction coefficients for both parties are —0.03 and —0.02, respectively). In a similar vein, supporters of both pro-EU parties are more likely to place their parties on the EU issue scale, when the positive opinion on European integration is shared (both coefficients are significant and positive: +0.01 and +0.01).

In sum, this section provides convincing evidence for the existence of alternative ways to preserve party attitudes in case of a mismatch between the supporter's and her own party's issue position. The literature on projection effect, as studied particularly in the US during the 70s and the 80s, has mainly focused on biased perceptions (Markus and Converse 1979; Conover and Palmer 1983, 1989; Martinez 1989; see also Granberg 1993 and Krosnick 2002 for reviews), However, a biased perception constitutes just one possibility, and in this section as well as in Chapter 3, compelling evidence has been provided in support of the idea that voters succumb to two alternative strategies to cope with cognitive dissonance due to mismatched issue preferences with the preferred party: 1) they can be *uncertain* about their preferred party's position; and, 2) they might *not place* their party on the issue scale.

Table 3M Partisan biased placement probability – The EU issue

	placement probability			
	Anti-EU parties		**Pro-EU parties**	
	UKIP	**Con**	**Lab**	**LD**
placement (t — 1)	0.16*	0.19*	0.12*	0.17*
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
placement (t = 0)	1.67***	1.61***	1.61***	1.69***
	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.10)
pro-EU (t — 1)	0.10***	0.06***	—0.05**	—0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.015)
pro-EU (Mean)	0.00	0.05**	0.02	0.035
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.025)
pro-EU (t = 0)	—0.01	—0.02	—0.01	—0.00
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
like (t — 1)	0.08***	0.03	—0.04*	—0.04
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
like (Mean)	—0.03	0.06**	—0.00	—0.045
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
like (t = 0)	0.03	0.02*	0.01	0.05*
	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
pro-EU * like (t — 1)	**—0.03***	**—0.02***	**0.01***	**0.01**
	(0.002)	**(0.002)**	**(0.002)**	**(0.003)**
wave 2	—0.35***	—0.29***	—0.24***	—0.08
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
wave 3	—0.28***	—0.13*	—0.17***	—0.03
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
wave 4	—0.18**	—0.14*	—0.12*	—0.12*
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Cons	0.28**	-0.06	0.36**	0.10
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.08)
/lnsig2u	0.39	0.33	0.27	0.35
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.10)
Obs	22'582	22'571	22'910	17'319
Groups	11'129	11'116	11'331	6'071

Source: BES Internet Panel Waves 1-6.
Note: Estimation done with xtprobit in Stata 14; wave 6 is the reference.
placement: 0 = "don't know"; 1 otherwise
pro-EU: 0 = "Unification has already gone too far"; 10 = "Unification should be pushed further"
like: 0 = "strongly dislike"; 10 = "strongly like"

The same dynamic random-effect probit model has been conducted for the left-right issue with the binary placement probability variable (0 = "don't know"; 1 otherwise).[133] Moreover, the Liberal Democrats were excluded due to their unclear left-right profile. The results for the remaining three parties are fully in line with my previous findings. All parties are more likely to be placed on the left-right scale the more the respondent's party attitude and her left-right self-placement are in line. Thus, right-oriented respondents are more likely to place the UKIP (coef. = +0.03) and the Conservatives (coef. = +0.05) on the left-right scale, when the party is liked as opposed to disliked. The same observation pertains to the Labour party. Left-oriented respondents are more likely to place Labour on the left-right scale, the more the party is liked (coef. = - 0.03).

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[133] There is no placement certainty item for the left-right issue in the BES 2015 dataset.

Table 3N Partisan biased placement probability – The left-right conflict

| | placement probability | | |
| | right-oriented | | left-oriented |
	UKIP	Con	Lab
placement (t - 1)	0.55***	0.58***	0.56***
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.09)
placement (t = 0)	1.99***	2.58***	2.59***
	(0.11)	(0.17)	(0.17)
right (t - 1)	-0.06**	-0.11***	0.17***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
right (Mean)	-0.06	-0.11**	-0.05
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
right (t = 0)	0.02	—0.03	—0.05
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
ptv (t - 1)	-0.16***	-0.27***	0.15***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
ptv (Mean)	0.04*	0.05	0.00
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
ptv (t = 0)	-0.04*	0.05***	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.004)	(0.02)
right * ptv (t - 1)	**0.03***	**0.05***	**—0.03***
	(0.002)	**(0.004)**	**(0.003)**
wave 2	—0.48***	—0.53***	—0.50***
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)
wave 3	—0.32***	—0.40***	—0.31***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
wave 4	—0.22***	—0.20**	—0.14*
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Cons	0.85**	1.27***	-0.36**
	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.13)
/lnsig2u	0.10	0.52	0.41
	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Obs	35'219	35'017	35'031
Groups	10'834	10'799	10'791

Source: BES Internet Panel Waves 1-6.
Note: Estimation were done using xtprobit in Stata 14; wave 6 is the reference
placement: 0 = "don't know"; 1 otherwise
right: 0 = "left"; 10 = "right"
ptv: 0 = "very unlikely"; 10 = "very likely"

Chapter 4

Table 4A Average issue salience across party families

	EU (EMP)		EU (CMP)		Economy & Welfare		Culture	
	mean	sd.	mean	sd.	mean	sd.	mean	sd.
Party Families								
Christian Democrats (19 parties in EMP; 18 in CMP)	17.83	(8.04)	2.43	(1.66)	35.44	(8.28)	16.28	(6.38)
Extreme-Left (14/11)	11.40	(2.46)	2.46	(1.76)	45.78	(9.56)	6.68	(4.59)
Conservatives (18/18)	19.19	(10.53)	2.42	(1.59)	34.29	(12.54)	13.62	(6.56)
Green (11/11)	11.70	(6.88)	2.94	(2.11)	35.30	(6.35)	6.72	(3.19)
Liberal (18/16)	19.50	(7.27)	2.66	(1.95)	32.93	(8.47)	11.97	(5.93)
Far-Right (16/13)	37.98	(21.84)	4.22	(3.89)	30.97	(11.59)	26.94	(12.08)
Regional (11/9)	12.37	(5.89)	2.38	(2.11)	29.09	(12.91)	11.51	(6.55)
Social Democrats (25/24)	11.60	(4.74)	2.43	(1.67)	42.02	(9.45)	9.04	(3.89)
Total (137/128)	17.52	(12.80)	2.64	(2.11)	36.10	(10.96)	12.90	(8.45)

Note: Entries are average mean issue salience across parties within same family; standard deviations are in parentheses. EMP stands for the content analysis of the party manifestos in the campaign prior to the European Parliament election 2009; CMP denote the content analysis of the party manifestos in the run-up to the last national election which have taken place in or prior to 2009.

Figure 4A Relationship between issue salience and ambiguity

socioeconomic left-right issue   cultural left-right issue
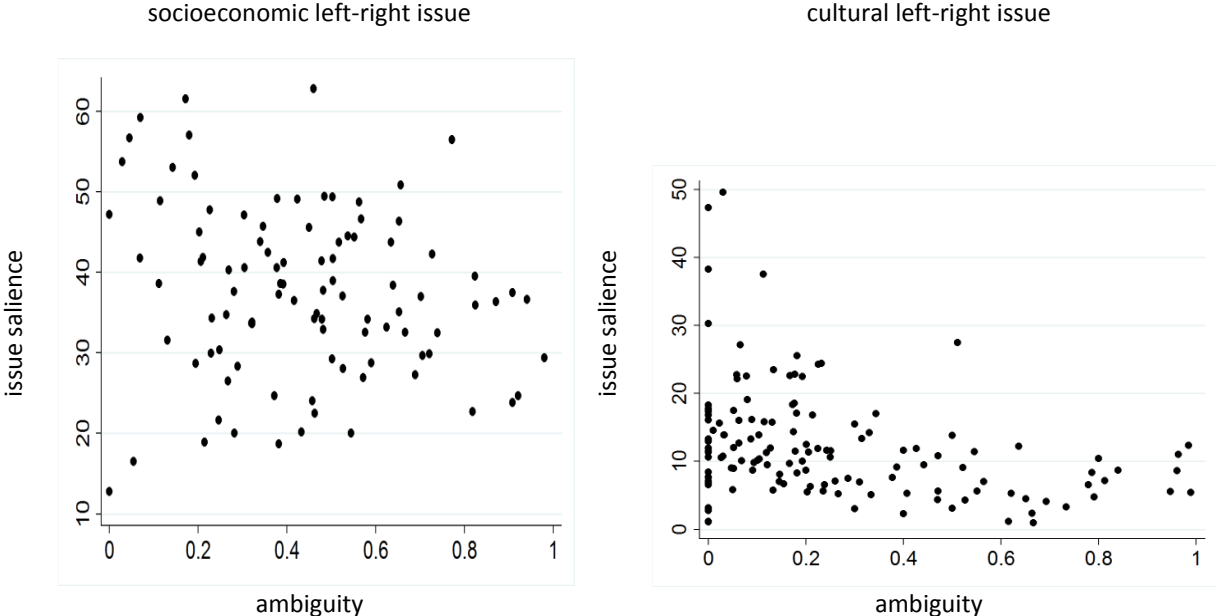
Note: Issue salience and ambiguity is measured with the CMP data. Ambiguity (1= high; 0 = low); issue salience is measured with the percentage of quasi-sentences referring to the issues concerned relative to the total number of quasi-sentences in a party's manifesto.

Table 5A How awareness and party attitude relate to placement probability depending on the information environment

	EU				Left-Right			
	coef.	std. err.	coef.	std. err.	coef.	std. err.	coef.	std. err.
awareness	0.81***	(0.14)	0.93***	(0.08)	4.29***	(0.32)	4.22***	(0.20)
ptv	0.19***	(0.01)	0.24***	(0.01)	0.23***	(0.01)	0.36***	(0.02)
resp. positional extremity	0.05***	(0.01)	0.04**	(0.01)	0.35***	(0.03)	0.34***	(0.03)
party size	0.05***	(0.001)	0.05***	(0.001)	0.06***	(0.002)	0.05***	(0.002)
clarity	0.13***	(0.02)	0.18***	(0.01)	-0.003	(0.03)	0.12***	(0.01)
awareness*clarity	0.04	(0.03)			0.02	(0.05)		
ptv*clarity			-0.01***	(0.002)			-0.03***	(0.003)
constant	0.35***	(0.09)	-2.11***	(0.11)	-1.44***	(0.23)	0.77***	(0.19)
var(resp.)	20.95	(0.32)	21.65	(0.34)	10.86	(0.31)	11.55	(0.34)
var(country)	0.20	(0.01)	0.83	(0.06)	1.77	(0.12)	0.73	(0.05)
log likelihood	-32'553.31		-29'388.61		-12'753.35		-12'644.47	
BIC	58'614.81		58'882.02		25'608.46		25'390.7	
Obs.	114'110		114'110		81'298		81'298	

Note: The dependent variable is the binary variable indicating whether the respondent has placed the party on the scale (1) or not (0). Entries are estimates from a three-level logistic model. Clarity is an additive index composed of the issue polarization and salience scores.

Table 5.1A The relationship between political awareness and perceptual accuracy contingent on the information context – the EU integration issue

	Polarization	Salience	Ambiguity	Full
fixed components				
cognitive component				
political awareness	-0.208	-0.634***	-1.084***	-0.380
	(0.206)	(0.061)	(0.057)	(0.226)
propensity to vote	-0.078***	-0.088***	-0.079***	-0.084***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
matched	-0.552***	-0.662***	-0.602***	-0.648***
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)
mismatched	-0.033	-0.069*	-0.046	-0.090*
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)
resp. extremity	0.117***	0.126***	0.129***	0.135***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
political context				
issue polarization	-0.348*			-0.284*
	(0.138)			(0.128)
issue salience		-0.011***		-0.013***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
ambiguity			-0.574***	-0.516***
			(0.064)	(0.065)
issue extremity	0.309***	0.352***	0.297***	0.348***
	(0.125)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)
cross-level interactions				
awareness*polarization	-0.344**			-0.341*
	(0.125)			(0.133)
awareness*issue salience		-0.008**		-0.007**
		(0.003)		(0.002)
awareness*ambiguity			0.959***	0.957***
			(0.096)	(0.098)
constant	3.333***	2.988***	3.052***	3.554***
	(0.225)	(0.102)	(0.097)	(0.213)
random components				
var(country)	0.087	0.201	0.175	0.072
	(0.031)	(0.060)	(0.052)	(0.027)
var(country: awareness)	0.047			0.054
	(0.029)			(0.032)
cov(awareness, country)	0.017			0.027
	(0.021)			(0.020)
var(respondent)	0.891	1.473	1.563	1.539
	(0.017)	(0.040)	(0.036)	(0.035)
var(respondent: party factor)		0.001	0.851	0.798
		(0.000)	(0.055)	(0.052)
cov(party factor, respondent)		-0.027	-1.154	-1.109
		(0.001)	(0.048)	(0.047)
continued Table 5.1A				

	Polarization	Salience	Ambiguity	Full
var(party-respondent)	3.551	3.437	3.545	3.505
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
number of observations	102'323	87'974	87'147	87'147
model fit				
BIC	435'750.6	374'843.7	372'476.3	371'649.9
BIC (with a constant sample)	373'481.4	371'304.3	372'476.3	371'649.9

continued Table 5.1A
Note: The dependent variable is misperception measured in absolute distance; standard deviation is displayed in parentheses. The model is a three-level nested model. In case of polarization, the model includes a random slope for awareness across countries; for salience and ambiguity, it includes a random slope for these two party-level variables across respondents.

Table 5.2A The relationship between political awareness and perceptual accuracy contingent on the information context – the left-right issue

	polarization	salience (eco)	salience (cult)	ambiguity	full
fixed part					
cognitive component					
political awareness	-0.071	-0.615***	-0.642***	-0.753***	0.285
	(0.267)	(0.106)	(0.049)	(0.069)	(0.398)
propensity to vote	-0.035***	-0.023***	-0.024***	-0.027***	-0.024***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
matched	-0.238***	-0.278***	-0.314***	-0.288***	-0.289***
	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.019)
mismatched	-0.324***	-0.252***	-0.278***	-0.269***	-0.245***
	(0.016)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)
resp. extremity	0.148***	0.154	0.162	0.155***	0.156***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
political context					
issue polarization	-0.007				-0.248
	(0.154)				(0.182)
issue salience (eco)		-0.007***			0.003
		(0.002)			(0.002)
issue salience (cult)			0.021***		0.022***
			(0.002)		(0.003)
ambiguity				0.354***	0.155***
				(0.065)	(0.029)
issue extremity	0.154***	0.123***	0.102**	0.125***	0.116***
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
cross-level interactions					
awareness*polarization	-0.333**				-0.151
	(0.120)				(0.158)

continued Table 5.2A

	polarization	salience (eco)	salience (cult)	ambiguity	full
awareness*issue salience (eco)		-0.005			-0.013***
		(0.003)			(0.003)
awareness*issue salience (cult)			-0.011**		-0.021***
			(0.004)		(0.004)
awareness*ambiguity				-0.048	
				(0.095)	
constant	2.233***	2.340***	1.927***	1.919***	2.269***
	(0.366)	(0.104)	(0.087)	(0.092)	(0.439)
random components					
var(country)	0.199	0.117	0.130	0.127	0.179
	(0.062)	(0.038)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.062)
var(country: awareness)	0.105				0.114
	(0.038)				(0.045)
cov(awareness, country)	-0.114				-0.101
	(0.043)				(0.046)
var(respondent)	0.550	2.321	0.390		0.389
	(0.010)	(0.122)	(0.024)		(0.155)
var(resp.: party factor)		0.001	0.002	0.385	0.002
		(0.0001)	(0.000)	(0.007)	(0.000)
cov(respondent, party factor)		-0.036	-0.003		-0.004
		(0.003)	(0.001)		(0.001)
var(party-respondent)	2.248	1.765	1.733	1.790	1.714
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
number of observations	119'955	75'213	75'213	77'117	75'213
model fit					
BIC	455'580.3	272'332.3	271'817.8	n.a.	271'649.9
BIC (with constant sample)	272'832	272'332.3	271'817.8	n.a.	271'649.9

Note: The dependent variable is misperception measured in absolute distance; standard deviation is displayed in parentheses. The model is a three-level nested model. In case of polarization, the model includes a random slope for awareness across countries; for salience and ambiguity, it includes a random slope for these two party-level variables across respondents.

Table 5.4A The relationship between party attitudes and perceptual accuracy contingent on the information context – the EU integration issue

	polarization	salience	ambiguity	full
fixed-effects parameters				
affective components				
awarenesss	-0.769***	-0.696***	-0.680***	-0.689***
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)
propensity to vote	-0.266***	-0.184***	-0.088***	-0.361***
	(0.044)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.047)
matched	-0.605***	-0.671***	-0.620***	-0.672***
	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.039)	(0.027)
mismatched	-0.057*	-0.022	-0.002	-0.019
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.027)
resp. extremity	0.122***	0.113***	0.113***	0.116***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
political context				
polarization	-0.986***			-0.885***
	(0.212)			(0.188)
issue salience		-0.034***		-0.034***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
issue ambiguity			-0.498***	-0.171***
			(0.043)	(0.038)
extremity	0.323***	0.359***	0.301***	0.365***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
cross-level interactions				
ptv*polarization	0.120***			0.100**
	(0.027)			(0.029)
ptv*salience		0.006***		0.006***
		(0.0002)		(0.0002)
ptv*ambiguity			0.036***	0.047***
			(0.007)	(0.007)
constant	3.876***	2.897***	2.873***	4.721***
	(0.344)	(0.097)	(0.093)	(0.307)
random-effects parameters				
var(country)	0.245	0.162	0.170	0.187
	(0.074)	(0.048)	(0.051)	(0.058)
var(country: ptv)	0.004			0.004
	(0.001)			(0.001)
cov(ptv, country)	-0.020			-0.015
	(0.008)			(0.007)
var(respondent)	0.918	1.753	1.751	1.607
	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.034)
var(respondent: ptv)		0.021	0.020	0.015

continued Table 5.4A

	polarization	salience	ambiguity	full
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
cov(ptv, respondent)		-0.158	-0.160	-0.132
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
var(party-respondent)	3.478	3.283	3.402	3..291
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Number of obs.	102'323	87'974	87'147	87'147
model fit				
BIC	434'220.9	372'968.2	371'771.8	368'513.9
BIC without interaction	434'218.4	374'409.9	371'781.5	369'805.3
BIC (constant sample)	371'131.4	369'521.1	371'771.8	368'513.9

continued Table 5.4A

Note: The dependent variable is misperception measured in absolute distance; standard deviation is displayed in parentheses. The model is a three-level nested model. The ptv variable is allowed to vary across countries when it is interacted with polarization, while it varies across respondents when interactions with party-level variables are examined. Party attitude is measured with the propensity-to-vote variable.

Table 5.5A The relationship between party attitudes and perceptual accuracy contingent on the information context – the left-right issue

	polarization	salience (eco)	ambiguity	full
fixed-effects parameters				
affective components				
awareness	-0.844***	-0.802***	-0.793***	-0.798***
	(0.126)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.031)
propensity to vote	-0.046	-0.134***	0.059***	-0.164***
	(0.028)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.035)
matched	-0.258***	-0.314***	-0.319***	-0.339***
	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.019)
mismatched	-0.344***	-0.237***	-0.259***	-0.249***
	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.019)
resp. extremity	0.152***	0.161***	0.163***	0.164***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
political context				
polarization	-0.222			-0.486**
	(0.126)			(0.143)
issue salience		-0.020***		-0.018***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
issue ambiguity			0.812***	0.707***
			(0.035)	(0.039)
extremity	0.158***	0.128***	0.128***	0.145***
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
cross-level interactions				
ptv*polarization	0.006			0.042**

continued Table 5.5A

	polarization	salience (eco)	ambiguity	full
	(0.011)			(0.014)
ptv*salience		0.003***		0.003***
		(0.0002)		(0.0002)
ptv*ambiguity			-0.124***	-0.107***
			(0.007)	(0.008)
constant	2.727***	2.883***	1.575***	3.419***
	(0.300)	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.342)
random-effects parameters				
var(country)	0.138	0.115	0.127	0.115
	(0.042)	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.038)
var(country: ptv)	0.001			0.001
	(0.0004)			(0.0004)
cov(ptv, country)	-0.006			
	(0.003)			
var(respondent)	0.556	0.855	0.865	0.831
	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
var(respondent: ptv)		0.005	0.005	0.004
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
cov(ptv, respondent		-0.051	-0.052	
		(0.003)	(0.003)	
var(party-respondent)	2.235	1.760	1.760	1.747
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
number of obs.	119'955	75'213	77'117	75'213
model fit				
BIC	455'142.70	271'785.9	278'907.40	271'172.70
BIC without interaction	n.a.	272'127.8	279'239.9	271'699.8
BIC (constant sample)	272'476.00	271'785.9	271773.8	271'172.70

Note: The dependent variable is misperception measured in absolute distance; standard deviation is displayed in parentheses. The model is a three-level nested model. The ptv variable is allowed to vary across countries when it is interacted with polarization, while it varies across respondents when interactions with party-level variables are examined. Party attitude is measured with the propensity-to-vote variable.

Table 5.7A Projections and the information context

	EU				LR			
	mismatched		matched		mismatched		matched	
	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
fixed-effects parameters								
propensity-to-vote	-0.025	(0.018)	-0.134***	(0.016)	0.028*	(0.014)	-0.071**	(0.011)
awareness	-0.946***	(0.072)	-0.692***	(0.054)	-0.766***	(0.046)	-0.647***	(0.041)
resp.' extremity	0.223***	(0.011)	0.031***	(0.009)	0.224***	(0.008)	0.245***	(0.007)
party's extremity	0.403***	(0.012)	0.284	(0.010)	0.032***	(0.011)	0.052***	(0.011)
clarity	-0.458***	(0.037)	-0.472***	(0.036)	-0.235***	(0.027)	-0.529***	(0.044)
ptv*clarity	0.111***	(0.008)	0.079***	(0.006)	0.052***	(0.008)	0.061***	(0.006)
constant	2.189***	(0.161)	2.720***	(0.110)	1.661***	(0.090)	1.822***	(0.095)
random-effects paramet.								
var(country)	0.503	(0.156)	0.218	(0.068)	0.123	(0.041)	0.146	(0.050)
var(country: ptv)	0.007	(0.003)	0.006	(0.002)	0.004	(0.001)	0.002	(0.001)
cov(ptv, country	-0.043	(0.017)	-0.023	(0.009)	-0.013	(0.006)	-0.012	(0.005)
var(respondent)	3.333	(0.076)	2.863	(0.065)	0.888	(0.029)	2.285	(0.064)
var(respondent: ptv)	0.065	(0.002)	0.042	(0.002)	0.041	(0.002)	0.026	(0.001)
cov(ptv, respondent)	-0.334	(0.012)	-0.296	(0.009)	-0.119	(0.007)	-0.238	(0.008)
var(residual)	2.405	(0.029)	2.304	(0.024)	1.204	(0.017)	1.366	(0.020)
Obs	28'556		36'355		24'137		25'408	
BIC	122'157.2		148'537.6		84'452.34		89'478.99	

Note: Clarity is an additive index composedof parties' polarization, issue salience and ambiguity scores. For the left-right case I have excluded cultural issue salience.