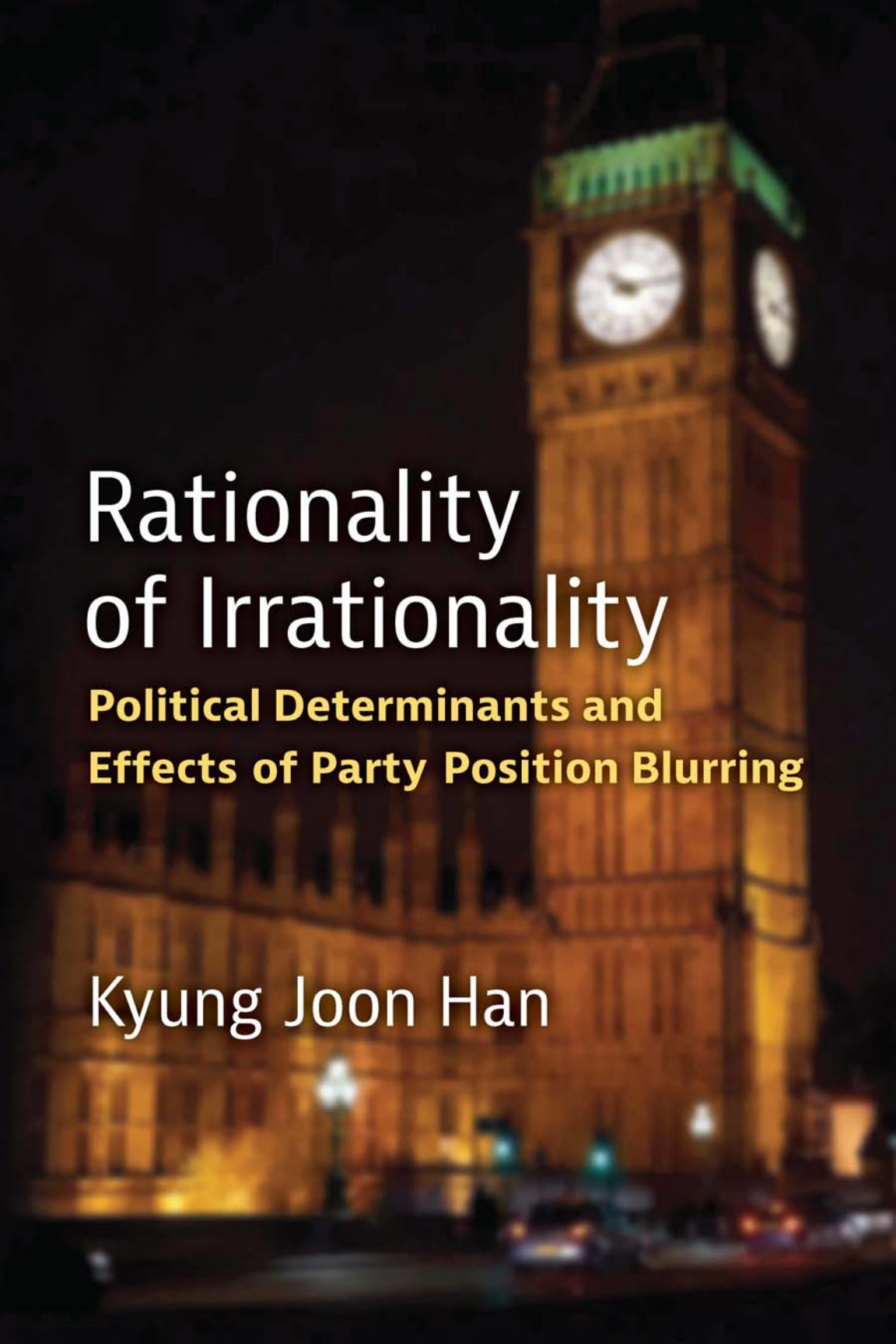
Rationality
of Irrationality
Political Determinants and
Effects of Party Position Blurring
Kyung Joon Han

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RATIONALITY OF IRRATIONALITY

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Kyung Joon Han

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To my family

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Abbreviations

CHES	Chapel Hill Expert Survey on party position
DPES	Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies
EES	European Election Studies
ESS	European Social Survey
EVS	European Value Study
FNES	Finnish National Election Study
MARPOR	Manifesto Research on Political Representation

ONE

Introduction

> Nevertheless, competition forces both parties to be much less than perfectly clear about what they stand for. Naturally, this makes it more difficult for each citizen to vote rationally. . . . We are forced to conclude that rational behavior by political parties tends to discourage rational behavior by voters.
>
> —Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957, 136)

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, many of the social democratic parties in Western Europe fell into a dilemma regarding immigration-related issues. On the one hand, the parties encountered dual pressure to adopt more restrictive policies regarding immigration. Pressure from outside the parties, namely negative public opinion on immigration and the rise of radical right-wing parties, constrained the parties to pursue more restrictive measures regarding immigration (Schain 1988). The parties faced pressure from their own inside organizations. Two groups of their main constituencies, manual (blue-collar) workers and ideological liberals/ethnic minorities, had different preferences on immigration (Mayda 2006). On the other hand, these political parties had maintained ideological commitment to values such as pluralism, multiculturalism, social justice, and equality. Also, immigrants and ethnic minorities were considered potential bases of political support (Lahav 2004; Ireland 2004; Messina 2007). Consequently, they had reasons for opposing restrictions in admitting foreign people and providing political, economic, and social needs for the people. In addition,

social democratic parties, instead of recovering their electoral deficiency, might lose their credibility by adopting more restrictive positions regarding immigration because they could not claim issue ownership on immigration (Bale et al. 2010).

Social democratic parties responded to this dilemma in different ways. Some adopted more restrictive positions regarding immigration, as the Danish Social Democrats did in the 2000s (Rydgren 2004a), while others held onto their principles in the way the same political party (the Danish Social Democrats) had done in the 1990s (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008). Many of these parties' stances on immigration-related issues during this period, however, are best described as ambiguous. For example, the Dutch Labour Party tried to frame immigration-related issues in socioeconomic terms and consequently reduce the salience of immigration as a sociocultural issue (Bruquetas Callejo et al. 2007). In Norway, the Labour Party made its stance on immigration ambiguous by mixing stricter policies on the admission of new immigrants with softer measures on the integration of foreign people (Bale 2003). By doing so, these political parties wanted to make their positions regarding immigration ambiguous and shift the political agenda to other issues (Bale et al. 2010).

Presenting an ambiguous party position brings about normative questions because it prevents a voter from making her vote choice based on a rational calculation of position proximity between herself and a party (Downs 1957). Such party behavior violates the responsible party model of political representation, in which political parties represent their supporters' interests through clear and distinct positions and policies (Dalton 1985). Beclouding a party position can also be politically risky: voters frequently criticize such tactics when detected. Many voters, particularly "the losers of the modernization and individualization process-marginalized blue collar workers, young people with lower levels of education, and the unemployed" have actually turned to voting for radical right-wing parties due to their frustration with and resentment of "left-wing parties' failure to address their plight and ambiguous positions on immigration" (Betz 1993, 423).

Though such party behavior may raise practical as well as normative problems, it is not uncommon in politics. Downs (1957) considers position blurring by political parties a stylized fact in politics. Aldrich et al. (1982) also contend that being ambiguous in policy position is "a time-honored political tradition and uncertainty among voters a frequent political posture" (411). Why do political parties frequently blur their position despite normative criticism and practical risks?

In this book, I define party position blurring as a wide-ranging behavior of political parties that makes their policy position ambiguous, and I argue that it is a deliberate strategy of political parties.[1] They present ambiguous positions on issues they do not want voters to focus on or make key electoral choices on. In other words, when political parties have a comparative disadvantage in an issue, regardless of whether the disadvantage comes from a lack of issue competence or intraparty division on the issue, they blur their stance on the issue so that voters move away from the issue in their consideration of vote choice.

Position Blurring in Party Politics

Position Blurring Is Common

It is not rare to observe people complaining about politicians' being ambiguous in their positions on specific issues. In the United States, Nixon's "I have a plan" rhetoric on the Vietnam issue during the 1968 presidential election campaign acknowledged the issue but never specified his policy plan (Budge and Hofferbert 1990). Nixon, as well as his opponent Humphrey, tried to avoid discussing the issue, and when he did address it, he focused more on criticizing past policies instead of making suggestions for future policies. Similarly, Republican nominee Bob Dole purposely made vague statements regarding abortion in the 1996 presidential election because he did not want to let the abortion issue dominate the electoral agenda and highlight the disparity between his moderate stance and strong anti-abortion language embedded in the party platform by conservative party supporters (Gill 2005).

In Western Europe, radical right-wing parties are known for their ambiguous and sometimes inconsistent stances on socioeconomic issues. Though main supporters of the parties (e.g., manual workers and small business owners) hold homogeneous preferences on sociocultural issues such as immigration and multiculturalism, they are divided on socioeconomic issues such as income redistribution and government regulation (Ivarsflaten 2005). Therefore, radical right-wing parties either consistently place socioeconomic issues as secondary issues (Mudde 1999) or combine left-wing (e.g., protectionism) and right-wing (e.g., tax cut) socioeconomic policies (Mudde 2007).

Because the behavior of position blurring is not uncommon, the literature on party politics has paid attention to it. Downs (1957) contends that

political parties can appeal to a broader range of voters with a particular policy position when they blur it and that "political rationality leads parties" to "becloud their policies in a fog of ambiguity" (136). Key (1953) even described political parties' behavior of position blurring as their "addiction to equivocation and ambiguity" (Key 1953, 232). A more recent theory of political parties by Bawn et al. (2012) also suggests that political parties tend to make use of "blind spots" (i.e., areas in the issue space where voters are unable to distinguish policy positions of political parties with confidence) in order to pursue their noncentrist policies without losing support from centrist voters.

Therefore, the behavior of position blurring by political parties is not an exceptional phenomenon and deserves further theoretical and empirical investigation. One more question we have to ask before analyzing such party behavior, however, is whether it is purposefully formulated by political parties. In other words, is the position blurring behavior of political parties their strategic choice based on rational self-interest?

Position Blurring as a Strategic Choice

Are ambiguous party positions the outcomes of political parties' strategic decisions or the unintended consequences of their failure in crafting unambiguous positions? Most of the literature on position blurring agrees that the behavior of position blurring is a strategic and rational choice of political parties. Being ambiguous is in politicians' "rational self-interest" (Page 1976, 742), and thus candidates or political parties "choose whether or not to be ambiguous, depending upon the incentives present in the electoral environment" (Enelow and Hinich 1981, 488).

Anecdotal evidence also demonstrates the strategic aspect of position blurring. The French Socialist Party unambiguously endorsed the principle of "le droit a la différence (the right to be different)" in the early 1980s but found that its straightforward message only increased the salience level of immigration and triggered countermovements (Rydgren 2004b). Therefore, the party thereafter tried to stand behind only broad and ambiguous principles on citizenship and liberty to diffuse the issue (Williams 2006).

But this does not mean that all the behaviors of position blurring result from deliberate and strategic calculation. Some ambiguous party positions are consequences of political parties' failure to reach a clear consensus between party leaders, supporters, and activists. For example, an observation of the socioeconomic positions of the French National Rally concludes that "economic policy is an area where the different ideological traditions

of the Party's leadership are most clearly evident" and consequently, its policy is "torn between two poles" of economic liberalism and nationalism (Marcus 1995, 109). Consequently, the party's oscillation between the two poles brought in ambiguity and confusion on its true positions.

Without overlooking position blurring as a consequence of political parties' failure in forming a clear policy position, I emphasize that political parties also strategically becloud their policy positions. Political parties blur their position on an issue and distract voters from the policy issue when campaigning on the issue is ineffective in winning votes. As the overall issue competition literature argues, political parties do not want an issue to dominate the political agenda when they struggle with a certain disadvantage on that issue. The parties will then want to blur their position on that issue to divert voters' attention from it. To underscore the strategic aspect of position blurring, I theorize and examine how party-competition environments such as party system salience and polarization and political parties' strategic interaction with other parties in these environments determine the relative effectiveness of issue-competition tactics and shape political parties' position-blurring behavior (chapters 2 and 5).

Position Blurring in the Multiparty System

Western European politics is more multidimensional in its issue space than is American politics. Though issues such as race and abortion have emerged as salient political issues in the United States, the economy still dominates the political agenda in many, particularly presidential, elections (Gomez and Wilson 2001; Singer 2011). In contrast, although more people still indicate economy-related issues as the most important issues in Western Europe, it is widely accepted that issues such as multiculturalism, race, ethnicity, and immigration have significantly transformed the foundation of Western European politics and societies (e.g., Parsons and Smeeding 2006).

The behavior of position blurring can be a more efficient electoral strategy when party competition exists within a multidimensional issue space than it does in the context of a unidimensional issue space (Rovny 2012, 2013). Previous anecdotal examples of position blurring imply that political parties, or politicians, employ such behavior when they want to avoid competing on an issue and shift the political agenda to other issues. When party competition occurs within a unidimensional issue space, however, this strategy is not as effective due to the absence of another issue dimension to which the political agenda can be swung.

Issue competition (i.e., party competition on which issues should dominate the political agenda) is inherently related to the multidimensional issue space (Green-Pedersen 2007; de Sio and Weber 2014). The behavior of position blurring is, as I argue in this book, a tactic of issue competition because political parties try to manipulate which issues dominate the political agenda by clarifying or blurring their positions. Thus we need thoughtful and comprehensive research on the politics of position blurring—its underlying forces and the political outcomes it produces—that is applied to a multiparty system with a multidimensional issue space as well as to the American political system. Therefore, I examine the politics of position blurring in Western European countries in light of political parties' issue competition.

The Argument

I argue in this book that political parties blur or clarify their issue positions as well as emphasize or de-emphasize an issue as a tactic for competing on issues. In this sense, my argument corresponds to the issue competition literature in contending that political parties compete with each other not only in their issue *positions* but also on *issues*. Political parties want political actors, such as rival political parties and voters, to discuss, focus on, and consider certain issues that bring in political advantages and electoral gains. On the contrary, they do not want particular issues to be set as main political agendas when they are disadvantaged by the issues for any reason.

In the issue competition literature, selective issue emphasis is the main strategic tool of issue competition. When political parties own a certain comparative advantage on an issue and thus want to compete on that issue, they emphasize that issue in their campaign, mostly by frequently referring to the issue in their communication with voters, intending to draw voters' attention to the issue. For example, if a political party owns voters' perception of issue competence on an issue for any reason, it will want to compete on that issue, knowing that the voters' perception of issue competence on a political party boosts their support for the party (Lachat 2014). Conversely, when political parties struggle with a disadvantage in an issue and consequently want to divert voters' minds from it, they will de-emphasize that issue and rarely mention it in their campaigns. For instance, a political party tries to avoid competing on an issue on which its supporters' preferences are divided because the issue can disrupt at least one of the supporter groups and even split the party (van de Wardt 2014).

I add a novel contribution to the literature of issue competition, however, by arguing that the behavior of position blurring is another tactic employed by political parties to compete on issues. As political parties emphasize an issue on which they hope to compete, they present a clear position on the issue. When they want to avoid competing on an issue, they present an ambiguous position on that issue to prevent voters from considering the issue seriously in their vote choice.

These tactical issue competition behaviors of political parties are driven by an aspect of voters' cognitive behavior. Though voters take into account the proximity between themselves and political parties in their stances on issues, each of the issue position *distances* has a different weight in voters' party choice. Voters consider a position distance on an issue more seriously when they think the issue is important for themselves or their country (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005). I contend that two other factors also determine dissimilar weights voters put on issue position distances. First, a voter incorporates an issue in her vote choice when the issue is seriously considered and handled by political parties, because their emphasis on the issue raises her expectation on the change of the policy status quo regarding the issue. Second, a voter's weight on each issue is also determined by the ambiguity or clarity of party positions that shape the certainty and accuracy of voters' party position estimations. Voters do not consider position proximity on an issue much when they are not sure about their assessments of party positions on the issue.

Political parties essentially exploit this behavior of voters in order to manipulate political agendas on which they compete with each other and to make the most of issue competition. Specifically, I argue that political parties embrace an issue by presenting a clear position on the issue as well as emphasizing the issue in which they enjoy a comparative advantage (i.e., issue competence or the unity of party supporters' opinion) (fig. 1.1). In contrast, they avoid an issue by blurring their position on the issue or by de-emphasizing the issue that brings a comparative disadvantage to the parties (i.e., a lack of issue competence or division among party supporters).

Nonetheless, there is still a significant difference in the effectiveness of the two issue competition behaviors (issue emphasis and position blurring) regarding an issue in which a political party has a comparative disadvantage. Meguid (2008) suggests that mainstream parties respond to the threat from niche parties in different ways, and the circumstances of their competition with other mainstream parties determine their particular tactical responses between "dismissive" (i.e., neglecting a niche party's issue), "accommodative" (i.e., adopting a niche party's position), and "adversarial"

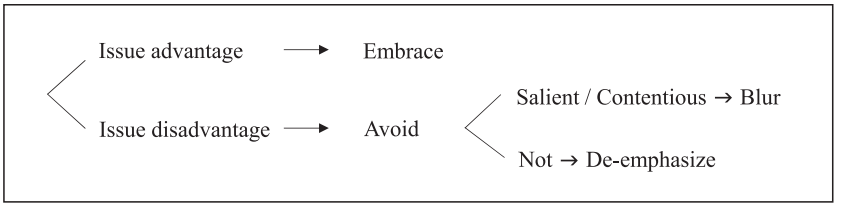

Fig. 1.1. Strategic Behaviors of Issue Competition

(i.e., adopting a position opposite to a niche party's position) strategies. In the same way, I argue that certain party-competition environments decide the relative effectiveness of the two issue competition tactics and thus determine political parties' choice between them.

Despite its comparative disadvantage, a political party cannot absolutely de-emphasize an issue when the issue is a salient or contentious issue in the party system. In such a case, other political parties keep putting the issue on the agenda in parliamentary discussions or candidate debates. A high level of salience or contentiousness in the party system will also draw the attention of the mass media, so the political party cannot completely avoid questions from the mass media. Therefore, though an issue disadvantage discourages a political party from emphasizing the issue, such an effect will be weakened by the salience or contentious level of the issue in the party system.

When a political party has to respond to an issue despite its unwillingness, position blurring is a strategically efficient alternative tactic of diverting voters' attention from the issue. The tactical usefulness of position blurring will be even amplified when a political party is constrained not to de-emphasize an issue due to the high level of issue salience or contentiousness in party competition. In that case, the position-blurring effect of issue disadvantage will be strengthened by the issue salience or contentiousness level in the party system.

In sum, when a political party struggles with a comparative disadvantage in an issue, it will de-emphasize the issue, particularly when the issue is neither salient nor contentious in the party system. But a political party will blur its position on its disadvantageous issue when the issue is a salient or contentious issue in the party system. Though the behavior of position blurring may weaken policy voting by voters and thus raise normative criticism of discouraging "rational behavior by voters," it is definitely "rational behavior by political parties" to capitalize on their comparative advantage between different issues (Downs 1957, 136).

Contributions and Implications

Political Parties as Active Agents

Are political parties more like reactive actors who respond to voters by riding the wave of public opinion, or are they proactive agents that influence and even manipulate voters' cognitive and actual behaviors? Political parties, undoubtedly, follow voters. Though this party-voter link displays variation between different types of political parties (e.g., mainstream parties and niche parties), dissimilar issues (e.g., socioeconomic issues and sociocultural issues), and party organizations (e.g., the balance of power between party leaders and party activists), political parties take issues that voters consider to be salient and adopt positions close to the mean voter or the mean party supporter.

This book emphasizes the other side of the nature of political parties. As the issue evolution literature, mostly based on American politics, and the issue entrepreneurship literature on Euroskeptic parties in Western Europe demonstrate (Carmines and Stimson 1989; de Vries 2007), political parties actively mobilize an issue with their distinct positions and try to make the issue dominate political agendas and electoral competition. The issue-competition literature also highlights political parties' strategic efforts to modify voters' issue attention by their own behavior of selective issue emphasis. In addition, the partisan-motivated reasoning literature implies that voters frequently rely on the ideologies, positions, and policies of their political party to filter political information and reach conclusions in a particular direction. Political parties can therefore proactively pursue changing voters' or their supporters' preferences on an issue with their own policy behaviors. With these proactive tactics, they urge voters to consider an issue in their party choice and accept the parties' policy position that reveals the clear distinction between them and other parties.

On the other hand, political parties sometimes deliberately play down an issue, becloud the differences in their policy positions, and take away an issue from party-competition agendas. McGraw (2015) studies how major Irish parties have proactively shaped electoral competition and finds that they have successfully sidelined challenging issues to preserve their own electoral advantage. They have purposefully blurred their positions and muted the differences between themselves regarding pressing issues such as European integration and abortion to diminish voters' perceptions of position differences between parties and weaken the electoral appeal of distinctive positions of minor parties.

At the same time, major Irish parties have constantly displaced controversial and divisive issues to extraparliamentary institutions such as referenda and courts. By doing so, the parties have successfully obscured party position differences on the issues and removed the issues from electoral agendas. Major parties, certainly, have to take a position even on a referendum issue. Nonetheless, McGraw's research reveals that the parties have minimized their campaign, sometimes even by refusing to actively campaign, during a referendum or tried to avoid a decisive position on the issue. Consequently, with some issues removed from the party-competition agenda and only ambiguous and confusing differences between major parties' positions regarding other issues in electoral campaigns, nonpolicy factors such as clientelistic party-constituency linkages have prevailed in voters' party choice, and major political parties have been able to make use of their advantages in nonpolicy factors over minor parties.

This book corresponds to this line of studies on political parties as proactive agents. Political parties' issue-competition behaviors definitely change voters' cognitive and actual behaviors on issues and their party choice. Knowing this, political parties strive to make use of the behaviors, either to highlight an issue or to hide an issue in party competition.

Position Blurring and the Party-Voter Linkage

The argument of this book makes a contribution to the distinct literature on the party-voter linkage. Because representative democracy is a dominant principle of modern democracy, and political parties are considered to be a principal apparatus that links the public and political decision makers (Dalton 1996), the linkage between political parties and voters has been a central topic in political science research.

In particular, recent research studies how well voters perceive the issue positions of political parties. Its findings are not encouraging: scholars have found that voters are often ignorant of or misinformed about political parties' issue positions (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011, 2014).[2] This phenomenon is typically explained by reference to voter apathy, voter bias resulting from party loyalties, or misinformation propagated by competing political parties and the media (Gerber and Green 1999; Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011).

My argument implies that another potential source of voter ignorance or misperception may be political parties intentionally blurring their own issue positions. As I show in this book, position blurring of a political party on an issue prevents voters from making an exact estimation of the party's position on the issue as well as from incorporating the issue in their voting

behavior. Thus the clarity or ambiguity of party position needs to be incorporated in the study of voters' perception of party position.

This connection of position blurring to the party-voter linkage leads to a deeper, but more worrying, implication on voters' perceptions of politics and the future of liberal democracy. Downs (1957) suggests that regardless of its electoral impact on political parties that engage in it, party position blurring decreases the rationality of voting behaviors because these become less based on utilitarian policy grounds. In addition, Shepsle (1972) argues that the ambiguity of party positions can cause confusion and uncertainty among voters and activate cynicism or anxiety among them.

An escalation of voters' cynicism, dissatisfaction, and distrust of the current political system has been observed in many democratic countries in the past couple of decades. Many citizens criticize established political actors such as political parties and government officers for their unwillingness to respond to citizens' demands and needs as well as for their inability to solve socioeconomic problems (Kitschelt 1995; Dalton and Weldon 2005; Treib 2014). Their frustration, skepticism, and grievance are expressed in different ways. Citizens who do not appreciate the established political actors are dissuaded from voting (Hooghe, Marien, and Pauwels 2011; Bornschier and Kriesi 2013). These voters are also drawn to supporting "outsider" political parties that also disapprove of the established political system (Abedi 2004; van Spanje and van der Brug 2007).

This development of cynicism and anxiety among voters can be worsened by the failure of the party-voter linkage. Voters feel disheartened when they cannot confidently and exactly estimate party positions and find clear and distinct alternatives (e.g., political parties) that can represent their preferences and interests in the policy-making process (Kitschelt 2000). They also believe they are being ignored when there is a "democratic deficit" (i.e., a lack of democratic accountability, transparency, and responsibility) in the political system (Morlino and Tarchi 1996). Therefore, though the behavior of position blurring may be an efficient strategy used by political parties to manipulate political agendas on which they compete, it can, in the long run, lead to a further crisis of liberal democracy by weakening voters' perception of legitimacy and credibility of foremost political actors: political parties.

Position Blurring and the Responsible Party Model

Position blurring raises normative questions because it violates the responsible party model of political representation. The model suggests that voters are represented mainly by and through political parties in the represen-

tative democracy system (Sartori 1968), and it is normatively desirable for political parties to provide distinct sets of policy programs for voters. With unambiguous party positions, voters can make a meaningful party choice based on policy-related information, and political parties can represent the policy stances of their supporters (Dalton 1985). In addition, political parties commit themselves to well-defined policy promises by clarifying their party positions in election campaigns. Position clarification prevents government parties from deviating from these promises when they implement real policies (Aragonès and Neeman 2000).

Therefore, position blurring violates the norm related to a role of political parties as a linkage mechanism. By presenting ambiguous party positions, political parties fail to offer distinct and clear policy alternatives to voters so that voters make their party choice based on substantive policy grounds. Consequently, it becomes difficult for voters to select political parties that represent their preferences (Adams 2001). In addition, political parties avoid making specific policy commitments when they blur their positions and thus enjoy greater freedom and flexibility in implementing their policies after they win elected office (Aragonès and Neeman 2000).[3] Voters can neither reward nor punish government parties based on how much parties are accountable to their supporters in their policy outputs.

Alesina and Cukierman (1990) and Aragonès and Neeman (2000) see the position-blurring behavior of political parties as a consequence of trade-offs between two fundamental goals that they pursue: office seeking and policy representation (of the interests of their supporters). The dilemma between these goals is essential for political parties, and they frequently have to make a hard choice between these (Müller and Strøm 1999). Political parties represent the stances of their core constituencies in their party manifestos, election campaigns, and government policies if they are elected into a government. Sometimes, however, they are placed in a difficult situation when taking a particular position results in an electoral disadvantage for a certain reason. In such a situation, political parties may want to have greater programmatic flexibility in their post-election policy actions by blurring their pre-election policy positions.

In particular, major political parties in Western Europe since the end of the Second World War have often been portrayed as catch-all parties that place a high priority on maximizing their electoral support through extensive aggregation of interests and the maintenance of broad coalitions (Lobo 2008). The classification of Western European political parties as catch-all parties might have lost its explanatory power due to new characteristics of political parties (e.g., cartel party), the emergence of niche parties, and the electoral decline of major parties (Koole 1996). Nonethe-

less, the concept of catch-all parties is still used to examine party politics in Western Europe mostly because of their behaviors of positional flexibility and the indistinctness of positional differences between them (e.g., Forestiere 2009; Poguntke 2014). The implication of position blurring on the responsible party model will be more worrying for political parties with such characteristics.

The role of political parties is not limited, certainly, to the representative function. The party government model emphasizes the institutional roles of political parties in mobilizing the majority of the electorate for the purpose of taking control of the government (Schattschneider 1945), formulating and carrying out policies once in office (Rose 1969), and recruiting government officials who are to be held responsible for their policies (Katz 1986). In addition, the particularistic party-competition model suggests that political parties compete not only by promising policies that benefit society at large (the programmatic party-competition model), but also by offering tangible benefits to selective groups in return for their electoral support (Häusermann, Picot, and Geering 2012). The clarity of party positions may not matter much in these models on the roles of political parties.

Nonetheless, the position blurring of political parties provides implications for the party government model and the particularistic party-competition model as well. A theory of the party government model by Thomassen (1994) emphasizes that voters should be able to choose a party that represents their policy preferences best and delivers them in its policies once in office, and thus they need to be aware of the differences between political parties' programs. Therefore, Mair (2013) suggests that as a condition for party government, political parties should "offer voters clear policy alternatives" as well as recruit political leaders (65).

Regarding the particularistic party-competition model, though non-policy benefits such as personal relationships and delivery of goods and services are definitely a part of welfare that political parties deliver to their clientele, they sustain the particularistic relationship also by passing policies favorable to the group (e.g., occupationally or industrially based social policies) (Lynch 2006). Accordingly, the clarity or ambiguity of party positions on such particularistic policies will have implications, in some way, even for the particularistic party-competition model.

Position Blurring and Issue Competition

Political parties compete not only on their differentiated positions on major issues (positional competition) but also on their asymmetric distribution of party campaign priorities between different issues (issue compe-

tition) (Green-Pedersen 2007). In other words, political parties try to draw electoral support by emphasizing issues that are favorable to them as well as by cautiously formulating their policy positions on major political issues.

Studies on selective issue emphasis (Robertson 1976; Budge and Farlie 1977; Budge 1982) have specified conditions that make certain issues favorable to political parties and found that political parties put great salience on issues in which they enjoy comparative advantages in terms of issue ownership and internal unity. When voters acknowledge that a political party puts great salience on an issue or has the capability to solve problems related to the issue, they hold the party in good faith and, hoping that the party wins an election and resolves the problems through government policies, offer their electoral support (Rovny 2012). Thus political parties want to emphasize issues that bring such electoral benefits.[4] Regarding internal unity, political parties do not emphasize an issue when their core supporters are divided on the issue (van de Wardt 2014). Political parties do not want to highlight an issue that worsens internal division because core party supporters are critical to the political survival of the parties.

The finding in this book that political parties blur their positions on issues of a comparative disadvantage implies that selective issue emphasis is not the only strategy of issue competition. Political parties can draw voters' attention to an issue and encourage them to incorporate the issue in their voting behavior not only by emphasizing the issue but also by presenting a clear position on the issue. In the same way, political parties can turn voters' attention away from an issue and discourage them from considering the issue by blurring their position on the issue as well as by de-emphasizing the issue in their electoral campaign.

This book also suggests, however, that party-competition environments bring about different patterns in political parties' behaviors of issue emphasis and position blurring. Issue de-emphasis works only when the issue is neither a salient nor a contentious issue in the party system. When other parties put salience on the issue or their positions on the issue are polarized, issue de-emphasis is not an effective issue competition tactic anymore, and political parties rely more on position blurring.

Plan of the Book

I first provide a theoretical cornerstone in chapter 2. I argue that the behavior of position blurring as well as that of selective issue emphasis is used as a strategic instrument in issue competition. Political parties de-

emphasize an issue and present an ambiguous position on the issue when they lack voters' perception of issue competence or their supporters are divided on the issue. When political parties do not struggle with such an issue disadvantage, they emphasize the issue and present an unambiguous position on the issue.

Despite the similar efficacy of the two issue-competition behaviors for manipulating voters' attention, the strategic benefit of position blurring is magnified in certain party-competition environments. When an issue is a salient or a contentious issue in party competition, a political party cannot fully diffuse the issue by de-emphasizing it because it has to respond to other political parties' messages on the issue. The political party can strategically react to the issue, but only ambiguously by blurring its position on the issue. By relying on the tactic of position blurring, the political party can still strive to divert voters' attention from the issue without completely ignoring it.

Chapter 3 discusses an empirical issue: measuring position blurring. I first introduce three measurements used in the previous literature on position blurring: the standard deviation of experts' party position estimations, the degree of multimodality of the distribution of experts' party position estimations, and the extent to which party manifesto statements are inconsistent on an issue. I also explore the challenges of measuring the degree of party position ambiguity by comparing the conceptual and practical aspects of these different measurements. Given that all the measurements are highly correlated with each other, I use the standard deviation of experts' party position estimations as the main measurement of position blurring in this book. The standard deviation measurement also has the advantage of conceptual clarity and simplicity of calculation. Nonetheless, I also discuss my plan to use the manifesto measurement as an alternative one for robustness checks in this book.

Chapter 4 discusses political effects of position blurring, particularly its impacts on voters' cognitive and voting behavior. Position blurring, above all, diminishes the certainty and accuracy of voters' estimations of party positions. Due to a lack of explicit and clear information and materials on party positions provided by political parties, voters cannot assess party positions correctly. Also, voters lose their confidence in their estimations because they are aware of the ambiguity of messages from political parties regarding their policy positions.

This position-blurring effect on the cognitive aspect of voters makes voters alter their actual voting behavior. Voters consider several factors when they cast a vote. In Western European party systems, most of which

have a multidimensional issue space, voters need to consider multiple political issues together. Political parties' position blurring on an issue discourages voters from considering the issue, particularly position proximity between themselves and political parties regarding the issue, in their vote choice. Voters lack confidence in their party position estimations and are reluctant to rely on their uncertain judgment.

In addition, voters consider not only the features of political parties such as party positions but also the characteristics of individual political actors related to parties, even when they cast a party-list vote. By reducing the availability, usefulness, and reliability of the most important reference on political parties (i.e., their policy positions), position blurring urges voters to rely on other information such as their assessment of and impression of individuals related to each party, such as party leaders. Therefore, the personalization of voting behavior is strengthened by position blurring: voters' evaluation of individual political actors increasingly determines their party choice as political parties blur their policy positions.

Chapter 5 examines, given its effects on voters, what causes position blurring of political parties. First, political parties de-emphasize an issue and blur their position on the issue when they lack voters' perception of issue competence or their supporters are divided on the issue. They embrace an issue in which they enjoy a comparative advantage but avoid an issue in which they struggle with an issue disadvantage. Second, though both issue emphasis and position blurring are used by political parties as issue-competition tactics, certain party-competition environments decide the relative effectiveness of the two tactics. When an issue is a salient or contentious issue in the party system, political parties cannot completely avoid the issue despite their comparative disadvantage. Thus, they de-emphasize their unfavorable issue only when the issue is neither a salient nor a contentious one. When political parties' disadvantageous issue is either a salient or contentious issue and cannot be de-emphasized, political parties rely even more on position blurring to divert voters' attention from the issue.

Chapter 6 applies the theoretical discussion and empirical findings in previous chapters to one of the most salient topics in Western European politics: radical right-wing parties. Despite their different preferences on traditional socioeconomic issues, manual workers and small business owners represent the main constituencies of such parties. The parties are known to be able to sustain this unlikely coalition by focusing on immigration-related issues that cross-cut the socioeconomic dimension. I generally agree with this argument but also add a supply-side story by arguing that

position blurring of radical right-wing parties on socioeconomic issues helps to divert the attention of both manual workers and small business owners from the issues. Many of the people in both occupational groups still categorize socioeconomic issues as the most important issues and consider position proximity between themselves and radical right-wing parties in their vote choice. However, the role of the issues in determining their voting behavior diminishes as the parties present ambiguous positions on the issues. Therefore, though some studies find that the parties have become more "left-wing" in socioeconomic issues and more based on the support by manual workers for the last couple of decades, the parties' shift to the economic left does not necessarily proletarianize their party base. In other words, if the parties move to the left also by blurring their positions on the economy, their position shift neither attracts more manual workers nor disturbs more small business owners.

As radical right-wing parties face internal divisions between manual workers and small business owners on socioeconomic issues, social democratic parties have encountered the same challenge regarding sociocultural issues such as immigration. As sociocultural issues emerged as major political issues in Western Europe, many social democratic parties came to observe a fault line in their own constituencies between manual workers, who hold authoritarian ideologies and oppose liberal policies regarding immigration, and other supporters, who have more libertarian ideologies and support liberal policies regarding immigration. It is also believed that many manual workers turned to voting for radical right-wing parties due to the disparity between themselves and social democratic parties on the issues. Thus, chapter 7 studies how position blurring of social democratic parties regarding immigration determines manual workers' party support. I find that the more ambiguous positions social democratic parties present on immigration, the less the position distance on immigration between manual workers and the parties discourages the workers from voting for the parties. I also find that social democratic parties may keep drawing support from manual workers, at least to some extent, with still sustaining liberal policies regarding immigration by making their policy positions ambiguous.

Finally, in chapter 8 I summarize my findings and provide further implications on party politics in democracies as well as literature in political science. First, scholars offer different conclusions on the electoral effect of position blurring, and I suggest that the electoral effect may depend on the party system and issue dimensionality. Second, party positions regarding both the economy and immigration have become more polarized for

the past two decades. Thus if party system polarization continues, political parties with a comparative disadvantage in one of these issues will further becloud their policy position. Third, party types matter in the politics of position blurring, but different typologies have different implications. Mainstream and niche parties demonstrate dissimilar issue competition behaviors because they have asymmetric advantages/disadvantages between issues. Also, the types of political parties based on their goals (e.g., catch-all parties) and organizations (e.g., leader- or activist-dominated) will make a difference because political parties with dissimilar goals and organizations will choose different equilibria between policy, vote, and office. Finally, the ongoing behavior of position blurring can advance the personalization of politics and create a paradoxical consequence of the weakening of political parties.

TWO

A Theory of Position Blurring

What makes political parties present ambiguous policy positions? I theorize political parties' motivation for blurring their policy position in this chapter. First, political parties blur their position on an issue as well as de-emphasize the issue when their comparative disadvantage regarding the issue is revealed. I suggest that two aspects of the party-issue relationship determine political parties' issue disadvantages: division within a party on an issue and voters' perception of a lack of competence regarding an issue. Therefore, a political party blurs its position on an issue as well as de-emphasizes the issue when its supporters' opinion is not united on the issue or when voters do not perceive the party's competence on the issue.

Second, though both position blurring and selective issue emphasis are employed by political parties as an issue-competition tactic, party-competition environments alter the effectiveness of the tactics. If a political party wants to divert voters' attention from an issue because of its issue disadvantage and other political parties do not address the issue either, the political party can safely neglect the issue. If, however, the issue is a salient or contentious issue in the party system, the political party cannot avoid discussing the issue. When a political party's hand of selective issue de-emphasis is tied, the strategic usefulness of the other hand of position blurring is increased.

In sum, an issue disadvantage leads political parties to de-emphasize the issue, particularly when the issue is neither salient nor contentious in the party system. When an issue is either a salient or contentious issue in the party system, political parties with a comparative disadvantage in that issue blur their position on the issue instead of de-emphasizing it.

The Selective Emphasis Theory and Issue Competition

Since Downs's seminal work (1957), positional competition has been a central explanation of party behavior. Political parties compete with each other by taking different positions on a policy dimension and so deliberately choose their position on the issue in order to sustain or gain electoral support.

After decades, scholars began to claim that shifting, or not shifting, their position is not the only way for political parties to compete with each other. In examining cases of British general elections and American presidential elections, Robertson (1976) and Budge and Farlie (1977) find that political parties try "to emphasize certain favourable issue areas and to play down others which are unfavourable" rather than make "direct policy confrontation on the same issues" (Budge 1982, 149).[1]

The selective emphasis theory suggests that if a political party has a comparative advantage in an issue for any reason, the political party selectively and exclusively emphasizes the issue in its election campaign so that the issue dominates the electoral agenda. By doing so, the political party expects the issue to become heavily incorporated and used by voters in choosing parties. Because the party has a comparative advantage on the issue over other political parties, it can benefit from this party strategy.

Political parties are, of course, responsive to voters in their issue emphasis. They emphasize the same issues voters do. In their vote choice, voters are likely to consider issues they believe hold great importance to their society as well as to themselves. For example, the EES (2014) includes both questions of what respondents think is the most important issue as well as what issue determines their vote choice. The study reveals that among those who indicate either economy, immigration, or environment issues as the most important problem their country faces, 49 percent say that it was the same issue (either economy, immigration, or environment) that determined their vote choice in the past election.

Therefore, studies following the "riding the wave" theory (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994) argue that the issue emphasis behavior of political parties is basically a bottom-up process: political parties respond to the issues that are salient to voters. By doing so, political parties can give a signal to voters that they are listening to, informed of, and responsive to voters' concerns (Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016). Though other factors such as voter opinion polarization (Spoon and Klüver 2015), party size, government incumbency, party type (Klüver and Spoon 2016), the electoral context (Spoon and Klüver 2014), and the divisiveness of coalition govern-

ment parties on an issue (Klüver and Spoon 2017) modify the relationship between the issue emphasis of political parties and that of voters, empirical studies find that political parties emphasize the same issues voters do.

Nonetheless, political parties can proactively manipulate which issues are taken seriously by voters by selectively emphasizing different issues.[2] In a unidimensional policy space where there is only one major electoral issue, the utility function of voters heavily depends on position proximity between the voters and political parties (or candidates). The utility of a voter (i) from voting for a political party (k) can be defined as a function of the distance between her position (x_i) on the major political issue and the party's position on the issue (x_k).[3]

$$U_i(k) = -(x_i - x_k)^2 \tag{2.1}$$

Most of the issue space in the politics of Western European countries, however, is multidimensional, and voters need to consider multiple issues and the positions of political parties regarding these various issues. When they do so, they do not take into account the issues equivalently. Voters put asymmetric weights on issues and consider issues they prioritize more heavily than other issues. Thus, the utility function of a voter becomes

$$U_i(k) = -\sum_{j=1}^{n} \alpha_j (x_{ij} - x_{kj})^2 \tag{2.2}$$

where j indicates each issue, n denotes the number of issues, and α_j represents the policy-weight parameter for issue j.

The policy-weight parameter for an issue (i.e., how much a voter considers an issue in her vote choice) is significantly determined by the salience that a voter puts on the issue. If a voter thinks the issue of the natural environment is more important than that of immigration, she will consider position proximity on the natural environment more seriously and substantially than that on immigration.[4]

The parameter is also determined by voters' perception of how seriously political authorities (e.g., political parties) care for each issue. When a voter considers an issue an important problem either to herself or to her country, she usually wants political authorities to do something. For example, 86.6 percent of people who indicated in the EES (2009) immigration-related issues (immigration, labor migration, or multiculturalism) did either "strongly agree" or "agree" to the idea of significantly reducing the number of immigrants. In the same way, 92.1 percent of respondents who pointed out in the EES (2014) natural environment issues (environment,

climate change, environmental protection, or national environmental policy) agreed with the argument that "environmental protection should always take priority even at the cost of economic growth." When voters put salience on an issue, they typically believe that the status quo regarding the issue, such as the current number of immigrants, the existing policies on unemployment, or the recent status of environmental policies, should be changed.

When political parties do not seem to take care of an issue as a major political agenda in their election campaigns, voters do not expect that the next government will seriously discuss the issue and introduce meaningful policy change regarding the issue. Voters will not put a heavy weight on the issue in their expected utility function on voting in such a case despite their own interest in the issue. In contrast, when voters see political parties emphasizing the issue and taking it seriously, voters anticipate a consequential policy change on the issue by the new government, put a heavier weight on the issue in their utility function on voting, and make their vote choice based on the issue more strongly (Selek 2006). Consequently, a voter becomes more likely to vote for a party when she and the party share the same issue priority (van der Brug 2004).

The behavior of British political parties in the 2005 election clearly demonstrates how political parties try to manipulate voters' attention and political agendas by either emphasizing or de-emphasizing an issue. The incumbent Labour Party had an advantage of decent economic conditions but suffered from a lack of political trust due to the intelligence failure on the weapons of mass destruction in the Iraq War. Thus the Labour Party simply de-emphasized and dismissed the issue while emphasizing other issues on which they were strong, such as the economy and health care. The two issues made up 52 percent of their news initiatives on policy issues in the four-week period before the election, but the issue of the Iraq War hardly appeared. In contrast, the Conservative Party allocated only 21.3 percent and the Liberal Democrats 29.4 percent of their news initiatives to these two issues and used most of their communication tools for other issues such as taxes, crime, and the Iraq War (Gaber 2006).

Therefore, from seminal theoretical works to recent empirical studies, most of the literature on issue competition suggests that political parties can manipulate the political agenda by emphasizing or de-emphasizing certain issues. Political parties can encourage voters to focus on an issue by emphasizing the issue and deviate their interest from a particular issue by de-emphasizing it. I suggest, however, that selective emphasis is not the only tactic of political parties in issue competition. Voters are also less

likely to rely on an issue in their vote choice when political parties present ambiguous positions on the issue despite their basic interest in the issue. If this is the case, position blurring will be used by political parties as another trick of issue competition.

Position Blurring and Voters' Behavior

Despite the development of theories on voting behavior that highlight partisanship, social backgrounds, and nonpolicy evaluations of political parties (e.g., issue ownership and party performance), position proximity between a voter and a party remains one of the most significant factors for her vote choice. A voter is likely to vote for a party whose policy positions regarding major issues are closer to hers. In order for her to evaluate position proximity, she needs to be able to accurately and confidently estimate the party's positions as well as her own stance.

The behavior of position blurring by political parties reduces the certainty and accuracy of voters' party position estimation: the more ambiguous the positions political parties present on an issue, the more uncertain and inaccurate are voters in their party position estimations. Voters become uncertain not only about party positions on an issue but also about projected government policies on the issue. For a voter, making a vote choice based on an issue inevitably involves a risk when party positions regarding the issue are ambiguous (Palfrey and Rosenthal 1985).

The trustfulness of political information and materials matters to voters. Voters convert their cognitive attitudes and beliefs (e.g., issue position and position proximity) into actual behaviors (e.g., voting) when they have a considerable level of credibility and clarity in political information (Lavine et al. 1996). Voters sometimes follow and accept a policy position of a political party they support ("partisan cue"), but they do not take a cue from their political party when its policy position is ambiguous (Brader, Tucker, and Duell 2013). Also, voters critically evaluate the credibility of political information by assessing the reliability of institutions that provide information (e.g., mass media) and selectively accepting information (Alt, Lassen, and Marshall 2016).

Regarding vote choice, voters do not want to make a choice that brings uncertainty to them, particularly when they are risk-averse (Kam and Simas 2012). There has been much discussion on whether and how many voters are risk-averse. While Shepsle (1972) assumes that voters take risks and Berinsky and Lewis (2007) refute the idea that most voters are risk-

averse, Enelow and Hinich (1981) and Bartels (1986) assume or conclude that most voters are risk-averse. In contrast to these studies that focus only on American voters, a survey question from a series of the ESS (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014) that is widely used to measure voters' risk orientation[5] (e.g., Kam and Simas 2012) indicates that a majority of Western European voters (between 60 percent and 64 percent) are risk-averse. These risk-averse voters will discount the salience of an issue on which party positions are ambiguous because voter estimations of party positions are possibly wrong (Bartels 1986; Alvarez 1997). They will also become less reliant on the issue as the basis of their vote choice despite their sincere interest in the issue (Palfrey and Poole 1987).

Alvarez (1997) formalizes the relationship between voter uncertainty, the perception of position proximity, and issue voting by assuming that voters' party position estimation is not deterministic but probabilistic: it is defined not by a fixed constant but by a probability distribution. A voter's uncertainty about a party's position increases the variance of the distribution and consequently reduces her expected utility of voting for the party. He also shows that uncertainty weakens the effect of position proximity on voting. The more uncertain a voter is about a party's position, the less significant is position proximity between the voter and the party in determining her voting for the party. Consequently, the voter does not consider the issue much in her vote choice because position proximity on the issue does not matter to her.

If voters do not possess enough information on an issue, they rely more on other issues or nonpolicy features such as party identification, incumbent/challenger status, and the demographic features of candidates (Bartels 1996; McDermott 1997). Consequently, Zaller (1992) observes that "the impact of people's value predispositions always depends on whether citizens possess the contextual information needed to translate their values into support for particular policies or candidates" (25).

In the literature on Western European politics, the role of political information in voting behavior is extensively discussed regarding European integration. Studies on this subject find that the amount of information on the issue, such as political parties' positions, significantly determines the degree to which the issue is considered by voters in their vote choice. The more information is available to voters (e.g., extensive media coverage and the visibility of party positions), the more they consider the issue in their vote choice (Hobolt 2005; de Vries, van der Brug, van Egmond, and van der Ejik 2011).

The position-blurring behavior of political parties will influence voters'

behavior by weakening the certainty and accuracy of their party position estimation, reducing the quantity and quality of political information available to voters, and consequently discouraging them from incorporating the issue (Downs 1957). In other words, "issue-taking" (i.e., how much an issue matters in a voter's vote choice) needs to be distinguished from "issue salience" (i.e., how much a voter thinks an issue is important). Although a voter may acknowledge the salience of an issue, a lack of clear and reliable information prevents the issue from being determinative of vote choice (Palfrey and Poole 1987).

Knowing this relationship between the behavior of position blurring by political parties and the nature of voters to overlook an issue on which they are underinformed, political parties are motivated to make use of this mechanism to manipulate political agendas. As political parties emphasize an issue to make it a main political agenda, they present a clear position on an issue to embrace the issue and draw voters' attention to the issue. As political parties de-emphasize an issue to divert voters' attention from the issue, they blur their position on the issue to avoid it and discourage voters from considering the issue. In short, position blurring is strategically employed by political parties as another tactic of issue competition.

Issue Disadvantages and Issue Avoidance

What makes political parties either embrace an issue by emphasizing the issue and clarifying their position on the issue or avoid an issue by de-emphasizing the issue and blurring their policy position? According to the issue-competition literature, party behaviors of issue competition depend on their comparative advantages or disadvantages in terms of competence, integrity, credibility, and the unity of their core supporters (Dolezal, Ennser-Jedenastik, Müller, and Winkler 2014; de Sio and Weber 2014; van de Wardt 2014).

Since these nonpositional advantages also help political parties draw electoral support (Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch 2012; Meyer and Müller 2013; Lachat 2014), political parties want to take advantage of their comparative advantages by embracing the issues. In addition, issues in which political parties possess comparative advantages, such as environmentalism for ecology parties and nativism for radical right-wing parties, usually demonstrate the core ideological identities of the parties and produce most of the voter support that parties receive (Müller-Rommel 1985; Rovny and Edwards 2012). In such a case, voters, particularly core supporters, incor-

porate the issues more sincerely in their voting behavior (RePass 1971). When political parties hold a comparative advantage in an issue because the issue represents their core ideological identity or because it shows their issue competence and reputation, they need to emphasize the issue with a clear position on the issue to highlight the interparty difference, help voters consider the issue, and take advantage of the comparative advantage they have.

In contrast, they will want to de-emphasize an issue that neither indicates their comparative advantage (or rather shows their comparative disadvantage) nor speaks for their identity and competence by blurring their position on the issue in order to discourage voters from incorporating the issue in their vote choice. I suggest that two particular aspects of comparative advantages/disadvantages matter in issue competition: party supporters' unity or division on an issue and the strength or weakness of issue competence on an issue.

The unity of a political party's supporters in their preferences on an issue constitutes an aspect of the party's comparative advantage/disadvantage in the issue. A political party's supporters do not necessarily share the same preferences on all major political issues. Supporters of niche parties such as radical right-wing parties and ecology parties share similar preferences on each party's core issues such as immigration and the natural environment.[6] Many of them, however, hold different stances on socioeconomic issues. Manual workers and small business owners constitute two major constituencies of radical right-wing parties, and they have significantly different preferences on socioeconomic issues (Ivarsflaten 2005; Rovny 2012). Also, some ecology parties struggled with internal division in their early stage of party development between party leaders who wanted to de-emphasize or moderate their stances on socioeconomic issues and grassroots activists who refused to do so (Talshir 2002).

On the other hand, some mainstream parties have struggled with their supporters' disagreements on new, rising issues, many of which brought in sociocultural cleavages. When women's issues, such as female labor participation and abortion, began to set a progressive political agenda in the 1970s in Germany, the Christian Democratic Union was split between traditionalists and liberals (Wiliarty 2010). European integration has divided some of the social democratic parties (and even trade unions) in Western Europe between party leaders and export-sector workers on the one side and party supporters and domestic and public-sector workers on the other side (Ladrech 2000; Tsarouhas 2008; Johansson and von Sydow 2011; Kassim 2011).[7] In the same way, social democratic parties were caught between tra-

ditional constituencies of male, blue-collar, manufacturing-sector workers and new constituencies of female, white-collar, service-sector workers when they faced the rise of environmentalism (Thomson 2000). Rising immigration issues have divided not only social democratic parties' supporters but also the constituencies of center-right parties (Perlmutter 2002).

The division of a political party's supporters on an issue potentially harms the party. A political party with divided supporters sometimes has to choose one of the two conflicting policy positions, and the choice can force the unchosen group to leave the party to another party that reflects their preference. As the size of the left-libertarian electorate expanded and the originally blue-collar-oriented Socialist People's Party followed this new constituency and attracted more educated, white-collar service-sector voters, the Danish Social Democrats adopted a strategy of moving to the center by endorsing liberal market-economy policies and playing a pivotal role in the party system in the 1970s and 1980s (Esping-Andersen 1985). It even strengthened its pivotal position by making a coalition not with the Socialist People's Party but with the central Liberal Party. These shifts and tactics resulted in losing more of its left-libertarian voters to the parties on the more left-wing side of the party (Kitschelt 1994).

Party supporters' division can even lead to party split, as is observed in the cases of the Freedom Party of Austria (the split of the Alliance for the Future of Austria) (Luther 2003) or the French National Rally (the split of the French Nationalist Party) (Stockemer 2014). Therefore, political parties do not want an issue to prevail in the political agenda when their supporters are not united in their preferences on the issue (van de Wardt 2014).

The case of the Swedish Social Democratic Party on the establishment of wage earners' funds demonstrates how much a political party can be vulnerable to a supporter-dividing issue. The funds were designed to distribute the record-high profits of Swedish companies in the 1970s to employees through companies issuing new stock, which would contribute to industrial branch funds managed by union-directed boards. The funds were expected not only to redistribute wealth but also to gradually socialize industries. The issue of wage earners' funds put the Swedish Social Democratic Party in a dilemma not only between its supporters (workers and the middle class) but also between its supporters and the growing left-libertarian electorate who favored social decentralization (Steinmo 1988). The party finally gave in to the demand of the funds, and the party's explicit endorsement led to its loss in the 1979 election. Thus after regaining government control in the 1982 election, the party scaled the funds and

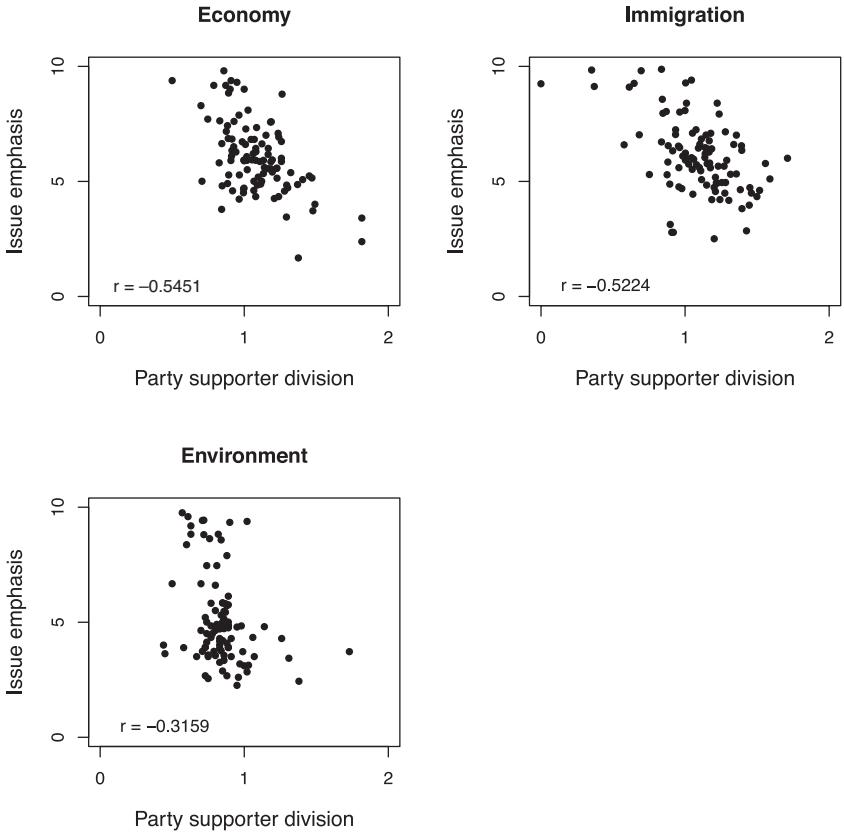

Fig. 2.1. Party Supporter Division and Issue Emphasis

Source: EES (2009), EVS (2008), CHES (2010).

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Party supporter division is measured with the standard deviation of party supporters' responses to survey questions on each issue. Salience scores from the CHES (2010) are used for issue emphasis.

tried to remove the issue from the agenda by focusing on other issues such as economic recovery (Kitschelt 1994).

Political parties are therefore expected to emphasize an issue and clarify their position on the issue when their supporters hold similar preferences on the issue. In contrast, they will de-emphasize an issue and blur their position when their supporters are divided on the issue (Han 2020). In particular, political parties want to take such a supporter-dividing issue away from the agenda table when the issue is strongly mobilized by other, partic-

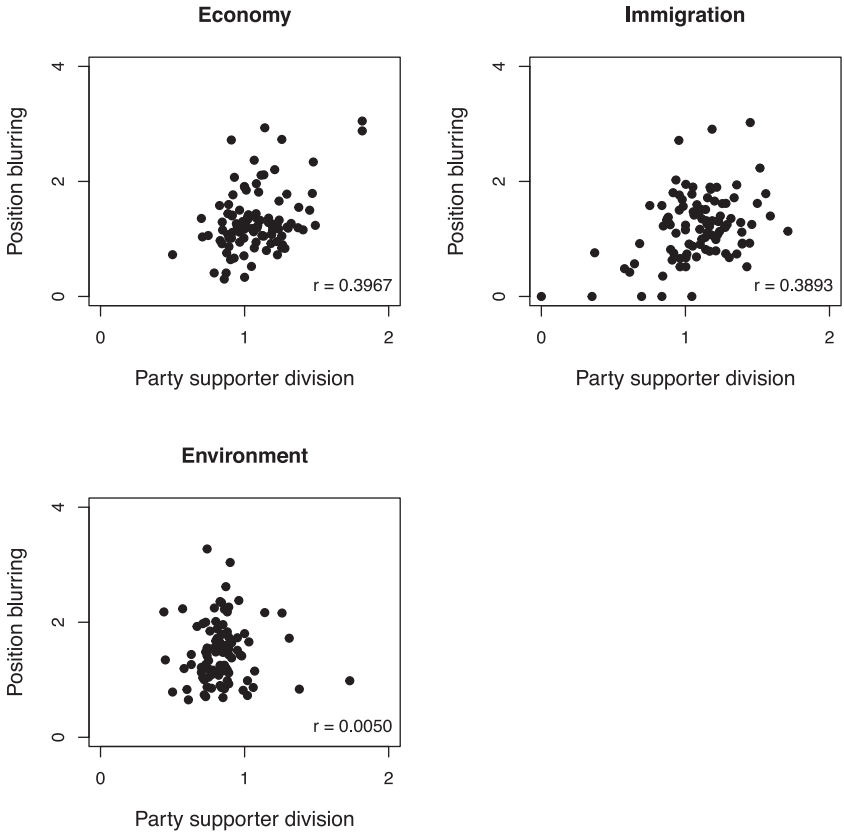

Fig. 2.2. Party Supporter Division and Position Blurring

Source: EES (2009), EVS (2008), CHES (2010).

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Party supporter division is measured with the standard deviation of party supporters' responses to survey questions on each issue. The standard deviation (of experts' estimations) measurement is used for position blurring.

ularly new or challenger parties, such as Euroskeptic parties' campaigning on Europe and anti-immigration parties' mobilization of the immigration issue (de Vries and Hobolt 2020).

Data support such correlations between party supporters' division and party behaviors of issue emphasis and position blurring. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show that positive correlations between party supporter division and position blurring as well as those between party supporter division and issue de-emphasis are found in all the three issues of the economy,

immigration, and the natural environment, except for the case of position blurring on the natural environment issue. In other words, when a political party's supporters hold heterogeneous stances on an issue, the party is likely to de-emphasize the issue and present an ambiguous position on it.[8]

Another aspect of political parties that is widely acknowledged by literature to indicate their comparative advantage in an issue is issue competence. A political party that is strongly associated in the minds of voters with competence on an issue is considered by voters to "own" the issue. Voters' perception of how much political parties care about an issue (i.e., the associative aspect of issue ownership) also constitutes the concept of issue ownership. But the associative aspect of issue ownership encourages a voter to support the party only when other conditions on the party and the issue are satisfied, such as position proximity between the party and the voter or the salience level of the issue among voters (Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch 2012; Meyer and Müller 2013; Lachat 2014). In other words, though voters recognize that a political party is committed to a particular issue, they do not support the party unless they agree with the party's ideological basis. In the same way, they are not willing to cast their vote for the party if they do not appreciate the salience of the issue.

The competence aspect of issue ownership indicates voters' perception of parties' capacity to handle and resolve problems related to an issue that voters care about. A voter's perception of a party's issue competence is a function not only of the priority that the voter gives to an issue but also of her general evaluation of the party's reputation and credibility on the issue (Enelow and Munger 1993). Though a voter's partisanship and policy preference play a significant role in shaping her perception of issue competence of political parties, the perception is also formulated by her evaluation of the parties' performance on issues and objective capacity to handle the issues (Stubager and Slothuus 2013; Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015). Therefore, the effect of the perception of issue competence on party choice is more direct, straightforward, and uninterrupted than the impact of the associative aspect of issue ownership (Green and Hobolt 2008; Green and Jennings 2012; Meyer and Müller 2013; Lachat 2014).

When voters consider an issue to be an important issue in their country and acknowledge that a political party has the capability to solve problems related to the issue, they hold good faith in the party. Voters are eager to offer their electoral support to the party and hope that the party wins an election and resolves the problems through government policies (Rovny 2012). When voters put salience on an issue, they wish for a change in the current status of the issue, such as cutting the number of immigrants,

introducing more eco-friendly policies, or implementing stronger employment protection. Voters' perception of issue competence will significantly encourage their party support. Political parties, therefore, are motivated to embrace an issue on which they own voters' perception of competence. By doing so, political parties "attempt to 'prime' voters to consider certain issues relevant to their electoral choice" (Green and Hobolt 2008, 461).[9]

Political parties try to avoid an issue not only when their own supporters are divided on the issue but also when they lack the perception among voters of issue competence on the issue. Political parties truly did so when they struggled with division among their supporters. In the face of worsening division among its supporters regarding European Union membership, the Swedish Social Democratic Party adopted strategies that "involved 'silencing,' 'downplaying,' and compartmentalizing EU-related issues" (Johansson and von Sydow 2011, 185). When the supporters of the German Christian Democratic Union did not hold homogeneous stances on asylum seekers and the amendment of the Basic Law,[10] Chancellor Helmut Kohl tried to play down the issues and take them out of the political agenda (Perlmutter 2002).

Political parties also try to avoid issues that only demonstrate their lack of issue competence but embrace issues that show their competence (Rovny 2012). While the British Labour Party suffered from its lack of issue competence on the Iraq War due to the intelligence failure on the weapons of mass destruction, the Liberal Democrats, who had opposed participation in the war, expected to benefit from issue competence on the war issue. The Liberal Democrats held more of an advantage on the Iraq issue than the Conservative Party because the latter supported British participation in the war. Therefore, while the Labour Party hardly included the Iraq War in their news initiatives and the Conservative Party used only 2.9 percent of their news initiatives for the issue, the Liberal Democrats used 14.7 percent of their news initiatives for the issue (Dermody and Hanmer-Lloyd 2006; Gaber 2006).

Voters' perception of issue competence is critical, particularly for mainstream parties, because government policy outputs and outcomes play a significant role in shaping perception, and these parties are more likely to form a government and implement their own policies. Through actual policies, the parties demonstrate how well, or how badly, they can handle salient policy issues, and the policies are used by voters as a source of their issue competence perception (Green and Jennings 2017). Consequently, mainstream parties pay attention to an issue, particularly when they do not suffer from a lack of issue competence (Green-Pedersen 2019).

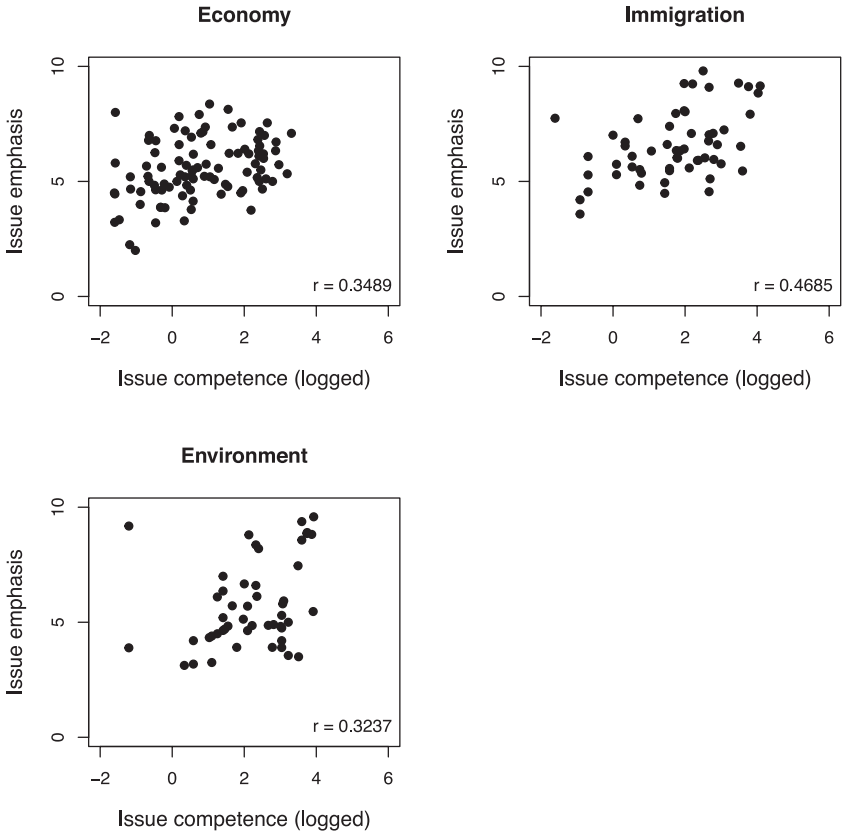

Fig. 2.3. Issue Competence and Issue Emphasis

Source: EES (2009), CHES (2010).

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Issue competence of a political party is measured with the percentage of people who indicated the party as the best political party to handle the issue. Salience scores from CHES (2010) are used for issue emphasis.

Nonetheless, a lack of voters' perception of issue competence matters for minor, non-mainstream parties as well. Ecology parties struggled not only with internal division on socioeconomic issues but also a lack of governing experiences on pragmatic issues. Their economic programs were frequently criticized for being short of detailed and practical answers for important questions (Langguth 1986). The parties needed "the switch from a style of politics that is naively and expressively obsessed with the immediate 'solution of problems' to a more complex style of politics that at

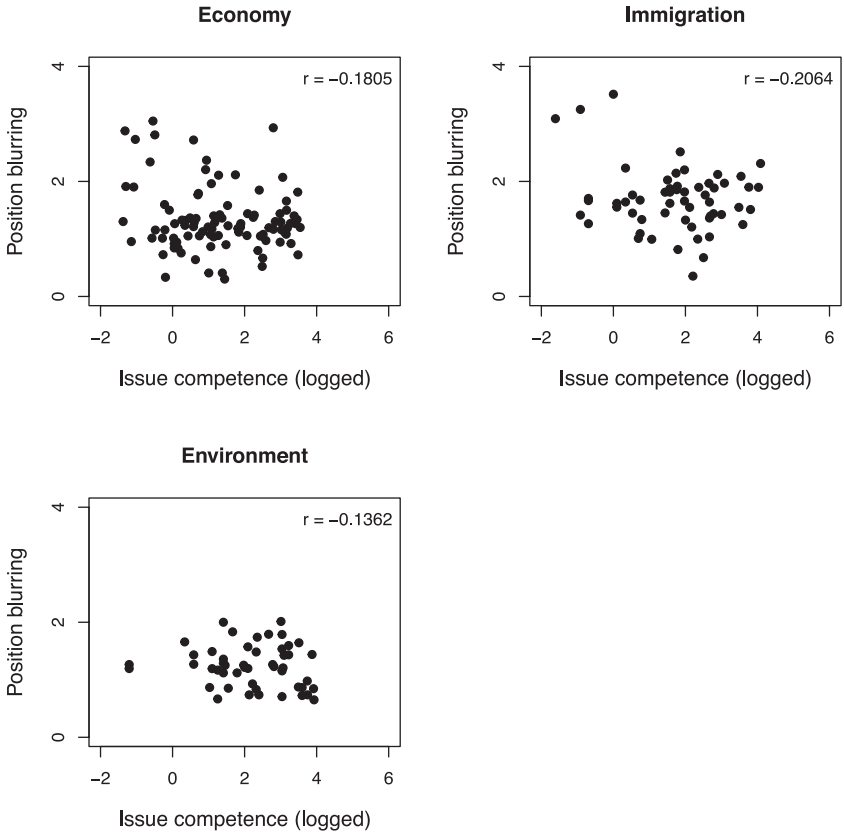

Fig. 2.4. Issue Competence and Position Blurring

Source: EES (2009), CHES (2010).

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Issue competence of a political party is measured with the percentage of people who indicated the party as the best political party to handle the issue. The standard deviation (of experts' estimations) measurement is used for position blurring.

least methodologically does not shy away from also considering the 'problems of solutions'" (Offe 1998, 174). Consequently, many of the parties tried to "marginalize socioeconomic themes" that were associated mainly with mainstream parties (Shull 1999, 104).

Voters' perception of political parties' issue competence is, as party supporter division is, expected to be correlated with political parties' issue-competition behaviors of issue emphasis and position blurring. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 graphically demonstrate that political parties embrace an issue by

highlighting the issue and presenting a clear position on the issue on which they enjoy issue competence. In contrast, political parties try to avoid an issue by de-emphasizing the issue and presenting an ambiguous position on the issue on which their issue competence is not recognized by voters. But the correlations between issue competence and position blurring, particularly that on the natural environment issue, are relatively low.

Party-Competition Environments

Certainly, it is reasonable to expect correlations between political parties' comparative disadvantages and their issue-competition behaviors, and descriptive data, as we can see in figures 2.1 through 2.4, also support the relationship. Nonetheless, such a correlated relationship does not necessarily mean that political parties *strategically* choose to avoid an issue when they struggle with a comparative disadvantage in the issue. As for position blurring, are political parties' position-blurring behaviors consequences of their failure in reaching a consensus among party members or outcomes of strategic consideration, deliberation, and arrangement?

A political party's stance on an issue can be perceived to be ambiguous when the party fails to coordinate and harmonize different voices within the party and deliver a consistent and unambiguous message on the issue. The German Christian Democratic Union intentionally avoided a clear decision on its position on women's issues in the 1970s to disturb neither the traditional constituency nor the emerging libertarian group (Wiliarty 2010). Nonetheless, the party's positions on the issues were even more confusing and ambiguous because, without successful intraparty coordination, different factions within the party submitted two different bills in 1973: One justified the "time limit" approach as well as medical reasons for abortion while the other proposed to legalize abortion only for medical reasons (Czarnowski 1994).[11]

Nonetheless, certain party-competition environments drive political parties to strategically make use of their position blurring. In particular, I argue that certain party-competition environments make political parties unable to completely stay away from discussing an issue despite their comparative disadvantage on the issue. In these circumstances, they employ position blurring more actively and purposely to divert voters' attention from the issue. In other words, political parties use position blurring as a substitute for issue emphasis under certain circumstances.

If political parties' comparative advantages/disadvantages in an issue because of their supporters' unity/division and the perception of issue com-

petence motivate them to choose between emphasizing an issue with an unambiguous party position and de-emphasizing an issue with an ambiguous party position, political parties' issue emphasis and position blurring should be highly negatively correlated. Such an expectation, however, is not strongly supported by data. The correlation between the two on the economy is 0.0447, the correlation on immigration is –0.0173, and the correlation on the natural environment is –0.1375 in the CHES (2010). It is implied that though it is reasonable to expect that political parties' emphasis on an issue goes along with their clear position, they are also encouraged to behave in opposite ways (e.g., emphasizing an issue and blurring their party position) by some party-competition environments.

I suggest that how an issue is handled by other political parties in party competition constrains a political party not to keep away from the issue completely despite its comparative disadvantage on the issue. If other political parties do not care for an issue seriously and the issue is not a contentious issue among political parties, a political party can easily and safely de-emphasize the issue on which it struggles with a comparative disadvantage. If this is the case, the political party does not have a strong incentive to blur its position on the issue. If an issue is a salient or debatable issue in the party system, however, a political party cannot help but respond to other political parties' claims on an issue and discuss the issue in its political communication despite its supporters' division on the issue or the party's lack of issue competence. It will then have a more convincing reason to blur its position on the issue and purposely present an ambiguous position.

First, a political party cannot thoroughly de-emphasize an issue when the issue is a salient issue in the party system. When other political parties seriously address an issue, they keep putting the issue on the political agenda in parliamentary debates, media interviews, and election candidates' debates. A political party cannot ignore the issue in such circumstances because the party is continually being directly asked or indirectly pressured, by its rival political parties or by the media, to present its own argument on the issue. As Budge and Farlie (1983) comment, "the actual state of the world may make certain issues unavoidable" (129) in such a case. When many asylum seekers from the Balkan area began to flow into Germany in the early 1990s, the Social Democratic Party could successfully avoid issues related to asylum seekers because the Christian Democratic Union did not actively mobilize the issues as well due to its own internal division (Perlmutter 2002). But once the Christian Democratic Union decided to argue for the amendment of the Basic Law and put the issue on the parliamentary and political agenda, the Social Democratic Party could not remain silent on the issue, and, after a long period of silence and resis-

tance, it agreed to amend the Basic Law to "get the issue out of headlines" (Bosswick 2000, 49).

A political party also cannot fully ignore an issue when other political parties emphasize the issue because the salience level of an issue in the party system sometimes signifies how urgent and imperative the actual circumstances on the issue are. The unexpected inflow of many migrants, such as the refugee crisis, has brought about a high salience level of immigration in the party system. The Fukushima disaster in 2011 also raised the salience level of issues around nuclear energy and the natural environment and modified the political agenda (Bernardi, Morales, Lühiste, and Bischof 2018). Spoon and Williams (2021) find that even ecology parties emphasize socioeconomic issues when economic conditions are bad. Their finding implies that political parties may not be able to completely avoid discussing an issue despite their issue disadvantage when it is a salient issue in party politics, in the political system, or in society in general.

In addition, saliency in the party system leads to, or reflects, voters' saliency. Radical right-wing parties in Western Europe have played a role of "issue entrepreneurship" in developing the European integration issue (de Vries 2007; de Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and de Vries 2015).[12] The parties have aggressively mobilized the European Union issue with their Euroskeptic ideologies, causing many voters to place salience on the issue and consider it in their vote choice, particularly in European Parliamentary elections (Hix and Marsh 2007; Down and Han 2021). The parties have also seriously politicized and campaigned on immigration-related issues as "wedge issues" that confound the pre-existing ideological dimension and the established pattern of political coalition between voters or between political parties (van de Wardt, de Vries, and Hobolt 2014). Consequently, the mobilization of immigration-related issues by radical right-wing parties as well as the parties' electoral success have not only increased the salience level of the issues in the political system but also modified the pattern of political cleavages at the voter level.

Because saliency at the party system level results in voters' salience on the issue, a political party, despite its unwillingness to act on the issue, cannot thoroughly avoid incorporating the issue in its program and campaign. For example, Abou-Chadi, Green-Pedersen, and Mortensen (2020) find that political parties shift their positions on issues in the direction of the stance of the majority of the electorate when the issue is a salient issue in the party system. The stronger the emphasis political parties generally put on an issue, the more salient the issue is among voters. Voters consider the issue more intensively in their vote choice, and political parties are

motivated to make their position correspond to public opinion to secure electoral support. In the same way, a political party cannot abandon the issue entirely in such a case.

Second, a political party feels pressured not to ignore an issue when political parties are polarized in their policy positions on the issue, and the issue is consequently a contentious one in the party system. Party system polarization on an issue encourages voters to consider the issue more heavily in their voting behavior. Polarization implies that issue position becomes a more useful decision-making heuristic as political parties come to have relatively clear and distinct positions on an issue and voters differentiate political parties better in the issue dimension (van der Eijk, Schmitt, and Binder 2005). If voters do not clearly and easily find positional differences between political parties, they rely less on the issue and more on other factors, such as strategic voting and split-ticket voting, in their voting decision (Jacobson 2005).

McGraw (2015) illustrates how the indistinctness of positional differences between political parties on an issue discourages voters from utilizing the issue as a basis of their party choice. Major Irish parties have purposefully blurred their positions on divisive issues such as abortion and European integration by recurrently shifting them and presenting only vague statements. As a result, though there have been differences in party positions that have been correctly detected by political elites, voters have failed to confidently and accurately discern the differences in party positions on the issues. Consequently, voters' stances on the issues have not to a large extent been reflected in their choice of a party.

Also, issue positions "should become more easily accessible to voters" and "more emotionally laden in voters' mind" as positional polarization increases (Lachat 2008, 688). Policy voting (i.e., a voter voting for a political party whose policy position is the closest to her stance) requires the cognitive ability to process and organize political information. How much voters rely on these cognitive skills is affected not only by individual factors such as political knowledge (Zaller 1992) but also by contextual factors such as the intensity of political competition (Basinger and Lavine 2005) and the availability of information (Fiske and Taylor 1991). It can also be determined by how much political parties are polarized in their issue positions. Polarization makes issue-positional "cueing information" more visible, connects voters, parties, and elites through positional correspondence more closely, and makes it easier for voters to make ideology- or value-based party choices (Hetherington 2001).[13]

Thus, my theory corresponds to Meguid (2008) in the sense that politi-

cal parties strategically respond to other political parties' behaviors. She suggests that political parties may want to adopt a "dismissive" strategy on an issue and urge voters to similarly dismiss the issue as irrelevant when they cannot claim an issue advantage. But when certain party-competition environments, such as the electoral threat of a niche party, make it difficult and costly for the parties to dismiss an issue, political parties cannot completely avoid the issue and have to make a strategic choice between the "accommodative" strategy and the "adversarial" strategy.

In a similar vein, I argue that political parties cannot fully stay away from an issue despite their comparative disadvantage when the issue is a salient or contentious issue in party competition. Nonetheless, while Meguid (2008) argues that political parties make a strategic choice on their party position and issue emphasis in such a case, I argue that they strategically modify another issue-competition tactic of theirs as well: position blurring.

Issue Disadvantages, Party-Competition Environments, and Issue Competition

Political parties are expected to incorporate an issue despite their comparative disadvantage in the issue when other political parties emphasize the same issue or it is a polarized issue in the party system. They may actually need to increase their issue emphasis as the party system salience level increases or the party system becomes more polarized on the issue.

I argue that political parties are motivated to strategically blur their policy position more when they are pressured to reluctantly emphasize an issue due to these constraining party-competition environments. As discussed above, the increase in the party system salience level or the polarization of party positions makes it difficult for political parties to completely ignore an issue despite their issue disadvantage. Given that a political party cannot use the tactic of issue emphasis to divert voters' attention from the issue, the party will rely more on another tactic of issue competition: position blurring. Therefore, while a certain party-competition environment (party system issue salience or party system polarization) strengthens the emphasis on the issue, the party that struggles with that issue will also intensify its position-blurring behavior.

Though political parties' issue emphasis and position *clarification* are expected to complement each other and draw voters' attention to

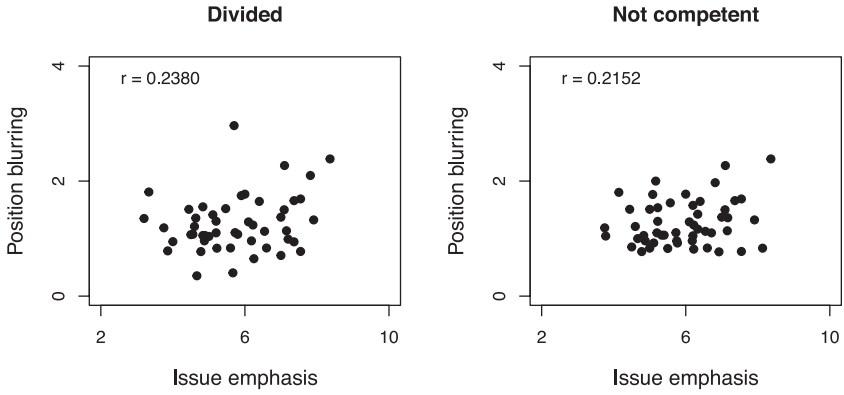

Fig. 2.5. Issue Emphasis and Position Blurring when Disadvantaged (Economy)

Source: EES (2009), EVS (2008), CHES (2010).

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. "Divided" indicates that the value of the party supporter division variable is above its median. "Not competent" means that the value of the issue competence variable is below its median. Salience scores from the CHES (2010) are used for issue emphasis, and the standard deviation (of experts' estimations) measurement is used for position blurring.

an issue in general, issue emphasis and position *blurring* may actually come together when political parties struggle with a comparative disadvantage. In such a case, political parties increasingly emphasize an issue and blur their position as a constraining party-competition environment develops. If this is empirically true, this might be why issue emphasis and position blurring are not highly correlated overall, as was pointed out earlier.

Data support such conditional correlations between issue emphasis and position blurring. Figures 2.5 through 2.7 demonstrate that issue emphasis and position blurring are positively correlated, though correlations are not very high, when party supporters are divided in their preferences on each issue or when the parties are not perceived to be competent on an issue by voters. That is, when a political party struggles with a comparative disadvantage in an issue, it blurs its position on an issue that it emphasizes. I argue, and empirically test in chapter 5, that this occurs when other political parties highlight the issue or party positions are polarized on the issue. Correlations are weaker, however, for the natural environment issue than those for issues of the economy and immigration.

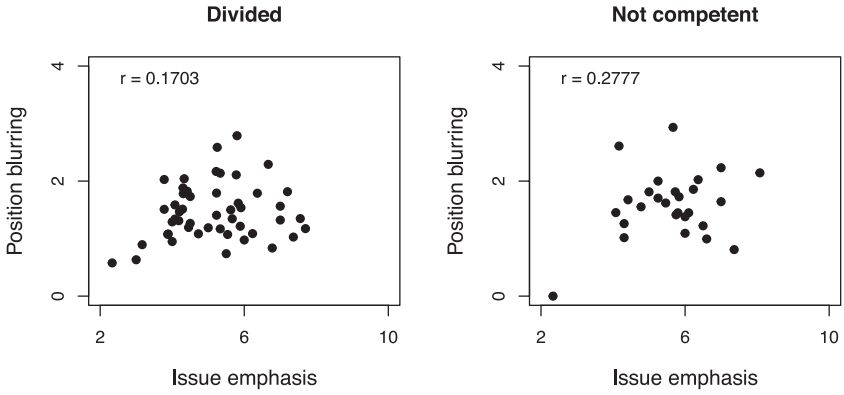

Fig. 2.6. Issue Emphasis and Position Blurring when Disadvantaged (Immigration)

Source: EES (2009), EVS (2008), CHES (2010).

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. "Divided" indicates that the value of the party supporter division variable is above its median. "Not competent" means that the value of the issue competence variable is below its median. Salience scores from the CHES (2010) are used for issue emphasis, and the standard deviation (of experts' estimations) measurement is used for position blurring.

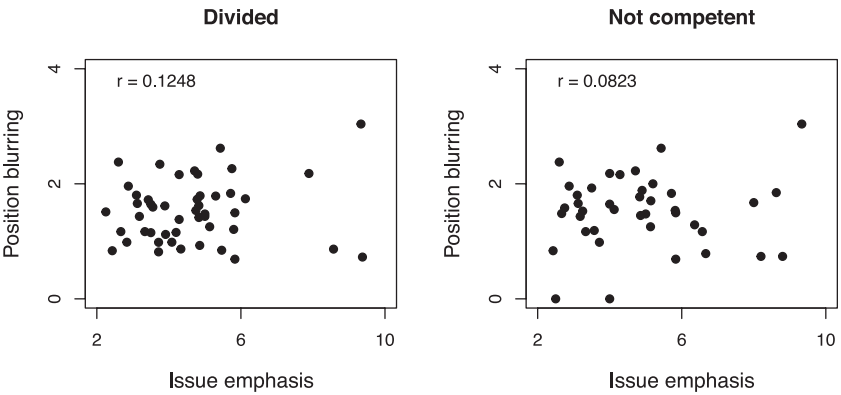

Fig. 2.7. Issue Emphasis and Position Blurring when Disadvantaged (Environment)

Source: EES (2009), EVS (2008), CHES (2010).

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. "Divided" indicates that the value of the party supporter division variable is above its median. "Not competent" means that the value of the issue competence variable is below its median. Salience scores from the CHES (2010) are used for issue emphasis, and the standard deviation (of experts' estimations) measurement is used for position blurring.

Summary and Discussion

Political parties can achieve the goal of manipulating voters' issue attention by clarifying or blurring their position on an issue as well as by emphasizing or de-emphasizing the issue. Position blurring plays a significant role in political parties' issue competition, and thus political parties are expected to blur their position on an issue as well as de-emphasize the issue when they struggle with a comparative disadvantage on the issue. I propose two aspects of party-competition advantages/disadvantages in this book: party supporters' division and issue competence.

Consequently, political parties will emphasize an issue *and* clarify their position on the issue when their supporters are not divided in their preferences on the issue or they hold the perception of issue competence among voters. But when political parties' supporters have conflicting preferences on the issue or voters do not recognize the issue competence of the parties, the relationship between issue emphasis and position blurring is significantly modified. Particular party-competition environments, such as party system issue salience level and party system polarization on an issue, drive political parties to purposefully use position blurring to counterbalance the attention-drawing effect of their reluctant issue emphasis.

Position blurring as a response to party-competition environments implies that though some of the ambiguous party positions we observe may be unintended consequences of their failure to articulate a clear party position or to reach a consensus among party members, a significant number of them will be outcomes of their strategic consideration and deliberation. This perspective on position blurring is not inconsistent with most of the literature on position blurring that suggests that political parties sometimes "purposefully" (Somer-Topcu 2015, 843) becloud their position because of a "desire" (Meirowitz 2005, 111) for the tactic to create "optimal" (Kartik, van Weelden, and Wolton 2017, 958) political outcomes.

THREE

Measuring Position Blurring

In this book I use mostly statistical methods to not only present a theory of position blurring but also empirically test the political causes and consequences of position blurring. Therefore, I need to be able to measure the quantitative degree of party position ambiguity. In this chapter, I introduce multiple ways of quantitatively assessing position blurring proposed and employed by literature, discuss their relative strengths and weaknesses, and present my own research strategy regarding the measurement issue.

Despite the availability of multiple approaches to measuring the degree of position blurring, one significant problem is that none of these measurements is flawless. All the measurements have their own theoretical and empirical drawbacks in quantifying the degree of party position ambiguity in a thorough and unbiased way. In addition, these measurements are constructed not only with a different conceptualization of party position ambiguity but also with different types of data.

Despite the differences in their relative strength and weakness, their conceptual foundation, and the data they mainly use, correlations between these measurements are not weak. Therefore, I choose a realistic approach instead of an ideal one to the measurement issue in this book. First, I choose one measurement of position blurring that is most generally employed in literature—the standard deviation of experts' party position estimations—and use it as the main measurement to strengthen the comparability and compatibility of this book with the literature on position blurring. Second, I use an alternative measurement of position blurring—the diversity of party positions within a party manifesto—that

is constructed with a different type of data (manifesto data) for a robustness check whenever it is relevant.

Measuring Party Position Blurring

Thus far, no single measurement that directly and satisfactorily quantifies the degree of party position ambiguity has been developed. In the earlier period of research on position blurring, Bartels (1986) counted "Don't know" responses to survey questions on party position estimation and assumed that such responses originated from incomplete information available to them due to ambiguous party positions. Alternatively, Alvarez and Franklin (1994) measured position blurring in a more direct way. They surveyed 797 American citizens and directly asked them not only about their senators' positions on taxes and abortion but also about how certain they felt about their perceptions of their senators' positions.

Each of these measurements, however, still suffers from its own limitation, particularly with respect to the study of Western European politics. First, uncertainty in voters' minds may come from factors other than party position ambiguity. People who have a larger interest in politics and have more information on politics are less uncertain about candidates' (or parties') positions (Alvarez and Franklin 1994). Voters' party position estimation and their uncertainty are also affected by their partisanship, media coverage, and the strategic distortion of a party's position by rival political parties (Gerber and Green 1999; Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011). Second, it is not plausible to collect data that directly measure the degree of ambiguity in people's perception of numerous political parties in Western Europe over a long period of time.

Position-Blurring Measurements from Expert Surveys

Unlike the general public, experts on each country's party politics are expected to be able to make more accurate, reliable, and unbiased estimations of party positions because they can access and process diverse sources of information on political parties and their policy positions (Hooghe et al. 2010). In addition, unlike party position estimation approaches based on the text analysis of party manifestos, experts can use materials other than party manifestos that political parties employ for political communication, such as mass media and social networking services (Laver and Garry 2000).

The nature of "taking everything into consideration" (Laver and Garry 2000, 621) in an expert survey brings in a couple of validity issues, and one of them is that it is sometimes unclear and inconsistent what constitutes experts' concept and estimation of political parties' left/right positions (Volkens 2007; Benoit and Laver 2007).[1] Nonetheless, party positions estimated by experts are found to be quite reliable, that is to say, we get similar results from different experts (Gabel and Huber 2000). In addition, they are highly correlated with party position estimations calculated by other methods such as hand coding or computer coding of political texts (Dinas and Gemenis 2010; König, Marbach, and Osnabrügge 2013). Party positions based on expert surveys will be more appropriate when research focuses on party positions regarding particular issues more than on political parties' overall left/right ideology, because such a restricted research focus alleviates the validity issue discussed above.

Therefore, many scholars use the degree of experts' inconsistency and disagreement in their party position estimations as a measurement of position blurring. In other words, this approach assumes that experts' inconsistencies in their estimations of a party's position arise considerably from its ambiguity. For example, socioeconomic issues are not primary issues that help to mobilize votes for many radical right-wing parties in Western Europe.[2] Campaigning on socioeconomic issues can even divide the parties because many of them are supported by two main constituency groups—manual workers and small business owners—who have dissimilar preferences on socioeconomic issues. Consequently, these parties do not emphasize socioeconomic issues or present clear arguments on the issues.

For instance, the positions of the French National Rally, one of the oldest and most successful radical right-wing parties, regarding socioeconomic issues are ambiguous and result in a high level of confusion for a couple of reasons. First, the party has, at least in the early period of its development, argued for an unusual combination of economic liberalism and nationalism. On the one hand, the party accepts inequality between individuals (or groups) as a fundamental principle and thus rejects egalitarianism. On the other hand, the party emphasizes the unequal relationship between "ingroups" (e.g., native French citizens) and "outgroups" (e.g., other countries and/or ethnic minorities), proposing a new form of social solidarity that is based not on a socioeconomic class cleavage but on a national cleavage and the protection of the benefits of "ingroups" (Swyngedouw and Ivaldi 2001). Consequently, the party supports the protection of private property rights and the privatization of nationalized industries, as well as the protection of industries affected by globalization (Bastow 1997).

Second, the party is made up of factions that hold different views on socioeconomic issues. While liberal or neoliberal factions had been influenced by the New Right movement since the 1960s, other factions have advocated protectionism measures to shield the national economy from the international economic order. Consequently, economic policies have been "an area where the different ideological traditions of the Party's leadership are most clearly evident" (Davies 1999, 33).

Finally, criticizing the established political and economic system has definitely been a successful strategy for the party, but the party has failed to offer specific and plausible alternatives. Though the party's disapproval of globalization and European integration has mobilized many voters, "how the National Front would disengage France from the perils of the international economic order is far from clear" (Marcus 1995, 111).

Therefore, the position of the French National Rally on socioeconomic issues is expected to be ambiguous, and experts' estimations on it are actually quite incoherent. Figure 3.1 shows that the distribution of experts' estimations on the socioeconomic position of the National Rally is more dispersed than that of the center-right Union for a Popular Movement, which holds a similar position on the economy as the National Rally but campaigns more like a mainstream party on socioeconomic issues.[3]

Though it is certain that experts' estimations of the National Rally position on the economy are more inconsistent and incongruent than those of the Union for a Popular Movement position, there is more than one way to describe the degree of incongruence.[4] One way to gauge the degree of disagreement is to measure the standard deviation of the distribution of experts' estimations. The more different experts' estimations are, the more dispersed their distribution is, and the degree of the dispersion can be measured with its standard deviation. Certainly, the standard deviation of experts' estimations for the National Rally (2.88) is larger than that for the Union for a Popular Movement (1.59). Therefore, many empirical studies on position blurring employ the standard deviation of experts' party position estimations to measure the degree of party position ambiguity (Campbell 1983a; Campbell 1983b; Rovny 2012; Rovny 2013; Rogowski and Tucker 2018; Han 2020; Rovny and Polk 2020).

However, van der Eijk (2001) criticizes the standard deviation approach for two reasons. First, the standard deviation of estimations does not necessarily correlate with the degree to which the responses concentrate on a small number of categories, which can be considered a way of measuring the degree of agreement. Second, the standard deviation tends to be

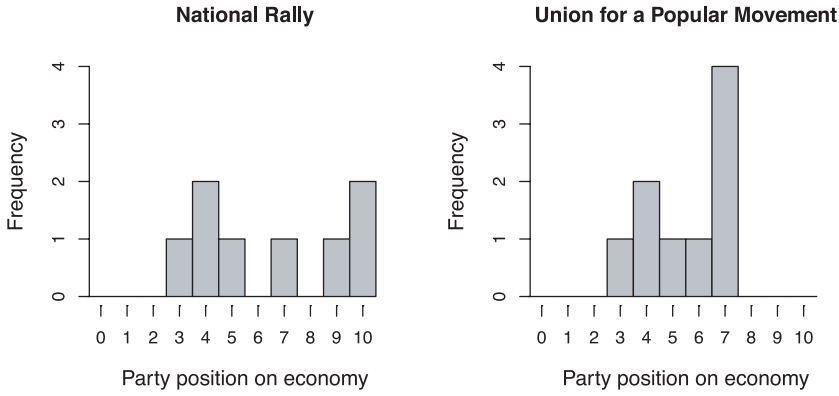

Fig. 3.1. Distribution of Experts' Estimations on the Positions of the National Rally and the Union for a Popular Movement Regarding the Economy

Source: CHES (2010) (***econlr,*** "Party position in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues"). The party position variable ranges from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right).

Note: The means of experts' estimations are 6.5 (the National Rally) and 5.6 (the Union for a Popular Movement), respectively. The difference of the means is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

underestimated for political parties whose positions are located on either end of the scale because the data on their positions are basically censored.

He proposes an alternative way of computing the intensity of the inconsistency of experts' estimations by measuring the degree of unimodality of the distribution of experts' estimations. His formula of unimodality essentially estimates how much certain values (e.g., experts' party position estimations) are concentrated on a particular mode. For example, we can notice two things when we compare the distribution of experts' estimations on the two French political parties in figure 3.1. First, though there are empty categories between non-empty categories in the distribution for the National Rally, the distribution for the Union for a Popular Movement does not have such empty categories.[5] Second, while there is no certain "peak" in the distribution of the National Rally, that of the Union for a Popular Movement has a clear "peak" on the score of 7: four out of nine experts estimated the party's socioeconomic position as 7. Therefore, we can intuitively presume that the distribution of experts' estimations for the Union for a Popular Movement is more unimodal than that for the National Rally.

The modality measurement is used by some empirical studies as well (Somer-Topcu 2015; Cahill and Stone 2018). Nonetheless, though the modality measurement touches on a different feature of the distribution

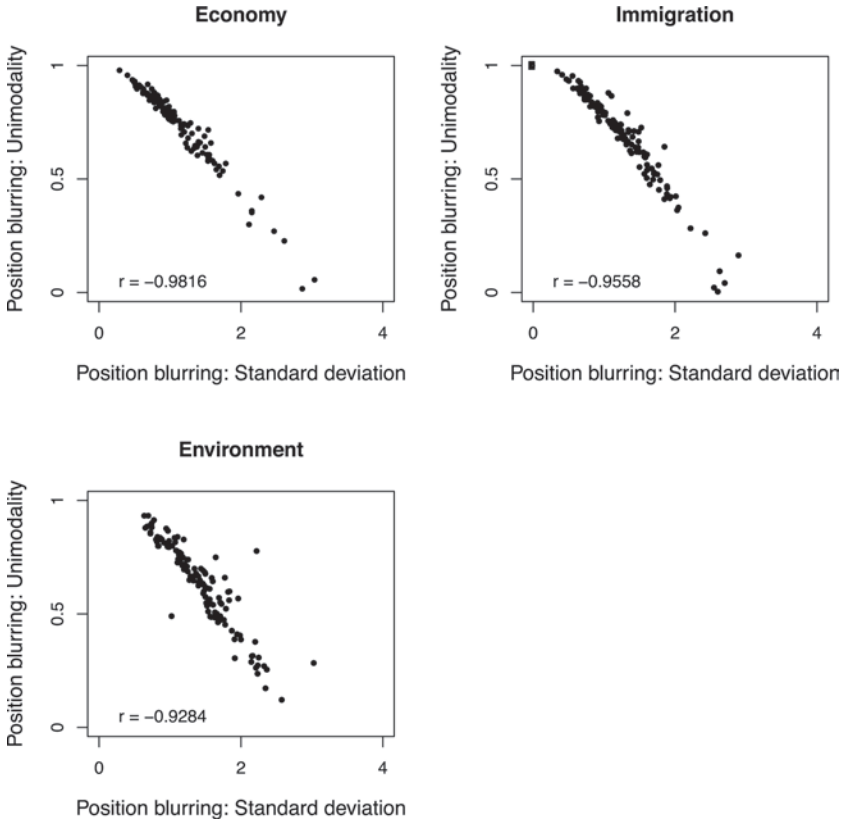

Fig. 3.2. Position-Blurring Measurements from Expert Survey

Source: CHES (2010).

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. While a greater value of standard deviation indicates that the distribution of experts' estimations is more dispersed (i.e., party positions are more ambiguous), a greater value of unimodality means that the distribution is more unimodal (i.e., party positions are less ambiguous).

of experts' estimations from the standard deviation approach, these two measurements are drawn from the same data source and are highly correlated. Figure 3.2 shows that the two position-blurring measurements for all political parties in Western Europe regarding the economy, immigration, and the natural environment are highly correlated.

Therefore, though the two measurements that use experts' party position estimations echo different characteristics of the distribution of experts' estimations, they do not show a significant difference in practice. Given

this empirical interchangeability, I choose to employ the standard deviation approach in this book because of its practical simplicity and compatibility with the literature on position blurring, most of which uses the same measurement.

Position-Blurring Measurements from Party Manifestos

Measuring position blurring from experts' estimations, either assessing the standard deviation of their distribution or calculating the degree of its unimodality, definitely has critical advantages. First, the conceptual background of the measurement is inclusive. Political parties can blur their policy positions in multiple ways, for instance by presenting only vague statements without specified alternatives, offering contradicting proposals on the same issue, or overturning their previous policy stances. Position-blurring measurements based on expert estimations do not exclude any of these different tactics of position blurring. Second, the actual calculation process is straightforward and easy, particularly in the case of standard deviation. Third, because expert survey data include many political parties, we can construct data on position blurring for many political parties. Many of the small political parties are excluded from other data (e.g., manifesto data), but expert survey data usually cover even small, minor, and regional political parties. Finally, most of the empirical studies on position blurring employ the standard deviation measurement of position blurring. Therefore, using the same measurement can strengthen the comparability and compatibility of research.

Nonetheless, position-blurring measurements based on expert survey data have some weaknesses and disadvantages as well. First of all, experts on political parties are, of course, imperfectly informed or biased. They may have more accurate knowledge on larger parties because the parties not only receive more extensive media coverage but also have more resources to communicate with voters. In addition, experts may have more consistent estimations of older parties' positions because they average information accumulated over time.[6] Second, because none of the expert surveys is conducted on every election year, we cannot construct position-blurring data for each of the country/election years.

Therefore, scholars have developed alternative approaches for measuring position blurring based on more objective, election-year-level data: political parties' manifestos. One tactic to blur a party position is to present different, sometimes conflicting and contradictory, statements and argu-

ments on the same issue. For example, as the level of immigration has risen and public opinion on immigrants has gotten worse, many political parties, even center-right parties, have been caught in a dilemma between standing for liberal democratic values of liberty and equality and following public opinion in blaming immigrants. Some of them attempted to satisfy both their ideological commitment and public opinion by signaling two different messages: mostly a multicultural message of appreciating and protecting the rights of immigrants and a restrictive one of reducing the number of new immigrants. Though this kind of "grand bargain" strategy has been particularly employed by center-left mainstream parties (Givens and Luedtke 2005), it is also found in the manifestos of center-right mainstream parties. For instance, in its 2005 party manifesto, the British Conservative Party stated that "Britain has benefited from immigration. We all gain from the social diversity, economic vibrancy and cultural richness that immigration brings. But if those benefits are to continue to flow we need to ensure that immigration is effectively managed, in the interests of all Britons, old and new."

Thus, assuming that the extent of the presence of contradictory statements on the same issue in a party manifesto influences the degree of party position ambiguity, scholars have invented different formulas to capture the measure of inconsistent manifesto statements (Lo, Proksch, and Slapin 2016; Bräuninger and Giger 2018; Nasr 2020).

While other position-blurring measurements based on manifesto data assume that certain manifesto variables represent left-wing positions while others indicate right-wing ones, the positional ambiguity score formula proposed by Bräuninger and Giger (2018) does not need such assumptions. Their formula determines the relative positional leaning either toward the left or toward the right of each variable in a manifesto ("virgin text") by examining how much they contributed to determining overall party positions in reference texts. This is a distinctive improvement of their approach. Therefore, I introduce their positional ambiguity score formula, which measures the diversity of policy positions within a manifesto with the following formula of the standard deviation of manifesto variable positions:

$$\sigma_{\delta} = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{k} \omega_i \left(\delta_i - \mu\right)^2} \tag{3.1}$$

$$\mu = \sum_{i=1}^{k} \omega_i \delta_i \,, \tag{3.2}$$

where ω is the vector of relative frequencies of manifesto variables in a manifesto (virgin text), k is the number of manifesto variables that constitute the policy dimension, δ is the vector of policy positions of each manifesto variable calculated from reference texts, and μ is the overall policy position of the manifesto. Following Laver, Benoit, and Garry (2003), the current manifesto of a political party is a virgin text and the manifestos of all the political parties in a country in the previous election are used as reference texts. In sum, the formula calculates how much manifesto variables of a political party converge on or diverge from its overall policy position. If a political party presents many statements that do not quite correspond to its "average" position, the party's position will be considered to be ambiguous.

How highly correlated, then, is the manifesto-based position-blurring measurement with experts' estimation-based measurement? Figure 3.3 implies that the two measurements are positively correlated, but the correlation is not high (0.1952). Also, though the correlation is statistically significant at the 0.10 level, it is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level (p-value = 0.0668).

The moderate positive correlation between the two measurements of position blurring implies that although a political party's presenting contradictory statements on the same issue in its manifesto pertains to its blurring party position, the former does not fully explain the latter. There are other behaviors of political parties that make their policy position ambiguous, and the presence of contradictory manifesto statements is only one of them (Cahill and Stone 2018).

Contemporaneously, political parties can blur their policy positions by presenting only general rhetoric on an issue without specific solutions or proposals to cope with the issue. For example, when nuclear energy became a major issue in the German 1983 election and the Christian Democratic Union was in a difficult position to handle the issue due to its historical support for militarization and nuclear weapons,[7] the political party could not send a strong and clear message in either direction. Consequently, it presented only a vague and general position by saying that "economic growth was 'not an end in itself' and the economy had to take into account human needs and the natural foundations of life" (Papadakis 1984, 195).

Longitudinally, political parties can make their policy positions ambiguous by continually overturning their previous stances. The German Christian Democratic Union encountered challenges from the feminism movement regarding women's issues in the 1970s. Though the party had resisted the challenges in the 1970s, it introduced some reforms in the

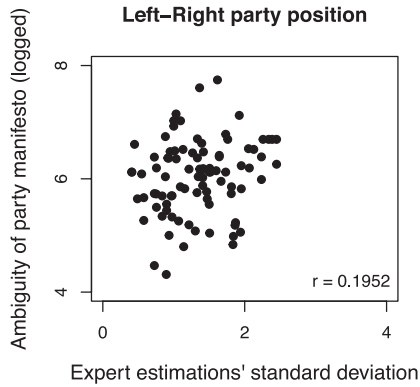

Fig. 3.3. Position-Blurring Measurements from Expert Survey and Party Manifesto

Source: CHES (2010) (***leftright***, "Party position in terms of its overall ideological stance") and MARPOR (***Rile***, "Right-left position of party")

Note: Data description is presented in the appendix. Each filled circle represents a political party. Included are political parties in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Manifesto data are chosen for election years that are closest to the year 2010 in each country. Both of the position-blurring measurements measure position blurring on overall left/right positions.

1980s such as creating the Women's Ministry and providing pension credits for time spent caring for children. Nonetheless, the party reversed the policy trend in the 1990s by refusing a quota system for women's party office positions. Though these policy turnarounds are the results of intra-party dissent as well as the party's strategy to satisfy both loyal voters with traditionalist ideologies and new constituencies with more libertarian beliefs, they brought in vagueness, confusion, and uncertainty to voters' views on the party's stance on the gender issue (Wiliarty 2010).

Therefore, though measurements based on manifesto data solve some problems of measurements based on experts' party position estimations, they have their own drawbacks. As comparative surveys on diverse party position measurements based on different materials conclude, the strength of one measurement usually reflects the weakness of others, and vice versa (Benoit and Laver 2007; Volkens 2007).

Measurement Strategy in This Book

A survey of a couple of approaches to measuring party position ambiguity reveals that there is no single perfect and thorough measurement. Mea-

surements based on experts' party position estimations are not absolutely free from their own bias or errors. Above all, the use of manifesto data, aside from reliability problems such as misclassification and stochastic coding errors (Mikhaylov, Laver, and Benoit 2012), does not fully portray political parties' comprehensive behavior of position blurring.

I choose a realistic approach to the measurement issue and primarily use the standard deviation of experts' party position estimations as the main measurement of position blurring in this book. The conceptual background of experts' party position estimations is comprehensive because they access a wide set of information on party positions. The standard deviation measurement is highly correlated with the unimodality measurement, but it is still much easier to calculate. Though there is an empirical drawback that experts' disagreement in their party position estimation can also be driven by other factors such as party size, age, and ideology, we can resolve this weakness by considering the factors in statistical models to a certain extent. Also, the use of this measurement helps to make all the findings in this book comparable with those of other literature because it has been used by many other empirical studies on position blurring.

In addition, I will use another measurement of position blurring based on manifesto data to reinforce the robustness of my empirical findings, but only when I examine political parties' position blurring on overall left/right ideologies. Because measurements based on manifesto data, no matter what specific formula they use, basically compute the degree of inconsistency and discrepancy of manifesto statements, their efficiency is assured when there are multiple subcategories that constitute a positional (or ideological) dimension (Bräuninger and Giger 2018). For example, this is a reasonable measurement to measure the ambiguity of overall left/right positions that include multiple subcategories of the economy, social policies, foreign relations, and so on. It is not, however, a sensible measure of party position ambiguity on specific, narrow issues such as income redistribution, the natural environment, and even immigration. Thus, I will use the manifesto-based position-blurring measurement computed with the positional ambiguity score formula by Bräuninger and Giger (2018) to compare the results from this measurement with those from the standard deviation measurement, but only for the ambiguity of overall left/right positions.

FOUR

Position Blurring and Voter Behavior

> As a result, voters are encouraged to make decisions on some basis other than the issue, i.e., on the personalities of candidates, traditional family voting patterns, loyalty to past party heroes, etc.
>
> —Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957, 136)

In order to comprehend why political parties blur their policy positions, we first need to understand what happens when party positions are ambiguous. In particular, when political parties as producers supply poorly defined goods (ambiguous party positions) in a political market, how do voters as consumers respond? Does the degree of party position ambiguity alter voters' cognitive and actual behaviors?

Voters take into account diverse aspects of the link between political parties and themselves. Though voters' societal environments such as social group (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954), their psychological attachment to political parties (Campbell et al. 1960), and their analytical reasoning on party performance (Fiorina 1981; Popkin 1991) definitely determine their vote choice, policy voting and position proximity still have a dominant effect on voters' behavior (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005).

If policy voting significantly determines voters' behavior and there is only one critical issue in party competition, position proximity between a voter and each party regarding the issue will dictate her party choice. Party competition in Western Europe, however, mostly occurs in a multidimensional issue space. Political parties discuss multiple issues and voters

consider them together when they make a vote choice. Consequently, voters usually put asymmetric weights between issues: that is, voters consider diverse issues to different degrees. I argue that party position ambiguity on an issue is one of the factors that determine how much cognitive weight voters give to the issue.

In this chapter, I first demonstrate that party position ambiguity prevents voters from confidently and accurately estimate party positions. Second, I find that voters reduce their consideration of an issue (particularly position proximity between voters and political parties regarding the issue) in their vote choice as political parties blur their positions on the issue as well as de-emphasize the issue. Because voters are aware of the uncertainty and inaccuracy of their party position estimation, they do not want to rely on it as critical information for their party choice. Finally, voters become less reliant on characteristics that originate from political parties (e.g., party position) and more dependent on features of individuals related to a party (e.g., party leaders) in their voting behavior when they are uncertain about political parties' policy positions due to their ambiguity.

These findings support the assumption that provides the theoretical reasoning of the issue-competition literature: when political parties de-emphasize an issue or blur their position on an issue, voters divert their issue attention from that issue to other issues or other aspects of political parties. This consequence of position blurring definitely motivates political parties to use such behavior strategically, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

How Well Do Voters Perceive Party Positions?

Voters are likely to vote for a political party or a candidate whose policy position or overall political ideology is close to their own. The strength of this spatial voting behavior can be different between voters with strong partisan identities and those without them: that is, independent voters consider position proximity between them and political parties more sincerely and seriously than partisan voters (Jessee 2009). Also, voters have varying degrees of political interest, access to information, and information-processing capability. Therefore, voters with a substantial interest in politics and a higher level of education show stronger policy voting tendencies because these voters are "equipped with the political skills and resources necessary to relate to politics in an involved and effective way" (Marthaler 2008, 939).

Position proximity between a voter and a political party is perceived by the inverse distance between her own position and the party's. A voter can have subjective confidence and objective accuracy in her perception of position proximity only when she has self-confidence and precision in her estimation of the party's position. Therefore, the literature on spatial voting sometimes discusses the question of how perfectly voters know about and differentiate between party positions (e.g., Bartels 1986; Jessee 2010).[1] If voters do not have correct estimations of party positions, they will make their vote choices with mistaken judgment. If voters are not confident in their assessment of party positions, they will be reluctant to make their vote choice based on estimated position proximity, or they will feel uncomfortable about the vote choice they make.

How well and perfectly do voters perceive party positions in industrialized democracies? Studies have attempted to answer this question by examining how accurately voters update their party position estimations when political parties shift their positions, but the conclusions vary. Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu (2011, 2014) are skeptical of the party-voter linkage. They find that voters' perceived party position *shifts* are not determined by the parties' actual position *shifts* as stated in their manifestos. They also suggest that voters may rely on more visible and observable information such as government policy outputs or legislative voting than party manifestos. Fernandez-Vazquez (2014), however, suggests that political parties' positions in Western Europe are relatively consistent between elections due to policy-based party families and their long history. Therefore, he examines how well voters perceive the *level* of party positions and finds that voters' party position estimations actually correspond to actual party positions as displayed in manifestos.[2]

A lack of consensus among scholars implies that not all voters have a high level of confidence and accuracy in their party position estimation. One survey data clearly show a lack of confidence and accuracy in voters' party position estimations. When respondents were asked to place each party's left/right position, the EES (2009), unlike most other surveys, allowed them to choose an answer of "don't know where to place party," as well as to refuse to answer at all. Given that choosing this answer indicates people's uncertainty in estimating a party position (Bartels 1986), these data tell us that a substantial portion of respondents were too uncertain about their party position estimation to reveal it: 10.1 percent of them chose the answer "don't know where to place party."

Regarding the accuracy of party position estimation, the same data show that voters have incredibly varied estimations on the same political

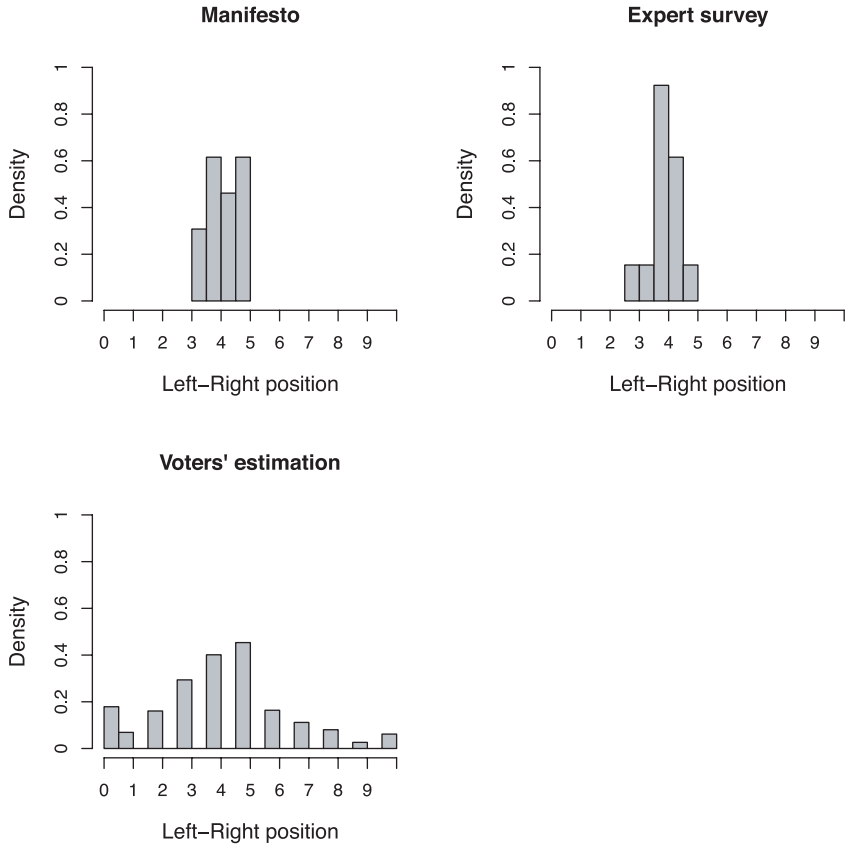

Fig. 4.1. Distribution of Western European Social Democratic Party Positions

Source: MARPOR for manifesto (***Rile***); CHES (2006) for expert survey (***Irgen***); EES (2009) for voters' estimations (the variable of ***q47***).

Note: Party positions from different sources are standardized into the scale from 0 (left-wing) to 10 (right-wing). Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

party's position. As figure 4.1 shows, political parties that belong to the center-left party family of social democracy in Western Europe share quite similar positions on the left/right dimension. When standardized into a 0 to 10 scale, both party position indexes based on the quantitative text analysis of political parties' manifestos (the top left graph) and party position data based on expert surveys (the top right graph) demonstrate that the positions of these political parties concentrate on the central left zone

between 3 and 5.[3] In contrast, voters' estimations of these political parties' left/right positions disperse more widely to the full range.[4] Thus the graphs imply not only that voters have different assessments of the same political party's position but also that many of their position estimations deviate from the party's real position.

Why do many voters in industrialized democracies lack decent assessments of party positions? Some personal characteristics prevent certain individuals from being willing and able to acquire and handle information needed for estimating party positions. Voters without much interest in politics are not willing to gather enough information to assess party positions. People who identify with a certain political party are not eager to know the positions of other political parties. Finally, voters without a high level of education may not be able to process political information effectively enough to comprehend the real positions of political parties (Alvarez and Franklin 1994; Gerber and Green 1999).

Voters' capabilities of evaluating party positions are also weakened by the behaviors of political and social actors other than the voters. Many of the party messages are delivered through the mass media, whose coverage concentrates more on major political parties than on minor political parties. As a result, the cost of assessing the positions of small political parties will be greater to voters, and they therefore will be more likely to have better estimations of positions of large political parties (Karlsen 2009; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). In addition, political parties try to distort their rival parties' public images and policy positions for their own purpose (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011), and voters' estimations of a political party's position may be misled by the party's rivals.

Though a political party's actual messages on its policy positions are delivered to voters without being neglected or distorted by the mass media or rival political parties, and most voters are ready for and capable of sincerely understanding and estimating its position, voters still cannot have clear and certain assessments of the position if the original source of the messages is not clear and straightforward. In other words, if a political party does not present an unambiguous policy position at the beginning, voters are fundamentally prevented from being confident and accurate in their estimation of the party's position. In this sense, the clarity or ambiguity of party positions provides a critical explanation on why voters sometimes do not have certain and accurate party position estimations.

Position Blurring and Voter Perception: The Uncertainty of Party Position Estimation

It is quite straightforward to expect that political parties' position blurring makes people less able to assess their positions. Uncertainty is, of course, found everywhere. As Simon (1985) simply, but firmly, puts it, "lack of reliable knowledge and information is a major factor in almost all real-life decision making. In our soberer moments, we realize how little we know" in our political behavior (302).

Because uncertainty arises due to imperfect and incomplete information, there is variation in uncertainty between individuals that "stems from systematic differences in cognitive processes and the objective political world of the citizen" (Alvarez and Franklin 1994, 671). It is widely agreed that voters' abilities and willingness to estimate a party's position with confidence are determined by their individual characteristics such as education level, political interest, and party attachment (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2014).

Educational attainment helps to assess party positions not only because it provides opportunities to obtain factual knowledge on politics (Jennings 1996) but also because it builds up cognitive abilities to handle political information (Lambert et al. 1988). Voters' interest in politics in general or feeling of attachment to a particular political party also increases their exposure to political information, drives them to be more politically engaged, and thus helps them to use more materials in estimating party positions.

A voter's ability to confidently assess a party's position is influenced not only by factors embedded in her as a "demander" of information needed to estimate the party's position but also by political contexts by which she is constrained. As a "supplier" of information, political parties need to provide learning materials for voters so they can generate or update their images of the parties. Voters cannot assess a party position with confidence and certainty when political parties do not provide clear and unambiguous information and materials on their own position (Downs 1957; Shepsle 1972; Alvarez and Franklin 1994; Rovny 2013).

When a political party's position is not unambiguous, it is difficult for other political parties as well as voters to confidently assess it. The huge inflow of asylum seekers from the Balkan area to Germany in the early 1990s increased the salience of issues around asylum seekers and worsened public opinion on asylum seekers. Mainstream political parties needed to discuss and negotiate with each other to modify asylum policies to reduce

the inflow of asylum seekers. All of these parties were internally divided, however, and divergent proposals were sometimes put forward by the same political party. For example, while the general secretary of the Social Democratic Party of Germany proposed quotas on asylum seekers, another party officer emphasized the acceleration of the asylum evaluation procedure (Perlmutter 2002). Inconsistent standpoints made party positions ambiguous, and ambiguity made it difficult for political parties to begin and advance interparty negotiations.

To see how party position ambiguity affects people's uncertainty in their party position estimations, I use the EES (2009), in which respondents could choose to answer "don't know where to place party" when they were asked to place each party's left/right position. I assume that, following Bartels (1986), choosing this answer indicates people's uncertainty in estimating a party's position, and I construct a binary variable, which has a value of 1 when a respondent chose the "don't know where to place party" answer and zero when the respondent estimated the party's position.

The main independent variables indicate the degree of party position ambiguity on the left/right dimension. I use both the expert survey measurement (the standard deviation of experts' estimations) from the CHES (2006) and the manifesto measurement (the positional ambiguity score). I also include the following individual-level variables to examine the interactive effects between these individual-level factors and position blurring as well as their independent effects: education level, political interest, and party attachment. Either direction of the interactive effects is reasonably expected. In other words, the position-blurring effect may be smaller among people with higher education, those with more political interest, and those with stronger party attachment, because these people are able and willing to use a wider set of information to estimate party positions and overcome the barrier of position ambiguity. Alternatively, the position-blurring effect may be smaller among people with less education, those with less political interest, and those with weaker party attachment, because these people are not able or willing to estimate party positions anyway.

Results in models 1 and 3 show that party position ambiguity increases the likelihood that people say they do not know where to place the party's left/right position. In addition, people with less education, those with less political interest, and those who do not feel close to the political party are more likely to say that they do not know where to place the party's position. Next, results in models 2 and 4 demonstrate that there is an interactive effect between position blurring and political interest as well as an interactive effect between position blurring and education level. Position

TABLE 4.1. Position Blurring and the Uncertainty of Party Position Estimation

DV=Party position estimation uncertainty	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Position-blurring data	Expert survey		Party manifesto	
Position blurring	0.18***	0.25*	0.07**	0.31***
	(0.05)	(0.15)	(0.03)	(0.11)
Education	–0.20***	–0.26***	–0.22***	–0.22***
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Position blurring × Education		0.07**		0.03*
		(0.03)		(0.02)
Political interest	–0.54***	–0.66***	–0.65***	–0.64***
	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Position blurring × Political interest		0.14**		0.07*
		(0.06)		(0.04)
Close to the party	–0.65***	–0.54***	–0.37***	–0.41***
	(0.05)	(0.18)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Position blurring × Close to the party		–0.14		0.14
		(0.21)		(0.08)
Constant	–0.83***	–3.04***	–0.58***	–0.61***
	(0.16)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.18)
–2 x Log likelihood	19,208.3	19,193.0	11,461.7	11,451.5
Number of observations	46,587	46,587	32,998	32,998

Note: Clustered standard errors (by political party) in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The logistic regression model with robust standard errors clustered by political party is used. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

blurring increases the likelihood of a respondent saying "don't know where to place party," particularly among people who are more educated and more interested in politics.

Figure 4.2 presents the predicted probabilities of saying "don't know where to place party" to the question of party position estimation. The top two graphs tell us that the probabilities are lower among more educated people and those with more political interest than among less educated people and those with less political interest. These graphs also show that position blurring has a statistically significant uncertainty-increasing effect only among people with higher education and those with more political interest. In other words, the blurring effect on estimation uncertainty is not activated among those with lower education and those with less political interest. Position blurring does not matter to these people because they are not able or willing to estimate a party position anyway. The top left graph implies that the education threshold for the position-blurring effect is 4, which is upper secondary education. In other words, the position-

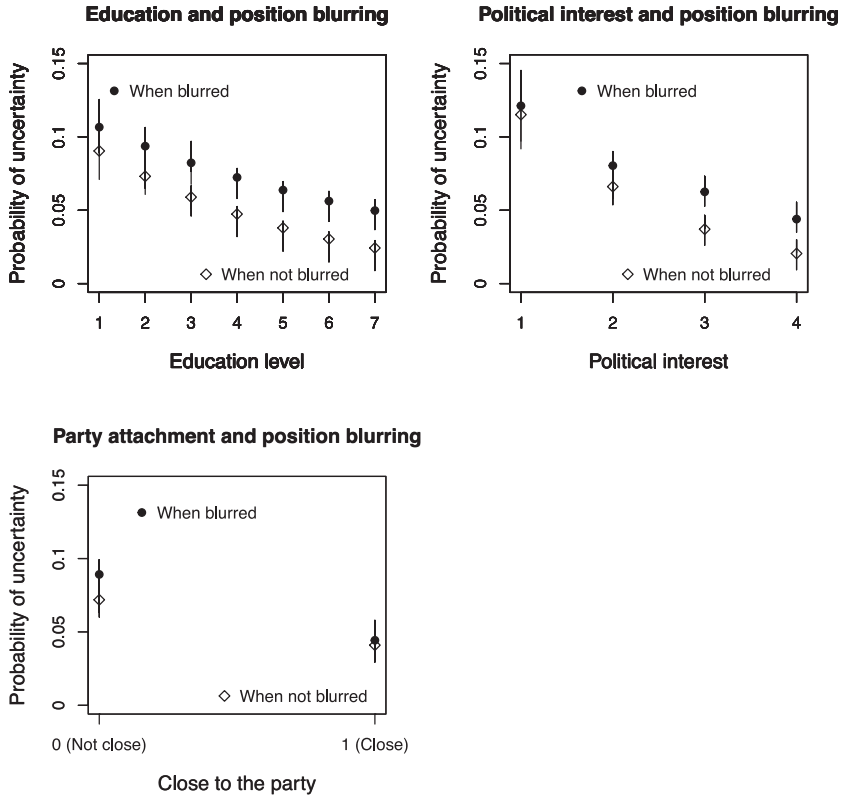

Fig. 4.2. Predicted Probabilities of Uncertainty in Party Position Estimation

Note: Circles and diamonds indicate predicted probabilities, and lines show their 95 percent confidence intervals. The predicted probabilities and confidence intervals are calculated with results in model 2 in table 4.1. "When blurred" indicates the 90th percentile value of the position-blurring variable, and "When not blurred" indicates its 10th percentile value.

blurring effect is activated among people who have any education above a lower secondary-education.

The top right graph tells us that the political interest threshold for the position blurring effect is 3. Thus while position blurring does not matter to people who are "not at all" or "a little" interested in politics, it has an uncertainty-increasing effect among those who are "somewhat" or "very" interested in politics. Finally, as was seen in table 4.1, the bottom left graph implies that though party attachment and position blurring have independent effects on party position estimation uncertainty, no interactive effect between the two is found.

In sum, the uncertainty of voters' party position estimation is deter-

mined not only by their own traits, such as their education level, political interest, and party attachment, but also by party position ambiguity.

Position Blurring and Voter Perception: The Inaccuracy of Party Position Estimation

Voters' party position estimations become not only more uncertain but also less accurate when party positions are ambiguous. Because voters are not certain about their assessment of a party position, they can only rely on their "best guess." The "best guess" is generated by combining prior knowledge and new information (Fernandez-Vazquez 2014), but the degree of its correctness will be reduced when new information lacks precision and clarity. Voters consequently come to have dissimilar estimations of a party position (Campbell 1983a, 1983b; Rovny 2012, 2013).

In particular, one way for political parties to blur their position is to present seemingly contradictory arguments on a given issue. Dissimilar messages on the same issue are delivered from a political party to different voters, and those voters will come to have different assessments of the party's position no matter what the true stance of the party is. Consequently, the overall accuracy of voters' estimations is decreased.

For example, in the 1980s and 1990s the French Socialist Party promoted policies and rhetoric, some of which advocated a more pluralistic society, but some of which stood for the need for more control on immigration. On the one hand, the Socialist government emphasized the "droit à la différence" (right of difference), supported the education of regional languages, and decentralized administrative decision making to increase the influence of regional identities (Safran 1985). On the other hand, it strengthened border control and legitimized some arguments of the National Front (the precedent of the National Rally) on immigration (Vichniac 1991). The policy goal was clear: the Socialist party "struggled to defuse the rhetoric of the National Front" on immigration by alternating between different messages and consequently bringing in confusion among voters (Schain 2002, 237).

The behaviors of Irish major political parties described by McGraw (2015) also illustrate how party position ambiguity reduces the accuracy of voters' party position estimation. Major political parties in Ireland have purposefully blurred their positions on main issues by continually shifting their positions, staying silent on divisive issues, or delegating controversial issues to nonparliamentary institutions in order to diminish voters'

TABLE 4.2. Position Blurring and the Inaccuracy of Party Position Estimation

DV=Party position estimation inaccuracy	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Position-blurring data	Expert survey		Party manifesto	
Position blurring	0.06***	0.15***	0.03***	0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Education	–0.09***	–0.14***	–0.09***	–0.09***
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Position blurring × Education		0.05***		0.01***
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Political interest	–0.04***	–0.08***	–0.04***	–0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Position blurring × Political interest		0.04***		0.00
		(0.02)		(0.01)
Close to the party	0.01	–0.02	–0.03**	–0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Position blurring × Close to the party		0.05		0.00
		(0.04)		(0.02)
Constant	0.61***	0.01	0.66***	0.13***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.01)
R^2	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Number of observations	43,217	43,217	29,082	29,082

Note: Clustered standard errors (by political party) in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The ordinary least squares model with robust standard errors clustered by political party is used. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

perception of policy differences between parties and dilute the distinctive electoral appeal of minor parties. Consequently, though the differences in party positions are perceived by political elites such as parliamentary members, Irish voters tend to fail in locating party positions accurately and distinguishing the differences in party positions.

To see how political parties' position blurring affects the accuracy of people's party position estimations, I measure the gap between survey respondents' subjective estimations of party positions in the EES (2009) and more objective party position scores from the CHES (2006). Though party positions seen in the CHES are also what is estimated by people (experts), these estimated positions are suggested to be more accurate and objective assessments of party positions because experts consider and have access to a wider range of information on these (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2014). Thus, I assume that the wider gap (in the absolute term) between a party's position as seen in the CHES and a voter's estimation of the party's position in the EES indicates that the voter has a higher level of inaccuracy. Party positions are those on the left/right dimension, and I use

the same position-blurring variables (both the expert survey measurement and the party manifesto measurement) that were used in table 4.1.

Results in models 1 and 3 show that a political party's position blurring increases the inaccuracy of party position estimations. As was found in table 4.1, people with less education and less political interest demonstrate a lower level of accuracy in their party position estimation. Party attachment, however, does not have an effect. In addition, results in models 2 and 4 show us the same interactive effects found in table 4.1. Position blurring increases the inaccuracy, particularly among people who are more educated and more interested in politics. Position blurring does not matter for people who are not highly educated or not interested in politics because they are not able or willing to exactly estimate party positions anyway.

These interactive effects are graphically presented in figure 4.3. The vertical axes of the graphs indicate the conditional coefficients and their confidence intervals of the position-blurring variable at different levels of education, political interest, and party attachment variables. The top two graphs show that the statistical and substantive significance of the inaccuracy-increasing effect of position blurring increases as the education and political interest variables increase. The top left graph implies that the education threshold for the position blurring effect is 3, which is lower secondary education. Also, the top right graph shows that the inaccuracy-increasing effect of position blurring is not activated only among people who are "not at all" interested in politics. Such an interactive effect, however, is not found regarding position blurring and party attachment.

Therefore, position blurring of political parties on an issue not only prevents voters from estimating party positions with certainty but also impedes their accurate estimation. Consequently, voters will have inconsistent judgments on party positions on the issue, become unsure about their own estimation, and turn out to be unable to distinguish political parties by their positions on the issue.

All in all, the position-blurring behavior of political parties potentially distorts the linkage between political parties and voters by making it harder for voters to exactly and confidently estimate party positions. For the responsible party model to work, voters should be able to clearly assess party policies and positions in order to check how responsive political parties are to the general public as well as to their own supporters. Though the key mechanism in the responsible party model allows voters to punish political parties that do not deliver their preferences, political parties can avoid this responsibility by blurring their position and consequently hindering voters from assessing whether political parties fail to do their duties.

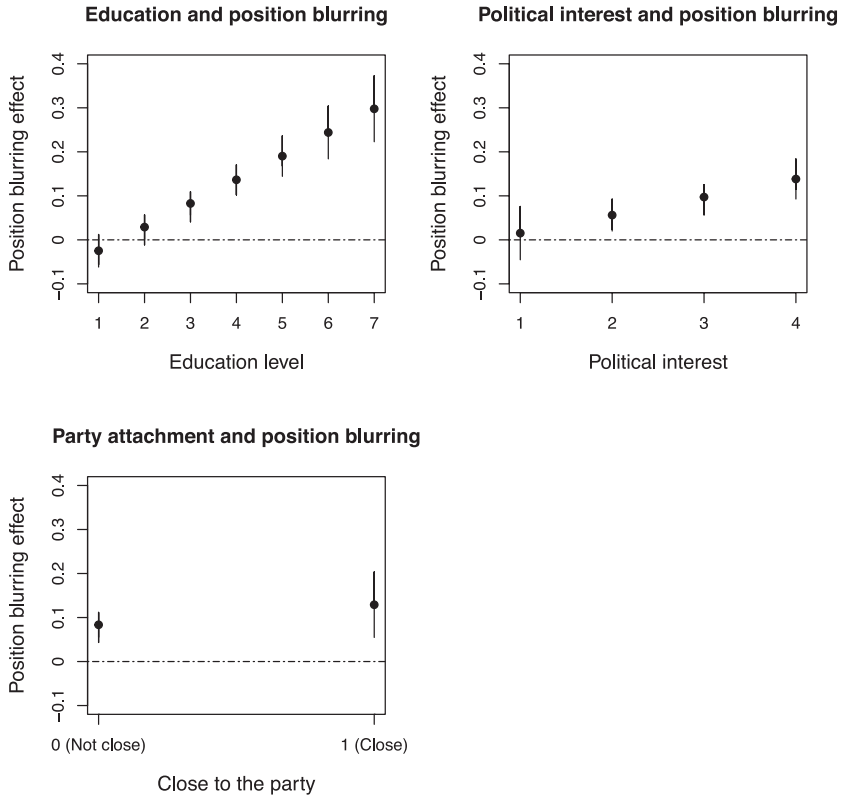

Fig. 4.3. Position Blurring and the Inaccuracy of Party Position Estimation

Note: Circles indicate coefficients, and vertical lines show their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in model 2 in table 4.2.

Issue Competition and Voters' Behavior

How does the decline in the certainty and accuracy of voters' party position estimation affect their actual behavior? In other words, how does position blurring of political parties and changes in voters' perceptions change voters' actual behavior? In particular, given that voters' proximity to political parties in their stances regarding principal political issues has remained a major determinant of their voting behavior, how does position blurring shape the role of position proximity in determining voters' party choice?

Models on voting behavior suggest that relative weights a voter puts on different issues matter in determining her final vote choice. The salience of issues plays a significant role in voting behavior (Adams, Merrill, and

Grofman 2005). Voters consider multiple issues with different levels of significance because of their varied economic statuses, political ideologies, and cultural values. People who are current or potential beneficiaries of social policies pay more attention to such issues than others do. Voters with strong libertarian ideologies are likely to put great salience on issues that represent those ideologies, such as the natural environment and same sex marriage. People who emphasize traditional and nationalistic values will consider immigration-related issues critical problems in their society.

When an issue is not salient to a voter, she does not pay much attention to the issue and thus she does not acknowledge differences in party positions on the issue. Even when she recognizes the differences in party positions, she does not incorporate them as a factor in her voting decision because the issue does not alter her utility function on voting (Selek 2006). A voter is more likely to cast her vote for a political party whose position is close to her stance, particularly regarding an issue on which she puts greatest salience. By voting for the party, she wants to change (or maintain) the policy status quo regarding the issue she thinks is most important.

But even though a voter may put substantial salience on an issue and have a strong preference regarding the issue, she may not want to, or may not be able to, incorporate the issue to a great extent in her vote choice if she is unsure about the precise positions of political parties on the issue. Uncertainty on elements that constitute a voters' utility function, such as her own policy stance and party positions regarding an issue, decreases the expected utility of her activity and discourages her from doing the activity (Palfrey and Rosenthal 1985). For a voter, making a vote choice based on position proximity between herself and other political parties regarding an issue entails a risk when party positions regarding the issue are ambiguous and her estimation of position proximity is likely to be wrong. In that case, the voter, particularly if she is risk-averse, will discount the salience of the issue (Bartels 1986; Alvarez 1997) and become indifferent to the issue. She will no longer rely on the issue as the basis of her vote choice despite her sincere interest in and substantial preference on the issue (Downs 1957).

In other words, "issue taking" needs to be distinguished from "issue salience." A lack of information prevents an issue considered salient by a voter from being taken as a determinant of vote choice by the same voter (Palfrey and Poole 1987). When a voter has enough information on an issue (e.g., party positions on an issue) on which she puts great salience, she will not hesitate to use it in her decision and "take" the issue. But she will feel reluctant to rely on an issue that she cares about when she does not have sufficient information on the issue. In such a case, she may want

to search for other materials that are not related to the issue, such as party brands or party leaders' images.[5]

The EES (2014) clearly demonstrates the plausible disparity between "issue salience" and "issue taking." The survey includes both questions of what respondents think is the most important issue and what issue determined their vote choice in the previous election. It reveals that 48.8 percent of people who indicated either economy, immigration, or natural environment issues as the most important issue made their vote choices based on the same issue. In other words, issue salience did not necessarily lead to issue taking for almost half of the voters.

Three binary variables of issue taking regarding economy, immigration, and natural environment issues, respectively, and three binary variables of issue salience (most important issue) regarding the same issues are constructed from the EES (2014). The issue-taking variable has a value of 1 when a respondent indicated an economy-related (or immigration-related or environment-related) issue as the issue that had determined her vote choice. The issue salience variable has a value of 1 when a respondent

TABLE 4.3. Issue Competition and Issue Taking

DV=Issue taking	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Issue competition	Issue emphasis			Position blurring		
Issue	Economy	Immigration	Environment	Economy	Immigration	Environment
Issue salience	0.87***	2.32***	2.63***	0.92***	1.96***	3.09***
	(0.08)	(0.14)	(0.23)	(0.07)	(0.14)	(0.25)
Issue emphasis	0.37***	0.39*	0.55***			
	(0.06)	(0.24)	(0.15)			
Issue salience × Issue emphasis	0.19**	0.55**	1.28***			
	(0.09)	(0.27)	(0.44)			
Position blurring				−0.22	−1.72***	−2.28***
				(0.19)	(0.54)	(0.39)
Issue salience × Position blurring				−0.56**	−1.83***	−0.13
				(0.25)	(0.68)	(1.58)
Constant	−0.32***	−0.71***	−3.18***	−0.10**	−1.01***	−2.61***
	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.05)	(0.12)	(0.08)
−2 x Log likelihood	6,588.0	2,473.4	2,646.7	6,588.0	2,467.1	2,204.6
Number of observations	5,312	5,312	5,312	5,312	5,312	5,312

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The logistic regression model is used. Issue emphasis and position-blurring variables are the average of political parties' emphases and position blurring on each issue in a country. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

pointed out an economy-related (or immigration-related or environment-related) issue as the most important issue that her country faces.[6] The issue-taking variable is regressed on the issue salience variable, position blurring, and an interaction term with these two variables for each issue. Position blurring is measured with the standard deviation of experts' party position estimations on each issue in the CHES (2010).

The issue-taking variable is also regressed on another issue-competition tactic of political parties: issue emphasis. As was discussed above, and as the issue-competition literature presumes, voters are prone to take their own salient issue in their vote choice when political parties also emphasize the issue. If political parties do not handle an issue as an important issue, voters do not have a strong expectation of the change of the status quo on the issue. A party choice based on the issue then does not make a critical difference to voters, and they will want to rely on other issues to make their vote decision. The issue emphasis is measured with political parties' salience scores on each issue in the CHES (2010).

Results in models 1 to 3 demonstrate that voters "take" an issue on which they put salience, and the connection between issue salience and issue taking is strengthened by political parties' emphases on the issue. In other words, a voter takes a salient issue in her voting behavior, particularly when political parties in her country emphasize the issue. In contrast, results in models 4 to 6 show that though people are likely to take an issue when they think the issue is the most important issue in their country, such an effect of issue salience decreases as political parties present ambiguous positions on the issue (fig. 4.4).[7] Such a statistically significant intermediating effect of position blurring, however, is found only among economic and immigration issues.

Therefore, political parties can divert voters' issue attention and issue taking by clarifying or blurring their policy position as well as emphasizing or de-emphasizing each issue. Though people may put great salience on an issue, they become less likely to make their actual vote choice based on that issue as political parties blur their positions regarding the issue. Voters are not provided enough information regarding party positions on an issue to make their vote choice based on the issue. Consequently, they are discouraged from relying on the issue in making their vote choice, and the issue is not used as a decision-making heuristic by voters despite its saliency.

When political parties present ambiguous positions on an issue, the issue itself is not actively used by voters as a criterion for their vote choice. A more specific and sensible interpretation of this phenomenon is that proximity between voters and political parties in their respective positions

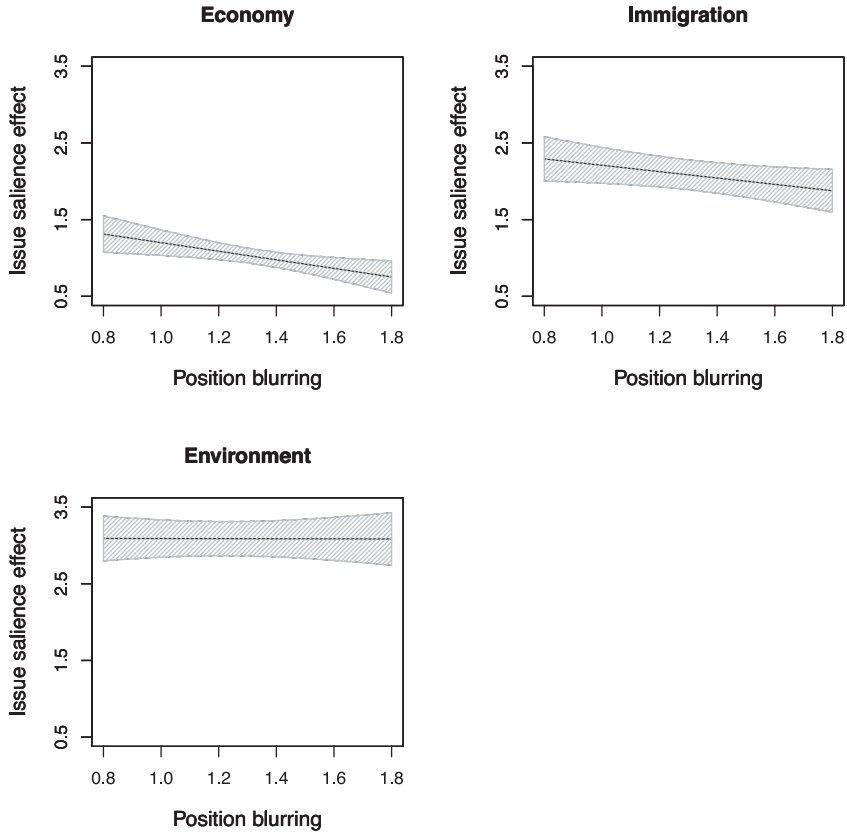

Fig. 4.4. Position Blurring and Issue Taking

Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in models 4 to 6 in table 4.3.

on an issue does not matter in voting behavior when political parties blur their positions on the issue. Though position proximity is one of the most critical determinants of voting behavior, the degree to which it plays a role depends on other factors such as issue salience, as discussed above. Another factor that determines the effect of position proximity on the voters' behavior is the certainty and accuracy of their party position estimations.

Voters use diverse sources of information to make their own party choice. If they do not hold enough confidence in this information, they rely less on it in their party choice. For example, though incumbent parties are punished in an election by voters for their poor policy performance, it is sometimes difficult for voters to specify which political parties in a coali-

tion government should be responsible. Thus voters hold single-party governments more responsible for their policies than coalition governments, and the pattern of retrospective voting is weaker on coalition government parties than on parties in single-party governments (Whitten and Palmer 1999; Dorussen and Taylor 2001).[8]

In the same way, voters rely less on positional differences between them and political parties in their party choice when they cannot clearly and easily find differences (Jacobson 2005). Position proximity is a useful decision-making heuristic only when voters have relatively clear and distinct perceptions of political parties' issue positions as well as of their own stances (van der Eijk, Schmitt, and Binder 2005). Though voters have a particular party position estimation, they do not want to weigh it heavily in their determination of party choice when they are not confident in their estimation (Downs 1957; Gill 2005).

Given that party position ambiguity increases the uncertainty and inaccuracy of voters' party position estimation and breaks the connection between issue salience and issue taking, how does it affect the role of position proximity in voting behavior? The DPES (2006) includes questions on respondents' self-identified positions on multiple issues and their estimations of party positions on the issues. In addition, the survey asked respondents how likely they are to vote for each party on the 1 to 10 scale.[9] I use this scale of voting likelihood as the dependent variable to measure their voting behavior and examine how position blurring determines the position proximity effect on voting likelihood.

Similar to the analysis in table 4.3, it is hypothesized that position blurring of political parties decreases the positional proximity effect on voting likelihood while political parties' issue emphasis strengthens the effect. I choose one economy-related issue (income redistribution) and one immigration-related issue (asylum seekers) that are available in the DPES (2006) and calculate position distance with the absolute value of the gap between a voter's self-reported stance and her estimation of each party's position regarding each issue. Position blurring is measured with the standard deviation of experts' estimations on each issue in the CHES (2006), and issue emphasis is measured with political parties' salience scores in the same expert survey data.

The result in model 1 tells us that position distance between a voter and a political party decreases her likelihood of voting for the party, and such a negative effect of position distance is strengthened as political parties emphasize each issue. In other words, a voter is likely to vote for a political party whose position is close to her stance, particularly when the political

TABLE 4.4. Issue Competition, Positional Distance, and Voting Likelihood

DV=Voting likelihood for each political party	(1)	(2)
Income redistribution		
Position distance	–0.38***	–0.51***
	(0.06)	(0.02)
Issue emphasis	–0.11***	
	(0.02)	
Position distance × Issue emphasis	–0.02**	
	(0.01)	
Position blurring		–1.10***
		(0.22)
Position distance × Position blurring		0.18*
		(0.10)
Asylum seekers		
Position distance	–0.13***	–0.28***
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Issue emphasis	0.79***	
	(0.04)	
Position distance × Issue emphasis	–0.10***	
	(0.02)	
Position blurring		–1.74***
		(0.12)
Position distance × Position blurring		0.07*
		(0.05)
–2 x Log likelihood	38,714.9	38,851.2
Number of observations	9,354	9,354

Note: Clustered standard errors (by political party) in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. Estimations on cut-points are not reported. The ordered logistic regression model with robust standard errors clustered by political party is used.

party highlights the issue. In contrast, the result in model 2 shows us that position blurring has an opposite interactive effect from issue emphasis on voting likelihood. The effect of position distance is weakened as political parties blur their position on income redistribution and asylum seekers, respectively. Political parties can manipulate the degree to which voters incorporate party-voter positional proximity on an issue in their voting behavior by clarifying or blurring their policy position as well as emphasizing or de-emphasizing each issue.

Graphs in figure 4.5 demonstrate how the combination of position blurring and position distance determines voters' likelihood of voting for a party. First, position distance between a voter and a party decreases her likelihood to vote for the party. Second, a voter is likely to vote for a party when the party presents a clear position, particularly when the voter's stance is close to the party's position. Finally, the support-decreasing

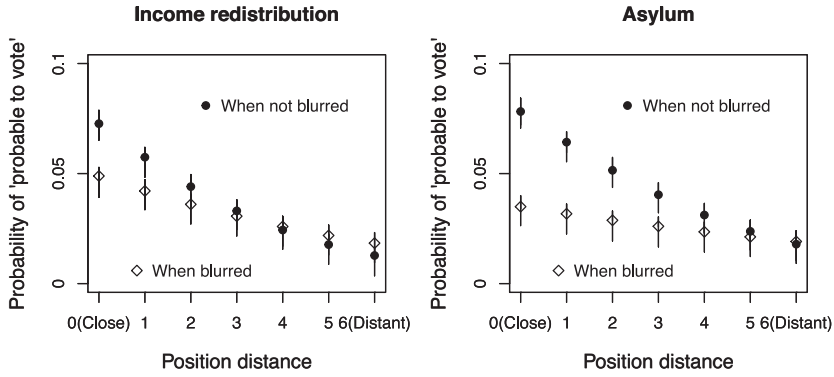

Fig. 4.5. Predicted Probabilities of Voting Likelihood

Note: Circles and diamonds indicate predicted probabilities, and lines show their 95 percent confidence intervals. The predicted probabilities and confidence intervals are calculated with results in model 2 in table 4.4. The probability of "probable to vote" indicates a probability that a person's answer for the voting likelihood question is 9 on a 1 to 10 scale. "When blurred" and "When not blurred" represent the 90th and the 10th percentile values of the position-blurring variables, respectively.

effect of position distance is smaller when a political party presents an ambiguous position. For example, while the probability of "probable to vote" decreases by 0.06 (from 0.07 to 0.01) as the position distance variable regarding income redistribution increases from its minimum value (0) to its maximum value (6) when a party position is not blurred, it decreases only by 0.04 (from 0.05 to 0.01) when a party position is blurred.[10]

In sum, though voters significantly care about the distance between themselves and each political party regarding their positions and preferences on salient political issues, the effect of position proximity diminishes as political parties present ambiguous positions on the issues. Voters' confidence in their cognitive estimation of position proximity is weakened, and thus they rely less on such an estimation in their party choice.

Position Blurring and the Personalization of Politics

Over the past couple of decades, there has been growing attention to the personalization of politics in Western European politics as well as in American politics. Very broadly speaking, this phenomenon is defined as "the notion that individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities" (Karvonen 2010, 4). More

practically speaking, the personalization of politics occurs when political individuals acquire stronger power, draw more media attention, or occupy voters' minds more than do collective and institutional actors such as political parties, parliamentary committees, or cabinets.

The personalization of politics occurs in different spheres. First, institutional personalization implies the "adoption of rules, mechanisms, and institutions that put more emphasis on the individual politician and less on political groups and parties" (Rahat and Sheafer 2007, 207). When this personalization occurs, either top leaders of governments or political parties ("centralized institutional personalization") or parliamentary or congressional members ("decentralized institutional personalization") are granted more power.

Second, media personalization leads to a heightened media focus on individual politicians rather than on collective groups such as political parties. Media personalization occurs either when the mass media exposes individual political actors more frequently than the collective actors they belong to or when it concentrates on personal characteristics such as appearance, image, and communication skills more than on nonpersonal ones such as ideologies and policy positions (Krauss and Nyblade 2005; Langer 2007).[11]

Finally, voter personalization implies that voters' evaluation of individual political actors, particularly the assessment of their personal traits, determines their party choice more than does their evaluation of political parties as collective actors. Indeed, voters judge candidates by their appearance and frequently cast their vote for candidates who look more competent and attractive (Mattes et al. 2010; Stockemer and Praino 2015). If voter personalization continues, voters' behavior will be influenced by short-term factors such as the images of party leaders as well as by long-term structural determinants such as party identity, social identification, and ideology (Wauters et al. 2018).[12]

Have voters in industrialized democracies become more "personalized" in their voting behavior than before? Though it is widely believed and strongly confirmed that media coverage on politics as well as the political campaigns and communication of political parties have become more personalized, empirical findings on the personalization of voting behavior are not conclusive. While such a trend of personalization is observed in some research of both American politics and Western European politics (Wattenberg 1991; Garzia 2012), the majority of studies do not support the personalization thesis (Kaase 1994; Curtice and Holmberg 2005; Hayes 2009; Karvonen 2010; Poguntke and Webb 2005). In addition, even if vot-

ers' behaviors have become more personalized, their evaluation of political parties or nonpersonal aspects of party leaders still plays a more substantial role in formulating their vote choice than does their assessment of individual political actors (Kaase 1994; King 2003; Schulz, Zeh, and Quiring 2005).

I neither theoretically argue nor empirically test whether the pattern of the personalization of voting behavior has been strengthened over time. Instead, the findings on how the position-blurring behavior of political parties discourages voters from considering an issue and party positions on the issue in their vote choice imply that when political parties blur their positions on major political issues, voters cast their votes based more on their evaluation of individual political actors because they put relatively less weight on a critical trait of political parties: their issue positions.

Relative weights voters place on individual and collective political actors in determining their vote choice depend on the comparative amount of available information regarding each actor. The more information is available for voters to evaluate individual political actors, the more they will rely on it in their vote choice. Voters may not be able to obtain enough information on political parties because the mass media focuses more on individual political actors than political parties. Nonetheless, it will be difficult for voters to access reliable information on political parties when political parties also do not provide unambiguous party positions.

Political parties can encourage voters to rely more on their evaluation of individual political actors by emphasizing the attributes of these politicians in election campaigns. Political parties whose leaders are popular among voters may want to adopt this strategy. For example, the Christian Democratic Union campaign in the 2009 election heavily focused on its leader Angela Merkel, who was also the incumbent chancellor because she was so popular, even more popular than the party itself (Holtz-Bacha, Langer, and Merkle 2014). Political parties can also influence voters to cast their votes based more on their assessment of individual politicians by providing insufficient and ambiguous information on parties as collective actors and discouraging voters from relying on their evaluation of political parties. When voters care about the policy aspect of political parties or party leaders, their evaluation of the personal features of individual political actors will be "taken as a substandard criterion for a vote choice" (Hayes 2009, 232). But when voters are not able to assess the policy facet of political authorities with confidence and accuracy, the personal characteristics of individual political actors will play a more significant role in voters' party choice.

We can draw a hypothesis that when party positions are ambiguous, voters' party choice becomes based more on their evaluation of political parties' individual actors such as top leaders and less on their assessment of the parties. This hypothesis is tested with the FNES (2015), which includes a unique question on whether voters rely either on political parties or candidates in their vote choice. The survey asks respondents which, between party and candidates, was ultimately more important for their vote choice in the past parliamentary election. I made a binary variable with this question (1 = candidate, 0 = party) and calculated a "personalized voting score" for each political party with a share of people who made their vote choice based on candidates among all the people who voted for the same party. The correlations between this "personalized voting score" and position blurring of each party on the left-right dimension are positive (r = 0.3501 with the standard deviation of experts' estimations in the CHES (2014); r = 0.3677 with the positional ambiguity score from the party manifesto data). That is, the more a political party presents an ambiguous position, the more people cast their vote for the party based on their assessment of the party's candidates and less on their estimation of the party itself.

In addition, a voter's decision on whether to consider a party more or its candidates more is determined by the personal relationship between the voter and the candidates (e.g., how well and how personally a voter knows the candidates). Thus the analysis in table 4.5, using the FNES (2015), tests how position blurring of political parties determines whether voters make their vote choice based on candidate or political party (the dependent variable: 1 = candidate; 0 = party), controlling for their relationship with party candidates. The result shows that the personal relationship between candidates and voters makes the latter cast their votes based on candidates

TABLE 4.5. Position Blurring and the Criterion of Vote Choice

DV=Personalized voting	(1)	(2)
Position-blurring data	Expert survey	Party manifesto
Position blurring	0.47**	0.12**
	(0.22)	(0.06)
Relationship with candidate	0.17***	0.17***
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Constant	–1.36***	–0.84***
	(0.30)	(0.16)
–2 x Log likelihood	1,524.9	1,525.4
Number of observations	1,134	1,134

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The logistic regression model is used.

rather than on party. In addition, even after controlling for this effect of personal relationships, position blurring of political parties has the same effect. When a political party blurs its position, people vote for the party not because of the party itself but because of its candidates.

All in all, as political parties present ambiguous positions, voters consider individual political actors such as party leaders more and political parties as collective actors less. Position blurring prevents voters from being able to gather the information they need on political parties so they can make their vote choice. If this is the case, they have to switch to considering their assessment of individual political actors more. Though numerous empirical studies do not agree with each other on whether the pattern of the personalization of politics has been strengthened over time, the party behavior of position blurring intensifies the pattern of personalization, at least in the sphere of voting behavior. In the same way, though it is not obvious what the normative implication of the personalization of politics is, position blurring of political parties weakens the image and the role of political parties as political entities that collect, represent, and deliver supporters' preferences on diverse subjects.

Summary and Discussion

Though the roles of political parties in articulating, representing, and delivering supporters' preferences and interests have been seriously questioned, there are still affirmative views on them. Naurin, Royed, and Thomson (2019) argue that political parties are, once in government, quite committed to pledges they made during election campaigns, and they try to achieve their promises through government policies. Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister (2011) also conclude that voters perceive the differences in political parties' positions and still make their vote choice based on positional proximity between themselves and each of the political parties.

Nonetheless, political parties' behaviors that may be problematic from the perspective of the responsible party model are still observed. Political parties relegate politically disadvantageous and vulnerable issues, regardless of the salience of the issues, to extraparliamentary institutions and consequently remove the issues from the electoral agenda (McGraw 2015). Also, political parties' reliance on symbolic politics instead of policy outcomes has led to the personalization of political institutions and communication (Lawson and Poguntke 2004).

Political parties' function as an apparatus for the articulation, representation, and delivery of their supporters' interest is also weakened by their own behavior of position blurring. As political parties blur their positions on an issue, voters' certainty and accuracy of their party position estimation diminish, and they become less likely to consider the issue, particularly position proximity regarding the issue, in their vote choice. Voters, particularly when they are risk-averse, do not want to rely on information about which they are not sure. Moreover, when party positions regarding major issues are ambiguous, voters consider the personal characteristics of individual political actors more and the attributes of political parties less.

Voters in Western Europe have become less satisfied with and trusting of the current political system in the past couple of decades. Many of the voters criticize established political actors such as political parties and political officers for their lack of responsiveness to voters, their opportunistic behaviors, and unfortunate socioeconomic conditions (Kitschelt 1995; Dalton and Weldon 2005; Treib 2014). Consequently, voters who are dissatisfied with or distrustful of established political actors not only abstain from voting or cast blank and invalid votes (Hooghe, Marien, and Pauwels 2011), but they also support political parties that mobilize on these anti-establishment protest sentiments on both sides of the ideological left/right spectrum (Betz 1993; Abedi 2004).

The failure of the responsible party model causes confusion and uncertainty among voters and activates cynicism and anxiety among them. If voters are not confident that a political party they voted for clearly represents their values, preferences, and interests, their confusion, uncertainty, and anxiety will increase their anti-establishment sentiments. Therefore, though it is found that position blurring is a part of political parties' strategic behaviors to discourage voters from focusing on issues in which the parties hold comparative disadvantages, and that political parties may actually benefit from their blurring behavior in an election in the short term (Somer-Topcu 2015), such behavior may, in the long run, lead to a further crisis of liberal democracy.

FIVE

Issue Disadvantage, Party-Competition Environment, and Issue Avoidance

In the previous chapter, I found that political parties can truly influence voters' issue attention. Different from other issue-competition literature, however, I discovered that political parties do this by clarifying or blurring their policy position as well as by emphasizing or de-emphasizing an issue. Given that issue-competition tactics have such effects on voters' cognitive and actual behavior, what motivates political parties' selective issue emphasis and position blurring?

In this chapter, I elaborate and empirically test my theory of position blurring outlined in chapter 2. As political parties de-emphasize an issue they do not want to dominate the political agenda due to their comparative disadvantage on the issue, they blur their policy position regarding the unfavorable issue. By doing so, political parties try to divert voters' attention from the issue and prevent them from considering the issue in their party choice.

I also argue that ambiguous party positions are not only consequences of failure to reach an intraparty consensus but are also outcomes of their strategic consideration, deliberation, and arrangement. In particular, certain party-competition environments increase the strategic usefulness of position blurring because they prevent political parties from selectively de-emphasizing issues. In other words, political parties' behavior of position blurring is not only a consequence of their own characteristics related to an issue (issue disadvantage) but also an outcome of their strategic interactions with other parties in the party system (party-competition environment).

I first discuss these subjects in the Western European context. I subsequently test how the combination of issue disadvantages and party-competition environments determine political parties' strategies of position blurring as well as their selective issue emphasis.

Party Supporter Division and Issue Avoidance

Though political parties are generally understood to follow the opinion of the general public either to maximize or to seek votes (Downs 1957; Adams, Clark, Ezrow, and Glasgow 2004; Adams, Clark, Ezrow, and Glasgow 2006), it is also suggested that the opinion of party supporters significantly influences party behaviors (Miller and Schofield 2003; Schofield and Sened 2005). Because nonpolicy factors such as partisanship also determine vote choice, political parties may not be able to easily attract votes from people who support other parties even when the parties shift their position or policy toward the preferences of the people (Adams 2001). Party "leader's freedom to set policy is constrained by the policy preferences of current party supporters" who occupy the core of the parties' ideological space (Laver 2005, 267).

There is variation between parties or between issues in how much political parties are constrained by their own supporters or the general public. Niche parties follow the opinion of party supporters more sincerely than the opinion of the general public (Ezrow, de Vries, Steenbergen, and Edwards 2011). Political parties that are more organizationally dominated by party activists respond less to the opinion of the general public and more to the opinion of party supporters (Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013). Also, political parties respond to the opinion of party supporters more than to the opinion of the general public regarding sociocultural issues (Han 2015a, 2017).

In addition to the *location* of party supporters' opinions on an issue, what also matters is their *distribution*. The supporters of the same political party do not necessarily share the same preferences on all the issues. Many social democratic parties in Western Europe went through internal divisions between people who increasingly adopted libertarian ideologies on sociocultural issues and those who held authoritarian ideologies in the 1980s and 1990s (Kitschelt 1994). More recently, though party supporters of niche parties such as radical right-wing parties and ecology parties find similarity each other in their preferences on sociocultural issues such as immigration and the natural environment, they are divided on socioeconomic issues (Ivarsflaten 2005; Rovny 2012).

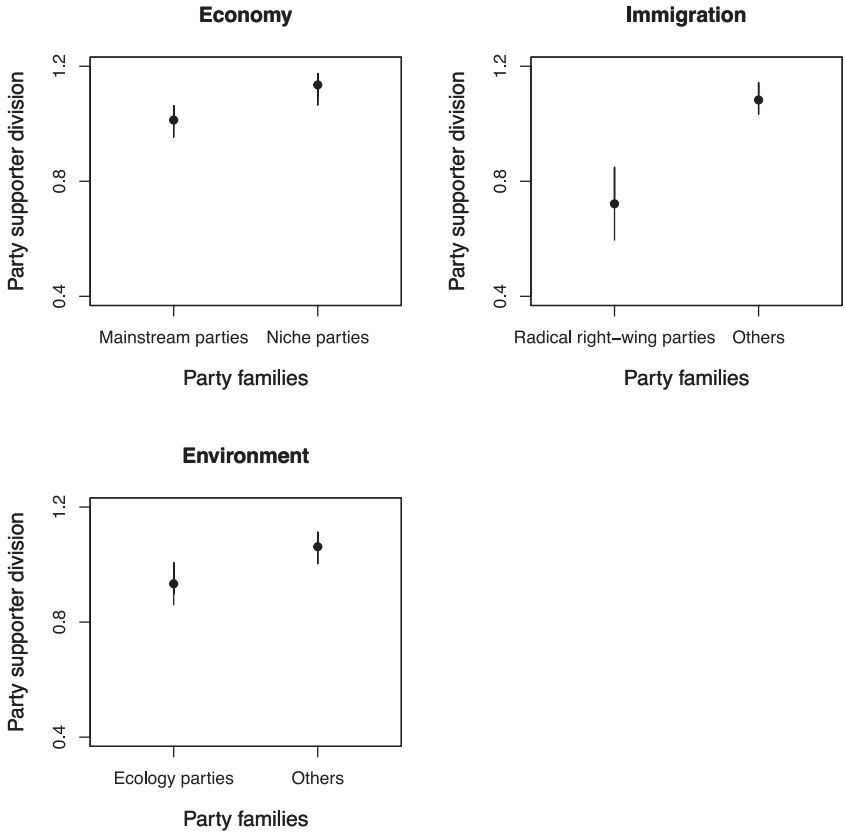

Fig. 5.1. Party Family and Party Supporter Division

Source: EES (2009) for the economy and immigration, and EVS (2008) for the natural environment.

Note: Party supporter division is measured with the standard deviation of party supporters' opinion on each issue. Survey questions for each issue can be found in the appendix. All of the survey responses are normalized to the scale of 1 through 5 for the comparability of standard deviations between issues. Mainstream parties include social democratic, liberal, conservative, and Christian democratic parties, and niche parties comprise radical right-wing parties and ecology parties.

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of party supporter division (measured by the standard deviation of party supporters' opinion by each political party) on the economy, immigration, and the natural environment by party families. The top left graph implies that the party supporters of niche parties are more divided on socioeconomic issues than those of mainstream parties. The top right graph tells us that the supporters of radical right-wing parties hold more homogeneous preferences on

immigration-related issues than those of other political parties. Finally, the bottom left graph shows us that the supporters of ecology parties are more united in their stances on the natural environment issue than those of other political parties.

Niche parties focus significantly on their own, mostly sociocultural, issues, and their supporters vote for niche parties because of the parties' mobilization of and extreme policy positions on the issues as well as because of their policies on traditional socioeconomic issues. While 40.7 percent of the respondents in the EES (2014) indicated an economic issue as an issue that made their vote choice, 25.1 percent of radical right-wing party supporters and 13.0 percent of ecology party supporters did so. On the other hand, while only 5.5 percent of all the respondents pointed out an immigration-related issue as their vote-deciding issue, 28.7 percent of those who voted for a radical right-wing party mainly considered immigration-related issues in their vote choice. Finally, while only 3.6 percent of the respondents took an issue related to the natural environment in their voting behavior, 33.4 percent of ecology party supporters did so.

Therefore, niche party supporters vote for the same political party *despite* their disagreement on socioeconomic issues because they are attracted by the party's ideology, argument, and policy on its core sociocultural (mostly immigration or ecology) issue. In the same way, though the development of sociocultural issues realigned voters' distribution between political parties to some degree, mainstream parties still struggle with their supporters' division on the issues. On the one hand, despite their decrease in size and the weakening of their class voting pattern, manual workers still constitute a significant portion of social democratic parties' supporters and, more importantly, have a part in the parties' policy making through the historical, institutional, and organizational connection between the parties and trade unions (Western 1997). The evidence of the influence of this connection abounds. Social democratic parties' investment-oriented policy positions do not mobilize votes when trade unions are strong and centralized (Abou-Chadi and Wagner 2019), and social democratic parties implement more restrictive immigration policies when manual workers' class voting pattern is strong (Han 2015b). On the other hand, as the share of highly skilled, nonmanual, service sector, and female workers has increased in the labor force, many of them, who hold more libertarian stances than low-skilled, manual, manufacturing sector, and male workers, have increasingly prevailed in the constituencies for social democratic parties. Consequently, these political parties have not gone through the depolarization of their supporters' preferences on sociocultural issues.[1]

Political parties are aware that party supporters are critical to the survival of the parties (Robertson 1976). The internal division between different sects of party supporters sometimes brings in not only electoral loss but also party split. For example, the participation of the Freedom Party of Austria in the coalition government with the Austrian People's Party in 2000 strengthened the party's moderate bloc, and the shift aggravated the party's tensions between pragmatic and extremist factions. The "conflict between the pragmatic party in government and the extra-parliamentary party, where there was little support for neo-liberalism and no appetite for policy compromise, led to" deteriorating internal divisions, the destructive loss in the 2002 election, and eventually the split between the party and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (Luther 2011, 468).

Therefore, when party supporters are divided on an issue, political parties do not want to put the issue as the key agenda in political competition out of fear that it will result in the loss of their core voters. When the Swedish Social Democratic Party was split on the European Union membership referendum in 1994, party leaders adopted a strategy of "wait-and-see" without putting the issue on the official party congress agenda and trying to make a party-level decision (Tsarouhas 2008, 128). Comparatively, van de Wardt (2014) finds that political parties de-emphasize an issue when their own supporters are divided on the issue, and Hobolt and de Vries (2015) conclude that the internal division between party supporters prevents a party from playing a role of issue entrepreneurship.

If political parties do not want an issue to be a key political issue, another plausible strategic tactic, in addition to de-emphasizing the issue, is blurring their position on the issue.[2] By doing so, they attempt to prevent supporters from being disturbed by position distances between themselves and their parties (Rovny 2012, 2013). In the 1980s, as the French Communist Party was torn between party leaders who had to bear in mind the party's solidarity tradition and local party members who observed the inflow of immigrants into their own constituencies, the Rally for the Republic, the mainstream center-right in France, was also divided between sociocultural liberals led by Simone Veil and conservatives headed by Jacques Chirac. Consequently, the two political parties did not commit themselves to a specific and clear policy position on immigration in the 1980s, and their immigration positions turned out to be what Rydgren (2004b) describes as "ambivalent" (166) and "ambiguous" (171).

Many of the relatively "old" radical right-wing parties such as the Freedom Party of Austria and the French National Rally had taken anti-tax and small government stances but begun to blur their economic liberalism

as they increasingly attracted support from people in the lower socioeconomic class. They tried to portray their socioeconomic position as "away from the twin polls of socialism and liberalism" (Davies 1999, 24) by giving it confusing and ambiguous labels such as "social market economy" of the Alliance for the Future of Austria, which proposes a "combination of a basic free market with low taxes and various protectionist measures for small businesses, shopkeepers, and farmers" (Mudde 2007, 124). As Rovny (2013) concludes on radical right-wing party positions on the economy, "taking positions may thus be an inappropriate strategy" when political parties struggle with internal division (4).

Issue Competence and Issue Avoidance

Issue competence indicates voters' perception of parties' capacity to handle and resolve an issue. The perception of issue competence is different from the associative aspect of issue ownership that refers to voters' views on the degree to which parties care about an issue. For example, though a great number of voters in Western Europe associate immigration-related issues with radical right-wing parties, many of them still think the parties' stances on the issues are too extreme.

How is voters' perception of issue competence formed? Some literature proposes that the perception of issue competence originates from the fundamental basis of party politics: political cleavages and the social basis of a political party (Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994; Petrocik 1996). Each of the party families in Western Europe has developed because of new political cleavages such as urbanization, secularization, industrialization, and postmaterialism. They were founded to represent new interests and developed with the politicization and mobilization of new issues. Therefore, political parties traditionally supported by a certain social group are considered not only to sincerely care about the issue of interest to the group but also to be able to adeptly handle the issue. Such an issue also constitutes the key identity of the parties, and thus they try to sustain the identity "that is anchored in the cleavages and issues that gave rise to their birth" (Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994, 24).

Therefore, a voter's partisanship plays a key role in forming her perception of issue competence: i.e., she is likely to acknowledge the issue competence of a political party she supports. For many voters, partisanship, particularly party attachment that pertains to voters' psychological and emotional connection or affection to a political party, works as a perceptual

lens through which voters see the political world (Stubager and Slothuus 2013). They rely on their relationship with their party in acquiring, interpreting, and processing political information and are biased toward information provided by a political party they support. Consequently, party supporters are likely to approve a policy proposed by their political party, acknowledge the salience of an issue emphasized by their political party, and appreciate the issue competence of their political party.

Partisanship, however, does not always lead to the perception of issue competence. Conceptually, a voter who feels attached to and identifies with a political party may not approve of the party's competence on an issue not only because the issue is not the main driving force of her support for the party but also because her partisanship is shaped by nonpolicy factors. Empirically, while most of the people (78.5 percent) who voted for a radical right-wing party in the past election indicated that the radical right-wing party was the best party to handle immigration-related issues, 21.5 percent of them did not do so in the EES (2009). Regarding environmental issues, 5.6 percent of ecology party supporters did not indicate their party as the best party to deal with the issues.

Party behaviors fill in the gap between partisanship and the perception of issue competence and have short-term effects on voters' perception of issue competence. Because the perception of issue competence reflects voters' belief in how successfully and competently a political party handles an issue, voters' perception depends on the real policy performance of the party, particularly when the party was in government (Bélanger 2003; Bellucci 2006). Generally, good economic conditions during government years strengthen the perception of governing parties' competence on economic issues. As a particular example, the British Labour Party struggled with voters' perception of incompetence and dishonesty during the Iraq War due to the government's intelligence failure (Dermody and Hanmer-Lloyd 2006).

Voters' perception of issue competence is also shaped by political parties' communication skills, strategies, and opportunities. Political parties' efforts to develop the perception of competence on an issue may be more successful when the issue is a new issue and no other political party owns competence on the issue yet (Walgrave, Lefevere, and Nuytemans 2009). Nonetheless, it is not impossible for political parties to contest on issue competence owned by other parties and even steal it from them. In particular, the increasing popularity of televised debates among candidates provides them opportunities not only to secure their issue competence but

also to compete on it by emphasizing the issue, proposing a better solution, and winning the debate (Aalberg and Jenssen 2007).

The emergence of sociocultural issues, the rise of niche political parties, and the development of new party-issue linkages have followed this causal structure in Western Europe. A rising number of immigrants, particularly asylum seekers, in the late 1980s and early 1990s not only increased the number of immigrants but also changed the compositional structure of immigrants regarding their skill level and cultural proximity to Western Europe. As many Western European citizens became concerned about the economic and social impacts of the new arrival of many asylum seekers, the discrepancy between people's attitudes toward immigration, in general, became larger, and issues around immigration came to constitute an important political cleavage between voters (Han 2013). The rise of this new cleavage brought in either the foundation of new radical right-wing parties such as the Danish People's Party or the transformation of existing political parties into nativist parties such as the Freedom Party of Austria.

In the same way, the release of scientific reports that revealed the risks of nuclear energy, the devastation of the natural environment due to the growth-oriented capitalistic economic system, and some notable events such as the Finnish government's decision in 1979 to drain a lake that was a protected area for birds set the foundation for environmental social movements and raised the contention level of the natural environment issue (Müller-Rommel 1985; Kitschelt 1986; Rothman and Lichter 1987). Though the natural environment issue has a nature of valence issues—which "merely involve the linking of the parties with some condition that is positively or negatively valued by the electorate" (Stokes 1963, 373)—the issue emerged as a contentious one because the issue still involved tensions between economic growth, resource efficiency, and productivity on the one hand, and environmental protection and sustainable growth on the other hand. Consequently, environmental issues formulated a critical political cleavage between voters and encouraged the foundation of ecology parties in most of the Western European countries.

These niche parties have strengthened voters' perception of competence on their own issue mostly by putting the issue at the front of their political campaign and proposing an alternative that had never been seriously considered and discussed by other political parties. Despite the extremity of the alternatives, they successfully gained the perception of issue competence from a significant faction of voters because an increasing number of them favored such nonmoderate solutions. The parties could

sustain voters' perception of issue competence despite their lack of governing experiences also because voters observed that mainstream parties had increasingly adopted niche party arguments on the issues in their government policies (Han 2015a).

On the other hand, niche parties have not been able to strengthen voters' perception of the parties' competence on socioeconomic issues. As was discussed above, these parties were not founded based on cleavages on socioeconomic issues. Therefore, their own supporters do not necessarily hold similar preferences on the issues, and the parties' main identity was not constructed on these issues. In addition, unlike sociocultural issues that are basically principled issues where ideological commitment matters more than pragmatic solutions, socioeconomic issues have the opposite nature (Tavits 2007). Therefore, while a political party's demonstrating a clear ideological alternative and showing its commitment to the alternative helps it to strengthen voters' perception of the party's competence and integrity on a sociocultural issue, on socioeconomic issues the political party needs to prove its ability to solve real problems through government policies in order to secure voters' perception of competence on those issues. Thus, niche parties' small size and limited opportunity for government participation because mainstream parties are unwilling to form a coalition government with them has made it difficult for voters to develop a perception of competence for niche parties on socioeconomic issues (van Spanje 2010b).

As a result, as figure 5.2 demonstrates, voters have shaped a stronger perception of issue competence for niche parties on sociocultural issues. Radical right-wing parties hold stronger issue competence than other parties on immigration, and ecology parties are considered to be more competent than other parties regarding the natural environment issue. On the other hand, voters' perception of these two party families' competence on socioeconomic issues is significantly weaker than that of mainstream parties.

Knowing the support-increasing effect of issue competence, political parties invest in issues that not only define their identity but also show their competence (Rovny 2012). In the context of American politics, Petrocik (1996) finds that the candidates of both political parties for the 1980 presidential election emphasized issues they were perceived by voters to handle better. While Ronald Reagan (the Republican Party) competed on economic and foreign policy issues, Jimmy Carter (the Democratic Party) focused more on social policies. In the context of Western European politics, radical right-wing parties and ecology parties try to emphasize issues over which they enjoy issue competence: immigration-related

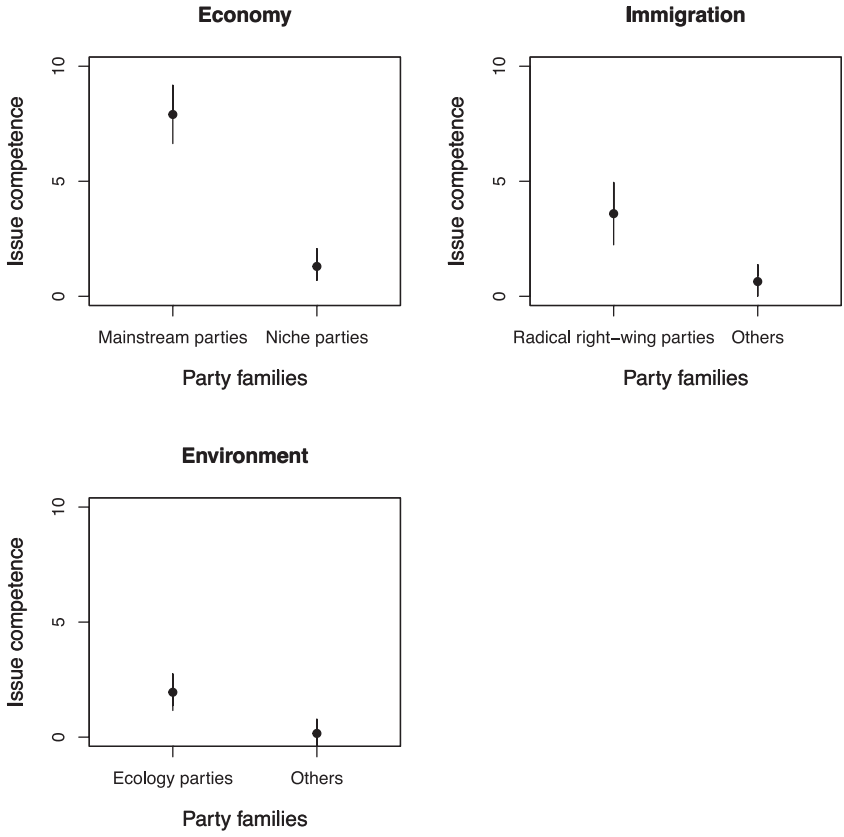

Fig. 5.2. Party Family and Issue Competence

Source: EES (2009).

Note: Issue competence is measured with the average percentage of survey respondents who indicated a political party belonging to each party family as the best political party at dealing with an issue. Mainstream parties include social democratic, liberal, conservative, and Christian democratic parties, and niche parties comprise radical right-wing parties and ecology parties.

issues and the natural environment, respectively (Smith 2010; Klüver and Spoon 2016).

On the other hand, political parties try to avoid an issue on which they do not claim issue competence. Many ecology party leaders did not want to put socioeconomic issues at the center of their political messages in their early periods of party development not only because their supporters were divided between moderates and radicals but also because they could not claim competence on the issues due to their lack of governing experiences (Talshir 2002). Though they made a passionate argument on ecological

renewal of industrial societies, they failed to develop working strategies, make pragmatic suggestions, and design reasonable policy programs (Offe 1998). Even one of the most successful ecology parties in Western Europe, in terms of parliamentary representation and government participation, could not assure voters with their government policies. The German Green Party first joined a government in 1998 and brought policies such as eco-taxes and the phasing out of nuclear energy. These policies, however, were considered by voters to be too unrealistic. Thus, the party ended up undermining voters' confidence in its suitability for government and showing its poor preparation in organizational and programmatic terms (Blühdorn and Szarka 2004).

All in all, mainstream parties and niche parties show similar patterns in their supporters' opinion and issue competence. While mainstream party supporters are more united on socioeconomic issues and divided on sociocultural issues, niche party supporters hold homogeneous stances on their own sociocultural issue but conflicting positions on socioeconomic issues. Mainstream parties claim their competence on socioeconomic issues, but voters acknowledge niche parties' competence on their own sociocultural issue. Consequently, it is expected that mainstream and niche parties will demonstrate different patterns of issue emphasis and position blurring between issues. While mainstream parties are expected to emphasize socioeconomic issues and clarify their positions on the issues, niche parties will do so regarding their own sociocultural issue. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 support such an expectation. The only exception is that ecology parties do not present more unambiguous positions on the natural environment issue than other parties.

The relationship between comparative advantage/disadvantage and issue-competition behavior is theoretically expected and also supported by descriptive data. Is the relationship confirmed by more analytical tests? To answer this question, in the next section I examine the effects of issue advantages/disadvantages on issue-competition behaviors with inferential statistical analyses.

Issue Disadvantages and Issue Avoidance

I empirically test the effects of issue advantages/disadvantages using three major political issues in Western Europe: the economy, immigration, and the natural environment. The two issue-competition tactics (issue emphasis and position blurring) are constructed with the CHES (2010) data on

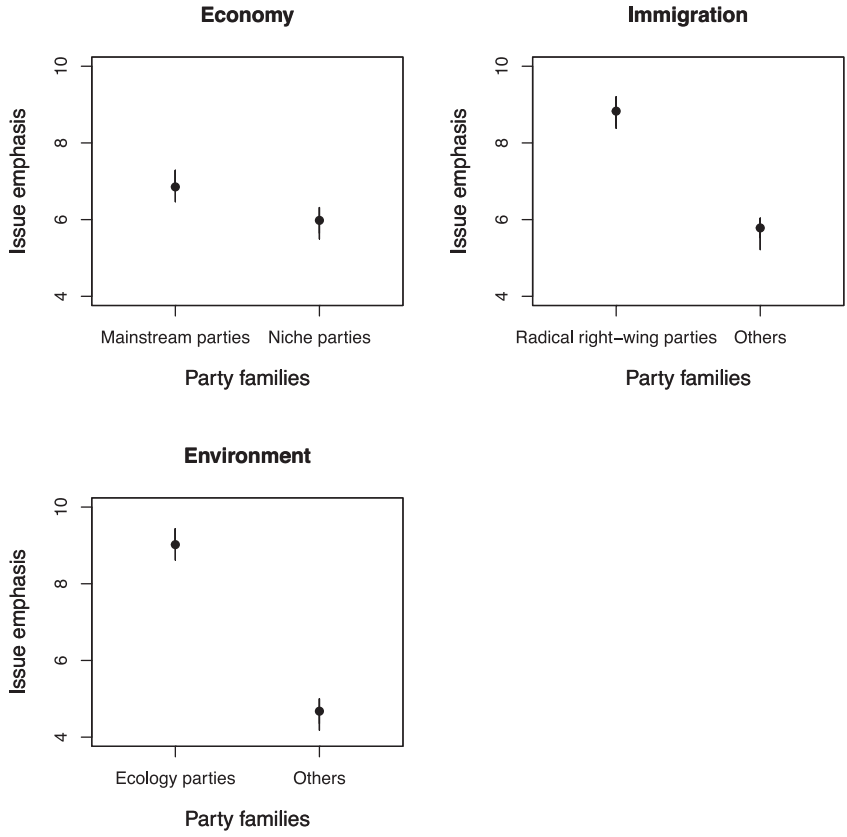

Fig. 5.3. Party Family and Issue Emphasis

Source: CHES (2010).

Note: Salience scores from CHES (2010) are used for issue emphasis. Mainstream parties include social democratic, liberal, conservative, and Christian democratic parties, and niche parties comprise radical right-wing parties and ecology parties.

party salience and party position. Salience scores from CHES (2010) are used for issue emphasis, and the standard deviation (of experts' estimations) measurement is used for position blurring.

I construct political parties' issue competence scores on each issue from the EES (2009). The survey asks respondents what is the most important problem their country faces and which party is best in dealing with the problem. The issue competence for a certain political party indicates the percentage of people who indicate the party, weighted by the percentage of people who suggest the economy, immigration, or the natural environment as the most important problem, respectively. Party supporters' division,

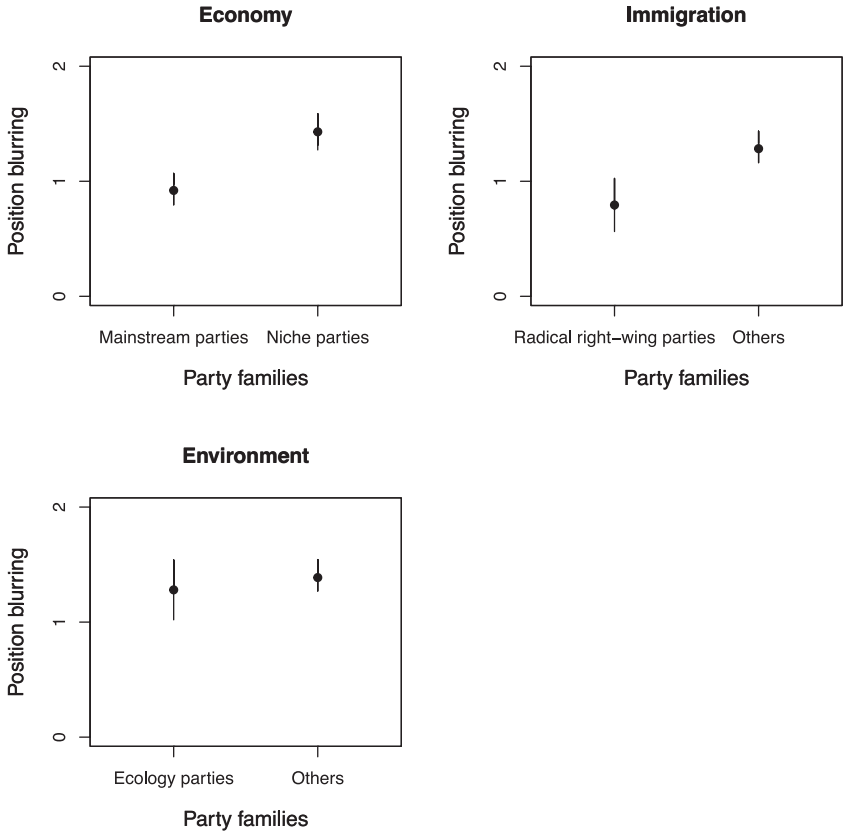

Fig. 5.4. Party Family and Position Blurring

Source: CHES (2010).

Note: Position blurring is measured with the standard deviation of experts' party position estimations regarding each issue. Mainstream parties include social democratic, liberal, conservative, and Christian democratic parties, and niche parties comprise radical right-wing parties and ecology parties.

the second aspect of issue disadvantage, is measured by the standard deviation of the opinion on each issue of people who voted for each political party in the previous election.

I also add the following control variables. As party-specific control variables, extremism in party position may determine both issue emphasis and position blurring. Political parties with extreme positions on an issue tend to want to change the status quo enthusiastically and thus emphasize the issue (Han 2017). In addition, it is difficult to blur extreme positions because of their distinctiveness and visibility (Rabinowitz and Macdonald

1989). Thus party position and its squared term are included in the model to control for the curvilinear effect of party position.

Second, issue dimensionality can be expanded in a system that allows the development and presence of multiple parties (Lijphart 1999). The dynamic of issue competition can be limited in the party system that does not allow a multidimensional issue space. Thus the effective number of political parties is included in the analysis.

Third, the vote share variable needs to be controlled for because the accuracy of experts' party position estimations may be affected by party size. Larger parties not only receive more extensive media coverage but also have more resources for communicating with voters (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2014).

Fourth, skeptics of expert studies suggest that expert judgments are more "stable over time because they average together a broad array of evidence" (Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister 2011, 116). People's certainty about a party's position may be biased by its age. Therefore, party age in years is included in the model.

Finally, while opposition parties are freer in choosing an issue agenda and focusing only on issues that are advantageous to them, incumbent parties are pressured to "respond to issues brought up on the party-system agenda" (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010, 273). Thus, a dummy variable of incumbent parties is included in the analysis.

The results of models 1 and 2 imply that while voters' perception of competence regarding the economy or immigration encourages political parties to emphasize the issue, party supporters' division on an issue discourages them from doing so. The two issue advantage/disadvantage variables have opposite effects on position blurring regarding the economy or immigration (models 4 and 5). Political parties blur their position on an issue when voters do not have strong perceptions of issue competence on the parties or the parties struggle with their internal division on the issue.[3] Such relationships between issue disadvantages and party behaviors, however, are not found regarding the natural environment issue.

In addition, as was theoretically expected, political parties with extreme positions on an issue emphasize the issue and clarify their policy position on the issue. The two variables on policy position (***Position*** and ***Position***^{2}) are statistically significant in all the models except for the model for position blurring on the natural environment.

All in all, results confirm that issue advantages/disadvantages influence political parties' issue-competition behavior of position blurring as well as that of selective issue emphasis, particularly regarding economic issues

TABLE 5.1. Issue Disadvantage and Issue Avoidance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Dependent variable	Issue emphasis			Position blurring		
Issue	Economy	Immigration	Environment	Economy	Immigration	Environment
Issue competence	0.04**	0.02**	−0.01	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.01
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party supporter division	−1.64**	−0.71*	−1.09	0.45*	−0.16	−0.28
	(0.72)	(0.36)	(1.05)	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.26)
Position	−1.63***	−1.66***	−2.05***	0.39***	0.37***	0.17
	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.36)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.16)
Position^2	0.16***	0.17***	0.14***	−0.03***	−0.03***	−0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Effective number of parties	0.01	−0.05	−0.00	−0.00	0.01	−0.01
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.06)
Vote share	0.02	0.03	−0.00	0.02**	0.00	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Party age	0.00	−0.00	0.00	−0.01***	−0.00	−0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Incumbency	0.34	−0.01	0.88***	−0.21	−0.17*	−0.15
	(0.30)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.09)	(0.25)
Constant	10.29***	9.90***	11.84***	0.36	0.90	1.55**
	(0.66)	(0.47)	(1.02)	(0.36)	(0.39)	(0.48)
R^2	0.48	0.79	0.77	0.36	0.18	0.18
Number of observations	100	95	61	100	94	61

Note: Clustered standard errors (by country) in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The ordinary least squares regression model with robust standard errors clustered by country is used. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

and immigration-related issues. My theory also suggests, however, that party-competition environments make political parties choose different strategies on issue emphasis and position blurring, particularly when they struggle with a disadvantage. So it is to these interactive effects of party-competition environments and issue disadvantages on issue-competition behaviors that I now turn.

Party-Competition Environments

When an issue demonstrates a political party's comparative disadvantage but does not draw other political parties' contentious attention, the political party can safely de-emphasize the issue. When the British Labour Party struggled with the intelligence failure on the weapons of mass destruction in the Iraq War, the party could put the issue away from the political agenda because the other mainstream party, the Conservative Party, also did not highlight the issue because of its previous support for the Iraq War.[4] Though the Liberal Democrats tried to mobilize the issue, they could not draw much attention from the electorate by themselves.

Political parties cannot, however, absolutely de-emphasize an issue of a comparative disadvantage when the issue salience level in the party system increases or party polarization on the issue rises. As the case of the Social Democratic Party of Germany in the early 1990s illustrates, political parties, particularly mainstream parties, have to respond to an issue in parliamentary discussions, media interviews, or government policies when other political parties contentiously place the issue on the agenda.

Though many of the political, particularly mainstream, parties in Western Europe have gone through similar socioeconomic transformations such as those caused by European integration, globalization, and the emergence of postmaterialism, they have had different experiences in the politicization of new, particularly sociocultural, issues. Thus, as Grande, Schwarzbözl, and Fatke (2019) propose and find, we need to see how party competition and party politics have determined political parties' responses to the issues and the extent to which the issues are politicized in the party system.

First, political parties have responded to new issues differently due to the dissimilar dynamics of political coalition. For example, the two center-right mainstream parties in Denmark (the Conservative People's Party and the Liberals) did not emphasize immigration-related issues in the early 1990s because they needed the support of the Social Liberals, which held a more centrist position on immigration than the two right-wing parties.

Therefore, in an effort to gain the support of the Social Liberals, the Conservative People's Party and the Liberals focused less on immigration and more on economic issues. But after the Social Liberals joined the coalition government with the Social Democrats in 1993, the right-wing parties "had no reason to avoid confrontation with the Social Liberals" (Green-Pedersen and Odmalm 2008, 372) and began to politicize immigration-related issues.

The dynamics of political coalition constrained the Swedish Moderate Party as well. The party did not bring up immigration-related issues much in its manifestos or electoral campaigns in the 1990s because it wanted to maintain a right-wing alliance with other central parties (the Liberals and the Centre Party). There were divisions between the Moderate Party and other center-right parties in the alliance over non-economic issues (e.g., nuclear power) in the 1980s that led to the collapse of the right-wing government in the 1990s. The Liberals clearly had a less restrictive position on immigration and integration than the Moderate Party as well, so the Moderate Party tried to avoid bringing up the issues and causing conflicts within the right-wing alliance (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008).

Political parties' prospects and strategy for future coalitions have shaped their behaviors on the natural environment issue, too. The government participation of the Greens in Austria had not been expected due to the long-term grand coalition of two mainstream parties (the Austrian People's Party and the Social Democratic Party of Austria). Even after the Austrian People's Party began to form a coalition with the Freedom Party of Austria, the coalition of the Greens and the Social Democratic Party of Austria remained unlikely not only because of the minority status of the left-wing bloc coalition but also because of the former's reluctance to join a government (Müller and Fallend 2004). Therefore, the Social Democratic Party of Austria did not emphasize the natural environment issue in the 2000s, compared with other social democratic parties in Western Europe.[5]

A German case demonstrates the opposite pattern on environmental issues. After the formation of the coalition government of Christian Democrats (the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union) and the Free Democratic Party, the popularity of the latter dropped because of some policy mistakes and personnel changes, while German voters were increasingly attracted to the Green Party. Consequently, the Green Party rose as an important plausible coalition partner of the Christian Democratic Union in the next election cycle, and the right-wing party began to consider tactics that could make the party more compatible as a future coalition partner for the Green Party. As a result, also as a response

to the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Angela Merkel announced her plan to shut down eight nuclear reactors and completely phase out all the other reactors by 2022 (Kayser and Rehmert 2021).

Second, political parties have responded to new issues in their salience and position in different ways because they have had different experiences of the electoral challenges from niche parties. The political success of niche parties has pushed parties, particularly mainstream parties, to shift their position toward those of niche parties (van Spanje 2010a; Spoon and Hobolt 2014). Nonetheless, center-right and center-left mainstream parties have responded differently. As for the radical right and immigration, center-left mainstream parties adopt a more restrictive position on immigration more reluctantly and less substantially than center-right ones for both ideological and political reasons (Han 2015a; Abou-Chadi 2016; Schumacher and van Kersbergen 2016).[6] For the same reason, center-left mainstream parties have adopted pro-environmental policies more actively than center-right ones (Carter 2013).

Therefore, it is expected that the political success of a niche party leads to the polarization of party positions on the niche party issue as well as the increase of the issue salience level because it draws political parties that are closer to the niche party to its position more than those parties on the other side of the issue dimension. Data support this expectation. Following previous literature (Dalton 2008; Lupu 2015), I measure party system polarization with the weighted sum of squared distances between each party position and the weighted average of all the parties' positions:

$$P = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \omega_i \left(p_i - p^* \right)^2, \tag{5.1}$$

where i indicates each party, n denotes the number of all the parties, ω_j represents the party i's vote share, p_i signifies party i's position, and p^* means the weighted average of all the parties' positions (by their vote share).

The top two graphs in figure 5.5 demonstrate that party positions on immigration are more polarized in countries where radical right-wing parties have been more successful. In the same way, political parties are more polarized in their positions on the natural environment when ecology parties successfully gain parliamentary representation (the bottom two graphs).

Finally, Akkerman (2015) suggests that the impact of the radical right on center-right mainstream parties' positions on immigration cannot be generalized. Different party families in the right-wing bloc hold different

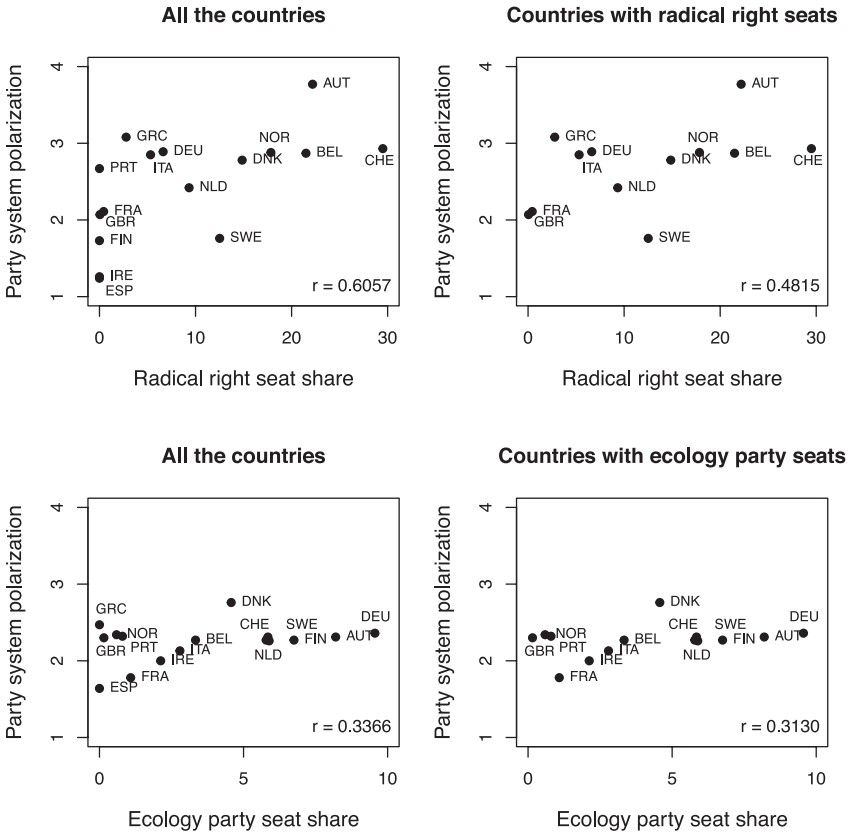

Fig. 5.5. Niche Party Parliamentary Seat Share and Party System Polarization

Note: AUT: Austria; BEL: Belgium; DNK: Denmark; FIN: Finland; FRA: France; DEU: Germany; GRC: Greece; IRE: Ireland; ITA: Italy; NLD: the Netherlands; NOR: Norway; PRT: Portugal; ESP: Spain; SWE: Sweden; CHE: Switzerland; GBR: the United Kingdom. Niche party seat share indicates the average parliamentary seat share of radical right-wing parties or ecology parties since 2000 in each country. Party system polarization is the average standard deviation of political parties' positions on three immigration issues (except for the radical right) in the CHES (2006, 2010, and 2014) or average standard deviation of political parties' positions on the natural environment (except for ecology parties) in the CHES (2010 and 2014) (the CHES (2006) does not have a variable on party position on the environment). Countries without a radical right-wing party or an ecology party in the legislature were excluded in the two right-side graphs.

stances on different aspects of policies regarding immigration due to their own ideological tradition and commitment. Policies regarding immigration are typically categorized into "immigration policies" that regulate the number of new immigrants and "immigrant policies" that define the political, economic, and social rights and benefits of immigrants. Liberal parties are more receptive to open immigration policies than are Christian Demo-

crats and conservative parties due to their belief in a free market and open borders as well as their political relationship with employers who want cheap labor (Duncan and Van Hecke 2008). Regarding immigrant policies, though both Christian Democrats and conservative parties hold restrictive stances because of their emphasis on nationalism and law and order, Christian Democrats' tradition of interventionist welfare policies is also extended to immigrants. Therefore, they do not demonstrate restrictive views on issues such as family reunification and immigrants' social rights (Akkerman 2015).

Consequently, the pattern and contentiousness of party competition on immigration will be different depending on the ideological profile of center-right mainstream parties as well as particular issues on immigration. For example, because Christian Democrats and conservative parties hold more restrictive positions on immigration policies than do liberal parties, this immigration issue will be more contentious between a center-left mainstream party and a center-right one when the latter is either a Christian Democrat or a conservative party. When immigrant policies are on the agenda, immigration will become a contentious issue, particularly when a conservative party dominates the right-wing bloc. Therefore, the ideological tradition and profile of mainstream, particularly center-right, parties will result in different modes of party competition on immigration and influence which particular aspects of immigration are more politicized in the party system.

In addition, the levels of salience and contentiousness on socioeconomic issues in the party system also vary between countries and between time periods. Above all, socioeconomic issues matter more when economic conditions are adverse (Wlezien 2005). Political parties will distribute more resources to these issues in their communication with voters and competition with other political parties to make an appeal to voters who struggle with poor economies. Indeed, the average party salience scores on socioeconomic issues in each country from the CHES (2006, 2010, 2014) are positively correlated with unemployment rates (r = 0.5001, p-value = 0.0004). Adverse economic conditions, particularly economic crises, polarize party positions on socioeconomic issues as well (Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch 2016). As can be observed in the economic crises in southern European countries in the late 2000s, an economic crisis not only intensifies but also justifies radical alternatives to the current economic system, such as the populist left-wing argument on workers' control of and participation in economic decision making (Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1988; Font, Graziano, and Tsakatika 2021). Rising income inequality also poten-

tially moves the socioeconomic positions of center-left parties to the left, particularly when voters on the left-wing side of the ideological spectrum are strongly mobilized in elections (Pontusson and Rueda 2010).[7]

What is the relationship between party system polarization and party system salience? Does one aspect of party-competition environments tend to lead to the other? Political parties may want to emphasize an issue and highlight their distinct position on the issue when they have divergent positions on the issue. Political parties may want to emphasize an issue on which their positions are polarized also because positional polarization helps voters to actively use the issue as a base of their vote choice by making political parties' positional differences as cueing information more visible and making the issue "more emotionally laden in voters' mind" (Lachat 2008, 688).

Nonetheless, as my general argument in this book suggests, whether political parties want to put salience on an issue also depends on their issue advantages or disadvantages. Though party system polarization motivates a political party to emphasize the issue, it may not actually do so if it struggles with an issue disadvantage such as party supporter division or a lack of issue competence. Therefore, I suggest that party system polarization and salience shapes party-competition environments, but the two aspects are not necessarily correlated in a certain way. Empirically, though the correlation between party system polarization and party system salience is positive and moderately high for the natural environment (r = 0.3064), those for economy (r = 0.0354) and immigration (r =-0.0386) are neither consistent nor high in my data.

All in all, political parties, particularly mainstream parties, have politicized and mobilized new sociocultural issues in different ways. Western European political parties have not been identical in handling socioeconomic issues in their party program as well. Consequently, Western European countries have observed differences in how salient each issue is in the party system and how polarized party positions on the issues are.

Issue Disadvantages, Party-Competition Environments, and Issue Competition

I empirically test the argument on how issue disadvantages and party-competition environments determine political parties' issue-competition behaviors using three major political issues in Western Europe. I use the same issue-competition behavior variables (issue emphasis and position

blurring), issue advantage/disadvantage variables (issue competence and party supporter division), and control variables that I employed in table 5.1.

In addition to these variables, two features of party-competition environments—party system salience and polarization—are measured with the average party salience score in each country regarding each issue and the standard deviation of party positions in each country on each issue, respectively. The CHES (2010) data on party salience and party position are used. Because I hypothesize that party-competition environments have an interactive effect with issue advantages/disadvantages on party behaviors, I employ interaction terms of each of these issue advantage/disadvantage and party-competition environment variables.

Models in table 5.2 test the interactive effects of party-competition environments and issue advantages/disadvantages on political parties' issue emphasis. Models 1 and 2 examine party behavior on economic issues, models 3 and 4 analyze immigration-related issues, and models 5 and 6 take in the natural environment issue. For each issue, models 1, 3, and 5 employ party system salience level as a party-competition environment variable, and models 2, 4, and 6 use party position polarization to indicate another aspect of the party-competition environment.

Overall, the coefficients of the interaction terms of party-competition environments and issue competence are statistically significant with a negative sign, and those of the interaction terms of party-competition environments and party supporter division are statistically significant with a positive sign.[8] The interaction terms, however, are not quite statistically significant for the natural environment issue.

What do the statistical results tell us about the actual meaning of the conditional effects of issue disadvantages? The interactive effects of party-competition environments and issue advantages/disadvantages on issue emphasis are graphically presented in figure 5.6 (the economy) and figure 5.7 (immigration). The vertical axes of the top two graphs in figure 5.6 indicate the conditional coefficients and their confidence intervals of the issue competence variable at different levels of party-competition environments.[9] Though the top left graph does not show any significant interactive effect of issue competence and party system salience level, the top right graph demonstrates that while issue competence encourages political parties to emphasize economic issues (i.e., a lack of issue competence encourages political parties to de-emphasize economic issues) when party positions on the issues are not polarized, the issue competence effect disappears when they are. In other words, when economic issues are not contentious issues in the party system, political parties that are not seen by

TABLE 5.2. Party-Competition Environment, Issue Disadvantage, and Issue Emphasis

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Issue	Economy		Immigration		Environment	
Party-competition environment	Salience	Polarization	Salience	Polarization	Salience	Polarization
Party-competition environment	0.01	−0.64	0.24	−0.74	1.54***	−2.03
	(0.33)	(0.56)	(0.19)	(0.61)	(0.18)	(1.65)
Issue competence	−0.00	−0.05	0.03	0.04	0.00	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party-competition environment	0.05	−0.20**	−0.10*	−0.10	−0.00	0.00
× Issue competence	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Party supporter division	−0.04	−1.30	−1.47***	−0.39	−1.43**	0.39
	(1.83)	(1.62)	(0.44)	(0.88)	(0.44)	(0.88)
Party-competition environment	3.81*	6.81**	1.45***	4.22**	4.06**	−8.02
× Party supporter division	(2.00)	(3.04)	(0.32)	(1.40)	(1.26)	(5.43)
Position	−0.98**	−0.98*	−1.11***	−0.84**	−1.76***	−1.76***
	(0.38)	(0.47)	(0.32)	(0.31)	(0.25)	(0.35)
Position^2	0.10*	0.10*	0.13***	0.11***	0.11***	0.12**
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.04)
Effective number of parties	−0.26***	−0.25***	0.11	0.13	0.02	0.11
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.04)	(0.16)
Vote share	0.00	−0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	−0.02
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Party age	0.01**	0.01**	0.00	−0.00	−0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Incumbency	−0.11	−0.15	0.27	0.08	0.58***	0.67***
	(0.51)	(0.47)	(0.50)	(0.48)	(0.16)	(0.14)
Constant	8.64***	8.39***	6.54***	6.08***	10.06***	9.97***
	(0.88)	(1.12)	(1.04)	(1.16)	(0.56)	(1.26)
R^2	0.34	0.37	0.51	0.44	0.89	0.79
Number of observations	100	100	95	95	61	61

Note: Clustered standard errors (by country) in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The ordinary least squares regression model with robust standard errors clustered by country is used. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

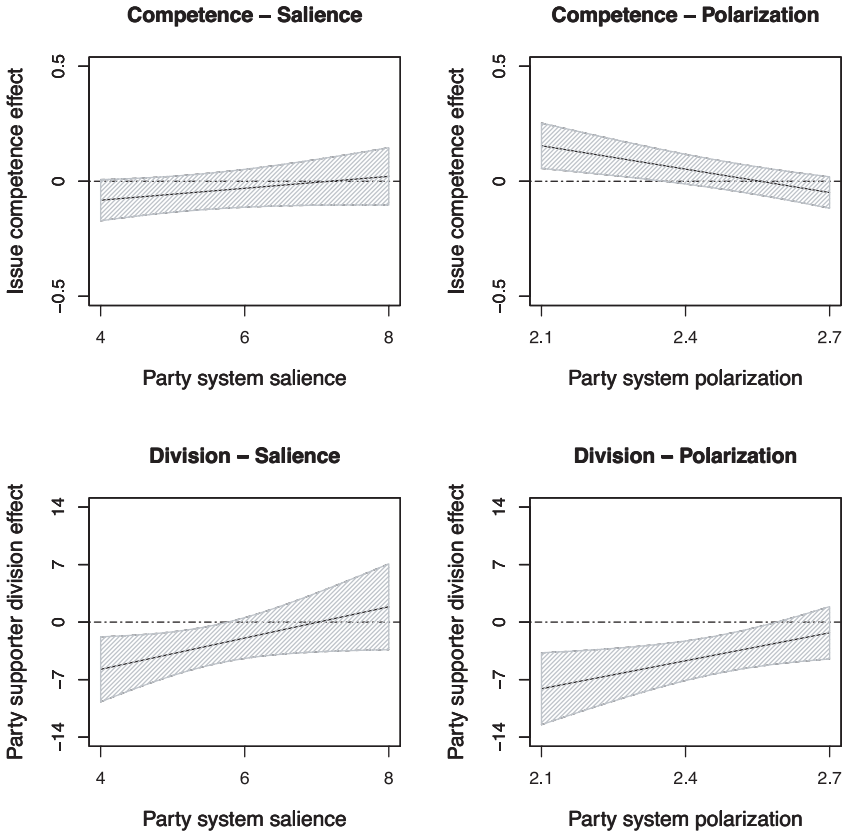

Fig. 5.6. Party-Competition Environment, Issue Disadvantage, and Issue Emphasis (Economy)

Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in table 5.2.

voters as competent on the economy de-emphasize economic issues more than other parties. When economic issues are, however, contentious issues, political parties do not de-emphasize the issues despite their lack of issue competence.

The two bottom graphs show a similar relationship between party supporter division, party-competition environments, and issue emphasis. A political party de-emphasizes economic issues that divide its own supporters when the issues are not salient issues in the party system or party positions on the issues are not polarized. As the issues become salient or contentious, however, party supporters' division does not make the party de-emphasize the issues anymore, that is, political parties whose support-

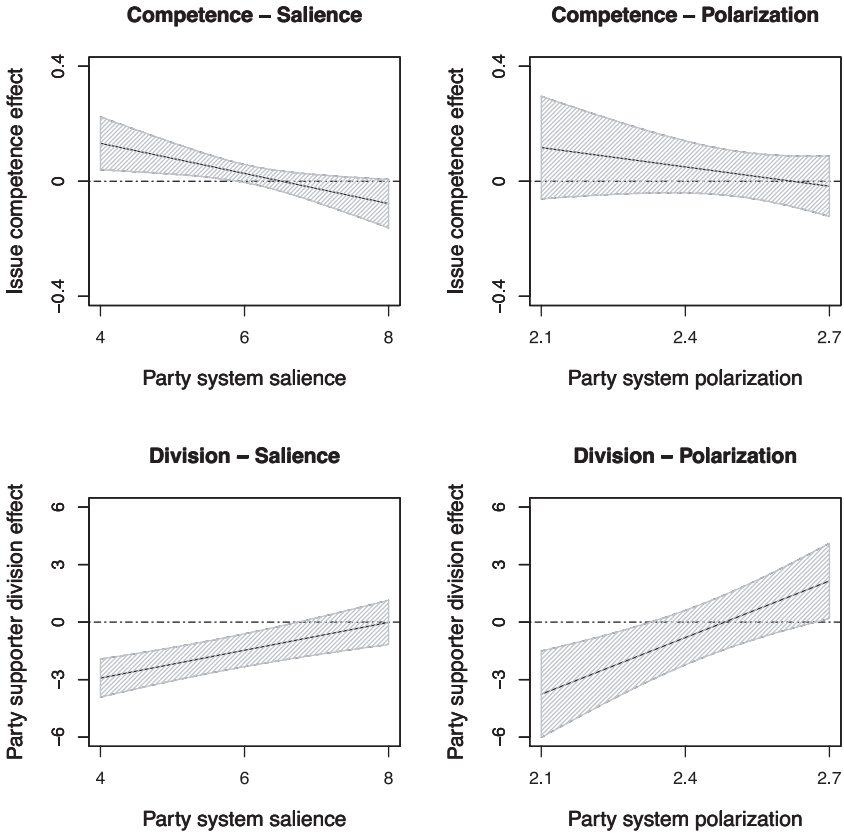

Fig. 5.7. Party-Competition Environment, Issue Disadvantage, and Issue Emphasis (Immigration)

Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in table 5.2.

ers are divided on economic issues do not de-emphasize the issues more than other parties.

Significant interactive effects are found in all the interaction terms regarding immigration-related issues except for one with party system polarization and issue competence in table 5.2. The graphs in figure 5.7 tell us that issue disadvantages discourage a political party from emphasizing the issues only when the issues are neither salient nor contentious issues in party competition. Political parties that struggle with a lack of issue competence de-emphasize immigration only when it is not a salient issue in the party system. In the same way, political parties whose supporters hold

heterogeneous stances on immigration de-emphasize the issue either when it is not a salient issue or it is not a contentious issue. When the issues are salient or contentious issues, issue disadvantages do not make a difference in political parties' issue emphasis.

How does the same combination of party-competition environments and issue advantages/disadvantages determine political parties' position blurring? Results in table 5.3 answer this question. We find the same results on the two sets of interaction terms. While the coefficients of the interaction terms of party-competition environments and issue competence are statistically significant with a negative sign, those of the interaction terms of party-competition environments and party supporter division are statistically significant with a positive sign.[10]

Though the interaction terms in table 5.3 demonstrate the same results as those in table 5.2, the substantive interpretation provides us quite a different implication. Graphs in figure 5.8 tell us that while issue disadvantages do not have an effect on position blurring when economic issues are neither salient nor contentious issues, they motivate political parties to present an ambiguous position when they are. Political parties who struggle either with a lack of issue competence or their supporters' division present an ambiguous position on the economy only when the economy is a salient or contentious issue in the party system.[11]

The same implication is discovered in figure 5.9 regarding immigration-related issues, except for the model on issue competence and party system salience (the top left graph). When immigration-related issues are neither salient nor contentious issues, issue disadvantages do not make political parties blur their position on the issues. It is only when the issues are salient or contentious issues that political parties blur their position because of their disadvantages on the issues. In sum, political parties that hold an issue disadvantage of either a lack of issue competence of party supporters' division blur their immigration position, particularly when it is salient or contentious in the party system.

The empirical results in this section are summarized in table 5.4. Though not all the different combinations of issue disadvantage, party-competition environment, and issue have the same result, the overall results tell us the following. When a political party holds an issue disadvantage, the issue disadvantage makes the party de-emphasize the issue only when the issue is neither a salient nor a contentious issue in party competition. When political parties in the party system emphasize the issue or present divergent party positions, the disadvantage leads not to the party's de-emphasis on the issue but to the party's position blurring. In other words,

TABLE 5.3. Party-Competition Environment, Issue Disadvantage, and Position Blurring

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Issue	Economy		Immigration		Environment	
Party-competition environment	Salience	Polarization	Salience	Polarization	Salience	Polarization
Party-competition environment	0.05	0.04	0.16*	−0.17	0.38	−0.83
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.17)	(0.23)	(0.74)
Issue competence	−0.03**	−0.02	−0.01	0.03	−0.02***	−0.01*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party-competition environment	−0.02*	−0.02*	−0.01	−0.07**	−0.01***	0.02
× Issue competence	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.00)	(0.02)
Party supporter division	1.32**	0.53	0.06	0.20	−0.03	0.34
	(0.49)	(0.39)	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.28)	(0.55)
Party-competition environment	1.01**	−0.13	0.71**	1.08*	0.79	−3.87
× Party supporter division	(0.44)	(0.55)	(0.26)	(0.50)	(0.75)	(2.47)
Position	0.24*	0.24	0.36***	0.40***	0.24	0.28*
	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.15)	(0.13)
Position^2	−0.02*	−0.02	−0.03***	−0.03***	−0.02	−0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Effective number of parties	−0.01	−0.05*	−0.02	−0.05	−0.01	0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.09)
Vote share	0.00	−0.00	−0.00	−0.00	0.01	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party age	−0.00	0.00	−0.00	−0.00	−0.00	−0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Incumbency	−0.12	−0.09	−0.16	−0.15	−0.20	−0.18
	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Constant	0.88***	1.04***	0.85**	1.07***	1.19**	0.88*
	(0.21)	(0.33)	(0.30)	(0.27)	(0.42)	(0.45)
R^2	0.23	0.16	0.32	0.31	0.32	0.22
Number of observations	99	99	94	94	61	61

Note: Clustered standard errors (by country) in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The ordinary least squares regression model with robust standard errors clustered by country is used. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

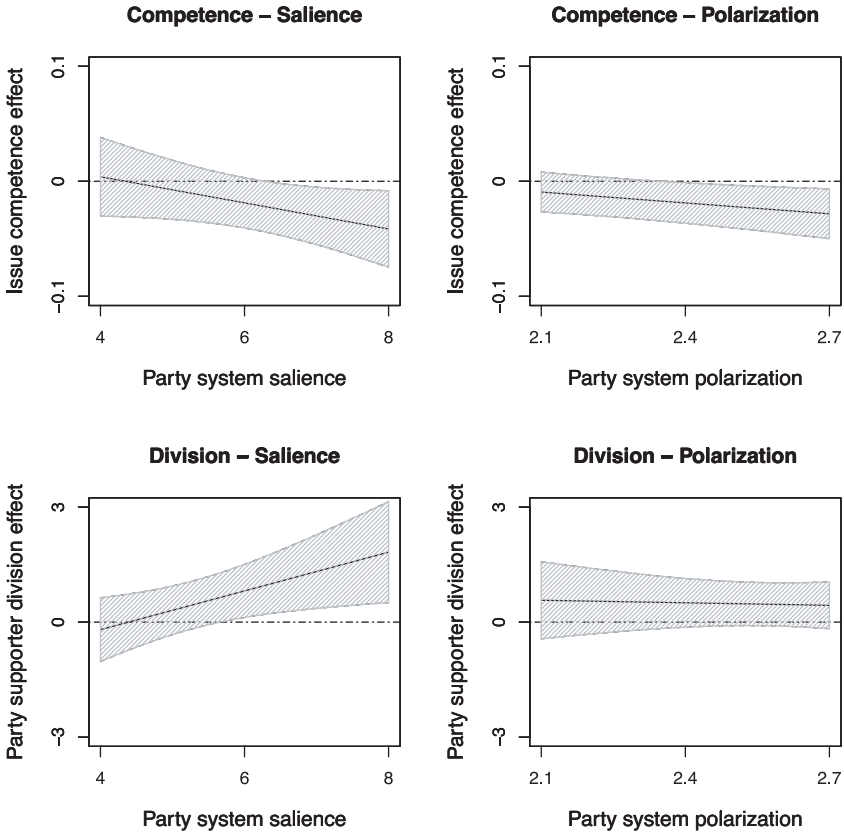

Fig. 5.8. Party-Competition Environment, Issue Disadvantage, and Position Blurring (Economy)

Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in table 5.3.

when an issue is placed on the agenda as an arguable issue, political parties cannot avoid confronting the issue despite their disadvantage. In that case they become more reliant on the tactic of position blurring to divert voters' attention from the issue.

The Absence of Issue Competition on the Natural Environment Issue?

The results so far demonstrate that party-competition environments and issue advantages/disadvantages interactively determine political parties'

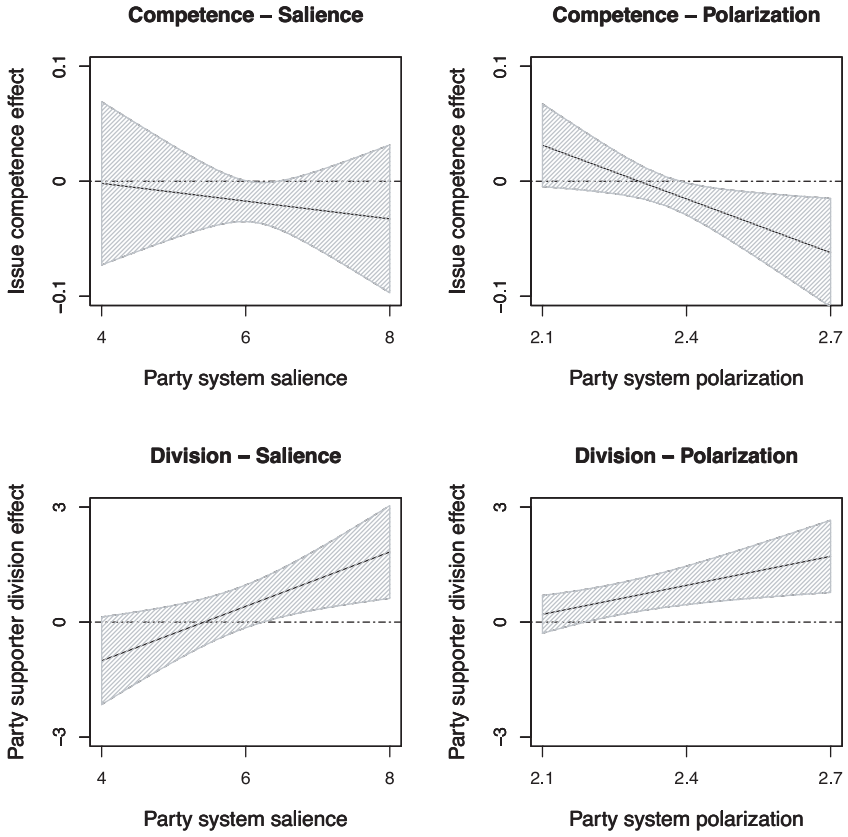

Fig. 5.9. Party-Competition Environment, Issue Disadvantage, and Position Blurring (Immigration)

Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in table 5.3.

issue-competition behaviors of issue emphasis and position blurring. Such relationships are found regarding economic and immigration issues, but not regarding the natural environment issue. Why do political parties not show the behaviors of issue competition regarding the natural environment issue?

One plausible explanation for a lack of the strategic behaviors of issue emphasis and position blurring regarding the natural environment issue is that unlike the economy and immigration, the natural environment has a character of valence issue (van der Brug 2004). Voters incorporate the positional evaluation of a political party regarding valence issues less actively

TABLE 5.4. Summary of Results on Issue Disadvantage, Party-Competition Environment, and Issue Competition

Issue disadvantage	Issue	Issue emphasis				Position blurring			
		Party salience		Party polarization		Party salience		Party polarization	
		Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
A lack of issue competence	**Economy**	Ø	Ø	–	Ø	Ø	+	Ø	+
	Immigration	–	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	+
Party supporter division	**Economy**	–	Ø	–	Ø	Ø	+	Ø	Ø
	Immigration	–	Ø	–	Ø	Ø	+	Ø	+

than regarding positional issues because voters, as well as political parties, hold similar positions on such issues (Clark 2009).[12] In such a case, political parties may not need to de-emphasize the natural environment issue or blur their position on the issue not only because they hold similar positions on the issue but also voters do not seriously take into account party positions.[13]

Nonetheless, we can expect that strategic issue-competition behaviors are adopted sincerely by political parties also regarding a valence issue. Because political parties share similar positions on such an issue, they cannot compete on their issue *position*. The only way to compete is by competing over the *issue* itself, and the tactics of issue competition may actually be more employed regarding valence issues (Dolezal et al. 2014).

An alternative explanation is provided by Abou-Chadi (2016), who finds that mainstream parties emphasize issues related to multiculturalism and adopt more restrictive positions on the issues as radical right-wing parties achieve electoral success. Mainstream parties' position and emphasis on issues related to the natural environment, however, are not affected by the electoral success of ecology parties. He suggests that issue competition on the natural environment does not occur because ecology parties dominate political discourse on the issue more strongly than radical right-wing parties direct the political agenda on immigration. Other parties may have a strategic disincentive to compete on the issue due to the nature of the natural environment issue as a valence issue and the strong issue ownership of ecology parties on the issue. De Sio and Weber (2014) also find that political parties emphasize an issue that enables them not only to broaden their party base but also to mobilize their core voters, particularly when issue ownership is less clear among parties.

But although issue ownership, or issue competence, on the natural environment issue held by ecology parties may be stronger than, for example, that on immigration-related issues owned by radical right-wing parties or that on economic issues held by mainstream parties, the salience level of the natural environment issue is much lower than those of economy and immigration issues. The EES (2009) shows us that while 60.6 percent of people indicated economic issues such as economic conditions and unemployment and 7.2 percent of the respondents pointed out immigration-related issues as the most important problem their country faces, only 2.4 percent of people responded that environmental issues such as environment and climate change are the most important problem. Therefore, a lack of issue competition on the natural environment may be driven not by the strong issue ownership of ecology parties regarding the issue but by its low salience level.[14]

Different party organizations also provide a plausible explanation for a lack of issue competition regarding the natural environment issue. Ecology parties are activist-dominated with a philosophical emphasis on grassroots democracy (Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013). Thus this structural aspect of ecology parties facilitates the participation of party activists in the party decision-making process and institutionalizes their control over the parties. This bottom-up structure of ecology parties is particularly contrary to that of another niche party family, radical right-wing parties, which has centralized party organization and relies more on charismatic leadership to rally the faithful (Pedahzur and Brichta 2002). Because party activists are more policy-seeking than party leaders (Müller and Strøm 1999), their preferences are not quite as responsive to changes in party-competition environments (Adams et al. 2006). Lehrer (2012) also finds that "inclusive" parties that are characterized by a low offices-to-selectors ratio respond to external political environments such as the median voter position less than do "exclusive" parties that have a high ratio. Though I did not examine the issue-competition behaviors of distinct party families separately, such a unique party organizational characteristic of ecology parties may drive a lack of overall issue-competition behaviors of political parties regarding the natural environment issue.

All in all, party-competition behaviors on the natural environment issue are found to be more inconsistent, complicated, or weak than those on other issues such as immigration. Regardless of whether these incoherent, confounded, or not-robust conclusions are driven by the nature of the issue (e.g., valence vs. positional issue), the characteristics of the party-issue relationship (e.g., issue ownership or salience level), or the traits of political parties (e.g., party organization), more research needs to be done regarding the disparity between two major niche parties (radical right-wing parties and ecology parties) and between two representative sociocultural issues (immigration-related issues and the natural environment issue) with comparative perspectives.

Party Family and Position Blurring on the Economy and Immigration

Certain arrangements of party-competition environments, such as party system salience and polarization, activate the position-blurring effect of issue disadvantages. Empirical results show that these effects are more significant regarding economic and immigration issues than the natural environment issue.

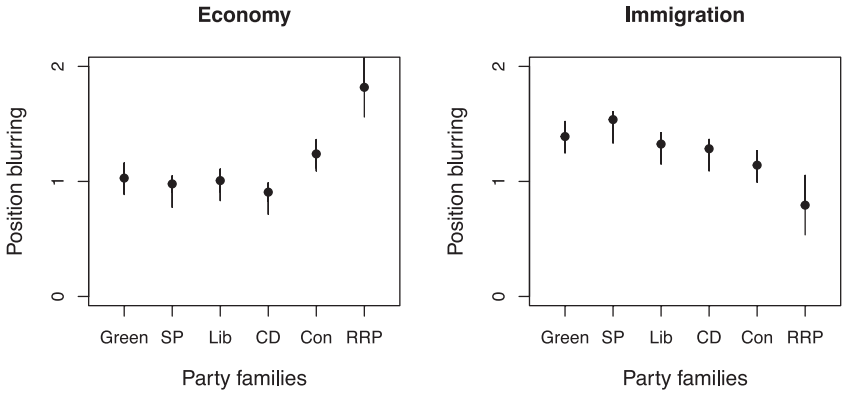

Fig. 5.10. Party Family and Position Blurring on the Economy and Immigration
Source: CHES (2010).
Note: Party families include Green (ecology parties), SP (social democratic parties), Lib (liberal parties), CD (Christian democratic parties), Con (conservative parties), and RRP (radical right-wing parties). Position blurring is measured with the standard deviation of experts' party position estimations regarding each issue.

Also, figure 5.4 illustrates that while niche parties present more ambiguous positions on the economy than do mainstream parties, mainstream parties blur their immigration position more than radical right-wing parties. Nonetheless, further differences in position blurring on each issue between party families are found. Figure 5.10 shows that radical right-wing parties present more ambiguous positions on the economy than any other party family. Regarding immigration, social democratic parties seem to blur their immigration position to a greater extent than do other mainstream parties.

Radical right-wing parties have struggled not only with a lack of competence but also with the disagreement between two main constituencies (manual workers and small business owners) of theirs on the issue (Ivarsflaten 2005). Though in recent years many of the parties have increasingly emphasized socioeconomic issues with a more centrist position, radical right-wing parties' socioeconomic positions still remain more ambiguous than those of other political parties (Rovny and Polk 2020).

In the same way, social democratic parties' traditional commitment to ideologies of equality, justice, and fairness and the presence of constituencies with these ideological beliefs have strengthened the parties' dilemma regarding immigration-related issues. While their pro-immigration stance conflicts not only with public opinion but also with the demand of their

major constituency (manual workers) on immigration control, their anti-immigration position shift has failed to create among voters the perception of sincerity, competence, and integrity due to their previous footpaths on defending the social and economic underclass (Williams 2006). In this dilemma, many social democratic parties might have wanted to blur their immigration position to diffuse the issue and avoid disturbing their core supporters.

Therefore, the position-blurring behaviors of these two party families (radical right-wing parties on the economy and social democratic parties on immigration) and their effects on each party family's support base will be examined in the following chapters.

Summary and Discussion

The theory of adaptive political parties argues that political parties search for optimal party positions by evaluating each plausible position with available information when they compete over position (Kollman, Miller, and Page 1992). Political parties need to consider the distribution of public opinion as an "electoral landscape" (Kollman, Miller, and Page 1998) and past election results as "learning material" (Laver 2005).

Political parties also need to go through this adaptive process when they compete over issues; they need to think about how much benefit an issue brings and what is the cost to them. They will consider it favorable to place an issue on their agenda as a major political issue and compete with other parties on it when they have certain strengths, assets, or advantages on the issue. But they will believe that it is harmful to draw voters' attention to an issue and compete over the issue when they have certain weaknesses, liabilities, or disadvantages on the issue.

While most of the previous literature either on selective emphasis or on issue competition presumes that emphasizing or de-emphasizing an issue is the only tool in issue competition, I suggest that position blurring is another effective means of competing over issues and has a similar effect as issue emphasis: the behavior of position blurring on an issue dissuades voters from considering the issue in their party choice.

Political parties may want to use both issue-competition tactics as complements to each other. Nonetheless, certain party-competition environments determine the relative effectiveness of the two tactics, and so the two behaviors are also used as substitutes for each other. When political parties

cannot completely neglect an issue despite their issue disadvantage due to the constraint of party-competition environments, they rely strongly on position blurring as an alternate tool to divert voters' attention.

The findings in this chapter help to reconcile two seemingly contradictory findings of the studies on the electoral consequences of position blurring. While the "obfuscation" literature in American politics implies that position blurring (on socioeconomic issues) has a negative electoral effect (Shepsle 1972; Enelow and Hinich 1981), the literature on Western European party politics suggests that position blurring on socioeconomic issues brings a positive electoral effect to at least some families of political parties (e.g., radical right-wing parties) (Rovny 2013; Somer-Topcu 2015). The different degrees of the importance of socioeconomic issues to political parties in these two different party systems may cause different electoral effects of position blurring. In other words, position blurring may have a negative effect because socioeconomic issues are prime issues for American political parties. In Western Europe, niche parties, in particular, will benefit from ambiguous positions on the issues because the issues are only secondary issues for those parties.

SIX

Radical Right-Wing Parties' Position Blurring on the Economy

Radical right-wing parties are well known for their ambiguous positions on socioeconomic issues. McGann and Kitschelt (2005) observe that the Freedom Party of Austria's "appeal on these issues is ambiguous, and as a result attracts a diverse electorate" (159), and Rydgren (2007) comments on radical right-wing parties in general and states that "the picture is more ambiguous as far as economic policies are concerned" (245).

Major reasons for the ambiguous socioeconomic positions of radical right-wing parties is different ideological traditions in the parties' leadership and heterogeneous preferences among core supporters (Davies 1999). When a political party faces such a comparative disadvantage, it can avoid facing the weakness by not presenting a party position on it. However, as Kitschelt (2007) remarks on the politics of the radical right, "parties cannot simply focus only on their most favoured issues" (1182), particularly when they cannot control the political agenda on their own and they are forced to respond to issues on the legislative table as well as to claims from their own constituencies. Despite the multidimensionality of issue spaces in Western Europe, socioeconomic issues are still the most salient issues, and thus it is not possible for radical right-wing parties to avoid the issues completely.

Therefore, radical right-wing parties are believed to blur their positions on socioeconomic issues due to their internal disparity and are found to present more ambiguous socioeconomic positions than other parties (Rovny 2013). Nonetheless, it is still not clear how the radical right's posi-

tion blurring modifies the voting behaviors of their core supporters and whether such a tactic actually achieves the goal of sustaining the "unlikely coalition" (Ivarsflaten 2005) between core supporters with unlike preferences on socioeconomic issues. Thus this chapter answers these questions.

In this chapter, I first show that two main constituencies of radical right-wing parties (manual workers and small business owners) still have significantly different preferences on socioeconomic issues. I also test how the parties' position blurring on the issues shapes each group's support for the parties and find that position blurring weakens their voting behavior on the issues. While radical right-wing parties' center-right socioeconomic positions discourage manual workers' party support and their central (or center-left) positions weaken small business owners' support for the parties, the parties' socioeconomic positions affect neither group's party support when they blur their position. The finding implies that radical right-wing parties can successfully maintain the unlikely coalition between the two groups by presenting only ambiguous positions on socioeconomic issues.

'Radical' Right-Wing Parties in Western Europe

There are different ways to label and conceptualize political parties with right-wing extremism in Western Europe. Though many of these political parties possess common characteristics, each label indicates different ideological, programmatic, and stylistic features of the parties. For example, "extreme" right-wing parties have mobilized anti-democracy and anti-establishment views. They argue that the current political system based on liberal democracy does not work anymore and emphasize their disapproval of fundamental ideological and institutional bases of liberal democracy such as pluralism and parliamentarianism (Ignazi 2003; Bale 2003). Related to this, an increasing number of political parties with right-wing extremism contend that the current political system dominated by corrupt and impotent political elites excludes common people. Nonetheless, this "populist" ideology of theirs differs from the Marxist concept of "class" because their "people" are not defined as specific social groupings (Heinisch 2003). In addition, by emphasizing the homogeneous characteristics of "people" and the exclusion of "other people" who do not share them (e.g., ethnic minorities), the populist argument inherently has an authoritarian connotation (Jagers and Walgrave 2007).

For my own research purpose, I conceptualize political parties with right-wing extremism, different from the notions of "extreme" or "popu-

list" parties, as political parties that campaign mostly on non-economic and relatively nontraditional issues (i.e., immigration-related issues) with extreme positions. These anti-immigration political parties are believed to blur their positions on socioeconomic issues because these issues are only secondary issues for the parties (Mudde 2007). In addition, their own supporters, particularly manual workers and small business owners, hold significantly different preferences on socioeconomic issues (Ivarsflaten 2005). Therefore, these political parties do not want the issues to be noticeable in their party programs and try to compete with other political parties mostly on immigration-related issues (Rovny 2013). For this reason, I examine political parties that focus exclusively on immigration-related issues with their nonmoderate positions and thus use the term "radical" right-wing parties, which has the meaning of non-moderate policy positions on an ideological dimension such as their strong authoritarianism (Mudde 2007) or on a specific issue agenda such as immigration (Norris 2005).

There is still, however, variation among radical right-wing parties in their origin and ideology. Some of them used to belong to other families of political parties but turned to radical right-wing parties mostly in the 1980s. The Freedom Party of Austria, for example, was founded as a national-liberal political party in 1956 (or its predecessor, the League of Independents, in 1949). The party had focused mostly on nonideological issues such as anticlericalism and patriotism and survived the long dominance of the Grand Coalition of the Social Democratic Party of Austria and the Austrian People's Party as sole parliamentary opposition until the 1980s (Knight 1992). The party went through substantial changes in the late 1980s. A new party leader from the "national" wing, Jörg Haider, who replaced the previous one from the "liberal" faction, Norbert Steger, began to combine opposition to immigration with its defense of free market and economic liberalism, mobilize xenophobic and nativist ideologies to oppose immigration and multiculturalism, and evolve "into the typical profile of 'new radical-right' parties" (McGann and Kitschelt 2005, 147).

In contrast, other radical right-wing parties are not closely connected with their historical traditions. The Sweden Democrats party was founded only in 1988. Though there had been political and social movements of right-wing extremism and attempts to found a political party (e.g., the Progress Party in 1968 and the Sweden Party in 1986), the extreme right had been discredited for a long time in Sweden (Widfeldt 2008). The moderate right Progress Party had participated in founding the Sweden Party, but after its split in 1987 due to internal conflicts between the Progress Party faction and a group based more on racist social movements (the Keep

Sweden Swedish), the party programs of the Sweden Democrats were mostly shaped by the latter (Widfeldt 2008). Consequently, the Sweden Democrats did not have a liberal or moderate right legacy that the Freedom Party of Austria and the Italian Social Movement had, and it remains quite centrist on socioeconomic issues and attracts the electoral support of manual workers with its strong authoritarian ideology (Erlingsson, Vernby, and Öhrvall 2014; Oskarson and Demker 2015).

Despite the variation in the parties' origin, historical path of development, and specific ideological profiles, immigration has provided the most essential ground for their electoral support. The increasing number of immigrants, particularly those from non-European countries, the consequent deterioration of public opinion on immigrants and immigration, and voters' frustration with mainstream parties' nonresponses to this new issue have since the 1980s led voters to search for alternative political parties as credible means to tackle the issue. Therefore, at the macro-level, immigration and negative public opinion on immigration have provided fertile grounds for the electoral success of radical right-wing parties. Which groups of people, in terms of gender, age, education level, or occupation, are mostly affected by these immigration challenges and motivated to cast their vote for the parties is, nonetheless, another question to be answered.

Radical Right-Wing Party Support by Manual Workers and Small Business Owners

It is not easy to generalize the social structure of the constituencies of radical right-wing parties in Western Europe because the parties have taken different paths of development. The disparity in their origin, ideological background, and historical context has brought about variation in the social and demographic structure of the parties' bases (Kitschelt 1995; Golder 2003; Givens 2005). Nonetheless, the evidence indicates that radical right-wing parties disproportionately garner support from manual workers and small business owners.

Table 6.1 demonstrates how much each occupation group is over- or underrepresented among radical right-wing party supporters. The numbers in the table indicate the ratio of each occupation group among people who voted for a radical right-wing party to people with the same occupation among all the people in the country. Thus, numbers larger than one indicate that the occupation group is overrepresented among the supporters of the political party, while those smaller than one tell us that the group

TABLE 6.1. Radical Right-Wing Party Support by Occupation Group

Country	Radical right-wing party	Manual workers	Small business owners	Professionals	Nonmanual workers
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria	1.18	1.73	0.58	0.99
Austria	Alliance for the Future of Austria	1.88	1.18	0.21	1.01
Belgium	Flemish Interest	1.77	1.50	0.55	0.81
Belgium	New Flemish Alliance	0.46	0.67	0.90	0.82
Belgium	National Front	3.07	1.64	0.88	0.92
Denmark	Danish People's Party	1.62	1.04	0.45	0.66
France	National Rally	1.25	1.85	0.96	1.36
Germany	The Republicans	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Germany	National Democratic Party	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally	0.92	1.33	0.80	0.72
Italy	Northern League	1.15	1.08	0.68	0.99
Italy	National Alliance	1.24	5.48	1.80	0.00
The Netherlands	Party of Freedom	2.41	1.01	0.82	0.73
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	2.00	1.80	0.33	0.92
United Kingdom	UK Independence Party	2.37	2.90	0.42	0.29
United Kingdom	British National Party	1.33	0.67	0.84	1.08
Average		**1.62**	**1.71**	**0.73**	**0.81**

Source: EES (2009).

is underrepresented. Table 6.1 shows that manual workers and small business owners are more likely to vote for a radical right-wing party, while other occupation groups such as professionals and nonmanual workers are less likely to do so.

Manual Workers' Support for Radical Right-Wing Parties

There are two plausible reasons for manual workers' support for radical right-wing parties. First, they consider themselves the main victims of recent socioeconomic developments, such as globalization, educational expansion, occupational upgrading, and the shrinkage of the manufacturing sector. Manual workers in the manufacturing sector, particularly those with a low skill level, have faced lower opportunities for full-time employment, the cutback of the protection of their employment and wages, and rising economic inequality due to these phenomena. At the same time, they believe that the current established political system has been either unwilling or unable to respond to these socioeconomic changes on their behalf.

Voters' grievances about socioeconomic circumstances and their discontent with political authorities have generated their search for alter-

native political systems, particularly antiestablishment political systems with extreme ideologies. Economic and social fear, distress, and insecurity caused by the Great Depression triggered people's psychological attachment to radical right-wing movements such as fascism in the early twentieth century in Europe. The end of the Second World War did not completely eradicate the legacy of fascism, as new neofascist political parties, such as the Italian Social Movement and the German National Democratic Party, were founded in the postwar period. Though these parties' legitimacy was questioned in the democratic antifascist regime (Veugelers and Chiarini 2002), they drew electoral support from a small fraction of the population who found themselves excluded from institutional protection such as safety nets and corporations as well as victimized by socioeconomic changes such as globalization and economic volatility. By calling attention to the failure of the current political system and the weakness of liberal democracy, extremist movements appealed mostly to "the disgruntled and psychologically homeless, to the personal failures, the socially isolated, the economically insecure, the uneducated, unsophisticated, and the authoritarian persons" (Lipset 1960, 175).

Contemporary radical right-wing parties have employed similar populistic arguments, condemning political elites and the established political system for their corruption and failure in responding to socioeconomic transformations. Thus they have successfully attracted voters who understand these political and economic complaints (Canovan 1999). In particular, manual workers' political discontents have been directed particularly at political parties with which they had been politically and institutionally associated: social democratic parties. Though these political parties had played the most critical role in developing and expanding policies that favored manual workers in the postwar period until the early 1970s, they have failed since then to implement prolabor policies compared to other political parties (Huber and Stephens 2001). On the one hand, globalization and neoliberalization of the world economy have made it difficult for the parties to maintain their social policies (Garrett and Mitchell 2001; Piazza 2001). On the other hand, many center-left parties "modernized" their party program to appeal to the expanding middle class and gave up their "old left" economic and social policies (Toynbee and Walker 2001).

The relationship between socioeconomic transitions, party politics, and social policies should not of course be oversimplified. Institutionalists argue that domestic political institutions such as the electoral system and the number of veto players play an intervening role between these factors (Pierson 2001; Swank 2002; Iversen and Soskice 2006). The "varieties of

capitalism" literature suggests that strategic interactions between firms, employees, and governments, which are embedded in specific economic institutions, make a substantial difference (Hall and Soskice 2001; Oliver 2008; Nijhuis 2009). Finally, the power resources theory literature contends that the importance of the political power of workers in sociocultural policies as well as in social policies has not faded (Rueda and Pontusson 2000; Korpi and Palme 2003; Rueda 2005; Han 2015b). Nonetheless, many manual workers came to cast protest votes against social democratic parties and turned to voting for radical right-wing parties (Betz 1994), and this pattern of party realignment has established new competition between the center-left and the radical right (Bale et al. 2010; Arzheimer 2013; Bale, Hough, and van Kessel 2013).

Second, workers' grievances and protest votes are not the only reason for their voting for radical right-wing parties. Manual workers definitely have a rationale for voting for radical right-wing parties as well as a reason for not supporting social democratic parties. Protest voters are eager to reject the current established political system but are not interested in the particular form of an alternative political scheme (Swyngedouw 2001). A number of studies, however, find that radical right-wing parties and their supporters share some ideological beliefs (e.g., authoritarianism) and policy preferences (e.g., immigration).

Though radical right-wing parties and manual workers sometimes have different ideological orientations on the traditional left/right dimension, both of them are on the same side of the new ideological dimension of authoritarianism/libertarianism. Authoritarian ideologies disapprove of individual differences, submit the differences to an authority, and pursue the unity and homogeneity of the society under their authority (Sibley, Robertson, and Wilson 2006). In contrast, libertarian ideologies endorse the distinctiveness between individuals and promote the heterogeneity of the society. Manual workers are quite receptive to the authoritarian and nationalist ideology of radical right-wing parties for several reasons.

First, manual workers hold strong authoritarian ideologies due to their low education level. Education helps to develop cognitive abilities, and thus a lack of education prevents people from recognizing the true causes and effects of social phenomena such as globalization and immigration (Nunn, Crockett, and Williams 1978). Education also helps people to develop communication skills and provides them opportunities to expose themselves to different ideas, cultures, and views. Consequently, a lack of education hinders people from appreciating diversity in their society and developing cosmopolitan views (Altemeyer 1988).

Second, the small degree of autonomy and a lack of personal interactions in the workplaces of these workers do not provide them opportunities to develop tolerance of people with different values or those from diverse cultures. Because of the "command and obedience" culture in their job routine, they do not feel uncomfortable with the authoritarian practices of politics (Kitschelt 1995). Also, while social interactions help to develop interpersonal communicative skills and tolerance of differences, these workers lack these personal contacts in their daily job practices (Oesch 2013).

Manual workers' strong authoritarian ideological orientation explains why manual workers are opposed to immigration. Their opposition comes, at least partially, from their concern about labor market competition with foreign workers (Malhotra, Margalit, and Mo 2013). Nonetheless, their disapproval of cultural values related to immigration, such as multiculturalism, is found to significantly formulate their negative views on immigrants and support for restrictive policies regarding immigration (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Dustmann and Preston 2007). Also, though people may have concerns about both the economic impacts of immigration, such as labor market competition and the fiscal burden, and its cultural and social aspects, such as multiculturalism and crime, Rydgren (2008) finds that their support for radical right-wing parties is more substantially driven by the latter than by the former.

Small Business Owners' Support for Radical Right-Wing Parties

Small business owners made up a main constituency of the neofascist movements in the 1950s, from which some radical right-wing parties originate. They showed a high level of fear of downward mobility and loss of social status due to their exposure to market forces, vulnerability to economic shocks, and a lack of institutional safety nets enjoyed by people employed in large organizations. The postwar era in Western Europe was the period of economic recovery and growth in which large organizations played a critical role. Therefore, the number of small business owners declined during this period, and so did their role in the economic process (Bögenhold and Staber 1991). Also, large organizations needed to secure labor supply and thus institutionalized the corporatist system of cooperation and coordination between employers and workers by offering privileges in job security and training, particularly in countries with coordinated market

economies (Hall and Soskice 2001). Small employers who were excluded from this protection were exposed to the rising challenges of globalization and volatile economic shocks. Consequently, they found themselves "squeezed between the growing power of big business and the collective clout of organized labor" (Norris 2005, 129).

Though not all the radical right-wing parties were founded as neofascist parties and some of the radical right-wing parties that had been founded as neofascist parties have transformed themselves to more liberal parties (e.g., the Italian Social Movement or its successor the National Alliance) (Ignazi 2003), small business owners still constitute a major source of support for radical right-wing parties.

In addition, small business owners in the "new wave of extreme right-wing parties" (Pedahzur and Weinberg 2016, 182) since the 1980s have their own reasons for supporting radical right-wing parties. Though the number of small business owners has increased since the 1970s in many Western European countries, a main driving force has been rising unemployment due to socioeconomic transformations such as globalization and deindustrialization (Thurik et al. 2008).

Thus small business owners, as well as manual workers, see themselves as "losers" in the process of socioeconomic transformation that has happened over the last couple of decades in Western Europe, such as the combination of deindustrialization and service sector growth, educational expansion, and occupational upgrading (Bornschier 2010). These phenomena have expanded service jobs for semiskilled or highly skilled workers, particularly in the public sector such as health care, education, and social services. In return, the manufacturing sector and the private service sector have relatively been diminished, and so the economic returns and job security of people in these sectors (e.g., manual workers and small business owners) have been weakened (Oesch 2013).

In addition, small business owners are receptive to authoritarian ideologies due to their low education level and a lack of autonomy in the labor process, as are manual workers (Arzheimer 2013). Some of them, such as independent professionals, certainly own their means of production and enjoy the independence of their labor process. But there are still many small business owners, such as some kinds of homeworkers and freelancers, who do not. These people "are 'independent' only in a formal and statistical sense and experience many of the disadvantages of wage-employment, without enjoying the rights typically associated with self-employment" (Bögenhold and Staber 1991, 225). Like the case of manual workers,

small business owners' strong authoritarian ideological predisposition also explains why they have negative attitudes toward immigration (Schneider 2008; Malchow-Møller et al. 2009).

Unlikely Coalition between Manual Workers and Small Business Owners

Manual workers have traditionally taken left-wing stances on socioeconomic issues, preferring more redistributive taxes and social policies, policies providing safety nets, and government regulations on private sectors. The "varieties of capitalism" literature argues that manual workers are not homogeneous in their preferences on socioeconomic policies, and workers with different skill profiles, market environments, and unemployment risks have dissimilar preferences. For example, workers with a low skill level favor greater income compression and more generous social insurance policies than those with a high skill level because the former are paid less than the latter (Hall and Thelen 2007; Nijhuis 2009; Becher and Pontusson 2011; Han and Castater 2016). Workers in sectors exposed to international competition support wage restraint more than those in sectors sheltered from such competition, to improve their competitiveness in foreign markets (Garrett and Way 1999; Iversen and Soskice 2010; Traxler and Brandl 2010). Workers in private and public sectors also have different preferences: those in the public sector support tax reductions less than do private-sector workers, to maintain the size of the public sector (O'Donnell, Adshead, and Thomas 2011). Finally, while workers with full-time and permanent jobs place a greater priority on employment protection policies to secure their jobs, those without such jobs prefer labor market policies to increase employment opportunities (Rueda 2007).

Despite the variation between different types of manual workers regarding their preferences on socioeconomic policies, they hold more left-wing stances than other people due to their relatively low income and vulnerability to unemployment. Figure 6.1 presents the positions of manual workers, small business owners, and other people on income redistribution and "public vs. private" ownership of industries, seen in the three waves of the EVS (1990, 1999, and 2008). The figure implies two things regarding manual workers' positions. First, manual workers have always maintained more left-wing stances than other people, supporting greater income redistribution and larger public industry ownership. Second, a strand of the realignment hypotheses argues that some workers in Western Europe,

particularly those in the private sector, came to take more central positions on socioeconomic policies, and thus they could form a political coalition with small business owners to support radical right-wing parties (Esping-Andersen 1999). Figure 6.1, however, does not show workers' shifting to the center on socioeconomic policies. In contrast, it shows that manual workers have moved to the economic left, and the gap between manual workers and other people has not decreased.[1]

Small business owners differ from manual workers in their preferences on socioeconomic issues because they have different motives for running their own business and job experiences prior to being self-employed. Some "opportunistic entrepreneur" small business owners used to have secure, high-paying organizational positions but have decided to run their own business in a desire for self-direction in the labor process. They are usually highly educated with sufficient social skills. In contrast, some people end up running their own business as a consequence of economic marginalization (Parker 2004). They did not have an opportunity to get a well-paid and secure job due to a lack of education and occupational skills, and self-employment was sometimes the only means for them to participate in the economic system.

Despite this heterogeneity, the majority of small business owners in Western Europe are opposed to the socioeconomic programs of left-wing politics. In particular, they endorse the role and the value of private entrepreneurship in economic prosperity and thus resist the regulation, intervention, and function of government. In the history of party politics in Western Europe, their ideology of autonomy, not only from a religious authority (i.e., church) but also from political power (i.e., government), played a critical role in establishing liberal parties in many countries (Kirchner 1988).

Figure 6.1 tells us also two things about small business owners' preferences. First, small business owners have demonstrated right-wing preferences regarding socioeconomic issues. They contest income redistribution and prefer private industry ownership more than other people do. Second, however, small business owners moved to the economic center over time, but they did not move to the center or to the left more substantially than other people did.

What happened to the distance between manual workers and small business owners in their preferences on socioeconomic policies? Did they converge, as the realignment hypothesis suggests, during the period when radical right-wing parties developed, enough to make a political coalition with each other? Two observations are noticeable in figure 6.1. First, their

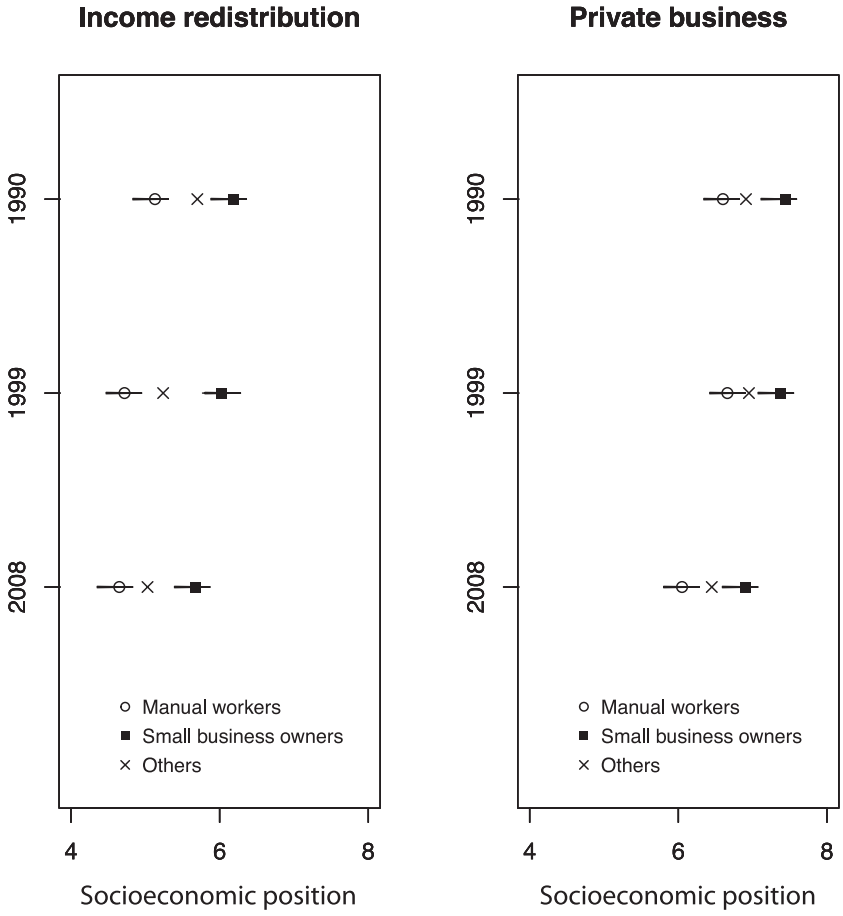

Fig. 6.1. Preferences on Socioeconomic Issues

Source: EVS (1990, 1999, 2008)

Note: Responses to the income redistribution question are on a scale of 1 (Incomes should be made more equal) to 10 (There should be greater incentives for individual effort). Responses to the private business question are on a scale of 1 (Government ownership of business and industry should be increased) to 10 (Private ownership of business and industry should be increased). "Others" mean people other than manual workers and small business owners.

positions have been statistically significantly different from each other throughout this period. Second, and more importantly, the position gap between these two constituencies has not reduced over time. The position gap regarding income redistribution has reduced only slightly, from 1.05 to 1.02 from 1990 to 2008. Regarding industry ownership, the distance was actually increased a little, from 0.84 to 0.86. Therefore, manual

workers and small business owners have sustained their relative stances on socioeconomic policies in the period of the growth, advance, and spread of radical right-wing parties. Consequently, the disparity between these two major constituencies of radical right-wing parties on socioeconomic issues has not diminished.

Radical Right-Wing Party Positions on the Economy

Many of the "old" radical right-wing parties, or anti-immigration parties more broadly, such as the French National Rally, the Freedom Party of Austria, and the Norwegian Progress Party, had focused on neoliberal economic policies such as opposition to taxes until the early 1980s, but in the late 1980s they began to prioritize immigration-related issues over economic issues, with a clear and radical anti-immigration message. At the same time, they strengthened nationalist or nativist ideologies in their economic policy positions by highlighting protectionist measures for economic sectors threatened by globalization.

Significant amendments to economic positions are also found among relatively new radical right-wing parties. The Party for Freedom, founded in 2006, had argued for social security cuts and the weakening of employees' rights but later advocated welfare provisions for the native population and endorsed the welfare state as "a source of pride" and "a shield for the poor" (Vossen 2017, 48). Therefore, recent economic positions of many radical right-wing parties are portrayed as a "contradictory combination of neo-liberalism on the one hand and economic protection" on the other (Givens 2005, 38).

Such a mix of neoliberal and protectionist positions, however, is not only a consequence of the parties' nationalist ideologies. The parties' emphasis on an extreme anti-immigration argument attracted many manual workers who are also opposed to immigration. As the relative size of this new constituency grew in their party base, the parties attempted to diffuse economic issues and rally a broader coalition of supporters with ambiguous stances that include both neoliberal and protectionist policies (Goodwin 2011). Consequently, economic issues have remained only as a secondary issue for these parties (Mudde 2007).

Shifts in radical right-wing parties' relative emphases on the economy and immigration and the clarity of their positions are exemplified by one of the oldest radical right-wing parties that has gone through a fundamental transformation of its identity, ideology, and program: the Freedom Party

of Austria. The party had been founded as a neofascist party, had campaigned mostly on the defense of free market and economic liberalism, and had gotten only marginal levels of electoral support until the early 1980s. After controlling party leadership in 1986, Jörg Haider began to focus on immigration and mobilize xenophobic and nativist ideologies that condemned immigration and multiculturalism. Far-right nationalist culture had been not only profoundly embedded in Austrian society but also incorporated as a major political cleavage in Austrian politics. It was not prohibited or delegitimized because Austria had been treated as a victim of the Second World War, but instead it was implanted in other cleavages such as socialism and Catholicism (Pelinka 1998). This nativist party base came to be the main resource when Haider challenged and overwhelmed the liberal party leadership (Art 2011).

As a result, the Freedom Party of Austria began to de-emphasize economic issues with more ambiguous party positions while putting immigration on the agenda with a clear stance on it. Haider's rhetoric on the economy alternated between promarket and solidaristic references, exemplified by his covert advocacy of generous social provisions only for the indigenous population. He also showed contradictory, blurring commitments both to individual freedom and to *Volksgemeinschaft* ("people's community"). By contrast, the party sent a strong and clear message that immigrants take jobs away from native people, increase crime rates, and threaten traditional culture (Ignazi 2003). The party's mobilization of immigration-related issues changed its social basis and made itself a party of the working class. Consequently, more working-class people (47 percent) voted for the Freedom Party of Austria than for the Social Democratic Party of Austria (35 percent) in 1999 (Art 2006).

The changes in the party's issue emphases and position blurring on the economy and immigration cannot be examined by the CHES data because the data do not extend back to the early 1980s. Alternatively, issue salience and position ambiguity measured with manifesto data support anecdotal evidence. While the party had used 31.4 percent of its manifesto statements for economic issues until the 1983 election, the issues have constituted only 20.7 percent of manifesto statements since 1986, when Haider became the party leader. The ambiguity score increased from 2.5 to 3.7 from the pre-Haider period to the post-Haider period. By contrast, the average percentage of manifesto statements on sociocultural issues such as national way of life, traditional morality, and multiculturalism increased from 22.3 percent to 28.4 percent, and the ambiguity score on immigration slightly decreased from 1.5 to 1.4.

We can see that radical right-wing parties de-emphasize socioeconomic issues with ambiguous party positions more than other parties do. Then do party-competition environments create variation in party behaviors between radical right-wing parties? In other words, given that radical right-wing parties do not claim issue advantages in socioeconomic issues, do they de-emphasize these issues when the issues are neither salient nor contentious and blur their positions when the issues are salient or contentious? Radical right-wing parties have definitely adjusted their strategies to such environments. For example, the Sweden Democrats could not focus primarily on immigration-related issues but had to broaden their campaign to socioeconomic issues in the 1990s because mainstream parties, particularly center-right mainstream parties, avoided bringing immigration-related issues to the agenda because the right-wing alliance disagreed on those issues (Widfeldt 2008). Consequently, socioeconomic issues dominated party competition, and the Sweden Democrats could not stay away from the issues (Erlingsson, Vernby, and Öhrvall 2014).

Figure 6.2 shows cross-party patterns of the relationship between party-competition environments and issue-competition behaviors within the party family of radical right-wing parties. It demonstrates that radical right-wing parties de-emphasize socioeconomic issues when the issues are neither salient nor contentious issues in the party system (the top graphs). On the other hand, the parties blur their positions on socioeconomic issues as other political parties emphasize the issues, or they are polarized in their positions on the issues (the bottom graphs).

The graphs confirm the relationship between party-competition environments and issue-competition behaviors that were found in chapter 5. While issue de-emphasis and position blurring are used by political parties to diffuse an issue in issue competition, the levels of issue salience and contentiousness in the party system make these tactics effective.

Position Blurring and Maintaining the Unlikely Coalition

If manual workers and small business owners have not changed their preferences on socioeconomic policies in a relative term and thus significant disagreements between them are still observed, how can radical right-wing parties sustain the unlikely coalition between them and uphold them as major constituencies?

Manual workers and small business owners are believed to support the same political parties despite their disagreement on socioeconomic

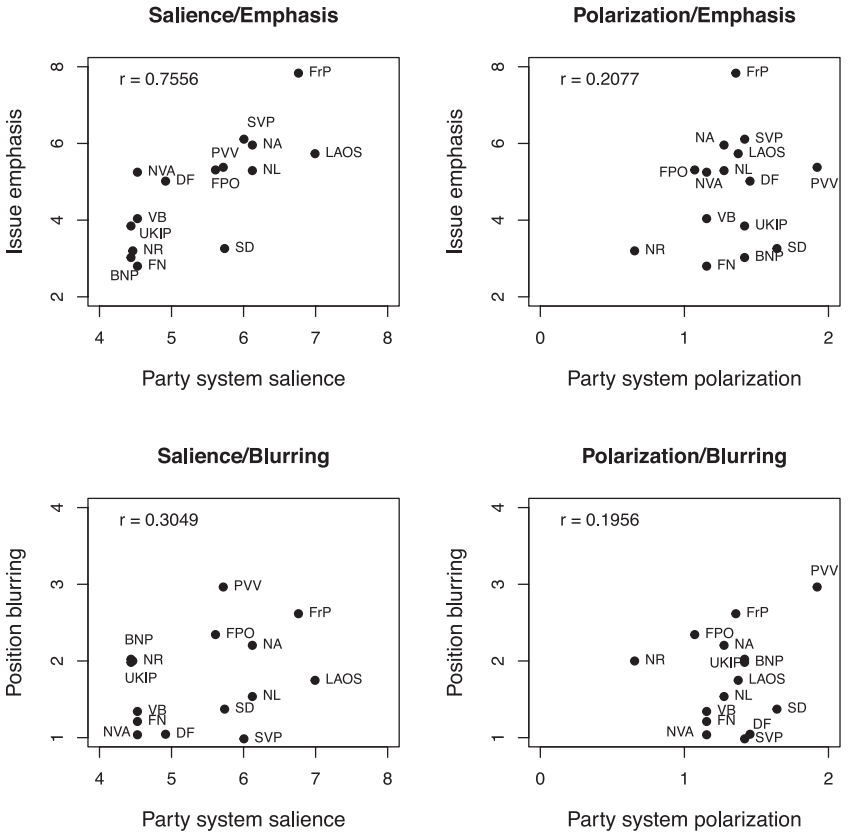

Fig. 6.2. Party-Competition Environments and Issue Competition on the Economy

Source: CHES (2010).

Note: FPO: Freedom Party of Austria; VB: Flemish Interest; NVA: New Flemish Alliance; FN: Belgian National Front; DF: Danish People's Party; NR: National Rally; LAOS: Popular Orthodox Rally; NL: Northern League; NA: National Alliance; PVV: Party of Freedom; FrP: Norwegian Progress Party; SD: Sweden Democrats; SVP: Swiss People's Party; UKIP: UK Independence Party; BNP: British National Party. Issue emphasis indicates radical right-wing parties' average salience scores on socioeconomic issues, and position blurring means the parties' average position blurring on the issues measured with the standard deviation of experts' estimations. Party system salience signifies the average salience scores of other political parties on socioeconomic issues in each country, and party system polarization indicates the standard deviation of other parties' positions on the issues in a country.

issues because of the parties' "appeal on issues cross-cutting the economic dimension" (Ivarsflaten 2005, 465). As discussed above, anti-immigration rhetoric has been attractive to manual workers and small business owners due to their declining economic status, lack of the necessary political and economic resources to have control over their situations, or strong authoritarian ideologies and attitudes.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that manual workers and small business owners do not care about conventional socioeconomic issues at all. For example, the EES (2009) shows that while only 4.8 percent of manual workers said that immigration-related issues (immigration, labor migration, and multiculturalism) were the most important problem in their country, 61.1 percent of them indicated economic issues (economic conditions, jobs, unemployment, taxes, financial crisis, and wages) as the most important problem. As for small business owners, 4.1 percent and 58.5 percent of them pointed out immigration and economic issues as the most important problem, respectively.

Therefore, radical right-wing parties need to make their supporters divert their attention from socioeconomic issues, particularly when they have dissimilar positions on the issues. Support for the radical right is determined not only by demand-side factors such as social developments that determine voters' need for radical right-wing parties, but also by the supply side of party support. Macro-economic and macro-social phenomena such as economic volatility, deindustrialization, and immigration have definitely intensified voters' demand for alternative political parties such as radical right-wing parties. Nonetheless, the characteristics of radical right-wing parties, such as their party position and party organization, also explain the variation in political support for the parties (Art 2011).

Radical right-wing parties will want to "supply" their own attributes that prevent voters from focusing much on socioeconomic issues in their party choice. One implication we can draw from the findings in chapter 4 of this book is that manual workers and small business owners will not be bothered much by the position distance between themselves and a radical right-wing party they support regarding socioeconomic issues when the party does not clarify its own position on the issues.

I, therefore, draw the following hypothesis. The position proximity between manual workers and small business owners on the one hand and radical right-wing parties on the other hand regarding socioeconomic issues has an effect on their support for the parties only when the parties present a clear position on the issues. When radical right-wing parties blur their position on socioeconomic issues, manual workers and small business

owners divert their attention from the issues and neglect the issues in their vote choice. Consequently, position distance on the issues does not determine their voting behavior much, and radical right-wing parties can successfully maintain the unlikely coalition between these two constituencies despite the essential differences in their stances on socioeconomic issues.

This hypothesis is tested with the EES (2009). The survey includes questions on the likelihood that people vote for each political party. Using the question on radical right-wing parties as the dependent variable, the analysis examines how party position and position blurring on a socioeconomic issue (income redistribution) determine the party support of manual workers and small business owners. The data on party position and position blurring are drawn from the CHES (2006).

TABLE 6.2. Party Position, Position Blurring, and Voting for Radical Right-Wing Parties

DV=Voting likelihood for the radical right	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Manual workers	2.96***	0.22***	2.88***	2.54***
	(0.94)	(0.05)	(0.93)	(0.82)
Party position	–0.34	–0.48	–0.38	–0.44
	(0.35)	(0.34)	(0.35)	(0.36)
Manual workers × Party position	–0.42***		–0.40***	–0.36***
	(0.14)		(0.14)	(0.13)
Position blurring	0.08	–0.25	0.02	–0.13
	(0.75)	(0.71)	(0.75)	(0.79)
Manual workers × Position blurring	–1.08***		–1.04***	–0.95***
	(0.37)		(0.37)	(0.30)
Party position × Position blurring	0.03	0.08	0.04	0.06
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)
Manual workers × Party position × Position blurring	0.16***		0.15***	0.14***
	(0.06)		(0.06)	(0.05)
Small business owners	0.13	–1.89	–1.62	–1.86
	(0.11)	(1.15)	(1.15)	(1.13)
Small business owners × Party position		0.38**	0.34*	0.40**
		(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Small business owners × Position blurring		0.78*	0.69	0.84*
		(0.45)	(0.45)	(0.47)
Small business owners × Party position × Position blurring		–0.15*	–0.14*	–0.18**
		(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)
Female	–0.24***	–0.24***	–0.24***	–0.25***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Age	–0.01***	–0.01***	–0.01***	–0.01***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education	–0.18***	–0.17***	–0.18***	–0.13***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Unemployed	0.15	0.14	0.15	0.21**
	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.09)

TABLE 6.2.—*Continued*

DV=Voting likelihood for the radical right	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Socioeconomic status	–0.03	–0.03	–0.03	–0.04
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Negative opinion on immigration				0.42***
				(0.10)
Negative opinion on the EU				0.01***
				(0.00)
Negative retrospective evaluation of economy				0.13***
				(0.03)
Satisfaction with democracy				0.10
				(0.11)
Unemployment rate	1.86***	1.85***	1.87***	1.69***
	(0.33)	(0.34)	(0.33)	(0.37)
Immigration	0.74***	0.73***	0.74***	0.66***
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.18)
Unemployment × Immigration	–0.18***	–0.18***	–0.18***	–0.16***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Effective number of political parties	–0.01	–0.01	–0.01	0.01
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
–2 x Log likelihood	24,414.9	24,423.7	24,413.0	23,425.0
Number of observations	8,121	8,121	8,121	7,917

Note: Clustered standard errors (by political party) in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; * $p < .1$. The ordered logistic regression model with robust standard errors clustered by political party is used. Results on cutting points are not reported. Party position and position-blurring variables are constructed with the CHES (2006) variable of party position on income redistribution. Greater values of the party position variable indicate more right-wing (i.e., more opposed to income redistribution) positions. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The result in model 1 implies that the electoral support of manual workers for radical right-wing parties is intensified by the parties' left-wing position on income redistribution (***manual workers*** × ***party position***), but such an interactive effect diminishes as the parties blur their position (***manual workers*** × ***party position*** × ***position blurring***). Specifically, left-wing or central positions (smaller than 6 on a 0 to 10 scale) make manual workers more likely to support a radical right-wing party than other people when the parties do not blur their position (the left-hand-side graph in figure 6.3). Radical right-wing parties' position on income redistribution, however, does not change manual workers' party support when the parties blur their position (the right-hand-side graph). When a radical right-wing party blurs its socioeconomic position, manual workers are more likely to support the party regardless of the location of the party position.

The result in model 2 shows the same pattern for small business owners.

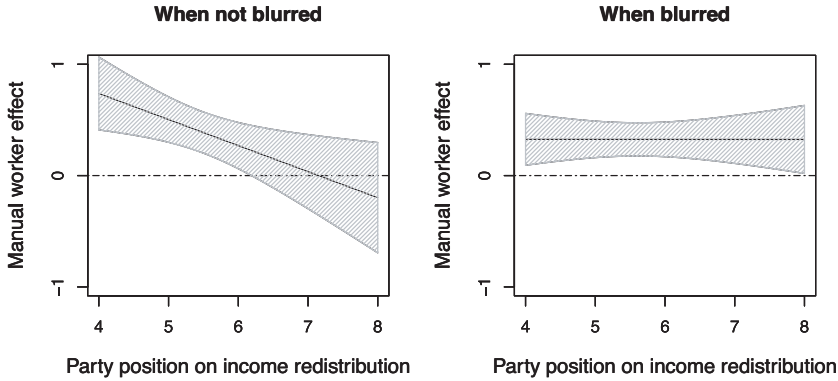

Fig. 6.3. Position Blurring, Party Position, and the Voting Behavior of Manual Workers
Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in model 1 in table 6.2. The conditional coefficients and standard errors in the left-hand-side graph ("When not blurred") are calculated with fixing the position-blurring variable at its 10th percentile value, and those in the right-hand-side graph ("When blurred") are calculated with fixing the variable at its 90th percentile value. The index of party position on income redistribution ranges from 0 (strongly favors redistribution) to 10 (strongly opposes redistribution).

They support radical right-wing parties when the parties hold a right-wing position on income redistribution (***small business owners*** × ***party position***), but such an interactive effect diminishes as the parties blur their position (***small business owners*** × ***party position*** × ***position blurring***). Specifically, right-wing or central positions (greater than 6 on a 0 to 10 scale) encourage small business owners' support for a radical right-wing party when the parties present a clear position (the left-hand-side graph in figure 6.4). Small business owners' behaviors, however, are not affected by radical right-wing parties' position on income redistribution when the parties present an ambiguous position (the right-hand-side graph). When a radical right-wing party blurs its socioeconomic position, small business owners are more likely to support the party regardless of the location of the party position.

Model 3 includes both manual workers and small business owners. Also, model 4 includes people's attitudes toward immigration, their opinion on the European Union, their negative retrospective evaluation of the economy, and their evaluation of democracy as the current political system. These are included because people's occupations (manual workers and small business owners) have an effect on their support for radical right-wing parties through these viewpoints of theirs. But the results on the main variables of manual workers, small business owners, party position, and position blurring are not significantly changed.

Therefore, it is first implied that the socioeconomic positions of both

Fig. 6.4. Position Blurring, Party Position, and the Voting Behavior of Small Business Owners

Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in model 2 in table 6.2. The conditional coefficients and standard errors in the left-hand-side graph ("When not blurred") are calculated with fixing the position-blurring variable at its 10th percentile value, and those in the right-hand side graph ("When blurred") are calculated with fixing the variable at its 90th percentile value. The index of party position on income redistribution ranges from 0 (strongly favors redistribution) to 10 (strongly opposes redistribution).

manual workers and small business owners still matter in their voting behavior. While manual workers are more likely to vote for a radical right-wing party that takes a left-wing or central position on socioeconomic issues, small business owners are motivated to cast their vote for a radical right-wing party that holds a right-wing or center-right stance on the issues. Though their protest against established political parties that failed to protect their interest (Betz 1994) and their ideology on the new sociocultural dimension of authoritarianism vs. libertarianism (Rydgren 2013b) definitely urge manual workers and small business owners to vote for radical right-wing parties, these voters do not neglect traditional socioeconomic issues such as income redistribution. Socioeconomic issues will consequently continue to put a potential challenge to the parties in their effort to maintain the alliance between these two groups in their party support base.

Nonetheless, radical right-wing parties can successfully organize the two groups who have different preferences on socioeconomic issues into their party base by presenting an ambiguous position on the issues. On the demand side of party support, manual workers and small business owners constitute the same party base despite the disparity in their stances on socioeconomic issues because they agree on immigration-related issues and place a high priority on them (Ivarsflaten 2005). On the supply side of party support, however, the degree to which manual workers and small

business owners consider, or do not take into account, socioeconomic issues in their vote choice is also determined by the behaviors of radical right-wing parties on the ambiguity of their position on the issues.

Position Blurring and Party Base

Studies on radical right-wing parties report an increasing pattern of proletarianization of the parties during the past couple of decades (Betz and Immerfall 1998; Oesch 2008). They suggest that the parties have become more based on the support from manual workers as a result of the "new winning formula" that some of the parties adopted. The parties combined authoritarian ideologies of ethnic nationalism and anti-immigration arguments with center-left-oriented messages, particularly prowelfare rhetoric or welfare chauvinism (Rydgren 2013a; van der Brug et al. 2013). In particular, some radical right-wing parties, such as the French National Rally and the Danish People's Party, have defended the public services as "a guarantee of the equality of the citizens" but at the same time portrayed immigrants as a threat to the welfare system (Betz and Meret 2013, 120). Indeed, the CHES data tell us that radical right-wing parties have moved to the economic left (or to the center) over the past decades: the average party position score on economic left/right changed from 7.4 in 1999 to 6.4 in 2014 on a 0 (left) to 10 (right) scale.[2]

Interestingly, the strategy suggested by Meguid (2008) for mainstream parties to steal issue ownership from niche parties and discourage the latter's electoral popularity (the "accommodative" strategy) seems to have worked for radical right-wing parties as niche parties in a certain way. By moving to the economic left (or to the center) and mobilizing some socioeconomic issues such as welfare chauvinism and protectionism, radical right-wing parties are found to have expanded manual workers' party support (Harteveld 2016).

Results in the previous section imply, however, that radical right-wing parties' positions on socioeconomic issues do not necessarily affect the electoral support of manual workers or small business owners for the parties. Party position does not matter when parties blur their position. The movement of parties toward the economic left will not necessarily proletarianize them and make them more dependent on manual workers, either. What the results suggest is that the shift of a party's position will change the structure of the party base only when the party modifies its position in an evident way. If a party position is ambiguous, the base of a radical right-wing party will not be dominated by manual workers (or small busi-

ness owners) though the party holds a left-wing (or right-wing) position on socioeconomic issues.

I present radical right-wing parties' positions on income redistribution, the ambiguity of the positions, and the structure of the parties' bases with the EES (2009) and the (CHES) 2006 in figure 6.5. Numbers in the parentheses indicate the ratios of manual workers to small business owners among people who voted for a radical right-wing party. Thus the greater the ratio is, the more a radical right-wing party is based on the support of manual workers relative to that of small business owners.

Radical right-wing parties are categorized into four groups according to their socioeconomic positions and the ambiguity of the positions. First, parties with filled triangles that appear in the top right area are those with more right-wing (above the median among all the parties in the data in their party position) and ambiguous (above the median among all the parties in the data in their position blurring) positions. Second, parties with empty diamonds that appear in the bottom right area are those with more right-wing and unambiguous (below the median among all the parties in the data in their position blurring) positions. Third, parties with empty squares that appear in the top left area are those with central (below the median among all the parties in the data in their party position) and ambiguous positions. Finally, parties with filled circles that appear in the bottom left are those with central and unambiguous positions. The average ratios of manual worker supporters to small business owner supporters of each category are reported in the rectangles at the four corners of the graph.

Figure 6.5 shows that we can find a clear difference in the ratio of manual worker supporters to small business owner supporters between socioeconomically central radical right-wing parties and those with quite right-wing positions when the parties do not blur their positions. While the average ratio of the former parties (the Sweden Democrats, the Freedom Party of Austria, and the Danish People's Party) is 5.1, the average ratio of the latter parties (the New Flemish Alliance, the Alliance for the Future of Austria, and the UK Independence Party) is only 1.5. In other words, when the positions are unambiguous, radical right-wing parties draw relatively greater support from manual workers by presenting central or center-left socioeconomic positions.

We cannot, however, find such an obvious difference between "central" radical right-wing parties (the Popular Orthodox Rally, the Party of Freedom, and the National Alliance) and "right-wing" radical right-wing parties (the National Rally, the Flemish Interest, and the Northern League) if they blur their position. The average ratios are 2.0 and 2.1, respectively. In other words, radical right-wing parties do not attract relatively more sup-

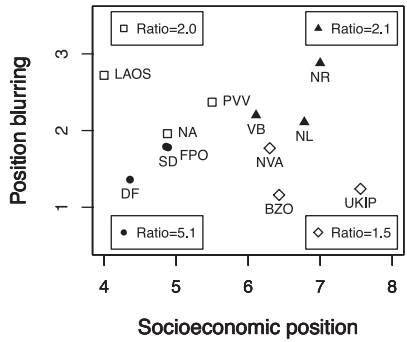

Fig. 6.5. Party Position, Position Blurring, and Constituency Structure

Note: FPO: Freedom Party of Austria; BZO: Alliance for the Future of Austria; VB: Flemish Interest; NVA: New Flemish Alliance; DF: Danish People's Party; NR: National Rally; LAOS: Popular Orthodox Rally; NL: Northern League; NA: National Alliance; PVV: Party of Freedom; SD: Sweden Democrats; UKIP: UK Independence Party. Numbers in the rectangles at the corners of the graph indicate the average ratio of manual workers to small business owners among radical right supporters in each category of parties. The index of socioeconomic position ranges from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). Some radical right-wing parties presented in table 6.1 are not included because either the EES (2009) or the CHES (2006) does not have data on these parties.

port from manual workers, nor do they lose the support of small business owners, with their central or center-left socioeconomic positions when the positions are ambiguous.

Therefore, though most of the radical right-wing parties have adopted more left-wing (or central) programs on socioeconomic issues such as protectionism and pro-welfare for the past couple of decades, whether these party position shifts have made manual workers a greater percentage of the party bases remains questionable. One preliminary answer we can draw from the discussion and evidence presented in this chapter is that the link between radical right-wing parties' party position shift and the change in their constituency structure depends on the clarity or ambiguity of the position. Party position ambiguity can break the connection between the two. In other words, the position blurring of a radical right-wing party on socioeconomic issues does not encourage manual workers or small business owners to turn their back on the party despite a significant gap between themselves and the party regarding their preferences on the issues.

Summary and Discussion

Though socioeconomic issues are only secondary and instrumental issues for many of the radical right-wing parties, the parties cannot avoid dis-

cussing the issues, responding either to legislative agendas or to voters' demands regarding the issues, and presenting their own policy positions on the issues. Though new issues such as immigration and European integration are the main driving forces of the support for these parties, traditional socioeconomic issues still constitute critical concerns for voters, and certain conditions, such as economic downturn, make the issues even more imperative to the majority of voters (Wlezien 2005).

Literature suggests that a particular stance on socioeconomic issues provides a "winning formula" for radical right-wing parties. On the one hand, Kitschelt (1995) argues that radical right-wing parties are successful when they combine sociocultural authoritarianism, anti-immigration stances, and economic liberalism. Though the original argument is modified to be time-bound to the 1990s, it contends that a weak form of this formula with "a muted appeal to free-market liberalism may be sufficient to satisfy the small business constituency without alienating blue-collar workers" (McGann and Kitschelt 2005, 150). On the other hand, the latest literature pays attention to the recent "left turn" of the parties and suggests that the "new winning formula" comprises sociocultural authoritarianism, anti-immigration stances, and center-left positions on socioeconomic issues because more of the voters with anti-immigration attitudes hold left-wing stances on socioeconomic issues (van der Brug and van Spanje 2009; Rydgren 2013a; van der Brug et al. 2013).

Particular positioning on socioeconomic issues, however, may not necessarily be a winning formula for radical right-wing parties. Manual workers and small business owners, who still hold different preferences on the issues, continue to be overrepresented among core supporters of the parties, and position proximity between themselves and a radical right-wing party significantly determines their voting behavior even now. Therefore, the shift of party position in any direction can result in the loss of the electoral support of either group.

Radical right-wing parties' position blurring on socioeconomic issues is found in this chapter to weaken the relationship between position proximity and party support. Thus a "newer" winning formula of radical right-wing parties may combine unambiguous sociocultural authoritarianism and opposition to immigration with ambiguous party positions on socioeconomic issues regardless of the true location of the positions. The question of how this newer formula actually benefits the parties in elections should be answered in future research.

SEVEN

Social Democratic Parties' Position Blurring on Immigration

While immigration-related issues, or sociocultural issues more broadly, provided opportunities for development and success for radical right-wing parties or niche parties more generally, they presented new challenges to mainstream parties. Though center-right mainstream parties are not free from the challenges from the rise of radical right-wing parties because they are adjacent to each other on the left/right ideological spectrum (Han 2015a), the emergence of these new parties has also created the prospects for expanding a right-wing bloc (Bale 2003). In addition, anti-immigration rhetoric is not unacceptable to many of the center-right mainstream parties due to the historical bond between right-wing ideologies and nationalistic sentiments that have existed for a long time in Western Europe (Dogan 1994).

The emergence of immigration-related issues as salient political issues, the rise of anti-immigration attitudes among voters, and the growth of radical right-wing parties have put substantial pressure on center-left mainstream parties, mostly social democratic parties. The party leaders of these parties, as well as many of their core supporters, are more ideologically committed to the values of social justice, equality, and multiculturalism than those of center-right mainstream parties are (Lahav 2004; Ireland 2004). Social democratic parties, however, have found many of their own supporters switching to voting for radical right-wing parties because of immigration-related issues.

In particular, manual workers, who have been the most critical constituency of social democratic parties, now constitute a major source of electoral support for radical right-wing parties (Rydgren 2013b), and many of them make their vote choice between a mainstream social democratic party and a radical right-wing party (Arzheimer 2013). A critical challenge to social democratic parties arose because manual workers are opposed to liberal policies regarding immigration. The internal dilemma of social democratic parties has been clear: though party leaders and libertarian constituencies want to pursue more liberal policies regarding immigration, those under the great political influence of manual workers have been discouraged from doing so (Han 2015b).

What do the findings in the previous chapters on position blurring imply for the relationship between social democratic parties, manual workers, and immigration-related issues? When party leaders are constrained by manual workers not to pursue liberal and inclusive policies regarding immigration, does their behavior of position blurring dilute the significance of the issues in the party-supporter relationship the same way position blurring on socioeconomic issues does for radical right-wing parties and their main supporting groups?

Like in the previous chapter, I first demonstrate that manual workers and other supporters of social democratic parties hold significantly different preferences on immigration-related issues. Then I find that though manual workers' support for social democratic parties is weakened as the parties' positions on immigration-related issues move in the liberal direction when the positions are not ambiguous, immigration positions do not change manual workers' party support when positions are blurred. Thus the finding implies conclusions similar to those in the previous chapter. Though sociocultural issues possibly worsen the cleavage between manual workers and other supporters in social democratic parties, the parties' ambiguous positions on the issues obscure the cleavage and help to sustain the unstable coalition between them.

The Rise of New Politics Issues and Manual Workers' Support for Social Democratic Parties

In line with the postmaterialism argument (Inglehart 1997), nonmaterial issues began to have an effect on numerous aspects of political phenomena and behaviors in the 1970s in Western Europe. People in these countries had until the 1970s mostly considered material issues such as income redis-

tribution, the role of the public sector in the economy, and social policies. A political actor's stance on these material issues could be summarized by her location on the dimension of "left-wing vs. right-wing."

Voters, however, came to find themselves taking into account other, nonmaterial values in their life such as traditional and nationalist values, multiculturalism, environmentalism, liberty and equality, and so on in the 1970s and 1980s. People put great subjective values on properties that are scarce in their society. Thus voters' utility from and priority on material resources diminished as the material means became abundant in their society (the principle of diminishing marginal utility). In addition, the political and social mobilization of particular nonmaterial issues were activated by social incidents and scientific activities, such as scientific findings on the risks of nuclear energy and food additives, scientific evidence on the challenges to the ecological system, and the Chernobyl disaster (Kitschelt 1986).

Immigration-related issues were mobilized as political issues later than environmental issues had been, but they were developed more strongly. The inflow of mass asylum seekers from the Balkans in the 1990s led to the first "refugee crisis" and decisively raised the salience level of immigration in Western Europe. It also brought about European citizens' concern on economic (e.g., fiscal burden and job competition), social (e.g., crime), and cultural (e.g., multiculturalism) consequences of refugees and immigrants in general.[1] In Germany, which admitted the largest number of asylum seekers, political asylum became the most salient and contentious issue between the Social Democratic Party and the Christian Democratic Union in some of the local elections in 1991–1992 (Geddes 2003). The salience level of immigration rose in other countries as well. While only 4 percent of people indicated immigration either as the most important or the second most important problem in their country in 1989, 17 percent did so in 2003.[2]

Scholars began to propose the second dimension of political ideologies to represent political actors' preferences on these issues and to call it the "libertarian vs. authoritarian" dimension. While libertarianism supports the realization of equality and liberty of all citizens in society and their voluntary and equal participation, authoritarianism advocates the stratification of society, hierarchical relationships between members, and their compulsory association (Kitschelt 1994). Regarding specific preferences on particular issues, whereas libertarianism is usually linked to the support for multiculturalism, environmentalism, abortion, and same-sex marriage, authoritarianism leads to the integration of ethnic minorities into main-

stream culture, the maintenance of traditional and nationalist values, and the opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002).

As these issues of new politics occupied political actors' minds, they played a critical role in determining the actors' behaviors. Regarding voting behavior, the evidence abounds in different ways. Survey items that directly indicate people's priorities on nonmaterial values (e.g., "ideas are more important than money") are found to affect voters' party choice (Knutsen 1995). People's education level, which mostly signifies their nonmaterial values, and their income level, which generally characterizes their material interests, significantly determine their voting behavior (van der Waal, Achterberg, and Houtman 2007). Finally, voters' preferences on particular issues that exemplify nonmaterial, sociocultural issues are now major factors for their party choice, particularly their support for political parties campaigning exclusively on these issues (Rydgren 2008; Dolezal 2010).

The rise of new political issues has created a dilemma for social democratic parties in Western Europe. Social democratic parties had to make a choice between moving in the left-libertarian direction and shifting toward the right-authoritarian pole. It was not an easy choice because either shift brought in different electoral outcomes depending on party-competition environments and on the distribution of the general public on the libertarian/authoritarian dimension (Kitschelt 1994).

Social democratic parties had to face an internal challenge as well. Though manual workers and other supporters did not significantly differ in their stances on socioeconomic issues, they showed critically different stances on new politics issues: manual workers hold more authoritarian positions than other supporters of the parties. As figure 7.1 shows, manual workers who support social democratic parties are not statistically significantly more left-wing (or right-wing) on socioeconomic issues of income redistribution, state ownership of industries, and private enterprise than are other party supporters (the left-side graph). But there are statistically significantly different positions on new political issues such as multiculturalism, same-sex marriage, and law and order (the right-side graph) between manual workers and other supporters.

As discussed in the previous chapter, manual workers hold an authoritarian propensity for several reasons: their low education level (Ivarsflaten and Stubager 2013), the small degree of autonomy in their workplaces (Kitschelt 1995), and a lack of personal interactions in their job routines (Oesch 2013). Regarding a particular issue related to the dimension of new

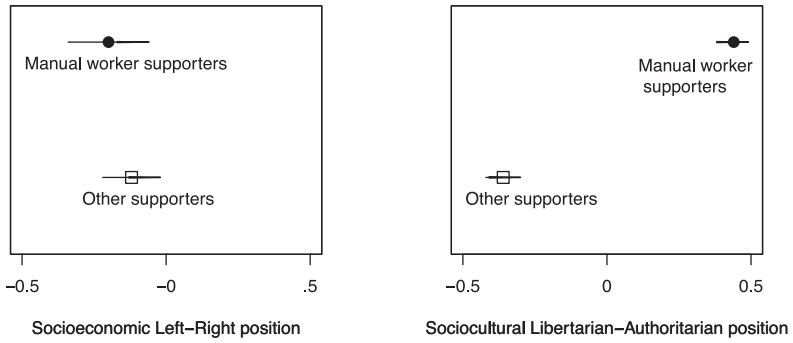

Fig. 7.1. Social Democratic Party Supporters' Positions on Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Issues

Source: EES (2009).

Note: "Manual worker supporters" are manual workers who voted for social democratic parties; "Other supporters" are social democratic party supporters who are not manual workers. Horizontal lines indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals of each of the positions. Left/right and libertarian/authoritarian positions are constructed with a principal component analysis using survey questions related to each ideological aspect in the EES (2009). Greater values indicate more right-wing and more authoritarian positions. See the appendix for survey questions and additional information on the principal component analysis.

politics in Western Europe, manual workers find themselves at the forefront of the opposition to immigration, though scholars do not always agree with each other about why manual workers oppose immigration. Some of them emphasize their economic concerns on labor market competition and the fiscal burden of immigrants (Malhotra, Margalit, and Mo 2013), while others argue that their cultural nationalism and nativism strongly shape their opposition to immigration (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010).

No matter which of these factors their opposition comes from, manual workers' disapproval of liberal policies regarding immigration has created a dilemma for social democratic parties. Social democratic parties have reasons for resisting restrictive policies regarding immigration. First, they consider immigrants and ethnic minorities potential supporters of the parties more than right-wing parties do (Faist 1994). Messina (2007) actually finds that ethnic minority people in Western Europe are more likely to vote for left-wing parties than for right-wing parties. Given that ethnic minority people and immigrants are more favorable to the arrival of new immigrants (Mayda 2006),[3] social democratic parties may want to represent the preferences of these people and support liberal policies regarding immigration. Second, ideologies matter. Lahav (2004) and Ireland (2004) find that the party elites of social democratic parties, or left-wing parties in

general, are more committed to the values of cultural pluralism and social equality. This ideological commitment of theirs leads to their opposition to discrimination against immigrants.

Therefore, immigration-related issues, or new political issues in general, have brought in new aspects of partnership and tension between social democratic parties and manual workers. Han (2015b) finds that the adoption of more liberal immigration policies by left-wing governments is constrained by the strong class voting pattern of manual workers. In other words, when manual workers can exert solid influence on social democratic parties, the parties are not able to pursue policies they favor regarding immigration. The potential friction between manual workers and social democratic parties has never disappeared. Manual workers "have not been acceptably satisfied with the migration policies of the parties, and this discontent has made some of them shift their votes to other political parties, such as radical right-wing parties" (Han 2015b, 613).

Therefore, manual workers have increasingly found cleavages between themselves and social democratic parties as well as other constituencies such as libertarian groups (Bornschier and Kriesi 2013). Obviously, intraparty cleavages have emerged regarding socioeconomic issues as well. Coordinated market economy production regimes found in many Western European countries diversified manual workers' skill types (e.g., firm-specific or industry-specific skills) as well as skill levels (Iversen and Soskice 2001). Globalization has also brought in heterogeneity in manual workers' interests between sectors, such as between export, domestic, and public sectors (Schwartz 2001). The rising living standards and increased social mobility of some workers have weakened their demand for income redistribution and social policies as well (Nieuwbeerta and Ultee 1999; Nieuwbeerta, de Graaf, and Ultee 2000). These diverse workers came to hold different preferences on labor and social policies, and social democratic parties sometimes prioritized some groups' preferences over others' and consequently forced some workers out of the parties (Rueda 2008).

Many manual workers left social democratic parties also because of the parties' shift to the center on the socioeconomic dimension. Social democratic parties "modernized" their socioeconomic programs and tried to draw party support from the middle class in response to a demographic challenge of the declining numbers of manual workers and to center-right mainstream parties' shifts to the right (Smith 1994; Toynbee and Walker 2001; Webb 2004).

The causal link between social democratic party policies and manual workers' voting behavior may not be straightforward. In particular, Arndt

(2013) argues that the electoral system modifies the electoral backlash of manual workers on social democratic parties' policy changes. The proportional representation system amplifies manual workers' dealignment from the parties because it provides opportunities for alternative, challenger parties on both sides of the ideological spectrum. Radical left-wing parties can draw the workers with their left-wing policies on socioeconomic issues, and radical right-wing parties can make an appeal to them with their extremely restrictive arguments on sociocultural issues. Nonetheless, the decline of the distinctiveness of center-left and center-right mainstream parties' positions on socioeconomic issues is found to have definitely weakened the pattern of class voting (Evans and Tilley 2012).

The disparity between social democratic parties and manual workers and the fractionalization of supporters regarding their preferences and stances on immigration-related issues and socioeconomic issues have motivated the workers to turn their backs on the parties. As figure 7.2 demonstrates, the percentage of manual workers voting for mainstream social democratic political parties has decreased in most Western European countries since 1975. In other words, manual workers are less likely to vote for a mainstream social democratic party now than they were in 1975.

Empirical evidence on the relationship between social democratic party positions on sociocultural issues and the party choice of manual workers, however, is only limited. Arzheimer (2013) finds that neither social democratic parties' stance nor their emphasis on the issues of immigration and national identity has an effect on manual workers' vote choice between radical right-wing parties and social democratic parties. Nonetheless, the arguments and findings in the previous chapters imply that ambiguity in social democratic parties' positions on immigration-related issues may intervene in the association between party position and vote choice.

Social Democratic Party Positions on Immigration

As was demonstrated in chapter 5, social democratic party supporters are more divided in their preferences on immigration than supporters for any other party families. When the parties' ideological commitment to equality and justice mostly concerned socioeconomic inequality and fairness, these ideological values were not incompatible with the material interests of manual workers as their main constituency. As social democratic parties attached the values to immigration-related issues, however, they increasingly found conflicts between their ideological beliefs and manual work-

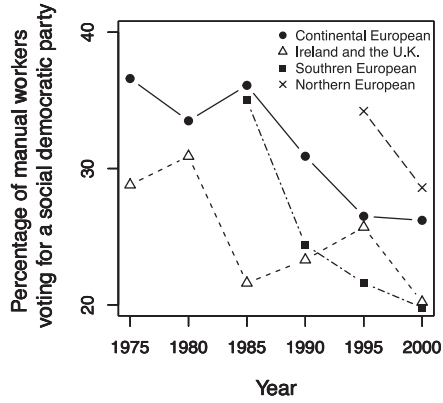

Fig. 7.2. Manual Workers' Support for Mainstream Social Democratic Parties
Source: Various years of Eurobarometer surveys.
Note: Continental European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands; southern European countries consist of Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain; northern European countries are composed of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The list of mainstream social democratic parties examined in this chapter is presented in the appendix.

ers' interests. From their early experience, they learned that presenting an unambiguously liberal position on immigration can bring a detrimental political outcome.

The French Socialist Party presented liberal immigration and immigrant policies in the late 1970s and early 1980s when immigration-related issues began to draw voters' attention. The party had promised to allow foreign residents to vote in local elections in its 1981 election campaign and, after controlling the government, implemented an amnesty for more than 100,000 undocumented immigrants (DeLey 1983).[4] But the proimmigration measures of the Socialist Party ended up politicizing immigration-related issues, raising the salience of the issues, and provoking countermovements (Rydgren 2004b). The proposal on voting rights provoked disputes on the legitimate concept of citizenship, and the argument of the "right to be different" had an unintended effect of supporting the radical right's claim that immigrants do not want to integrate into French society (Brubaker 1992).

Adopting an anti-immigration position, however, was not always a preferable strategy either. As the Social Democratic Party of Austria supported the 1998 Naturalization Act, which put language hurdles for citizenship, some of the social democratic parties tried to follow the change of public opinion and adopted a more restrictive policy on immigration. But these

shifts were not always credibly accepted by voters. The parties had traditionally maintained ideological and policy propensity toward protecting and representing the social underclass. Thus, people hostile to immigrants perceived the party as a plausible defender of immigrants, not as a problem solver (Williams 2006). In other words, Western European voters did not bestow the strong perception of issue competence to social democratic parties.

Knowing that their policy proposals, no matter what the proposals were, could not win voters' perception of competence and trustfulness, they first tried not to act on the issues. The Social Democratic Party of Austria tried to divert voters' attention from immigration to other issues such as European Union membership in the 1990s, and the Dutch Labour Party also tried to diffuse immigration-related issues by framing the issues in socioeconomic terms instead of sociocultural terms (Bale et al. 2010).

Nonetheless, many of them could not continue to stay absolutely silent because of other political parties' behaviors as well as their own status as incumbent parties and major political actors. The Social Democratic Party of Austria could not continue to neglect immigration-related issues because another mainstream party, the Austrian People's Party, abandoned the strategy of isolating the Freedom Party of Austria and began to adopt anti-immigration arguments after its electoral defeat to the Freedom Party of Austria (Luther 2003). The Dutch Labour Party also found it hard to keep ignoring the issues because its coalition partner (the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) made much of anti-immigration rhetoric in the late 1990s (van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008).

As they found they could not avoid immigration-related issues by de-emphasizing the issues, they either stood behind broad but vague principles of citizenship, liberty, and equality or alternated between pluralistic arguments (e.g., "right to difference") and restrictive policy proposals to diffuse the rhetoric of the radical right on immigration-related issues (Schain 2002). Consequently, scholars describe social democratic parties' responses to immigration-related issues as "ambivalent" (Rydgren 2004b), "confusing" (Schain 2002), and "vague" (Aylott 1999).

Consequently, it is expected that the relationship between party-competition environments and social democratic parties' issue-competition behaviors on immigration is consistent with the theory and findings in this book. While party-competition environments (party system salience and polarization) are negatively correlated with the parties' de-emphasis on immigration-related issues, there is a positive correlation between party-competition environments and the ambiguity of the parties' immigration

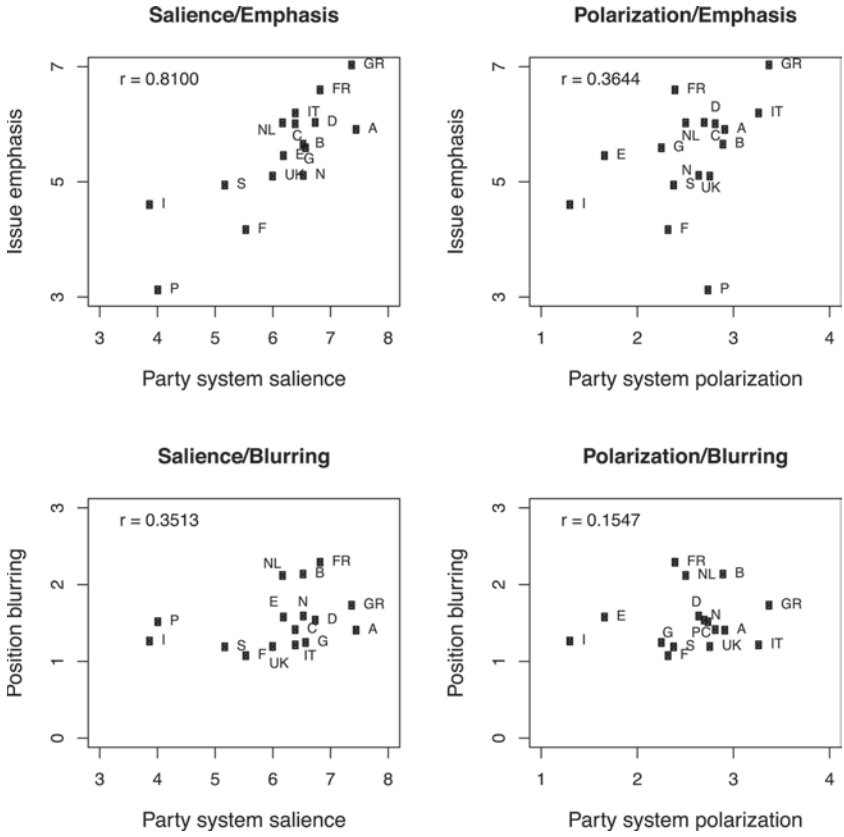

Fig. 7.3. Party-Competition Environments and Issue Competition on Immigration

Source: CHES (2010).

Note: A: Austria; B: Belgium; C: Switzerland; D: Denmark; E: Spain; F: Finland; FR: France; G: Germany, GR: Greece; I: Ireland; IT: Italy; N: Norway; NL: the Netherlands; P: Portugal; S: Sweden; UK: the United Kingdom. Issue emphasis indicates social democratic parties' average salience scores on immigration-related issues, and position blurring means the parties' average position blurring on the issues measured with the standard deviation of experts' estimations. Party system salience signifies the average salience scores of other political parties on immigration-related issues in each country, and party system polarization indicates the standard deviation of other parties' positions on the issues in a country.

positions. Figure 7.3 confirms the expectation. Social democratic parties de-emphasize immigration-related issues when the issues are neither salient nor contentious issues in the party system (the top graphs). By contrast, the parties blur their positions on the issues as other political parties in the same country emphasize the issues, or if they are polarized in their positions on the issues (the bottom graphs).

Position Blurring and Manual Workers' Party Support

Can social democratic parties' blurring of their positions on immigration-related issues weaken manual workers' grievance on the parties' soft positions on the issues and sustain their party support? Such a strategy was deliberately pursued by some social democratic parties. Some of them, such as the Dutch Labour Party, discussed immigration-related issues in socioeconomic terms and attempted to purposely weaken the sociocultural frame of immigration (Bruquetas Callejo et al. 2007). Many of the social democratic parties also tried not to send a precise signal to voters regarding their stances on immigration by mixing tougher positions on the number of new immigrants with softer stances on the integration of immigrants (Givens and Luedtke 2005).

We can draw a similar hypothesis for social democratic parties with one in the previous chapter on radical right-wing parties. As radical right-wing parties can deter party supporters who hold different stances on socioeconomic issues from abandoning their support for the parties by blurring their positions on the issues, social democratic parties will be able to sustain the electoral support of people whose preferences on immigration-related issues are different from theirs by presenting an ambiguous position on the issues. Specifically, social democratic parties with liberal positions on the issues are expected to retain the party support of manual workers when the parties blur their position regarding the issues.

This hypothesis is tested with the EES (2009), which has questions on the likelihood of people voting for each of the political parties. Using the question on social democratic parties as the dependent variable, the analysis examines how party position and position blurring on immigration-related issues determine the electoral support of manual workers.

The result in model 1 does not suggest that social democratic parties' positions on immigration-related issues modify the electoral support of manual workers. The result does not correspond to the common expectation, but it is consistent with the finding of Arzheimer (2013). But the result in model 2, particularly the statistically significant coefficient of the three-way interaction term (***manual workers*** × ***party position*** × ***position blurring***), tells us that such an interactive effect of manual workers and party position on immigration depends on the ambiguity of the party position.

Specifically, modestly restrictive positions (larger than 5.5 in the 0 to 10 scale) on immigration-related issues make manual workers more likely to support a social democratic party than other people when the parties do not blur their position. But manual workers are neither more likely nor

TABLE 7.1. Party Position, Position Blurring, and Voting for Social Democratic Parties

DV=Voting likelihood for social democratic parties	(1)	(2)	(3)
Manual workers	–0.03	0.02	–0.06
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.26)
Party position	–0.01	–0.09	–0.11*
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Manual workers × Party position	0.07	0.05	0.02
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Position blurring		0.10	0.13
		(0.22)	(0.32)
Manual workers ×		–0.01	0.04
Position blurring		(0.14)	(0.18)
Party position × Position blurring		0.38***	0.34**
		(0.15)	(0.13)
Manual workers × Party position ×		–0.51***	–0.53**
Position blurring		(0.20)	(0.20)
Party position (economy)			0.02
			(0.11)
Manual workers ×			0.03
Party position (economy)			(0.08)
Female	0.02	0.02	0.04
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Age	–0.00	–0.00	–0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education	0.02	0.01	0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Unemployed	0.07	0.06	0.09
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Socioeconomic status	–0.11***	–0.12***	–0.10**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Political ideology (left/right)	–0.25***	–0.25***	–0.23***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
–2 × Log likelihood	53,092.5	53,062.8	49,331.1
Number of observations	12,121	12,121	11,231

Note: Clustered standard errors (by political party) in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The ordered logistic regression model with robust standard errors clustered by political party is used. Results on cutting points are not reported. Party position and position-blurring variables indicate social democratic parties' positions on immigration-related issues and the ambiguity of the positions from the CHES (2006). Greater values of the party position variable indicate more restrictive positions regarding the issues. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

less likely to vote for a social democratic party than other people when the party presents an unambiguously modest liberal stance (the left-hand-side graph in figure 7.4).

Yet manual workers' support for social democratic parties is not affected by the parties' positions on immigration-related issues when they blur theirs (the right-hand-side graph). In other words, social democratic par-

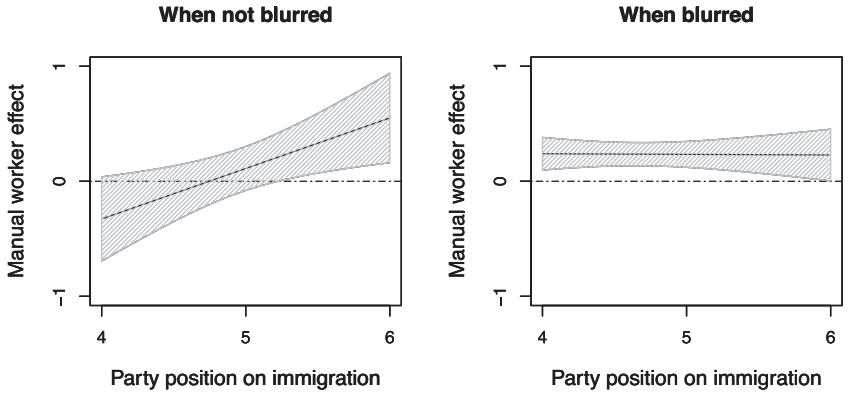

Fig. 7.4. Position Blurring, Party Position, and the Voting Behavior of Manual Workers
Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in model 2 in table 7.1. The conditional coefficients and standard errors in the left-hand-side graph ('When not blurred') are calculated with fixing the position-blurring variable at its 10th percentile value, and those in the right-hand-side graph ('When blurred') are calculated with fixing the variable at its 90th percentile value. The index of party position on immigration ranges from 0 (liberal position) to 10 (restrictive position).

ties do not need to be worried about losing the support of manual workers despite their modestly liberal party positions on immigration-related issues when the positions are ambiguous enough for the workers not to pay attention to their immigration positions. As radical right-wing parties can uphold the support of both manual workers and small business owners by blurring their socioeconomic positions, social democratic parties may be able to encourage manual workers to continue their party support by presenting ambiguous positions on immigration-related issues.

Position Blurring and Party Base

Have social democratic parties adopted more restrictive positions regarding immigration since the 1990s? Immigration-related issues certainly make social democratic parties "face conflicts between unions who favor restrictive policies and liberals and ethnic groups who favor expansionist policies" (Perlmutter 1996, 377). The political influence of manual workers on social democratic parties, regardless of whether it works through their class voting pattern (Han 2015b) or institutional affiliations between trade unions and the parties (Western 1997), definitely constrains the parties from promoting liberal policies on immigration.

Externally, the success of radical right-wing parties also puts pressure on social democratic parties to reconsider their stances on immigration (van Spanje 2010a; Abou-Chadi 2016). Though social democratic parties do not necessarily adopt a more restrictive immigration position as a response to the electoral growth of radical right-wing parties (Han 2015a), both social democratic parties and radical right-wing parties compete for the votes of manual workers, and the former's campaign strategies have been significantly affected by the latter's electoral tactics and outcomes (Arzheimer 2013).

Data on party position actually provide evidence on social democratic parties' shifts in their positions regarding immigration. Table 7.2 shows that most of the mainstream social democratic parties in Western Europe gradually adopted more restrictive immigration positions between 1990 and 2010.

Though most of the mainstream social democratic parties adopted more restrictive immigration positions, there are still significant divisions between manual workers and other party supporters regarding their stances on immigration, as was shown previously in this chapter. More importantly, manual workers perceive that there is a substantial disparity between themselves and the mainstream social democratic party in their

TABLE 7.2. Social Democratic Parties' Immigration Positions (1990–2010)

Country	1990	2000	2010	Difference (2010 – 1990)
Austria	4.4	6	5.2	0.8
Belgium	3.5	3.3	3.0	–0.5
Denmark	3.4	5.3	6.4	2.9
Finland	3.3	3.5	5.3	2.0
France	3.1	3.7	3.8	0.6
Germany	3.7	4.2	4.9	1.2
Greece	4.7	4.9	5.1	0.4
Ireland	3.9	3.9	4.9	1.0
Italy	2.1	3.1	3.0	0.9
The Netherlands	3.2	4.2	5.2	2.0
Norway	6.0	5.9	6.5	0.5
Portugal	3.3	3.7	4.3	1.0
Spain	4.7	3.8	4.1	–0.6
Sweden	4.6	5.1	3.4	–1.2
Switzerland	2.7	2.6	1.4	–1.3
The U.K.	4.5	5.6	5.6	1.1
Average	**3.8**	**4.3**	**4.5**	**0.7**

Source: Lubbers (2000) for 1990 and 2000 positions; CHES (2010) for 2010 positions.

Note: Party positions range from 0 (strongly opposes tough immigration policy) to 10 (strongly favors tough immigration policy).

country in their policy positions on immigration. For example, the DPES (2006) asked respondents their estimations of party positions regarding asylum seekers as well as their own stances on the issue. The survey shows that manual workers' self-placement on the issue is statistically significantly more restrictive (5.2 on average on a 1 to 7 scale, a greater value indicates a more restrictive position on asylum seekers) than their estimations on the Dutch Labour Party position (4.2 on average). These data imply that manual workers in Western Europe still think that mainstream social democratic parties' immigration positions are not as tough as they should be.

Therefore, it is believed that many manual workers turned their backs on mainstream social democratic parties due to the divergence between their stances on immigration. While manual workers who still vote for left-wing parties do so due to their low income and wage dependence, those who do not cast their vote for a left-wing party follow their sociocultural beliefs (Achterberg and Houtman 2006). Things went from bad to worse as radical right-wing parties attracted many manual workers with their strong authoritarian ideologies and tough stances on immigration in particular. Thus sociocultural ideologies and positions are major factors among manual workers for voting for a radical right-wing party (Bornschier and Kriesi 2013).

The disparity between manual workers and social democratic parties in their positions on immigration, however, may not be a sufficient condition for the former's dealignment from the latter. As the general argument of this book suggests, the significance of a party position decreases as the ambiguity of the party position increases. As the socioeconomic positions of radical right-wing parties do not disturb manual workers or small business owners despite their discord when the parties blur their positions, the softer stances of social democratic parties regarding immigration will not upset manual workers when the stances are ambiguous enough. In that case, social democratic parties will be able to sustain the support of manual workers despite their potential tension on immigration-related issues.

Figure 7.5 demonstrates social democratic parties' positions on immigration, the degree to which the positions are ambiguous, and the percentages of manual workers among those who voted for social democratic parties. The data on party position and position blurring are from CHES (2006) and the party supporter data are from the EES (2009). Social democratic parties are categorized into four groups according to their immigration positions and the ambiguity of the positions. First, parties with empty squares that appear in the top right area are those with more restrictive (above the median among all the parties in the data in their party position)

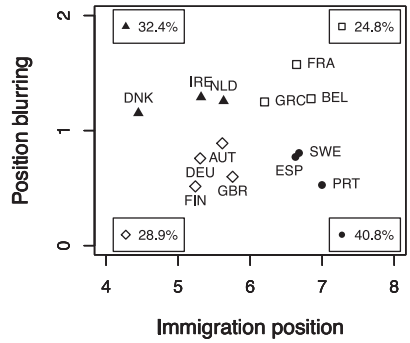

Fig. 7.5. Party Position, Position Blurring, and the Share of Manual Workers

Note: AUT: Austria; BEL: Belgium; DNK: Denmark; FIN: Finland; FRA: France; DEU: Germany; GRC: Greece; IRE: Ireland; NLD: the Netherlands; PRT: Portugal; ESP: Spain; SWE: Sweden; GBR: the United Kingdom. Numbers in the rectangles at the corners of the graph indicate the percentages of manual workers among social democratic party supporters in each category of parties. The index of immigration position ranges from 0 (strongly opposes tough policy) to 10 (strongly favors tough policy). Western European countries not available either in EES (2009) or CHES (2006) are not included.

and ambiguous (above the median among all the parties in the data in their position blurring) positions. Second, parties with filled circles that appear in the bottom right area are those with more restrictive and unambiguous (below the median among all the parties in the data in their position blurring) positions. Third, parties with filled triangles that appear in the top left area are those with central (below the median among all the parties in the data in their party position) and ambiguous positions. Finally, parties with empty diamonds that appear in the bottom left are those with central and unambiguous positions. The average percentages of manual worker supporters of each category are reported in the rectangles at the four corners of the graph.

Figure 7.5 shows that we can find a clear difference in the share of manual workers among party supporters between social democratic parties that take quite restrictive positions regarding immigration and those that do not when the parties do not blur their position. While the average percentage of manual workers in the former parties (Portugal, Spain, and Sweden) is 40.8 percent, the average percentage of the latter parties (Austria, Finland, Germany, and the United Kingdom) is only 28.9 percent. In other words, when the positions are unambiguous, social democratic parties draw strong support from manual workers by presenting restrictive positions regarding immigration.

In contrast, such a pattern is slightly reversed when the parties blur

their immigration position. About 24.8 percent of supporters are manual workers who favor "tough and ambiguous" social democratic parties, such as those in Belgium, France, and Greece. The share of manual worker supporters is actually a little larger (32.4 percent on average) for "moderate and ambiguous" social democratic parties in Denmark, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

Therefore, though social democratic parties' positional shifts regarding immigration have not filled in the gap between the parties and manual workers in their stances on immigration-related issues, the positional disparity does not necessarily lead to the underrepresentation of manual workers among party supporters. The position-blurring behavior of social democratic parties can mitigate manual workers' dissatisfaction with the parties' soft positions and deter them from withdrawing their support and searching for an alternative.

Position Blurring and Social Democratic Parties' Electoral Performance

Due to many challenges to social democratic parties discussed in this chapter, most of the parties have struggled in elections since the 1990s. On average, social democratic parties in Western European countries acquired 32.3 percent of the vote share in the 1980s. The portion decreased to 30.9 percent in the 1990s, 29.5 percent in the 2000s, and 22.7 percent in the 2010s. From the 1980s to the 2010s, social democratic parties in only three countries increased their vote share, but still only marginally.

In the same period, many of the social democratic parties surely adopted more restrictive positions regarding immigration (table 7.2). For example, while the Social Democratic Party of Austria had tried to ignore the Freedom Party of Austria and redirect the political agenda to other issues in the early 1990s, it agreed in 1990 to pass the Integration Package, which strengthened income and language criteria for naturalization (Perchinig 2012). In the United Kingdom, the Labour Party was opposed to the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act of 1993 and the Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996 of the Conservative government.[5] After gaining control of the government, however, the party introduced its own restrictive bills on asylum seekers, such as the Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999, which replaced cash benefits to asylum seekers with a voucher system (Schuster and Solomos 2004).

The discussion in the previous section implies that social democratic

TABLE 7.3. Social Democratic Parties' Vote Share (1980s–2010s)

Country	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	Difference (2010s – 1980s)
Austria	45.4	37.2	33.7	26.9	–18.5
Belgium	28.0	23.2	24.5	21.7	–6.3
Denmark	30.9	36.0	26.8	25.6	–5.4
Finland	25.4	24.4	22.9	17.8	–7.6
France	34.4	20.6	24.4	18.4	–16.0
Germany	39.4	36.9	31.9	23.1	–16.3
Greece	43.4	42.3	41.6	9.1	–34.3
Ireland	8.9	15.0	10.5	13.1	4.2
Italy	28.2	19.2	27.0	25.4	–2.8
The Netherlands	31.0	26.4	21.2	16.7	–14.3
Norway	37.4	36.0	30.8	29.1	–8.3
Portugal	26.7	39.0	39.8	30.2	3.5
Spain	44.2	38.4	40.4	23.8	–20.4
Sweden	44.5	39.8	37.4	30.0	–14.5
Switzerland	20.6	20.9	21.4	18.8	–1.9
The U.K.	29.2	38.8	38.0	33.2	4.0
Average	**32.3**	**30.9**	**29.5**	**22.7**	**–9.7**

Source: MARPOR project data (2020a).

parties might have retained the party support of manual workers either by shifting their position in a more restrictive direction or by sustaining their previous position but making it ambiguous. How do their positions on immigration and their position-blurring behavior decide their electoral performance? The emergence of immigration as a salient political issue, the rise of nativism among the public, and the growth of radical right-wing parties are believed to have made social democratic parties struggle in most Western European countries (Arzheimer 2013). Did the adoption of more restrictive immigration positions actually help the parties to overcome these challenges and minimize their electoral damage? How did the behavior of position blurring lessen the effect of party position on electoral performance?

The effect of social democratic parties' response to radical right-wing parties in terms of their positions on immigration-related issues, or, more broadly, that of mainstream parties' reaction to niche parties and their core issues on their own electoral outcomes, has not been actively researched yet. Some scholars theorize and analyze how mainstream parties' positioning on issues that constitute the major identity of niche parties determines the electoral fortune of the niche parties, but they reached different conclusions. Meguid (2008) concludes that mainstream parties' shift of their posi-

tion regarding niche party issues toward those of the niche parties weakens the electoral support for niche parties. By moving close to a minor, niche party on the issue, mainstream parties will likely raise the salience of the issue but also transfer issue ownership to themselves. Voters are likely to grant issue ownership to mainstream parties when they take similar positions with niche parties because the major and established parties have greater legislative and governmental experiences than do niche parties.[6] But Dahlström and Sundell (2012) reach a different finding. Mainstream parties' adoption of a more restrictive position regarding immigration intensifies electoral support for radical right-wing parties. They suggest that such an electoral effect of position shift may occur if such a shift gives legitimacy and credibility to the restrictive positions of radical right-wing parties and consequently lowers a psychological barrier to voting for the parties.

Nonetheless, though social democratic party positioning has a certain clear impact on radical right-wing parties' electoral fortune, whether it intensifies or weakens the support for radical right-wing parties, such an effect does not necessarily imply anything about the party positioning effect on social democratic parties' electoral performance. The new electoral support for radical right-wing parties can be mobilized from voters who used to abstain from voting (Bornschier and Kriesi 2013). In addition, there is huge variation among countries in which radical right-wing parties compete for the same potential pool of voters.[7]

Though it is difficult to generalize, it is legitimate to deduce that the adoption of more restrictive immigration positions by social democratic parties might have helped the parties to reduce their electoral deficiencies. The mobilization of a certain issue with a particular ideology among voters provides pressure for political parties to adopt the issue as a party program with a party position based on the ideology. Western European voters found not only that they put greater salience on immigration-related issues than before but also that their views on immigration became more negative in this period (Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky 2006). Consequently, social democratic parties might have gained support, or reduced their losses, by corresponding to voters' opinions and preferences.

Nonetheless, there are reasons to presume that such a shift of party position on immigration might not have helped social democratic parties. Immigration involves sociocultural aspects such as multiculturalism as well as socioeconomic aspects such as job competition. A position shift regarding sociocultural issues, regardless of its alignment with public opinion, may not help political parties because the issues are more principled issues

rather than pragmatic ones. The main rationale behind the argument on sociocultural issues is articulating and representing identity, value, and ideological commitment, rather than achieving practical solutions (Dougan and Munger 1989). Therefore, political parties' position shifts regarding sociocultural issues signify the withdrawal of their ideological commitment and disturb their core supporters (Tavits 2007). Also, the unexpected adoption of a restrictive position on immigration by a social democratic party that has never owned the issue before may not be able to persuade voters (Bale et al. 2010). If this is the case, voters will not sincerely believe such a position shift and will not change their voting behavior.

An observation of a simplified relationship between social democratic parties' immigration position and their vote share does not show a strong pattern. When each social democratic party's average vote share in a decade is regressed on their immigration positions as well as their average vote share in the previous decade, the coefficient of the immigration position variable has a positive sign (model 1 in table 7.4), indicating that the tougher the immigration positions social democratic parties had held, the fewer votes they lost in the next decade. Such an effect, however, is statistically insignificant.

When the interactive effect of party position and position blurring on vote share is tested in model 2, however, it is found that position blurring weakens the vote-increasing effect of tough immigration policies. As is graphically illustrated in figure 7.6, tough immigration positions help

TABLE 7.4. Immigration Position, Position Blurring, and Social Democratic Party Vote Share

DV=Vote share	(1)	(2)
Vote share (logged) $_{(t-1)}$	0.55**	0.46*
	(0.23)	(0.23)
Immigration position $_{(t-1)}$	0.04	0.16*
	(0.06)	(0.09)
Position blurring $_{(t-1)}$		0.58
		(0.39)
Immigration position $_{(t-1)}$ × Position blurring $_{(t-1)}$		–0.21*
		(0.12)
Constant	1.23*	1.20*
	(0.66)	(0.66)
R^2	0.28	0.35
Number of observations	39	39

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; ***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$. The ordinary least squares model is used. Included are the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

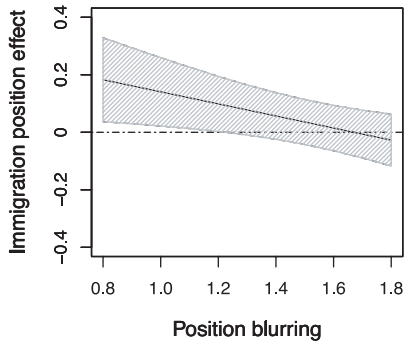

Fig. 7.6. Immigration Position, Position Blurring, and Social Democratic Party Vote Share

Note: Solid lines are coefficients, and shaded areas indicate their 95 percent confidence intervals. The coefficients and standard errors are calculated with results in model 2 in table 7.4.

social democratic parties to reduce their vote loss when they present a very clear position. In other words, unambiguously liberal (or moderate) immigration positions have hurt social democratic parties in elections. The interpretation of the coefficients suggests that the average shift of party position that occurred between 1990 and 2010 (0.7, table 7.2) would cause the loss of vote share by 3.2 percentage points, which is about 40 percent of the vote loss of social democratic parties between the 1990s and the 2010s (table 7.3).

Social democratic parties often connected their electoral defeat to their soft positions on immigration. Tony Blair argued that the Labour Party was losing electoral support after it had won the 1997 election because of people's concern on asylum seekers, where the Conservative Party was "occupying the ground the electorate thought the Labour party had vacated" (*The Guardian*, July 18, 2000). The Danish Social Democrats pointed out the politicization of immigration as the main reason for its consecutive electoral defeats in 2001 and 2005, which made them adopt more restrictive positions on immigration and support restrictive immigration bills by the center-right government as well (Bale et al. 2010). The result in table 7.4 implies that social democratic parties' responses to their electoral defeat and positional shifts on immigration-related issues were reasonable as a means to prevent further loss of electoral support.

When social democratic parties offer ambiguous positions, however, their positions neither help nor hurt the parties in elections. The graph implies that the position-blurring threshold is 1.2. It means that party position loses its effect on vote share when a party position is more ambiguous

than 1.2, and 69.2 percent of party/years had such ambiguous immigration positions. In other words, while two-thirds of social democratic parties have maintained immigration positions ambiguous enough to prevent the electoral effect of party position, party positions on immigration of other parties, such as the Social Democratic Party of Germany and the Danish Social Democrats, have been too unambiguous to mute the effect.

Social democratic parties have adopted tougher positions regarding immigration since the 1990s, but many of them have done so reluctantly. Immigration-related issues have surely provided dilemmas for social democratic parties in satisfying their own constituencies, who have different preferences on the issues, and in strategically formulating their position on the issues (Perlmutter 1996). The behavior of position blurring has new implications for social democratic parties' immigration politics. As such behavior beclouds the relationship between party position and manual workers' support for social democratic parties, it seems to make the effect of social democratic parties' position on their overall electoral fortune less straightforward. As a result, the parties may not necessarily go through electoral defeat because of their not-tough positions regarding immigration.

Summary and Discussion

The findings in this chapter, as well as those in previous ones, provide a practical implication for political parties. When they encounter internal division between core supporters who have different preferences on an issue, political parties can prevent the conflict from escalating by blurring their position on the issue. Though the behavior of position blurring is criticized as violating the normative role of political parties in representing voters' interests and delivering them to the political system, parties will be tempted to make use of the behavior to maintain the coalition of supporter groups.

As radical right-wing parties, or niche parties in general, draw more voters, scholars pay more attention to the strategic responses of mainstream parties. Some of them examine how mainstream parties adjust their policy position and issue emphasis regarding issues that niche parties actively mobilize on (Meguid 2008; Bale et al. 2010; Han 2015a), while others study whether mainstream parties take an inclusive approach to niche parties and try to collaborate and cooperate with the parties or exclude and ostracize them from collaboration (van Spanje 2010b; van Spanje and van der Brug 2007; Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn 2016).

Nonetheless, the contribution of this chapter to the literature on party politics differs from that of previous research in two ways. First, political parties possess another strategic tool in addition to making a decision on the modification of their policy position and the collaboration with new but growing political parties: how ambiguous or clear to make their policy positions. Second, though most of the previous studies examine the effects of mainstream parties' responses on the electoral support for niche parties (Meguid 2008; van Spanje and van der Brug 2009; van Spanje and Weber 2019; van Spanje and de Graaf 2018), this chapter inspects what happens to a mainstream party when it shifts or blurs its position. Again, unfortunately, the behavior of position blurring is normatively blameworthy, but it can be pragmatically useful.

EIGHT

Concluding Remarks

My argument on the politics of position blurring principally corresponds to that of the literature on issue competition. Political parties try to manipulate for their own purposes political agendas on which they compete with each other. Nonetheless, while most of the literature obliquely assumes that selective issue emphasis is the major, or only, instrument to direct voters' attention and make the most of their comparative advantage, I suggest in this book that the behavior of position blurring is another useful issue-competition tool despite the normative criticism that such party behavior elicits.

In this chapter, I conclude by discussing some of this book's imperative implications. How do the findings in this book relate to ongoing political changes such as party system polarization and personalization of politics? In addition, studies on position blurring do not find a consensus on the electoral effect of position blurring. When a political party blurs its policy position, does it benefit or hurt its electoral outcome? My discussion of position blurring implies that the political causes and consequences of position blurring should be understood in the context of issue dimension and issue competition. Does issue dimensionality lessen the electoral effect of position blurring? Though I do not have obvious answers for these questions, I discuss in this concluding chapter the implications that my findings provide regarding these questions.

Party System, Position Blurring, and Its Electoral Effect

The findings in this book may help to reconcile two seemingly contradictory findings in the literature on the electoral consequences of position blurring. On the one hand, position blurring may help political parties to strengthen their electoral base. Risk-acceptant voters actually embrace ambiguous candidates or parties and are willing to gamble on casting their votes for them (Shepsle 1972). Voters with strong partisanship optimistically accept an ambiguous party (candidate) position and expect the party (candidate) position to be close to their own position (Tomz and van Houweling 2009).[1] Position blurring can be an effective political strategy for shifting a policy position, particularly in the multiparty system (where the entry of new parties is easier) because it does not necessarily leave a previous party position vacant and consequently deters a new party from attracting voters around the position (Somer-Topcu 2015).

On the other hand, political parties lose the support of risk-averse voters by blurring their position (Enelow and Hinich 1981). Voters take into account not only the position of a political party but also the uncertainty of the position (Gill 2005). Because they tend to dislike uncertainty, the perceived distance between their ideal position and a party's position is enlarged when voters are uncertain about the party's policy position (Bartels 1986; Alvarez 1997). Ambiguous party positions on an issue also weaken the credibility of the parties, particularly when the issue emerges as a salient issue. Many mainstream political parties in Western Europe do not clarify their position on European integration, and this ambiguity prevents the parties from running successful campaigns in European Parliamentary elections in which the European integration issue plays a significant role (Ferrara and Weishaupt 2004). As a result, voters do not believe that mainstream parties are credible means to solve problems related to the issue of European integration.

I suggest that we need to consider the structure of the party system and issue dimension to understand the electoral effect of position blurring. Issue dimension is deeply and closely related to the configuration of the party system, particularly with regards to the number of political parties. Party competition in party systems with fewer major political parties is likely to occur on a smaller number of issues, and socioeconomic issues will dominate the political agenda more strongly in such political environments.

Data support the relationship between party system and issue agenda though direct comparison is not straightforward because no cross-country

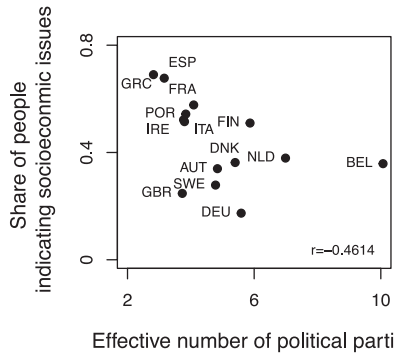

Fig. 8.1. Party System and the Salience Level of Socioeconomic Issues

Source: EES (2014) for the salience level of socioeconomic issues; Comparative Political Data Set (1960–2017) for the effective number of political parties.

Note: AUT: Austria; BEL: Belgium; DNK: Denmark; FIN: Finland; FRA: France; DEU: Germany; GRC: Greece; IRE: Ireland; ITA: Italy; NLD: the Netherlands; POR: Portugal; ESP: Spain; SWE: Sweden; GBR: the United Kingdom.

survey that covers both the United States and Western European countries asks a question on the most important issue. While 64.8 percent of American voters indicated socioeconomic issues such as economic growth, unemployment, and taxes as the most important issue (American National Election Studies 2012), only 43.4 percent of people in Western Europe did so (EES 2014). Such a relationship is observed among Western European countries as well. As figure 8.1 shows, fewer people indicate socioeconomic issues as the most important problem in countries with multiparty systems. In other words, more people consider issues other than socioeconomic issues, such as immigration and the natural environment, as major issues in multiparty systems.

Blurring party positions on socioeconomic issues may not have a positive electoral effect in the two-party system such as the United States because the underdevelopment of a multidimensional issue space makes it more difficult for political parties to divert voters' attention away from the issues by presenting ambiguous positions. If the second dimension of an issue space is not effective, voters will not easily turn their interest and concern from the first dimension.[2] In addition, if two major political parties compete mostly on the first dimension of an issue space, there may not be a clear distribution of comparative advantages/disadvantages between the parties regarding socioeconomic issues. In that case, position blurring will not have a clear electoral effect on political parties, regardless of whether it helps or hurts them.

In contrast, the position-blurring strategy may be more efficient in the multiparty system because issues other than socioeconomic issues are more thoroughly developed as major political issues. Also, the map of comparative advantages and disadvantages, in terms of voters' perception of issue competence and the unity of party supporters' preferences, is quite clear in many cases. As was demonstrated before, mainstream parties hold comparative advantages over niche parties regarding socioeconomic issues, and radical right-wing and ecology parties enjoy comparative advantages over other parties regarding their own sociocultural issues. Consequently, there will be wider opportunities for political parties in Western Europe to make use of position blurring for their own purpose than there are in the United States.

Party System Polarization and the Politics of Position Blurring

The theory and empirical findings in this book imply that party system polarization on an issue motivates political parties to blur their policy position on the issue, particularly when they struggle with a comparative disadvantage on the issue. Are political parties in Western Europe more polarized in their positions on major political issues than before?

There is little discussion in the literature on whether European political parties have really become more polarized and, if they have, what has driven polarization. Nonetheless, party position data imply that Western European political parties have become more dissimilar in their positions on economic and immigration issues. The top left graph in figure 8.2 demonstrates that party system polarization on the economy was slightly increased from 2.21 in 1999 to 2.42 in 2017. Was polarization driven by right-wing parties' moving further to the right or left-wing parties' shifting to the left? The top right graph shows the positional changes of mainstream parties and implies that center-right mainstream parties have contributed more to the polarization of party positions on the economy than center-left mainstream parties have. While the average center-right mainstream party position was changed by 0.91 (from 6.82 to 7.73), the average center-left mainstream party position shifted only by 0.45 (from 4.11 to 3.68).

We can find a similar pattern in party position changes regarding immigration. The party system polarization score was slightly increased from 2.40 in 2006 to 2.73 in 2017 (the bottom left graph), and center-right mainstream parties moved to the right (by 0.50) more than center-left mainstream parties moved to the left (by 0.33).[3] Overall, descriptive data

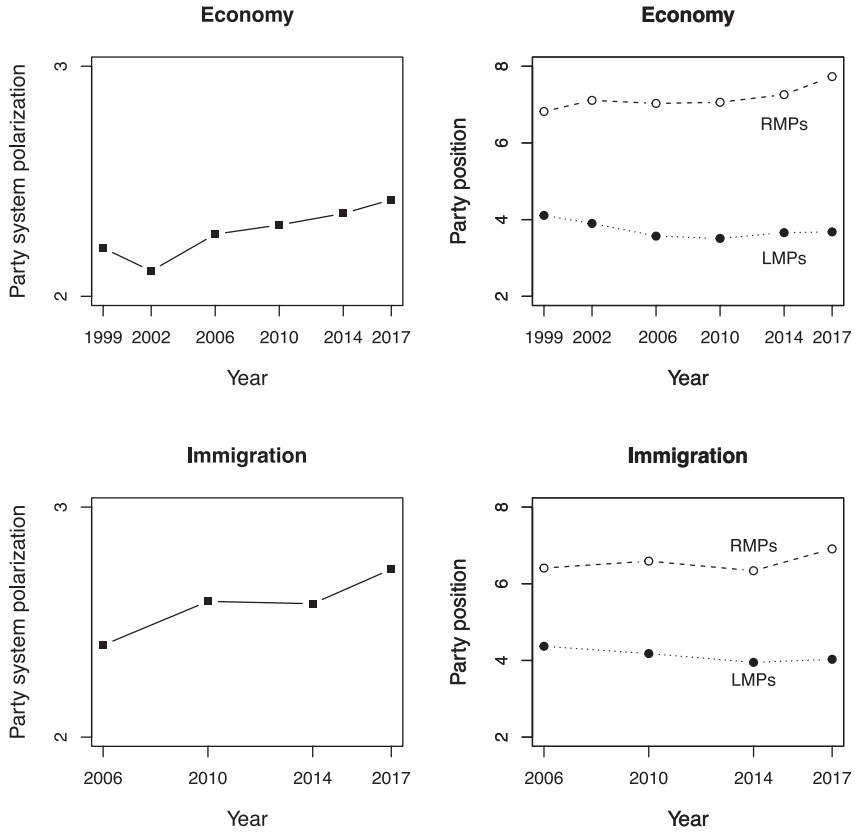

Fig. 8.2. Party System Polarization

Source: CHES (1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2017).

Note: LMPs indicate center-left mainstream parties, and RMPs mean center-right mainstream parties. Party positions on both issues range from 0 (left-wing on the economy and liberal on immigration) to 10 (right-wing on the economy and restrictive on immigration). See the appendix for the CHES variables on both issues.

tell us, though very preliminarily, that party positions became a little polarized in the last decade, and center-right mainstream parties' position shifts seem to have played a more substantial role in increasing the polarization level than center-left mainstream parties' position changes have.

We need further research to answer the questions of why party positions have become more dissimilar and why center-right mainstream parties have particularly shifted their positions on economy and immigration. Nevertheless, findings that the electoral success of the radical right causes center-right mainstream parties' position to shift on immigration more

than left-wing ones (Han 2015a; Abou-Chadi 2016; Schumacher and van Kersbergen 2016) mean that the polarization of party positions on immigration and center-right mainstream parties' rightward positional shifts are, at least partially, driven by the political emergence of radical right-wing parties.[4]

Though many more studies are needed to confirm and explain the polarization of party positions on the economy, economic crises are suggested as a cause of political polarization on economic issues (Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch 2016). Economic crises strengthen and justify extremist alternatives to the current political and economic system, as was seen in the extreme protectionism in the 1930s or the populist left-wing rhetoric of the Greek SYRIZA (the Coalition of the Radical Left–Progressive Alliance) after the 2008 financial crisis (Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1988; Font, Graziano, and Tsakatika 2021). Therefore, economic crises may foster party system polarization even more by facilitating the success of extreme political parties as well as by legitimizing extreme political ideologies.

This evidence of increasing, or at least continuing, polarization implies that political parties for which economic issues and immigration create a comparative disadvantage will feel heavier pressure to blur their positions on the issues. If this is true, we should expect that political parties will increasingly implement a strategy of position blurring.

Party Types and Organizations and Position Blurring

The strategic use of position blurring arises from the dilemma of political parties trying to achieve different goals. Political parties want to implement their desired policies as well as maximize their electoral support and control of government offices, but sometimes they have to choose only some of them at the expense of others. Position blurring can be an efficient and useful strategy to avoid this dilemma. For example, political parties can avoid the fury of voters who have different policy positions by blurring their position and still enjoy the flexibility and freedom to implement their preferred policy programs after winning government office (Alesina and Cukierman 1990; Aragonès and Neeman 2000).

Political parties' choice between goals is influenced by their own internal characteristics. Major political parties in Western Europe since the end of the Second World War have often been described as catch-all parties. They have placed a priority on combining a wide set of interests and consequently appealing to a broad coalition of voters and maximizing their

electoral support. In doing so, they have demonstrated their ideological and positional flexibility and sometimes obscured the differences between their positions by moderating them (Lobo 2008).

These parties' programmatic flexibility has been enabled by their leader-dominated organizations (Krouwel 2003). Comparatively, party activists care about party policies due to their eagerness to voice their ideological views, and party leaders think they need to secure electoral victory and hold government office before implementing policies. Consequently, as political parties whose organizations are activist-dominated stick to their own policy positions despite the changes in party-competition environments (Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013), they may also keep their policy positions unambiguous and clearly express their ideology.

Therefore, it is implied that party organization may also matter in the politics of position blurring. A comparison between ecology parties and radical right-wing parties supports such an implication. Figure 5.10 in chapter 5 shows that radical right-wing parties' positions on socioeconomic issues are statistically significantly more ambiguous than ecology parties' positions. The ambiguity of ecology parties' positions is not much different from that of mainstream party positions even though they lack the perception of competence among voters due to their extreme ideologies and a lack of government experiences (Offe 1998). Also, ecology parties have gone through internal divisions between party members who wanted to concentrate on environmental issues with moderate positions on the economy and those who preferred to articulate their own economic and social policies (Talshir 2002). How then can we explain the difference in the ambiguity of socioeconomic positions of the two niche party families?

The structure of party organization, as well as issue disadvantages, may explain the position-blurring behaviors of the parties. Radical right-wing parties are leader-dominated, while ecology parties have the most activist-dominated organizations among all the parties (Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013). Radical right-wing parties may show stronger behaviors of position blurring than ecology parties because the former's behaviors are more controlled by party leaders who want to use ambiguous party positions for vote-seeking and office-seeking goals. In contrast, the activist-dominated party organizations of ecology parties may encourage the parties to present clear policy positions on the economy despite their comparative disadvantages and potential electoral costs because party activists are "strongly policy oriented and are therefore highly resistant to ideological 'compromises' in their party's policies" (Adams et al. 2006, 515). Indeed, bivariate correlations show that leader-dominated party organization scores (Schum-

acher, de Vries, and Vis 2013) and position-blurring scores (the standard deviation measurement, CHES 2010) are modestly positively correlated on the economy (r = 0.2415) and immigration (r = 0.2357) regardless of party families, once party supporter division and issue competence are controlled for.

Party families (e.g., ecology parties, radical right-wing parties, social democratic parties, etc.) matter in position blurring because they hold different issue advantages or disadvantages between issues. Nonetheless, party family is not the only relevant party category. Party types based on more fundamental aspects such as party goals (e.g., catch-all parties) and party organizations (e.g., leader-dominated or activist-dominated) will also make a difference. Therefore, other party characteristics—in addition to issue disadvantages and party-competition environments—such as party goal, party organization, and historical legacy, should be considered in future research on position blurring.

The Personalization of Politics and Its Implication for Liberal Democracy

Chapter 4 showed that the position-blurring behavior of political parties strengthens the personalization of voters' behavior. In their vote choice, voters consider the characteristics of individual political actors such as party leaders more than the attributes of collective political actors such as political parties. The personalization of politics, in general, has critical consequences. The personalization of politics, as well as partisan dealignment and the decreasing influence of social structure (e.g., social class and religion), increases electoral volatility (McAllister 2007). Because voters put individual political actors such as party leaders, instead of political parties, as the main basis of their vote choice, they become more prone to change their vote choice as party leaders come and go. A party leadership change can alter voters' choice, even without a consequent shift in a party position (Bille 1997), particularly when the political party has been underrated due to its unpopular leader or when voters hold "early naïve expectations" on the new leader (Nadeau and Mendelsohn 1994, 224).

Also, as voters give more weight to the personal image of party leaders more than to their long-term partisanship, party policies, and their own social attributes such as socioeconomic class and religion, short-term factors such as election campaigns will have a greater influence on voters' choice than before. In particular, though some studies disprove either the increas-

ing personalization of media coverage on politics (Kriesi 2012) or the connection between media personalization and voter personalization (Hayes 2009), others find that more personalized media coverage of an election, such as televised debates, makes nonpolicy aspects such as the appearance of party leaders or individual candidates more important factors in vote choice (Reinemann and Wilke 2007). Position blurring will motivate political parties to use these personalized aspects of political campaigns because such party behavior draws voters' minds and attention to them.

Therefore, the strategic use of position blurring by political parties will result in the paradoxical consequence of weakening the political parties. As the "presidentialization" thesis suggests, the overwhelming focus on political personnel rather than political parties weakens political parties as the apparatus of interest aggregation and policy formulation (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Political parties perform these tasks by identifying relevant grievances of their core supporters and discussing, reviewing, and aggregating related policy proposals (Lawson and Poguntke 2004). But the personalization of politics in general, and the presidentialization of parliamentary democracies in particular, makes party leaders less dependent on a coalition of core supporters within their party and encourages them to find the foundation of their leadership outside the party organization: in public opinion. In this way, position blurring may shift the source of interest aggregation and policy formulation from "the core of the party faithful" (Lawson and Poguntke 2004, 4) to "the fickle mood swings of public opinion" (Poguntke and Webb 2005, 353).

The personalization of political parties certainly does not necessarily provide an undesirable implication all the time. Political parties perform functions other than aggregating, articulating, and representing voters' (or supporters') interests and preferences. For example, the party government model highlights the status and role of political parties as "the most potent form of democratic political organisation" to make a claim to govern a country (Schattschneider 1945, 1151). They also recruit and furnish individuals who take government office positions. Political parties sometimes rely on the personal resources of party leaders, such as their own reputation, skills, and relationships, when they negotiate with other parties to form a coalition government and recruit people to staff public offices (Bennister and Heffernan 2012). Nonetheless, though the personal aspects of political parties can help them to carry out these governing roles, a successful party government model requires voters to identify the differences between the programs of different political parties and choose a political party that represents their policy preference best (Thomassen 1994). Con-

sequently, political parties should present unambiguous policy alternatives to satisfy their governing responsibility as well (Mair 2013).

The Future of Position Blurring in Western Europe

Political parties have employed position blurring as a strategic tool in issue competition. Consequently, based on their own constituency structure, ideological profile, and governing experience, they hold different degrees of position ambiguity. A political party may show different behaviors between issues, as is observed among radical right-wing parties that tend to present a clear position on immigration but blur their position on the economy. Alternatively, we can find a significant variation in party position ambiguity on the same issue between political parties, as can be seen between mainstream parties that blur their position on immigration and radical right-wing parties that do not.

Issue salience levels change as economic and social conditions change. Economic hardship raises the salience level of economic issues. Immigration usually becomes a more salient political issue when there is an unexpected inflow of many new immigrants. Therefore, we cannot have a clear indication of how much position blurring will arise from a high issue salience level in a party-competition environment. But trends in another critical party-competition environment, the increasing levels of party system polarization regarding the two issues, make us expect that political parties that struggle with a disadvantage in either issue will increasingly blur their position.

Populists blame established political parties for their inattention to the public and unresponsiveness to their voices. While some scholars approve of the roles that political parties have successfully played in liberal democracy (Lawson and Poguntke 2004; Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister 2011; Naurin, Royed, and Thomson 2019), this book suggests that it may also be true that political parties have sown the seeds for their own criticism. The behavior of position blurring definitely violates the norm of the responsible party model. By presenting only ambiguous positions on major political issues, political parties fail to aggregate supporters' interests and clearly represent them in the political system. Such behavior is found to intensify the personalization of politics, which may lead to the weakening of political parties.

Does the position-blurring behavior of political parties have the further effect of deepening voters' cynicism and populism and aggravating

the crisis of liberal democracy? Though this connection between party behavior and voters' perception has been speculated about for so long (e.g., Shepsle 1972), neither theoretical nor empirical follow-up research has been done. If, unfortunately, there is a causal link, a political party's behavior of position blurring may provide a useful strategic tool for a short-term benefit but may impair the base of its own identity, status, and prestige in the long run.

Appendix

Appendix A

Data Description

TABLE A1. CHES Variables for Party Position and Issue Emphasis

Variable	Question
Left/right position	Position of the party in terms of its overall ideological stance
Economy emphasis	Average of parties' importance/salience on three issues: Improving public services vs. reducing taxes; Deregulation; Redistribution from the rich to the poor
Immigration emphasis	Average of parties' importance/salience on three issues: Immigration policy; Integration of immigrants and asylum seekers; Ethnic minorities
Environment emphasis	Parties' importance/salience of the environment
Economy position	Average of party positions on three issues: Position on improving public services vs. reducing taxes; Position on deregulation; Position on redistribution from the rich to the poor
Immigration position	Average of party positions on three issues: Position on immigration policy; Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers; Position toward ethnic minorities
Environment position	Position toward the environment

Note: These variables are constructed with CHES (2006) for tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 7.1, and figure 7.5; with CHES (2010) for figures 2.1 to 2.7, figures 3.2, 3.3, 5.3 5.4, 5.10, 6.2, 7.3, and tables 5.1 to 5.3; and with CHES (2014) for tables 4.3 and 4.5.

TABLE A2. CHES Variables for Party Position in Figure 8.2

Variable	Question
Economy position (CHES 1999–2017)	Party position in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues. Parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, and a leaner welfare state.
Immigration position (CHES 2006–2017)	Average of party positions on three issues: Position on immigration policy; Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers; Position toward ethnic minorities

TABLE A3. Survey Data Sources and Question Wordings for Party Supporter Division and Issue Competence

Variable	Question	Survey
Party supporter division (Economy)	Please tell me to what degree you agree or disagree with each statement: "Private enterprise is the best way to solve Britain's economic problems"; "Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership"; "Income and wealth should be redistributed toward ordinary people."	EES (2009) (Average responses to the questions)
Party supporter division (Immigration)	Please tell me to what degree you agree or disagree with each statement: "Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of Britain"; "Immigration to Britain should be decreased significantly."	EES (2009) (Average responses to the questions)
Party supporter division (Environment)	Can you tell me whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree or strongly disagree?: "I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution."	EVS (2008)
Most important problem	"What do you think is the most important problem facing [country] today?"	EES (2009)
Issue competence	"Which political party do you think would be best at dealing with [answer in Q1]?"	EES (2009)

Note: These variables are used for figures 2.1 to 2.7, figures 5.1 and 5.2, and tables 5.1 to 5.3.

TABLE A4. MARPOR Project Data Variables for Position Blurring

Variable	Description	Variable	Description
per103	Anti-Imperialism	per406	Protectionism: Positive
per104	Military: Positive	per407	Protectionism: Negative
per105	Military: Negative	per412	Controlled Economy
per106	Peace	per413	Nationalization
per107	Internationalism: Positive	per414	Economic Orthodoxy
per201	Freedom and Human Rights	per504	Welfare State Expansion
per202	Democracy	per505	Welfare State Limitation
per203	Constitutionalism: Positive	per506	Education Expansion
per305	Political Authority	per601	National Way of Life: Positive
per401	Free Market Economy	per603	Traditional Morality: Positive
per402	Incentives	per605	Law and Order: Positive
per403	Market Regulation	per606	Civic Mindedness: Positive
per404	Economic Planning	per701	Labor Groups: Positive

Note: These variables are used for figure 3.3 and tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.5.

TABLE A5. EES (2009) Questions for Party Position Estimation Uncertainty and Inaccuracy in Tables 4.1 and 4.2

Variable	Question	Answer scale
Party position estimation	(In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right.") About where would you place the following parties on this scale?	0 (Left) to 10 (Right); 98 (Don't know where to place party)
Education	What is the highest level of education you have completed in your education?	1: Pre-primary education; 2: Primary education; 3: Lower secondary education; 4: Upper secondary education; 5: Postsecondary nontertiary education; 6: First stage of tertiary education; 7: Second stage of tertiary education
Political interest	To what extent would you say you are interested in politics?	1 (not at all); 2 (a little); 3 (somewhat); 4 (very)
Party attachment (close to the party)	Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?	

TABLE A6. EES (2014) Questions for Issue Taking and Most Important Issues in Table 4.3

Variable	Question
Issue taking	"What are the issues which make you vote in the recent European elections?"
Issue salience	"What do you think is the first most important issue or problem facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment?"

TABLE A7. DPES (2006) Questions for Position Proximity and Voting Behavior in Table 4.4

Variable	Question	Answer scale
Voting likelihood	"Some people are completely certain that they will always vote for the same party. Others reconsider each time to which party they will give their vote. I will mention a number of parties. Would you indicate for each party how probable it is that you will ever vote for that party?"	1 (I will never vote for this party) to 10 (I will surely sometime vote for this party)
Income redistribution party position estimation	"Some people and parties think that the differences in incomes in our country should be increased (at number 1). Others think that these differences should be decreased (at number 7). Of course, there are also people whose opinion is somewhere in between. Where would you place [party] on this line?"	1 (Larger differences) to 7 (Smaller differences)
Income redistribution self-placement	"And where would you place yourself?"	1 (Larger differences) to 7 (Smaller differences)
Asylum party position estimation	"Now I would like to talk with you about another problem. Allowing ASYLUM SEEKERS to enter the Netherlands has frequently been in the news during the last few years. Some people think that the Netherlands should allow more asylum seekers than the government currently does. Other people think that the Netherlands should send asylum seekers who are already staying here back to their country of origin. Of course, there are also people whose opinion lies somewhere in between. Where would you place [party] on this line?"	1 (Admit more asylum seekers) to 7 (Send back as many asylum seekers as possible)
Asylum self-placement	"And where would you place yourself on this line?"	1 (Admit more asylum seekers) to 7 (Send back as many asylum seekers as possible)
Most important problem	And now I would like to ask you, what do you think are the most important problems in our country?	

TABLE A8. FNES (2009) Questions for Position Blurring and the Personalization of Voting Behavior in Table 4.5

Variable	Question	Answer scale
Party choice base	"For your voting choice, which was ultimately the more important, the party or the candidate?"	1 = The candidate; 0 = The party
Personal relationship with candidate	"In what way was the candidate you voted for known to you?"	1: I chose the candidate without knowing much about him/her; 2: I voted for the candidate on the basis of his/her election campaign; 3: I knew of the candidate's activities from prior media coverage; 4: My friend, acquaintance or relative knew the candidate personally; 5: I know the candidate personally

TABLE A9. Data for Niche Party Seat Share and Party System Polarization in Figure 5.5

Variable	Data	Question
Niche party seat share	MARPOR project data	
Party system polarization on immigration	CHES (2006, 2010, 2014)	Standard deviation of average party positions on three issues: Position on immigration policy; Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers; Position toward ethnic minorities
Party system polarization on the natural environment	CHES (2010, 2014)	Standard deviation of party position toward the environment

TABLE A10. Data Sources of Control Variables in Tables 5.1 to 5.3 and Table 6.2

Variable	Data sources
Effective number of political parties	Comparative Political Data Set
Vote share	MARPOR project data
Party age	Various sources
Incumbency	Party Government Data Set
Unemployment rate	World Bank, World Development Indicators
Immigration	OECD, Trends in International Migration

TABLE A11. EVS Questions on Socioeconomic Issue Positions in Figure 6.1

Socioeconomic issue	Answer scale
Income redistribution	1 (Incomes should be made more equal) to 10 (There should be greater incentives for individual effort)
Private business	1 (Government ownership of business and industry should be increased) to 10 (Private ownership of business and industry should be increased)

TABLE A12. EES (2009) Questions Used in Tables 6.2 and 7.1

Variable	Survey question	Answer scale
Manual worker	And in your current job, what is your main occupation?	1: Semi-skilled worker or unskilled worker; 0: Others
Small business owner	What is your current work situation?	1: Self-employed; 0: Others
Female	Are you . . .	1: Female; 0: Male
Age	What year were you born?	
Education	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	1: Preprimary education; 2: Primary education or first stage of basic education; 3: Lower secondary education or second stage of basic education; 4: Upper secondary education; 5: Postsecondary nontertiary education; 6: First stage of tertiary education; 7: Second stage of tertiary education
Unemployed	What is your current work situation?	1: Unemployed; 0: Others
Socioeconomic status	If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to?	1: Working class; 2: Lower middle class; 3: Middle class; 4: Upper middle class; 5: Upper class
Negative opinion on immigration	Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of [Country].	1: Strongly disagree; 2: Disagree; 3: Neither agree nor disagree; 4: Agree; 5: Strongly agree
Negative opinion on the EU	Generally speaking, do you think that [Country]'s membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?	1: Good thing; 2: Neither; 3: Bad thing
Retrospective evaluation of economy	What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in [Country] is?	1: A lot better; 2: A little better; 3: Stayed the same; 4: A little worse; 5: A lot worse
Satisfaction with democracy	On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [Country]?	1: Not at all satisfied; 2: Not very satisfied; 3: Fairly satisfied; 4: Very satisfied
Political ideology (left/right)	In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right." What is your position?	0 (Left) to 10 (Right)

TABLE A13. List of Social Democratic Parties in Chapter 7

Country	Party
Austria	The Social Democratic Party of Austria
Belgium	The Socialist Party / The Flemish Socialist Party
Denmark	The Social Democrats
Finland	The Social Democratic Party of Finland
France	The Socialist Party
Germany	The Social Democratic Party of Germany
Greece	The Panhellenic Socialist Movement
Ireland	The Labour Party
Italy	The Democrats of the Left
The Netherlands	The Labour Party
Norway	The Labour Party
Portugal	The Socialist Party
Spain	The Spanish Social Workers' Party
Sweden	The Swedish Social Democratic Party
Switzerland	The Social Democratic Party of Switzerland
United Kingdom	The Labour Party

Appendix B

Distribution of Experts' Estimations

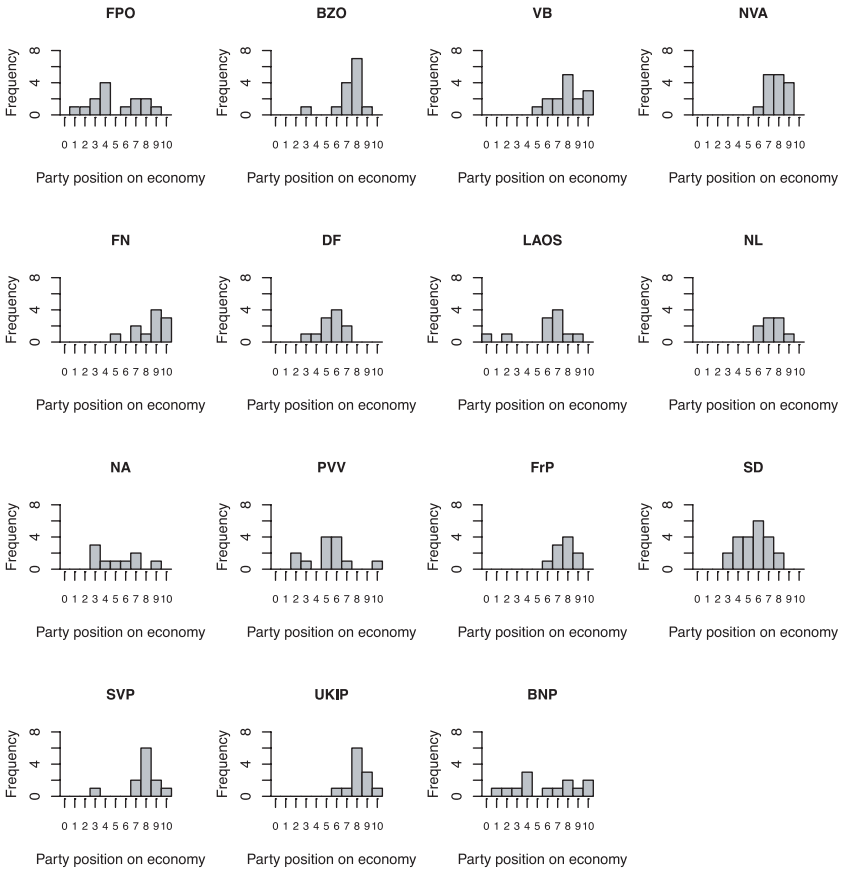

Fig. B.1. Distribution of Experts' Estimations on Radical Right-Wing Parties' Socioeconomic Positions

Source: CHES (2010) (***econlr***, "Party position in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues").

Note: FPO: Freedom Party of Austria; BZO: Alliance for the Future of Austria; VB: Flemish Interest; NVA: New Flemish Alliance; FN: Belgian National Front: DF: Danish People's Party; LAOS: Popular Orthodox Rally; NL: Northern League; NA: National Alliance; PVV: Party of Freedom; FrP: Norwegian Progress Party; SD: Sweden Democrats; SVP: Swiss People's Party; UKIP: UK Independence Party; BNP: British National Party. The party position variable ranges from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right).

Appendix C

The Construction of Left-Right and Libertarian-Authoritarian Positions from the EES (2009) in Figure 7.1

I construct people's left-right and libertarian-authoritarian positions with conducting a principal component analysis using survey questions related to each ideological aspect. The principal component analysis is used not only for analyzing to what extent original input variables represent one (or more) common dimension(s) but also as a tool of dimension-reduction. It generates artificial dimensions that correlate with original input variables and constructs new variables that correspond to linear combination of the original variables (Babbie 2007). I use three survey questions related to economic left-right positions and four survey questions connected to socio-cultural libertarian-authoritarian stances. As the following table shows, I retain one dimension for each ideological aspect that is highly correlated with input variables (Eigenvalue > 1) (Kleinnijenhuis 1999). The first component for left-right positions explains 47 percent of the total variance, and that for libertarian-authoritarian positions explains 38 percent of the total variance. As can be seen in the table, all component scores are above the critical value of 0.50 (Netjes and Binnema 2007).

TABLE C1. Information on Principal Component Analysis

Position	Survey question	Component scores
Socioeconomic Left/ Right	Income and wealth should be redistributed toward ordinary people.	0.70
	Private enterprise is the best way to solve [Country]'s economic problems.	0.53
	Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership.	0.73
Sociocultural Libertarian/ Authoritarian	Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of [Country].	0.70
	Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law.	0.57
	People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days.	0.73
	Schools must teach children to obey authority.	0.73

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. Studies sometimes use the term "position ambiguity" in slightly different ways. While Somer-Topcu (2015) uses it to describe the behavior of presenting only a vague, unclear position, position ambiguity in Cahill and Stone (2018) expands the concept to include political parties' presenting conflicting statements on the same issue or staying silent on an issue. I use the term in an inclusive way: position ambiguity means any trait of party position that brings in uncertainty, inaccuracy, and inconsistency in people's party position perceptions and estimations (Tomz and Van Houweling 2009).

2. Fernandez-Vasquez (2014) proposes a more affirmative conclusion on voters updating their estimations on political parties' issue positions.

3. In the same vein, Meirowitz (2005) presents a model in which candidates have an incentive to present ambiguous positions in a primary process when they do not have complete information on voters in a general election.

4. Recent studies on issue ownership separate the competence aspect of issue ownership and its associative aspect: while the competence aspect of issue ownership indicates voters' perceptions on parties' capacity to handle and resolve an issue, its associative aspect refers to voters' views on the degree to which parties care about an issue (Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015).

CHAPTER 2

1. It does not mean that positional competition and issue competition are totally unrelated. Riker (1996), for example, argues that emphasizing an issue regarding which political parties converge on each other in their positions does not bring electoral benefits to them. In that case, the presence of positional competition can be, in some sense, a prerequisite to the presence of issue competition. Meguid

(2008) also contends that mainstream parties can "steal" the issues of niche parties by adopting positions similar to theirs, implying that positional competition can be utilized to secure success in issue competition.

2. See also Hill and Hinton-Anderson (1995) for their finding on the mutual causal relationship between public opinion and party policies.

3. This voting model describes only a "deterministic policy" portion (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005) of overall, more integrated models on voting behavior that include not only "probabilistic policy" factors such as candidates' (or parties') credibility on their policy position, but also nonpolicy factors such as partisanship, economic voting, and peer effect.

4. Issue salience has an effect also on nonpolicy voting behaviors such as issue ownership (Bélanger and Meguid 2008).

5. "She/he looks for adventures and likes to take risks; She/he wants to have an exciting life."

6. In this book, niche parties are defined as political parties that politicize and mobilize a limited number of non-economic issues and usually maintain extreme positions on those issues.

7. Party leaders who tried to implement social democratic policies through European institutions needed to make coalition with liberal parties or acknowledge the economic opportunity of expanded trade with European countries. But workers in the domestic and public sectors were scared by privatization or import shock.

8. We mainly use the 2010 wave of the CHES when issue emphasis and position blurring are outcome variables, mostly in chapters 4 and 5 in this book, because it is the only wave that includes all the variables I need. For example, the CHES (2006) does not have a variable for political parties' position and salience on the natural environment issue and the CHES (2014) does not have variables for political parties' salience on any issue. No wave of the CHES prior to 2006 has a variable for immigration.

9. The importance of issue competence in party support and party behavior has increased due to rising voter volatility and realignment that happened over the past couple of decades in Western Europe (Thomassen 2005).

10. Article 16(2) of the Basic Law, the German constitution, said that "persons persecuted for political reasons enjoy the right of asylum." By saying that in this way, the constitution guaranteed a right of asylum to individual asylum seekers and made it hard for German governments to reject asylum applications.

11. The "time limit" approach legalizes abortion during the first stages, mostly the first trimester, of pregnancy, and the medical reasons for abortion include the case where a mother's health is endangered by pregnancy.

12. Issue entrepreneurship refers to "a strategy by which parties mobilize issues that have been largely ignored in party competition and adopt a policy position on the issue that is substantially different from the mainstream status quo" (Hobolt and de Vries 2015, 1161).

13. Levendusky (2010) and Hetherington (2001) find that voters' "cue-taking" and party engagement becomes stronger when the opinion of the elites is polarized, because party polarization sends clearer signals to voters about their positions.

CHAPTER 3

1. Other aspects of the validity question include experts' different time frames for party position estimation and the disparity between party intention (e.g., manifesto) and party behavior (e.g., policy output) (Steenbergen and Marks 2007).

2. As will be discussed in chapter 6, however, many radical right-wing parties began to emphasize socioeconomic issues with central or even center-left positions to draw more electoral support from manual workers (Harteveld 2016).

3. In terms of issue emphasis, the average issue salience score of the National Rally in the CHES (2010) on three economic issues (government spending vs. taxation, government deregulation, and income redistribution) is 3.04 in the 0 ("not important at all") to 10 ("extremely important") scale, while the score of the Union for a Popular Movement is 5.15.

4. Though the National Rally may not be able to represent all the radical right-wing parties, the wide dispersion and multimodality of the distribution of expert estimations are found among the majority of the parties (appendix B).

5. In other words, no expert gave either 6 or 8 for the National Rally, while some gave scores smaller than 6 and greater 8.

6. To handle these problems, these factors, such as party size and party age, will be controlled for in some of the empirical analyses on position blurring in following chapters.

7. In a survey, 56 percent of voters indicated unemployment and 32 percent of them pointed out the deployment of nuclear weapons as the most important electoral issue (*The Guardian*, March 5, 1983).

CHAPTER 4

1. In a similar vein, Alt, Lassen, and Marshall (2016) argue that voters, particularly sophisticated ones, discount information on government performance when they do not acknowledge the credibility of the information source.

2. Seeberg, Slohuus, and Stubager (2017) confirm such a party-voter linkage even regarding the shift of party positions.

3. The standard deviation of the distribution is 0.47 (the manifesto data) and 0.45 (the expert survey data), respectively.

4. The standard deviation of the distribution is 2.30.

5. For example, Alvarez and Franklin (1994) find that voters rely on party names in estimating candidate positions when they are uncertain about them.

6. For the issue-taking and issue-salience variables, economy-related issues include economic conditions, jobs and wages, unemployment, taxes, and the financial crisis. Issues around immigration, labor migration, multiculturalism, and ethnic minorities constitute immigration-related issues. Environment-related issues comprise climate change, environment protection, and environmental policies.

7. The vertical axes of the graphs indicate the conditional coefficients and their confidence intervals of the issue salience variable at different levels of position blurring.

8. Nonetheless, Fisher and Hobolt (2010) argue that some governing parties in a coalition government, such as larger parties and chief executive parties, are perceived by voters to be more responsible than other governing parties.

9. I use the Dutch data not only because it has questions on respondents' party position estimations on multiple issues but also because the Dutch party system has the largest number of political parties in Western Europe except for Belgium, whose system is further fragmented by ethnic diversity. Thus, I can examine how the combination of party behaviors (issue emphasis and position blurring) and voters' perceived party positions determine voters' behaviors on political parties with diverse characteristics.

10. Regarding asylum seekers, the probability decreases by 0.06 (from 0.08 to 0.02) when party positions are not blurred, but only by 0.01 (from 0.03 to 0.02) when blurred.

11. Though some data provide weaker evidence on the increasing media exposure of individual political actors relative to political parties (Johansson 2008; Kriesi 2012), they also acknowledge that voters now have much easier and expeditious access to news coverage on top political leaders than before.

12. For example, American presidential candidates have deliberately manipulated their own images in TV debates since Richard Nixon's five-o'clock shadow and pale and sickly image in contrast to John F. Kennedy's confident and balmy image in the 1960 debate (Self 2005).

CHAPTER 5

1. The ESS has asked the same question of "Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?" and the same answer scale of 0 ("Cultural life undermined") to 10 ("Cultural life enriched"). The standard deviation of social democratic party supporters' responses to the question was hardly changed from 2.3 in 2002 to 2.2 in 2016.

2. Han (2020) finds that political parties blur their position on an issue in the face of voter polarization, particularly when their own supporters are divided on the issue.

3. Nonetheless, the coefficient of party supporter division is not statistically significant in model 5.

4. In terms of the number of media initiatives on each issue, the Iraq War ranked only tenth as the most salient issue for the Conservative Party, and the Labour Party never referred to the issue in the last four weeks before the 2005 election (Gaber 2006).

5. The Social Democratic Party of Austria's salience score on environmentalism in CHES (2010) is 4.8, which is statistically significantly lower than the average of other social democratic parties in Western Europe (5.2).

6. Ideologically, center-left mainstream parties have committed themselves to values such as pluralism, multiculturalism, social justice, and equality (Ireland 2004; Messina 2007). Politically, immigrants and ethnic minorities are considered to be a potential base of electoral support for the parties (Lahav 2004).

7. Nonetheless, Fenzl (2018) finds that income inequality moves the center-

left's socioeconomic positions to the center and leads to the depolarization of party positions.

8. Nonetheless, the coefficient of ***Party system salience × Issue competence*** in model 1 and that of ***Party system polarization × Issue competence*** in model 4 are not statistically significant.

9. The horizontal axes of the graphs in figures 5.6 to 5.9 range from the 10th percentile value to the 90th percentile value of the variables on the horizontal axes.

10. Nonetheless, the coefficient of ***Party system salience × Issue competence*** in model 3 and that of ***Party system polarization × Party supporter division*** model 2 are not statistically significant.

11. Nonetheless, as can be seen in table 5.3, the interactive effect of party supporter division and party system polarization is not statistically significant.

12. It does not necessarily mean that issues of economy and immigration do not have the nature of valence issues at all. Some specific aspects of these issues (e.g., unemployment, asylum seekers) are sometimes considered more like valence issues than positional issues (e.g., van der Brug 2004), though studies do not find a consensus on whether these issues should be considered valence issues (e.g., Wright 2012).

13. In the CHES (2010), the standard deviation of all the political parties' positions on the natural environment (2.00) is smaller than those of positions on the economy (2.1~2.2) and immigration (2.3~2.4).

14. If issue salience level matters in the strength of political parties' issue-competition behavior, a lack of such a behavior on the natural environment issue may be time-bound because major incidents related to the issue, such as the Fukushima disaster in 2011, change the salience level of the issue as well as public opinion on it (Bernardi et al. 2018).

CHAPTER 6

1. In addition, the EES (2009), which has a question on whether a respondent is employed in the private or public sector, tells us two things. First, private-sector manual workers are not much more likely to vote for radical right-wing parties than those in the public sector. While the ratio of private-sector manual workers to those in the public sector is 31:69 among total respondents, the ratio among radical right-wing party supporters is 28:72. Second, manual workers in the private sector and those in the public sector do not show statistically significantly different preferences on income redistribution and public industry ownership.

2. All radical right-wing parties that are available in both of the CHES waves moved to the center: the Freedom Party of Austria (from 6.4 to 5.5), the Flemish Interest (from 8.8 to 5.5), the Danish People's Party (from 7.3 to 4.5), the French National Rally (from 8.7 to 5.9), and the Northern League (from 8.8 to 7.3).

CHAPTER 7

1. For example, the number of asylum seekers to Europe was about 170,000 in 1985, but the number jumped to 690,000 after the Yugoslavia Wars occurred (1992). The number went down to 252,000 in 1996, but increased again to 443,000

in 1999 due to the Kosovo War (OECD, *Trends in International Migration*, various years).

2. Eurobarometer 31A (1989) and 60 (2003).

3. The second or third generation of immigrants, however, may actually be opposed to immigration because they encounter stronger labor market competition with new immigrant workers (Miller, Polinard, and Wrinkle 1984; Hood, Morris, and Shirkey 1997).

4. The party withdrew its commitment to immigrants' voting right after winning the election, however.

5. The 1993 act introduced the safe-third-country clause, increased the fine for airlines that accepted people without valid documents, fingerprinted all the asylum seekers, and modified the appeal process. The 1996 act deprived welfare benefits to asylum seekers who did not claim asylum at ports or at airports when they entered Britain.

6. The perception of political efficacy also matters. Voters are likely to cast their vote for large political parties because they have a larger chance of governing in the cabinet and implement their own policies than small, niche, and "outsider" parties (van Spanje and van der Brug 2009).

7. For example, van der Brug et al. (2013) show that voters who vote for a radical right-wing party are also willing to cast their vote not only to social democratic, Christian democratic, or conservative parties, but also to liberal or even ecology parties.

CHAPTER 8

1. Kartik, van Weelden, and Wolton (2017) suggest that the relationship between position blurring and electoral outcomes is correlational, not causal: political parties (or candidates) that lead in electoral competition both blur their positions and win elections.

2. The asymmetric salience levels of socioeconomic issues between the United States and Western Europe are also found at the party level. The average share of statements regarding socioeconomic issues in the party manifesto data is statistically significantly larger among American political parties than among Western European parties (the 1940s through the 2010s). This implies that American political parties discuss socioeconomic issues in their election campaigns more than do those in Western Europe.

3. The CHES (1999) and the CHES (2002) do not have a question on party position on an immigration-related issue.

4. I do not, of course, exclude plausible reversed causal relationships between party system polarization and mainstream party position on the one hand and the success of radical right-wing parties on the other (see Dahlström and Sundell 2012; Down and Han 2020).

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