Appendix

### Appendix A: Replication of Somer-Topcu (2015)

In Table A1, we replicate the main empirical model that Somer-Topcu (2015) adopts to examine the individual-level mechanism. This is an important step as recovering the same results Somer-Topcu presents in her research using our own data can help us rule out the possibility that differences to her conclusions are merely artifacts of the data. Clearly, this replication reveals very similar results to Somer-Topcu’s original findings. In particular, the effect of the Actual Distance between the respondent’s ideal position and the focal party’s position on one’s perceived distance is virtually 1. Moreover, the coefficient on the interaction-term between Actual Distance and Party Ambiguity is negative and statistically significant.

 To better interpret the interaction effect and demonstrate how Party Ambiguity affects voters’ perception, we further calculate and plot the marginal effect of Actual Distance for different values of Party Ambiguity using the estimated results in Table A1. As Figure A1 demonstrates, when a party possesses a very concrete policy platform, say the ambiguity score is 0, respondents seem to have a pretty accurate perception about the ideological distance between themselves and the party — the marginal effect is about 1, suggesting that respondents can perfectly transform the actual distance into the perceived distance using a 1:1 ratio. On the contrary, when another party adopts the broad-appeal strategy and is very ambiguous about its own policy intentions, say the ambiguity is 0.27, the accuracy of respondents’ perception of the ideological distance between themselves and the ambiguous party significantly drops — now the marginal effect is about 0.8, suggesting that respondents significantly underestimate the true distance and tend to perceive a shorter distance to the ambiguous party than it actually is.

Table A1: Replication of the Individual-Level Model by Somer-Topcu (2015)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   | DV: Perceived Distance  |
| Actual Distance |  1.012\*\* |
|  |  (0.036)  |
| Ambiguity |  2.771  |
|  |  (4.651)  |
| Distance \* Ambiguity |  -0.827\*\* |
|  |  (0.180)  |
| Partisan Voter |  -0.769\*\* |
|  |  (0.058)  |
| Education  |  0.018  |
|  |  (0.015)  |
| Single Issue Party |  0.167  |
|  |  (0.551)  |
| Government Party |  0.161  |
|  |  (0.223)  |
| Vote Share  |  -0.004  |
|  |  (0.003)  |
| 2nd Wave  |  -0.116  |
|  |  (0.082)  |
| Constant  |  0.073  |
|  |  (1.029)  |
| Rand. Effect – Party  |  -15.637  |
|  |  (297.902)  |
| Rand. Effect – Party Wave |  -17.42\*  |
|  (7.326)  |
| Rand. Effect – Residual  |  0.398\*\* |
|  |  (0.009)  |
| Observations  | 6867  |
| Log Likelihood | -12477.9  |
| Standard errors in parentheses |
| ,   |

Figure A1: The Marginal Effect of Actual Distance conditional on Party Ambiguity

 

Note: White lines in the plot show point estimates, and gray areas indicate the 95% confidence interval.

### Appendix B: Robustness Check using Ambiguity Score as a Continuous Variable

In Table A2, we replicate our main models presented in Table 2 by treating party ambiguity as a continuous variable. Similar to what we did in the main text, we further simulate and plot the marginal effect of Actual Distance for different values of Party Ambiguity and Perceived Party Cohesion in order to help readers better interpret the estimated results. Specifically, we present the marginal effect of Actual Distance by setting Party Ambiguity at its 5th percentile and 95th percentile values and Perceived Unity to range from its minimum to maximum values. We then present in the left panel of Figure A2 the situation where a party has a concrete policy stance (i.e., the value of ambiguity is set to its 5th percentile value), while in the right panel the situation where a party takes the broad-appeal strategy (i.e., the value of ambiguity is set to its 95th percentile value). The white lines in the figure indicate the point estimates of the marginal effect, and the gray areas represent the 95% confidence intervals.

It is clear that the results are similar to the main models in which we treat ambiguity as a dummy variable. When the party is being very ambiguous about its policies (i.e., the right panel), the discounting effect of this “broad-appeal" strategy only works when the party is perceived to be highly unified. Assume now this ambiguous party is perceived to be internally cohesive at the unity score of 10, the marginal effect of Actual Distance on Perceived Distance is about 0.7. This means when the Actual Distance is 1, respondents tend to underestimate it and only perceive a distance of 0.7 from oneself to the party. On the contrary, if the party is perceived to be internally divided, say at the unity score 2, the marginal effect significantly increases to about 0.9. This suggests that when the Actual Distance is 1, respondents tend to perceive a 0.9 distance, almost at a 1:1 ratio. In other words, when perceived unity increases, the discounting effect of being ambiguous on perceived distance significantly grows. Yet, when a party is very concrete about its policy stance (i.e., the left panel of Figure A2), respondents seem to know well about the party and have a clear sense of what the actual distance between themselves and the party is, regardless of whether the party is internally unified or not.

Table A2: Replicating Table 2 by Treating Ambiguity as a Continuous Variable

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|   | Model 1 | Model 2  |
| Actual Distance |  1.060\*\* |  1.047\*\* |
|  |  (0.082)  |  (0.081)  |
| Ambiguity |  4.997\*\* |  3.022  |
|  |  (1.516)  |  (4.715)  |
| Distance \* Ambiguity |  -0.588  |  -0.530  |
|  |  (0.408)  |  (0.405)  |
| Perceived Party Unity |  0.064  |  0.068  |
|  |  (0.053)  |  (0.053)  |
| Distance \* Unity |  -0.002  |  -0.004  |
|  |  (0.014)  |  (0.014)  |
| Ambiguity \* Unity |  -0.504\*  |  -0.383  |
|  |  (0.244)  |  (0.242)  |
| Distance \* Ambiguity \* Unity |  -0.057  |  -0.073  |
|  |  (0.070)  |  (0.069)  |
| Partisan Supporter |   |  -0.724\*\* |
|  |   |  (0.058)  |
| Education  |   |  0.020  |
|  |   |  (0.015)  |
| Single Issue Party |   |  -0.064  |
|  |   |  (0.556)  |
| Government Party |   |  0.170  |
|  |   |  (0.225)  |
| Vote Share  |   |  0.000  |
|  |   |  (0.003)  |
| 2nd Wave  |   |  -0.116  |
|  |   |  (0.083)  |
| Constant  |  -0.276  |  0.027  |
|  |  (0.337)  |  (1.043)  |
| Random Effect – Party  |  -3.037\*\* |  -20.508  |
|  |  (0.866)  |  (10.78)  |
| Random Effect – Party Wave  |  -3.104\*\*  |  -21.592\*\* |
|  |  (0.873)  |  (7.517)  |
| Random Effect – Residual  |  0.405\*\* |  0.393\*\* |
|  |  (0.009)  |  (0.009)  |
| Observations  | 6867 | 6867  |
| Log Likelihood | -12530 | -12446  |
| Standard errors in parentheses |
| , ,   |

Figure A2: The Marginal Effect of Actual Distance conditional on Party Ambiguity and Perceived Party Unity

  Note: The white lines in the plot show the point estimates, and the gray areas indicate the 95% confidence interval.

### Appendix C: Robustness Check Adding Respondent Fixed Effects

In Table A3, we examine the robustness of our main model (i.e., Model 2) presented in Table 2 by adding the fixed effects at the respondent level. Doing so essentially absorbs all respondent-specific effects that are constant between the two waves in our sample. Since some respondents change their education level or party support between waves, we are able to estimate effects for these variables nevertheless. However, by adding several thousand respondent fixed effects, we lose a significant amount of efficiency.

Irrespective of these econometric considerations, we find that the results are very similar to results presented in Table 2. Figure A3 further indicates that the conclusions drawn from the model in the main text are robust to including respondent-specific fixed effects. We are, thus, confident to suggest that our conclusions are robust to time-invariant effects that we cannot directly control for.

Table A3: Replicating Table 2 while Adding Respondent Fixed Effects

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   | Model 1 |
| Actual Distance |  0.962\*\* |
|  |  (0.036)  |
| Ambiguous Party |  0.453\* |
|  |  (0.160)  |
| Distance \* Ambiguous Party |  -0.078  |
|  |  (0.052)  |
| Perceived Party Unity |  0.000  |
|  |  (0.020)  |
| Distance \* Unity |  -0.009  |
|  |  (0.006)  |
| Ambiguous Party \* Unity |  -0.034  |
|  |  (0.024)  |
| Distance \* Ambiguous Party \* Unity |  -0.010  |
|  |  (0.008)  |
| Partisan Supporter |  -0.774\*\* |
|  |  (0.052) |
| Education  |  0.017 |
|  |  (0.058) |
| Single Issue Party |  0.076 |
|  |  (0.062) |
| Government Party |  0.142\*\* |
|  |  (0.050) |
| Vote Share  |  0.001 |
|  |  (0.002) |
| 2nd Wave  |  -0.067 |
|  |  (0.045) |
| Respondent Fixed-Effects  | Yes |
| Random Effect – Party  |  0.000 |
|  |  (0.000)  |
| Random Effect – Party Wave  |  0.000 |
|  |  (0.000)  |
| Random Effect – Residual  |  1.226\*\* |
|  |  (0.010)  |
| Observations  | 6867 |
| Log Likelihood | -11145 |
| Standard errors in parentheses |
| , ,   |

Figure A3: The Marginal Effect of Actual Distance conditional on Party Ambiguity and Perceived Party Unity with Respondent Fixed Effects

 Note: The white lines in the plot show the point estimates, and the gray areas indicate the 95% confidence interval.

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