Chickens and Eggs: Untangling the Party Electorate Link

By

Leonard Ray

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill NC 27599

Leonard_ray@unc.edu

Paper presented at the 1997 European Community Studies Association conference, Seattle WA. Do note quote without permission.

Abstract

The question of European Integration is increasingly the object of political debate in the member states of the European Union. The stance taken by a political party on this issue is has been shown to be similar to the position taken by the electorate of that party. However, the causal mechanism underlying this link has not been identified. The literature on European integration suggests two contradictory explanations for this link. Bottom up theories of integration suggest that shifts in mass support for integration drive the positions taken by political elites. Neofunctional theories suggest that integration is an elite driven process, and that mass publics mirror the positions taken by political elites. This paper uses a new dataset on political party positions on European integration to determine the direction of the causal link between electorate opinion and party position. The results suggest that parties can influence the aggregate opinion of their electorates by taking salient positions on the issue of European integration. However, if this relationship is due to realignment of voters, then parties may not be able to exercise substantial influence on overall aggregate opinion.

In his introduction to Political Parties and the European Union John Gaffney notes that while the literature on European integration is vast, and the literature on parties is perhaps even more extensive, there is precious little work on the role of political parties in the European Union. He cites a number of reasons for this lacunae, the most important being a sense that parties are somehow of little relevance to the process of regional integration. Another topic which has been understudied until the recent referenda on Maastricht and on accession is the role of public opinion. Once one turns to the question of the relationship between political parties and public opinion about European integration, there are few scholarly accounts to draw upon.

Nonetheless, the interaction of political parties and public opinion is of great importance for the future of the European Union. Political parties have served as indispensable agents of interest aggregation and articulation in all modern democratic polities. It is difficult to imagine a solution to the European Union's "democratic deficit" which does not rely to some degree upon political parties. Parties also play an important role in informing electorates and shaping public opinion. In this capacity, parties can serve as a bridge between the people of Europe and the EU, bringing the voices of their voters into the European arena while explaining the role of the EU to their electorate.

The literature on regional integration is indeed vast, and only that fraction of it which deals, however indirectly, with the party-voter connection will be surveyed here. One can discern two models of the party voter link which are implicit in this literature. Sometimes the relationship is assumed to run from the elites to the mass level, with mass opinion following and reflecting the decisions of elites. Other authors present accounts of public opinion which leave no room for elite cues. According to this view, integration is really driven by attitudinal shifts, and elites tend to follow long term shifts in mass opinion.

Public opinion was an important explanatory variable for early integration theory. However, after the establishment in 1958 of the institutions of the European Economic Community, attention shifted to the interactions of national elites and supranational organizations. Public opinion has appeared in a decidedly secondary role, if at all, in most mainstream theory about European integration. Public opinion was generally assumed to lag and in some way reflect the actions of integrating elites.

The early work by Karl Deutsch (1957) stressed the importance of public attitudes as a precondition for successful political integration. In chapter three of Political Community in the North Atlantic Area, Deutsch argues that some sense of community is a necessary precursor to the amalgamation of separate political units. As he put it, "consent" must precede "compliance". Mutual trust, shared values, and a shared identity are all components of this sense of community.

Deutsch viewed integration as an elite instigated process with public opinion playing a more important role only in the later stages of integration. However, once the process of integration was underway, popular participation was decisive in ensuring its success. (104) In this account, political parties serve as a natural channel for the expected public support for integration. They provide a forum for popular participation, and do much to foster integration when they serve to link similar groups across different political units.

The "transactionalist" literature inspired by the work of Karl Deutch was soon eclipsed by a new school of "neofunctionalist" theorizing. The label "neofunctionalism" covers a broad range of theories and theorists. The work of Ernie Haas is generally cited as a primary inspiration and example of this branch of integration theory. Haas' basic argument is that integration tends to proceed by a process of functional spillover, with sucessful cooperation in one domain stimulating a demand for cooperation in other areas. However, in a departure from the "functionalism" of earlier writers such as Mitrany, political actors (elites) are aware of this spillover dynamic and may seek to thwart or manipulate it. Public opinion plays little role in Haas' theory beyond reflecting the preferences of elites. This is made clear by his attitude towards polling.

> " It is as impracticable as it is unnecessary to have recourse to general public opinion surveys, or even surveys of interested groups... It suffices to single out and define the political elites in the participating countries, to study their reactions to integration..." (cited in Hewstone 1986:12)

To the extent that neofunctionalists envisaged any role for public participation, it was generally seen as a force which gives a final impetus to the process of integration. This is spelled out most clearly by Philipe Schmitter who suggests that politicization is the ultimate stage of integration during which "the controversiality of joint decisionmaking goes up". This widens the range of actors interested in integration with the result that "there will be a shift in actor expectations and loyalty towards the

center." (Schmitter 1969) However, the link between pro integration elites and the shift in public opinion seems to be indirect at best. The exact mechanism leading to the "transfer of loyalties" is not specified. The implication is that general economic benefits from integration will lead to a broad increase in support.

In reaction to the inability of neofunctionalism to account for the apparent stagnation of European integration during the 70's, scholars began to downplay the importance of supranational actors and emphasize the role of member states. "Intergovernmental" theorists such as Andrew Moravcsik focus on the motives and actions of member state executives. Public opinion appears in these theories only fleetingly. State executives are assumed to use the institutions of the European Union for their own ends, including reelection. However, the mechanisms by which actions at the European level might feed back into domestic political support are nowhere spelt out. Once again, there seems to be an implicit model of retrospective voting lurking underneath the surface. Competing theories which characterize the EU as a multilevel polity also fail to consider the role of public opinion. While advocates of the multilevel governance approach argue for the importance of sub and supra national actors, these theorists focus primarily on the workings of EU institutions and regional governments or interest groups. Again, little consideration is made of the mass public or of political parties.

As public opinion shrank in importance in mainstream integration theory, a literature dedicated to the study of public opinion developed. Just as public opinion appears only intermittently in mainstream integration theory, political elites make only cameo appearances in much of the literature on public opinion about European integration. This literature has generally focused on explanations for three types of variation in opinion about the EU, individual level variation, aggregate differences across the member states of the EU, and changes in support over time.

Some of the earliest literature dedicated specifically to public opinion about the European Community sought explanations for variations in individual preferences for regional integration. Ronald Inglehart's early work on cognitive mobilization was inspired by Deutsch's work on political community as well as Haas' neofunctionalism. Deutsch argued that social mobilization was a prerequisite for the popular participation which would insure the success of integration. Inglehart (1970) argued by analogy that "cognitively mobilized" individuals provide a base for support of the European Community. Inglehart only briefly raised the question of partisan effects on public

opinion in an attempt to account for the apparently anomalous decline in French support for integration in the mid 1960's. He chalked this up to the persuasiveness of Charles DeGaulle (1971a).

Shortly thereafter Inglehart began to stress the importance of a long term inter generational shift in the values of European populations. Inglehart argued that Europeans were increasingly concerned with what he termed "post materialist" issues. As a result of this change in values, each successive generation was expected to be more supportive of integration than was the preceding generation. (Inglehart 1971b) In addition to explaining individual level variation in support, this concept of post materialism provided an explanation for ever increasing levels of mass support for integration. Recent work, particularly by Janssen (1991) has returned to the concept of cognitive mobilization. Janssen finds that the impact of "postmaterialism" disappears under controls for cognitive mobilization. In all of this research, political elites are cited as possible explanations of anomalous results, but their role is not explicitly investigated.

Other explanations for individual level variation in opinion have focused on the social characteristics of individuals. Shepherd (1975) stresses the importance of social position- in terms of occupational status and income- as a predictor of support for the EEC. Gabel and Palmer (1995) provide an economic explanation for individual level differences in support fot the EU. By eliminating controls on cross border migration between member states, the EU has increased competition in labor markets. Individuals who possess higher 'human capital' (as indicated by educational attainment) can expect to compete better in this new environment than those with lower 'human capital'. They make a similar argument about income, insisting that "EC citizens with higher income levels are also more likely to benefit from EC policies since they prefer low inflation, less public sector spending, and a larger and more open financial market." (1995:7)

A second stream of research on public opinion and the European community was inspired by the decline in support which coincided with the recession of the 1970's. This led to a series of dynamic analyses which demonstrated a link between economic conditions and pro integration attitudes. (Inglehart 1978, Handley 1981, Dalton 1993) Building upon the literature on sociotropic voting, these authors demonstrate that shifts in macroeconomic indicators such as inflation and unemployment affect aggregate opinion about the European Union. Another explanation for temporal change in mass attitudes

towards the EU is provided by Bernhard Wessels. He argues that economic interest is an insufficient explanation for public opinion. Instead, a process of opinion diffusion seems to have occurred. A pro integration consensus has spread during the period of 1973-1991 as support for the EU has increased, and group differences have waned.

Scholars have also long been aware of large cross national differences in support for integration. Numerous explanations for these differences have been proposed. Oskar Neidermayer cites such idiosyncratic factors as a desire to escape from an unpleasant national history in Italy and Germany, to British and Danish ties to external groups of nations (the commonwealth and the Nordic block) (1995) Miles Hewstone explains low levels of support in the UK as the result of anti EU political leadership, and the economic costs of membership. Much of the literature from the late 70's cited length of membership as a cause of higher support in the six founding members. This explanation has lost some popularity given the high levels of support in Ireland and the newer Mediterranean members. Support in these nations is often explained as a function of the economic benefits of membership. However, Bosch and Newton maintain that net transfers to and from the EU budget cannot account for cross national differences in support. (Agusti Bosch and Kenneth Newton 1995)

Some of the research on public opinion has brought political parties into the analysis explicitly. In an early study of attitudes towards European integration, Feld and Wildgen argue that elites have a substantial degree of freedom from mass opinion in formulating their own positions on European integration.(1976a) They also find that patterns of elite opinion are reflected in mass opinions. In another analysis, they demonstrate that a voter's perceptions of the position taken by their preferred party has a significant impact on their attitudes towards the EU (1976b). These results hold even after other correlates of EU support are controlled for. However, Feld and Widgen also find that the potential impact of political orientation is limited by the high degree of pro European consensus among political parties.

The bulk of research linking parties to mass opinion has, in fact, been carried out in conjunction with studies of referenda. It is during referenda campaigns that the EU becomes a highly salient, indeed central, element of the political agenda. Shepherd (1975) cites evidence that parties succeeded in altering the positions of their electorates during the British and Norwegian referenda of 1975. Writing about the British referendum, Kitzinger argues that the Conservative government's release of a White Paper favoring EEC membership was followed by a 10% increase in public

support for membership.(p 364) Conversely, he argues that the British Labour party adopted an anti EEC position only after its electorate had shifted towards opposition to membership. (This interpretation is contested by Shepherd.) There is some evidence that during the recent Norwegian referendum on EU membership, the Norwegian Labour party electorate shifted towards a markedly pro EU stance after the party adopted its official pro EU line.

One interesting demonstration of the strength of party-voter links outside of the context of referenda was carried out by Van Der Eijk and Franklin (1991). Using data from the 1989 European elections study, they create indicators for the average opinion of the electorates of the major European political parties. Another survey question on the positions taken by parties is used to create a measure of the pro or anti EU stance taken by each political party. Comparing these two indicators, they find that party positions are related to the average opinion of party electorates in most countries. This link does vary widely in strength across the member nations of the EU.

An analysis of the direction of influence between parties and their electorates was carried out by Bernhard Wessels (1995). Wessels contrasts a "push" model of political influence where elites are seen to respond to the desires of the electorate with a "pull" model where voters follow the leads given by elites. He then tests these two models, finding support for both of them. Wessels uses party manifesto data as an indicator of a party's position on the EU issue. He then constructs a path model where party position is a function of electorate opinion prior to the writing of the party manifesto. Electorate opinion subsequent to the writing of the manifesto is then modeled as a function both of prior electorate opinion, and as a function of the party platform. Wessels finds that party platforms are influenced by the opinions of their electorate, and that the manifestoes in turn influence the later opinion of the electorate. One limitation to Wessels' analysis is the omission of any controls for the prior position of the political party. This makes it somewhat difficult to interpret the association between party platform and prior electorate opinion. The party platforms could be invariant over time, and the analysis would still suggest that the platform was "caused" by recent electorate opinion.

This paper will follow a different strategy in an attempt to determine the direction of the party-electorate link. There are two steps in this analysis. The first imperative is to demonstrate that partisanship is associated with distinctive opinions about European integration. If electorates do not have distinctive views on the issue,

then the entire point is moot. The demonstration of partisan differences must also rule out the possibility that some third set of factors, related to both partisanship and opinion about European integration, is actually the cause of the distinctive opinions of party electorates. After all, if there is no evidence that partisanship has an independent impact on opinion, then there are grounds to suppose that the party-electorate link is spurious. The second step is the analysis of the direction of the party-electorate link. This analysis will use data on party position and electorate opinion at two points in time, so that prior party position is adequately controlled for.

Demonstration of the independent impact of partisanship.

In order to demonstrate the strength of the association between partisanship and support for European Integration, an index of support for European integration was regressed on a set of dummy variables indicating the respondent's party preferences. Data was derived from two Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 1992, EB#37 and #38. The index of support for integration combines responses to two Eurobarometer questions, and ranges from -1 to 1[1] In order to ease cross-national comparisons, parties were recoded according to their European parliamentary group affiliation.

These regressions were estimated separately for each member nation for two reasons. Separate regression equations allow for the possibility that the electorate of the same European party group may support integration in some nations, while opposing it in others. Separate equations also permit a cross national comparison in the overall usefulness of partisanship as a predictor of attitudes towards integration.

Table 1. presents the results of these regression equations. Party preference is related to support for integration, though the overall importance of party preference varies greatly across national contexts. In Denmark, partisanship can account for one fifth of the total variance in opinion about European integration, and the majority of political parties are significantly associated with support for or opposition to integration. In Spain and Luxembourg only one party is associated with orientations towards the EU, and partisanship can account for only one percent of the total variance in opinion about European Integration.

---

[1] These questions were "Are you in favor of efforts being made to unify Western Europe?" and "Do you think your country's membership in the EU is a good thing?"

A number of possible explanations for these crossnational differences in the predictive power of partisanship suggest themselves. The explanation may lie in crossnational differences in the salience of the issue of European integration. If political parties in a nation choose to raise the issue of integration, then we would expect to see clear differences among the electorates of these parties. Conversely, if parties elect to ignore the issue, then their electorates will be broadly similar in orientation to the EU. An alternative explanation lies in crossnational differences in the social basis of support for integration. If the push model of the party-voter link is accurate, then voters should form their views on European integration independently of the influence of parties. In this case, the partisan differences reported in Table 1. will simply be artifacts reflecting underlying differences in the role of social cleavages which predict both partisanship and support for the EU.

If the "push" model is accurate, then the regression equations presented in Table 1. will not accurately reflect the importance of partisanship as an explanation for individual attitudes towards the EU. Instead, this analysis will be subject to omitted variable problems. Several social characteristics of individuals are related both to party preference and to support for European integration. In order to determine the independent impact of partisanship, these social characteristics must be added to the analysis.

There is a long tradition in political science of describing party systems as reflections of the underlying social cleavages which divide the societies in which they operate. The system of social cleavages defines the major political issues and conflicts over which actors will struggle, and identifies which types of political parties one should expect to find representing these actors. The most robust and widely cited classification of social cleavages is a four part typology established by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). They argue that the party systems of Western Europe have been shaped by the four cleavages of center vs. periphery, church vs. state, urban vs. rural, and owner vs. worker. The center/periphery cleavage is described by Lipset and Rokkan as a division between the state building core, defined territorially and culturally, and the assimilated periphery. This cleavage gives rise to regionalist parties with an ethnic and linguistic base. The church/state cleavage reflects a struggle between the church and secular authority for control over education and regulation of civil institutions such as marriage and divorce. An urban/rural cleavage divides agricultural interests from those of the industrial urban areas. Finally, the class cleavage separates the owners of industry from the working class.

Two more potential fault lines should be added to complete this catalogue of social cleavages. Many authors working with public opinion or with new social movements have identified a new cleavage alternately called the post-materialist or left-libertarian cleavage. (Dalton and Kuchler 1990) This cleavage emerged from the women's, environmentalist, and peace movements of the 1960's and 1970's. The concern with both novel substantive issues and open democratic procedures sets this group apart from the mainstream political forces.

There is also evidence of an cleavage between individuals living on the margins of society, and those in the mainstream. Several authors have linked this cleavage to the emergence of new far right parties in France, Germany and Belgium. (Esping-Andersen 1995, Kreisi 1995) This cleavage is related to the '"core/periphery" distinction drawn by authors such as Galtung (1979) and Hechter (1975) Their use of the concept of a core/ periphery division should be distinguished from the meaning Lipset and Rokkan attach to their more geographic or cultural concept. Periphery is here understood in a social sense- as separating those who posses of political, economic, and cultural power from those who do not. In this view gender, unemployment and spatial location combine with differentials in education, income, class to create to a sense of deprivation and exclusion on the part of individuals living at the margins of society whose interests are not protected by prevailing institutions. I propose labeling this group "socially marginal" in order to clearly distinguish this concept from Lipset and Rokkan's "cultural periphery".

Regression analysis allows us to determine the degree to which these social cleavages structure attitudes towards the European Union. Religiosity combined with religious denomination was used as an indicator for the church/state cleavage. Farming and fishing was used to measure the urban/rural split. Employment as a manual worker was included to capture the effects of the class cleavage. Unemployment, education, and income were used as indicators for social marginality. Indicators of the "new politics" cleavage were gender, public sector employment, and postmaterialism. Unfortunately, no variables in the 1992 Eurobarometers were appropriate proxies for the center/periphery cleavage, and this cleavage was omitted from the analysis.

The regression results presented in Table 2 indicate that these social cleavages do have a modest impact on attitudes towards the European Union. On average, they explain about 5 percent of the variance in support for the EU. There is also wide cross national variation in the overall impact of social cleavages, with the equations predicting 9

percent of the variance in Denmark, 8 percent in France and the UK, but only 1 percent of the variance in Italy and Portugal. Individual social cleavages also vary in their association with support for the EU. Farming is associated with support for integration in Denmark, and with opposition in Germany, France and Portugal.

In order to demonstrate that partisanship has an impact independent of that of social cleavages, the dummy variables for partisanship discussed earlier were added to the social cleavage regressions. Table 3. presents the results of these fully specified regression equations. In most cases, the coefficients for partisanship remain significant, indicating that partisanship does have an impact independent of social cleavages. The overall predictive power of the fully specified model is in each case greater than the predictive power of social cleavages alone, indicating that the inclusion of partisanship improves our ability to predict individual orientations towards European integration. Table 4. presents the adjusted R squares for the three regression equations, as well as the improvement in R square resulting from the addition of political variables to the social cleavage model. The degree of improvement does vary widely across nations. In Denmark, adding partisanship boosts predictive power by 13 percent, while in Ireland., Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the UK, adding partisanship increases predictive power by only one percent. The improvement in R square due to the inclusion of partisanship is very closely related to the predictive power of partisanship alone, correlating at .99.

These results indicate that cross national differences in the independent impact of partisanship cannot be written off as an artifact of the underlying social cleavages. The most likely explanation for these differences must lie with the political parties and their willingness to raise the issue of European integration. In order to test this hypothesis, data must be obtained on the positions taken by parties on the issue of European integration and on the salience of the issue for various political parties.

The Expert Survey

Comparable data on the positions of political parties is available from very few sources. None of these sources were particularly well suited to the analysis at hand. One 1988 Eurobarometer survey, #30, asks respondents in each EU member nation to evaluate the positions of the political parties of their nation. This is an excellent source of data on the public perception of party positions. Unfortunately, the data is available only for one moment in time, and does not lend itself to a measure of the salience of the

EU issue. The Comparative Party Manifesto project has analyzed the electoral platforms of a large number of political parties. This dataset provides another useful indicator of the positions of political parties for a couple of different time points. Unfortunately, not all member states in the EU are included in this dataset. If the manifesto data were used, Spain, Portugal, and Greece would have to be omitted from the analysis. Recent manifest data (post 1990) is also unavailable.

In order to obtain comparable time series data on the positions of parties, I conducted an expert survey. The survey was designed to cover all major and minor parties in the EU and EFTA. Experts were identified from the ECPR handbook of political scientists in Europe. (Unfortunately, no experts could be identified for Iceland.) Scholars who specialized in party systems, European politics, or in the domestic politics of a specific nation were contacted, and asked to evaluate the positions taken by parties in that nation in 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996. In addition to the positions taken by parties, respondents were asked to evaluate the salience of the issue of European integration for each party, and the extent of dissent within each party. The text of the survey is included as an appendix to this paper.

252 questionnaires were mailed out to experts. 128 usable responses were received, for an overall response rate of 51 percent. Several experts declined to participate because they felt unqualified to respond accurately. A minimum threshold of 5 responses per nation was set for the inclusion of any nation in the resulting dataset. All but one nation met this threshold. The exception was Luxembourg, where none of the experts contacted responded to the survey. The response rates for each nation are presented in Table 5.

Because data on party positions was available from two other sources for 1988, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to measure the degree of commonality between the three indicators. This analysis was, of course, limited to those parties included in all three sources. The only nations included were the EEC 9. All three of these indicators correlate highly with rho values between, .6 and .8, and significance levels below .0001. The factor analysis indicated that one underlying factor could account for most of the variance in the three indicators. This sole factor accounted for 87 percent of the variance in perceived party positions (as indicated by respondents to Eurobarometer #30.) It accounted for 88 percent of the variance in party position as indicated from the manifesto dataset, and for 94 percent of the variance in party positions as indicated by the expert survey.

It was suggested above that crossnational differences in the predictive power of partisanship may be due to differences in the salience of the issue of European integration. In order to obtain measures of the salience of the issue in each EU member nation, the 1992 salience scores for all of the parties in each nation were averaged. By weighting all parties equally, this measure allows for the disproportionate impact small parties can have on the political agenda by raising issues which the larger parties would prefer to de-emphasize. These national salience scores are reported in Table 6. These national salience scores correlate significantly with both of the indicators of the predictive power of partisanship. The correlation with the R square for partisanship is .69, and the correlation with the improvement in R square due to the inclusion of partisanship is .71. While partisanship is relevant to public opinion about the EU, this relevance is clearly a function of the salience of the issue of integration.

Partisan positions offer a partial explanation for cross national differences in levels of support for the EU. The national means on the index of support for European integration provide a measure of national levels of support for the EU. These national levels of support can be compared with the average position of political parties in each nation. Averaging the positions taken by the political parties in a nation is, however, somewhat misleading. Parties differ widely in the size of their electorate, and one would expect the influence a party has on the direction of public opinion to reflect the predominance of that party in the national context. For this reason, an unweighted average of party positions would skew our measure towards the positions of the smaller (and generally more extremist) parties. The unweighted and weighted national averages are presented in Table 6. The unweighted scores are uniformly lower than the weighted ones, reflecting the general tendency of the smallest parties to be the most anti EU. The correlation between national levels of support and the simple average party positions is a meager and insignificant .02. However, national levels of support do correlate significantly with a weighted average of party positions ($r=.72$).

The relationship between party position and voter opinion also holds when parties and their electorates are used as the unit of analysis. A party's position correlates highly with the opinion of that party's electorate. For 1992, the correlation coefficient is .68 ($p \leq .0001$.) However, the correlations for any particular year do not tell us much about the direction of the party-electorate link.

Explaining the Party-Electorate link.

Partisanship is related to support for the EU, and this relationship is strongest when the issue of European integration is a salient one. There are, however, a number of different mechanisms which could account for this relationship. If partisanship did not have an impact on opinion independent of social characteristics, one could perhaps conclude that the causal link must run from the electorate to the party. Once a party's electorate adopts a distinctive position on the issue, the party would then adopt the position of it's electorate. The independent impact of partisanship suggests otherwise. It is more likely that parties select a position on the issue of European integration, and that the party's electorate then shifts to reflect the position taken by the party.

A direct test of the direction of the party -electorate link is only possible given an independent indicator for both party position and electorate opinion. The past positions of parties and electorates can be used for this purpose. For this analysis, party position in 1988 is used to predict party position in 1992, while electorate opinion in 1988 is used to predict electorate opinion in 1992. The link between party position in 1992 and electorate opinion in 1992 is modeled as two reciprocal paths. This system of equations results: (see graphic presentation in Figure 1.)

(Party 1992) = Gamma1*(Party 1988) + Beta1*(Electorate 1992) + error

(Electorate 1992) = Gamma2*(Electorate 1988)+ Beta2*(Party 1988) + error

This nonrecursive system of simultaneous equations can be estimated with a variety of statistical packages. The CALIS procedure in SAS was used for this paper.

The results are presented in Table 7. The most important predictor of a party's position is clearly the prior position of that party. Likewise, the most powerful predictor of the opinions of a party's electorate is the opinion of that electorate 4 years earlier. The relationship between a party's position in 1992 and its electorate's opinion in 1992 appears to be due primarily to the influence the party has on the opinion of its electorate. The parameter for this path is large and statistically significant, while the parameter corresponding to the electorate's influence on the party is low and insignificant. The implication is that a party's position is constrained by the past position taken by the party, but not by the opinion of its electorate. However, the electorate adjusts to the new position of the party.

The results reported above are for all of the political parties for which data was available for 1988 and 1992. It is reasonable to suppose that the strength of party

leadership varies across parties. As mentioned earlier, the importance which parties attach to the issue of European integration varies widely. One would expect the ability of parties to lead their electorates to be greatest when the EU issue is a highly salient one for the political party. Conversely, where the issue is of low salience, electorates will receive far weaker cues about their party's position on the issue, and should be relatively unaffected. In order to examine the interaction between salience and the impact of party positions, the CALIS analysis was repeated, with the data divided into two subgroups corresponding to the political parties for whom the EU is a salient issue, and those for whom the EU is not a salient issue.

The results of the subgroup analysis bear out our expectations. Among the parties for which the EU is a salient issue, the influence of parties is much stronger. Judging by the parameter estimates, the impact of party positions on electorate opinion is actually greater than the impact of prior electorate opinion. Conversely, electorate opinion appears to have a small, marginally significant, and negative impact on the positions of the parties. This somewhat surprising result may indicate that parties were shifting their positions away from their electorates during this period of rapid change in the European environment (1988-1992). This may also indicate that instability in electorate opinion reduced the usefulness of prior opinion as an instrumental variable.

Among the parties which do not stress the EU, neither of the paths between party position and electorate opinion are significant. The electorates of these parties seem unaffected by the positions taken by their political parties. Party positions are also independent of the opinions of party electorates.

The mechanisms of party leadership

These results suggest that parties which emphasize the issue of European integration can have an impact upon the opinions of their electorates. The implications of this finding are ambiguous because the analysis does not indicate what mechanism brings about this shift in the aggregate opinion of party electorates.

Two quite different mechanism may be responsible for the shift in electorate opinion. I label these persuasion and realignment. Persuasion occurs if the supporters of a party react to disagreement with their party's position on the EU by changing their own opinions. The agreement between parties and their electorates reflects these individual level shifts in opinion. If the party-electorate link is due to persuasion, then parties may be able to exert a great deal of influence over aggregate public opinion. In

the hypothetical case where all of the parties in a system adopt more pro EU positions, we would expect aggregate public opinion to shift in a pro EU direction, reflecting the shift in party positions.

Realignment would explain the party-electorate link if voters react to disagreement with their party's position on the EU by changing their party loyalty while maintaining their own opinions on European integration. In this case, shifts in party positions will be followed by shifts in the party loyalties of voters. The link between party positions and electorate opinion reflects changes in party loyalties as voters abandon their preferred party and switch their support to parties with which they agree on the issue of European integration. If this model is accurate, then parties can have only a limited impact on aggregate opinion. However, this model does open up the possibility that parties can use the EU issue to engineer electoral realignments in their favor by raising the salience of the EU issue.

A direct test of these competing mechanisms would require individual level panel data on party preferences and evaluations of the EU. Such a test is beyond the scope of the present paper. One hint that realignment may be the operative mechanism can, however, be gleaned from the current analysis. If the persuasion mechanism were responsible for the party-electorate link, then shifts in the overall positions of parties would be mirrored by shifts in aggregate opinion. However, from 1988 to 1992, the average party become more pro European. Over the same time period, aggregate public opinion became more anti European. This indicates that voters are shifting their party loyalties in light of their opinions about the EU. If future work confirms this finding, then the potential for elite manipulation of public opinion is quite limited. Parties may alter the composition of their electorates, but they will be unable to effect large scale shifts in aggregate opinion.

Works Cited

Bosch, Agusti and Keneth Newton. 1995 "Economic Calculus or Familiarity Breeds Content?" in Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance. Oskar Neidermayer and Richard Sinott eds. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Dalton, Russel, and Manfred Kuechler eds. 1990. Challanging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies. Oxford University Press: New York.

Dalton, Russell and Richard Eichenberg. 1994. "Europeans and the European Community: the dynamics of public support for European Integration" International Organization 47,4 507-534

Deutsch, Karl. 1957. Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience. Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Esping Anderson, Gøsta. 1995. The Eclipse of the Democratic Class Struggle? European Class Structures at Fin de Siècle. Paper presented at the conference on "The Politics and Political Economy of Contemporary Capitalism" Berlin May 26-27 1995

Feld, Werner J, and John K. Wildgen. 1976a. Domestic Political Realities and European Unification: A Study of Mass Publics and Elites in the European Community Countries. Westview:Boulder

Flickinger, Richard S. and Mershon Center. 1993. British Political Parties and Public Attitudes Toward the European Community: Leading, Following, or Getting Out of the Way? Paper presented at APSA Washington DC Sept 2-5 1993.

Gabel, Matthew and Harvey Palmer. 1995. "Understanding Variation in Public Support for European Integration." European Journal of Political Research 277 3-19.

Gaffney, John. 1996. Political Parties in the European Union. Routledge Press: New York.

Galtung, Johan. 1979. A Structural Theory of Imperialism. Journal of Peace Research : 81-117.

Handley, David. 1981. "Public Opinion and European Integration: The Crisis of the 1970's" European Journal of Political Research 9 335-364

Hechter, Michael. 1975. Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966.

Hewstone, Miles. 1986. Understanding Attitudes to the European Community: A social-psychologcal study in four member states. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1970. "Cognitive Mobilization and European Identity" Comparative Politics 3:1 45-70

Inglehart, Ronald. 1971a. Public Opinion and Regional Integration in Regional Integration: Theory and Research Leon Lindberg, and Stuart Scheingold eds. Harvard University Press: Cambridge.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1971b. "Changing Value Priorities and European Integration" Journal of Common Market Studies. 10:1 1-36

Inglehart, Ronald, and Jacques-René Rabier. 1978. "Economic Uncertainty and European Solidarity: Public Opinion Trends Annals, AAPSS 440 66-97

Janssen, Joseph I. H. 1991. "Postmaterialism, Cognitive Mobilization and Public Support for European Integration" British Journal of Political Science 21:4 443-468

Kitzinger, Uwe. 1975. Diplomacy and Persuasion: How Britain Joined the Common Market. Thames and Hudson: London.

Kriesi, Hanspeter. 1995. Movements of the left, Movements of the Right: Putting the Mobilization of Social Movements into Political Context. Paper presented at the conference on "The Politics and Political Economy of Contemporary Capitalism" Berlin May 26-27 1995

Lipset, Seymour Martin and Stein Rokkan. 1967. Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross- National Perspectives The Free Press: Glencoe.

Neidermayer, Oskar. 1995 "Introduction" in Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance. Oskar Neidermayer and Richard Sinott eds. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Schmitter, Phillipe. 1969. Three Neo-funtionalist Hypothesies About International Integration. International Organization 23:1 161-166

Shepherd, Robert J. 1975. Public Opinion and European Integration Saxon House: Westmead England.

Van Der Eijk, Cees and Mark Franklin. 1991. "European Community politics and electoral representation: Evidence from the 1989 European Elections Study." European Journal of Political Research 19 105-127.

Wessels, Bernhard. 1995. "Development of Support: Diffusion or Demographic Replacement" and "Evaluations of the EC: Elite or Mass Driven." in Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance. Oskar Neidermayer and Richard Sinott eds. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Wilgden, John K. and Werner J. Feld. 1976b. "Evaluative and Cognitive Factors in the Prediction of European Unification. Comparative Political Studies. 9:3 309-334.

Figure 1.

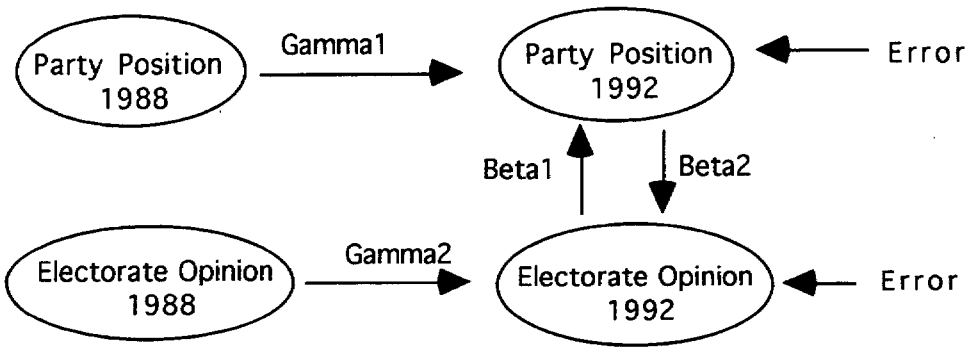
Party Position 1988
Gamma1
Party Position 1992
Error
Beta1
Beta2
Electorate Opinion 1988
Gamma2
Electorate Opinion 1992
Error

Table 1.

1992	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	Greece	Spain	France
Church/State						
Protestant		.132***	.099***			-.016
Catholic	.036		.011	.182***	.058*	-.002
Urban/Rural						
Farmer/Fisher	-.071	.202*	-.224**	-.013	-.035	-.169**
Class						
Worker	-.115***	-.256***	-.052*	-.053	-.036	-.108***
Marginality						
Income	.025	.057***	.019*	.030*	.028*	.022
Education	.010**	.010*	.011***	.007*	.002	.030***
Unemployed	-.123	-.000	-.219***	-.035	.001	-.094
"New Politics"						
Post Material	.040**	-.044	.023*	-.017	.068***	.071***
Female	-.054*	-.187***	-.019	-.068**	-.065**	-.016
Public Sector	-.007	-.062	.047*	.019	.024	.064*
Intercept	.297***	.107	.171**	.328***	.479***	-.143
Adjusted R Square	.03	.09	.02	.02	.02	.08
N	1845	1894	3854	1780	1706	1820

1992	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	U.K.
Church/State						
Protestant	.045			-.112***	.204	-.027
Catholic	.040	.016	.096**	.059*	.060	.273***
Urban/Rural						
Farmer/Fisher	-.000	-.006	.021	-.067	-.116***	-.182
Class						
Manual Worker	-.033	-.045	-.046	-.088**	.010	-.016
Marginality						
Income	.058***	.015	.007	.048***	.012	.023
Education	.016***	.005*	.009	.011***	.005*	.039***
Unemployed	-.101	.057	-.200	-.027	-.073	-.113
"New Politics"						
Post Material	.008	.043***	.032	.063***	.002	.053**
Female	-.076***	-.028	-.053	-.059**	-.040	-.123***
Public Sector	.034	.029	.131***	.050	-.041	.062
Intercept	.214**	.503***	.285*	.244***	.576***	-.394***
Adjusted R Square	.04	.01	.03	.07	.01	.08
N	1718	1890	921	1849	1722	.2219

*=p<.05 **=p<.01 ***=p<.001

Table 2.

1992	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	Greece	Spain	France
Party Preference (Coded by EP group)						
S	.074*	-.029	.170***	-.054	.140***	.227***
LDR	.024	.581***	.103*		.059	.030
PPE	.078*	.456***	.189***	.241***	.029	.193**
V	-.021	-.294***	.130**		.046	.186***
GUE		-.298***		-.327***	.042	
RDE		.041		.385	.137	-.050
DR	-.253***		-.479***			-.492***
DE		.458***				
CG				-.117*		-.201**
ARC	.025	-.417			-.048	
NI		.437***	-.146**		-.033	
Intercept	.483***	.140***	.343***	.615***	.530***	.365***
Adjusted R Square	.01	.20	.06	.07	.01	.08
N	1845	1894	3854	1780	1706	1820

1992	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	U.K.
Party Preference (Coded by EP group)						
S	.042	.066	.048	.094**	.084**	.125***
LDR	.191**	.205***	.035	.127***	.116***	.080
PPE	.065	.06*	.102	.142***	-.009	-.159***
V	.137	.125	-.147*	-.009		.109
GUE		.060				
RDE	.082**				.354	
DR						
DE						.014
CG	-.025				-.041	.551*
ARC		-.068				.084
NI		-.051				-.41**
Intercept	.563***	.614***	.516***	.471***	.646***	.270***
Adjusted R Square	.01	.01	.01	.02	.01	.02
N	1718	1890	921	1849	1722	2219

*=p<.05 **=p<.01 ***=p<.001

Table 3.

1992	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	Greece	Spain	France
Church/State						
Protestant		.073**	.064**			.017
Catholic	.025		-.031	.134***	.056*	-.000
Urban/Rural						
Farmer/Fisher	-.088	.059	-.178*	-.029	-.038	-.169**
Class						
Worker	-.036	-.157***	-.053**	-.026	-.039	-.118***
Marginality						
Income	.026*	.039**	.013	.020	.031*	.018
Education	.012**	.008	.010***	.008**	.004	.026***
Unemployed	-.115	.059	-.181***	-.011	.008	-.103
"New Politics"						
Post Material	.043**	-.035	.020	.004	.073***	.065***
Female	-.056*	-.158***	-.029	-.075**	-.068**	-.045
Public Sector	-.022	.011	.048*	.021	.025	.043
Party Preference (Coded by EP group)						
S	.067	.004	.159***	-.047	.169***	.224***
LDR	-.034	.513***	.074		.073	.039
PPE	.065	.416***	.177***	.237***	.025	.185**
V	-.070	-.286***	.104**		.011	.153***
GUE		-.303***		-.325***	.033	
RDE		.043		.264	.192	-.056
DR	-.283***		-.465***			-.473***
DE		.402***				
CG				-.120*		-.163*
ARC	-.007	-.367			-.068	
NI		.388***	-.173**		-.035	
Intercept	.267**	-.003	.147*	.362***	.385***	-.085
Adjusted R Square	.05	.24	.07	.08	.04	.15
N	1845	1894	3854	1780	1706	1820

*=p<.05 **=p<.01 ***=p<.001

Table 3. (Continued)

1992	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal	U.K.
Church/State						
Protestant	.030			-.128***	.186	-.006
Catholic	.028	.015	.091**	.020	.035	.260***
Urban/Rural						
Farmer/Fisher	.009	-.018	.018	-.109	-.120***	-.174
Class						
Manual Worker	-.030	-.044	-.045	-.084**	.017	-.024
Marginality						
Income	.057***	.017	.006	.047***	.012	.023
Education	.017***	.005*	.010	.014***	.006*	.038***
Unemployed	-.089	.085	-.199	-.007	-.070	-.104
"New Politics"						
Post Material	.006	.039**	.032	.064***	.005	.035*
Female	-.074***	-.030	-.051	-.062**	-.037	-.117***
Public Sector	.035	.021	.127**	.045	-.035	.061**
Party Preference (Coded by EP group)						
S	.081	.069	.073	.118***	.080**	.117***
LDR	.151*	.171***	.051	.080**	.121***	.068
PPE	.069*	.066*	.074	.162***	-.029	-.111**
V	.102	.094	-.122	-.024		.165
GUE		.056				
RDE	.101***				.336	
DR						
DE						.041
CG	.029				-.048	.408
ARC		-.082				.016
NI		-.064				-.334**
Intercept	.129	.484***	.257*	.147*	.531***	-.421***
Adjusted R Square	.05	.03	.04	.08	.03	.09
N	1718	1890	921	1849	1722	2219

*=p<.05 **=p<.01 ***=p<.001

Table 4.

Adjusted R Square	Social Cleavages	Party Preference	Full Model (Social and Partisan Variables)	Full Model R2 minus Social R2
Belgium	.03	.01	.05	.02
Denmark	.09	.20	.24	.13
Germany	.02	.06	.07	.05
Greece	.02	.06	.08	.06
Spain	.02	.01	.04	.02
France	.08	.08	.15	.07
Ireland	.04	.01	.05	.01
Italy	.01	.01	.03	.02
Luxembourg	.03	.01	.04	.01
Netherlands	.07	.02	.08	.01
Portugal	.01	.01	.03	.02
United Kingdom	.08	.02	.09	.01

Table 5.

Expert Survey	# of Surveys Sent	# of Respondents	Response Rate
Belgium	23	8	.35
Denmark	11	9	.82
Germany	14	7	.50
Greece	14	10	.71
Spain	25	13	.52
France	21	9	.43
Ireland	15	8	.53
Italy	21	8	.38
Luxembourg	6	0	.00
Netherlands	15	9	.60
Portugal	13	7	.54
United Kingdom	13	8	.62
Austria	12	5	.42
Finland	12	8	.67
Sweden	15	7	.47
Norway	11	7	.64
Switzerland	11	5	.45

Table 6.

	Average Salience Score	Unweighted Average of Party Positions	Weighted Average of Party Positions
Belgium	2.66	1.62	1.99
Denmark	3.06	-.41	1.39
France	3.39	.94	.97
Germany	3.06	.53	1.83
Greece	3.51	.51	2.23
Ireland	2.99	.55	1.54
Italy	2.85	1.51	1.75
Netherlands	2.46	.20	1.75
Portugal	3.12	-.08	2.30
Spain	3.34	1.85	2.02
United Kingdom	2.94	1.54	1.25

Salince scores range from 1 = European Integration is of no importance to this party to 5 = The EU is the most important issue for this party
Party Position scores range from -3 = Party strongly opposed to European integration to 3 = Party strongly in favor of European Integration.

Table 7.

CALIS results	Exogenous Variables		Endogenous Variables		
Dependent Variables ⬇	Party Position 1988	Electorate Opinion 1988	Party Position 1992	Electorate Opinion 1992	R Square
All Parties					
Party Position 1992	.995 (20.862)			-.056 (-1.141)	.91
Electorate Opinion 1992		.566 (7.044)	.362 (4.382)		.67
High Salience Parties					
Party Position 1992	1.117 (13.256)			-.187 (-2.17)	.91
Electorate Opinion 1992		.400 (4.486)	.600 (6.524)		.77
Low Salience Parties					
Party Position 1992	.928 (13.779)			.045 (.656)	.90
Electorate Opinion 1992		.804 (5.885)	-.006 (-.045)		.64