Researching the European Union: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Stacy A. Nyikos
The University of Tulsa
stacy-nyikos@utulsa.edu
&
Mark A. Pollack
University of Wisconsin-Madison
pollack@polisci.wisc.edu

1. Introduction

The EU is a particularly challenging object of study for social scientists. By comparison with established domestic political systems, the EU is a complex, multinational and multilingual, political system, characterized by a vertical and horizontal separation of powers, and operating across several European capitals. As a relatively young polity, moreover, the EU has until recently offered few ready-made empirical resources such as the extensive databases available to students of American and national European politics. Studying the EU, therefore, poses particular challenges to social scientists in terms of theory, hypotheses, and research design, as well as in terms of access to qualitative and quantitative data for the testing of such hypotheses.

In this chapter, we offer guidance for organizing, planning and conducting social science research in and about the European Union. Our guidance, we should warn, is partial, both in the sense of incompleteness and in terms of our shared bias in favor of theoretically informed analysis, hypothesis-testing, and causal inference. Readers who do not share our bias will therefore disagree with some of our comments and suggestion regarding, for example, research design; although we hope that even these scholars will find useful practical information in the pages that follow. The chapter is organized in six parts. Following this introduction, section 2 offers some observations about the wealth of research questions that could be asked about the European Union, and suggests that the nature of one's research question can and should guide researchers in the identification of relevant theories, the formulation of testable hypotheses, and the design of a research project. Section three reviews the availability of both qualitative and quantitative data, including both official EU sources as well as innovative datasets compiled by EU scholars. The fourth and fifth sections offer some nuts-and-bolts advice for scholars undertaking fieldwork at the Brussels and Luxembourg headquarters of the primary EU institutions. A very brief sixth section concludes.

2. Setting up A Research Project

2.1 Research Question

In the study of the European Union, as in social science more generally, every good research project begins with a compelling research question. Deciding upon the question to ask is as important as devising a theoretical answer to that question. The question is the basis on which theoretical thought is generated. The question guides the investigation. Traditionally, the central research question in EU studies was how to explain "integration," defined in terms of either institutional development or policy development, or both. For such studies, the EU was indeed the only case, or at least an extraordinary outlier in comparison with other cases. One could furthermore argue plausibly that the EU was *sui generis*, and that the implications of EU studies did not "travel"—were not generalizable—outside the Union itself. However, as Simon Hix (1994) has pointed out, integration *per se* is no longer the only, or even the most common, dependent variable in EU studies. Instead, students of the EU increasingly study other political phenomena, such as the outcomes of intergovernmental bargains, the adoption (or non-adoption) of advanced social regulations in multi-tiered political systems, the interactions of legislative principals and their executive and judicial agents, the voting behavior of parliamentarians, and the implementation of EU policies in the member states. In studying such questions, moreover, scholars have been able to generate multiple observations or "cases," both by selecting multiple cases within the EU and by comparing the EU to other cases that are similar in important respects (Caporaso et al. 1997).

For these reasons, the EU is no longer plagued by an overarching "n=1 problem," yet the multiplicity of potential research questions raises the new "problem" of how scholars might go about identifying particularly promising questions, formulating hypothesized answers to those questions, and designing research projects capable of testing (and possibly falsifying!) those hypotheses. Fortunately, the existing literature on research design and methodology offers useful guidelines for scholars seeking to identify and elaborate a research program in the social sciences.

The research question itself should be one that not only builds upon existing knowledge but also one that is relevant. In other words, and very simply put, any research question must first pass the "so what" test. The question must address a phenomenon, the greater understanding of which broadens our general knowledge in a relevant manner. For instance, someone interested in studying the EU judicial process may pose the question: Why did the ECJ decide not to answer all of the questions referred to it in the Irish abortion case, *SPUC v. Grogan*?[i] While this question is highly interesting, the answer to it is very limited in scope. How the ECJ acts in one specific case does not allow us to make any broad inferences about general patterns in ECJ decision-making across time. Rather, a more general question that nevertheless is directly related to the first is: What drives the decisional calculus of the ECJ? Such a question addresses the "why" of the first question but on a much broader level. The second question is an attempt to understand and ultimately make inferences about broad motivations and patterns in court behavior that a very refined question cannot. It also addresses an ongoing debate within legal political science concerning the motivations of the ECJ when it rules in cases (Garrett, Keleman & Schulz 1998; Mattli & Slaughter 1998; Alter 2001). Thus, a slightly broader question does far more than simply answer the initial question. The broader question fits within the present debates on the EU judicial process, potentially offers information about an important legal process and offers the researcher fertile ground for future research.

Naturally, the answer to "so what" is very subjective, despite the above-mentioned standards, relevance and contribution to general knowledge, that serve as measures of the potential viability of a proposed project. If a researcher is interested in only the *Grogan* case and can plausibly argue that such exclusive study of a single case will add significantly to the general knowledge of ECJ case law, an in-depth analysis of this case is an appropriate approach. However, if the researcher wishes to know more about the general tendencies that characterize ECJ decision-making, then focusing upon a narrow question that revolves around a single case is arguably less useful than using the seeming anomalies within that case to generate thought about broader issues of court behavior, thus ultimately resulting in a broader question that addresses potential causal relationships or patterns in behavior.

2.2 Developing a Theory and Identifying Competing Hypotheses

After and while devising a research question, it is also important to begin theorizing, i.e. developing "a reasoned and precise speculation about the answer to a research question" (King, Keohane & Verba 1994, 19). Discerning how a question can be answered means creating not only one hypothesized answer to the research question posed but also considering and controlling for other, competing answers that could negate the researcher's preferred hypotheses. If testing reveals that the researcher's preferred hypotheses explain and predict more effectively than other potential competing hypotheses, then the preferred hypothesis arguably stands stronger than if a research question, hypothesis, and design are created only to test that one hypothesis and no others.

A good theory, or working hypothesis, is one that can be tested, has leverage, and can potentially be exported to other, similar situations. A working hypothesis that cannot be tested based upon the facts that we know in the real world has very little ultimate value. For instance, to say that the ECJ decisions are a result of individual judge's preferences, while a potentially valid hypothesis, cannot be tested since the votes in ECJ decisions are not made public and there is no method of accessing votes in ECJ cases. Interviews are also of little use because ECJ judges are highly unlikely to reveal how they voted in a particular case, each judge having taken an oath to deliberate in secret. Thus, the hypothesis that a researcher employs to answer her research question must be one that can be measured in some manner. For instance, Garrett, Keleman and Schulz (1998) argue that the decisions of the ECJ are, in part, driven by the preferences of the Member States, It is possible to measure Member State preferences across areas of law and even specific cases on the basis of the written observations submitted by Member States to the ECJ. It is also possible to measure whether national court preferences drive the ECJ's decisional calculus by comparing the positions advanced by national courts in preliminary reference cases with the decisions handed down by the ECJ in the same case (Nyikos 2000; 2001). Theorizing that focuses upon observable implications, such as the above two examples, allows the researcher to create a practical – rather than simply a theoretical – project by combining intuition and obtainable data in the theory-building process.

A hypothesis that has leverage is essentially one that attempts to explain "as much as possible with as little as possible" (King, Keohane & Verba 1994, 29). The explanatory variables chosen for the hypothesis should be those that identify and explain the largest part of a phenomenon. Including other variables that may also explain a small but additional part of a phenomenon may broaden the explanatory power of a hypothesis, but only minimally. The researcher must decide when the inclusion of just one more variable is "too much," and drawing the line for this can be difficult. Knowingly leaving out a part of the explanation to a phenomenon is not done lightly.

Yet, if the researcher has done some preliminary testing, she will likely be aware of the explanatory power of her variables and which ones are on the low end and which are on the high end. While we would not suggest taking out the trusty conceptual chain saw and with verve trimming down a theory from a healthy Douglas fir to a slender Charlie Brown tree, some selective trimming of unnecessary explanatory branches is helpful. Including too much information can, after all, clutter a hypothesis such that understanding what the researcher wishes to explain gets lost among the exhaustive plethora of variables and sub-hypotheses. For instance, a researcher poses the question: What motivates the voting behavior of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)? (Bardi 1989; Bowler & Farrell 1993; Raunio 2000; Hix 2001; Noury 2002) A precise hypothesis with leverage that answers this question is: MEPs vote according to their political party preferences. A less precise but potentially more explanative hypothesis would be: MEPs vote according to their personal policy preferences, as long as these are not too far off from the preferences of the political party to which they belong. While the second hypothesis arguably takes into account other influences that could act upon an MEPs vote choice on a specific issue, the question is whether including the other variable increases the predictive power of the hypothesis significantly in comparison to the first hypothesis. Deciding "how much" to include in a hypothesis is, once again, a subjective choice reflecting the individual scholar's tradeoff between the exigencies of parsimony on the one hand, and accuracy on the other.

Finally, it is important, when possible, to make a hypothesis general in nature, such that it is at least potentially exportable to other political contexts. Aiming for generalizability need not, of course, involve constructing "grand theories" of either European integration or politics more generally; but in the case of the EU, it does involve asking to what universe of cases a given hypothesis applies. For example, a study of MEP voting behavior may aim, in the first instance, primarily at the understanding of the European Parliament; however, to the extent that a scholar is able to ask broader questions about parliamentary voting behavior as such, she may be able to both draw hypotheses from the literature on comparative legislative behavior, and her results may have implications for that literature that extend beyond her specific aim of understanding voting in the European Parliament.

2.3 Research Design, Measurement, and Data Collection

While narrowing the research question, crafting the preferred theoretical answer, and identifying competing hypotheses, a researcher must also determine *how* to test her hypotheses, which raises questions of research design, operationalization and measurement of variables, and data collection. Having formulated a research question, mined the relevant literature for insights, and formulated a hypothesized answer to the research question (as well as competing hypotheses), the researcher's next step is to design a research project capable of testing the relevant hypotheses within the limits of her available resources. A complete discussion of research design questions is far beyond the scope of this chapter, but in general the creation of a good research design involves the specification of the *dependent variable* (the outcome one wishes to explain); the *independent variable* or variables (the factors which are hypothesized to cause or explain the dependent variable); various competing hypotheses or *control variables*; *the universe of cases* to which one's theory is meant to apply; and the *selection of cases* or observations from this universe of cases in order to test the researcher's hypotheses. Indeed, it is for this reason that we began this chapter with a discussion of research questions, theory, and the formulation of hypotheses, for the research design of any given project arises from the nature of the individual scholar's questions, from outcomes she seeks to explain, and from the variables she hypothesizes to be important in explaining those outcomes (King, Keohane and Verba 1994; Van Evera 1997; Geddes 1990).

Research designs are commonly discussed under two general rubrics: qualitative and quantitative. However, any type of research, good research, has a common root: inference (King, Keohane & Verba 1994). We use the facts that we know or can measure to learn about the facts that we do not know. Both qualitative and quantitative research are geared toward inference. Yet one method, quantitative, uses numerical and statistical methods, e.g. models, measures of statistical significance, measures of association, and regression, in order to test hypotheses about the relationships among variables in the social sciences; whereas the qualitative method generally involves the examination of one or a few cases by descriptive methods, such as interviews, analysis of historical data or biographical data, sacrificing statistical significance in favor of a comprehensive understanding of those cases, including the observation of hypothesized causal mechanisms at work (Dixon 1977; King, Keohane & Verba 1994; Babbie 1999; Epstein & King 2002).

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses follow all of the previously mentioned guidelines for setting up a research project, but each type is characterized by particular strengths and weaknesses. Generally, quantitative analysis offers more and diverse opportunity and method to measure correlations, whereas qualitative analysis offers greater opportunity to trace causal mechanisms that may result in correlations between variables. The goal of inference, however, remains the same.

An example of qualitative analysis of the EU is Alter's recent work on the establishment of the supremacy of EU law within the Member States. In short, the text investigates why judges throughout Europe have come to accept the supremacy of EU law over national law. Alter argues: "Judges are primarily interested in promoting their independence, influence, and authority" (Alter 2001, 45). The process of acceptance has been driven by lower courts, as opposed to high courts. European law and the EU judicial system give lower courts more power to challenge higher courts and national law by circumventing the national judicial system. Thus, there is, in many instances, a potential advantage for lower courts to refer cases to the ECJ, rather than simply decide according to national law. To test her hypotheses, Alter uses extensive interviews of judges in varying EU Member States to determine national court judges' preferences, as well as analysis of the case decisions at the national level to show "how judicial rivalries and divergent judicial preferences regarding European legal issues shaped the process of doctrinal change" at the national level (Alter 2001, 65).

Quantitative research on the EU is still in its infancy. According to Gabel et al.: "Although the study of EU politics has develop considerably, we still lack scientific maturity in the key area of data accumulation and integration...few research communities [in the many areas of EU research] have built a common data set that is sufficient to advance knowledge" (Gabel, Hix, Schneider 2002, 482). Nevertheless, there are good examples of pioneering projects across areas of study that have begun to develop the vastly untapped but collectable or collected data on the European Union. For instance, within integration theory, to test their neoinstituionalist hypotheses regarding the interdependent relationship among dispute resolution, fluctuations in trade and changes in legislation Stone Sweet and Brunell have collected and codified in SPSS format all cases sent to the ECJ from 1961 to 1998 (1998a & b, 1999). These have been codified according to area of law, date set, date decided, level of court, among a host of other important variables. The wealth of information contained within this publicly accessible database is overwhelming, and has already resulted in further analysis and data collection (Cichowski 1998, 2001, 2002; Carrubba 2002; Nyikos 2000, 2002).

The style of research a scholar ultimately decides upon depends upon numerous factors, including most importantly the nature of the dependent and the independent variables identified in a given study, as well as the scholar's aims in undertaking the study. Some topics, such as the voting behavior of MEPs, lend themselves more readily to quantification and large-*n* studies, while other topics, such as the outcome of a complex intergovernmental bargain, may be more difficult to quantify and may call for more detailed study and understanding of actor preferences and causal processes. Similarly, one scholar may be motivated primarily by a desire to test the hypothesized correlation between two variables in political life, while a second scholar may be more interested in the interpretation or "thick description" of a particularly important political event. Nevertheless, as noted above, the common aim of many students in the social sciences is inference, and the differences between qualitative and quantitative research designs should not be exaggerated. Indeed, in our view, it is often useful to combine the collection of qualitative and quantitative data when investigating a phenomenon to determine if different approaches produce similar or complementary results and explanations. In the instance of MEP voting, "triangulation" using both qualitative and quantitative evidence can result in a far richer and more well-rounded understanding of MEP behavior. While quantitative analysis can offer overall trends in seemingly similar yet diverse voting behavior based upon coded, large-*n*, roll call votes, qualitative analysis can potentially explain ambivalent statistical results produced by those data.

The second important issue to address is whether the data already exist. As stated before, few if any areas of EU study have a solid base of extensive empirical data. Yet, there are sources that a researcher should consult first to determine if the data she needs already exist. The best place to start such a search is in the pertinent literature. Researching and reading the work already conducted within an area often already illuminates whether the needed data exist. In addition, it is also possible to contact scholars who have already conducted research in a particular area to determine if the data needed already exist. Also, it is often helpful when studying specific institutions to contact those bodies and inquire whether they may have such data in their archives and whether access to it is permitted. Such preliminary footwork aids in not only potentially cutting down on time needed for data collection, but also helps to make data collection within a research area more efficient and effective. If the data do not exist, the next issue is whether collection is feasible. Feasibility is the function of diverse external variables, such as the level of difficulty of collection, timeframe for the project, and funding available or potentially needed. It is very likely that a researcher will, at least, consider all of these factors before deciding upon a project and a method of data collection.

3. Finding and Using Empirical EU Resources

Thus far, we have emphasized the importance of identifying a compelling research question, relating that question to relevant bodies of theory, formulating testable hypotheses about the answer to one's research question, and coming up with a research design and methodology appropriate to a given research project. In principle, each of these steps is a *prerequisite* to good empirical research on the EU. In practice, of course, it is impossible to identify a compelling research question and design a coherent research project without undertaking at least preliminary empirical research, and we therefore expect that readers of this chapter will have already be familiar with the secondary literature on the subject, including the core textbooks like Dinan's *Ever Closer Europe* and the key journals such as the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, the *Journal of European Public Policy*, *European Union Politics*, *International Organization*, etc. Up-to-date table of contents listings for some 107 journals related to EU studies can be found on the website of the Jean Monnet Program (http://www.jeanmonnetprogram.org/, January 15, 2003), which is an excellent place to begin research into secondary sources.

In addition to these secondary sources, however, scholars undertaking original EU research will want to consult and exhaust available primary sources, including both the EU's official sources (such as the *Bulletin of the European Union*, the *Official Journal*, and all relevant Commission documents, European Parliament reports, and ECJ decisions) and databases compiled and made available by other scholars—ideally *before* embarking on extensive data collection or fieldwork at the institutions of the EU. Fortunately, the past decade has witnessed a revolution in the availability of primary sources on EU law and politics, many of which were until recently available only at the Brussels headquarters of the EU institutions but which are now widely available in US and European libraries or on-line. Students of contemporary EU politics, therefore, will find an extraordinary mass of primary-source information available, and keyword-searchable, through various official EU and other databases.

A complete introduction to these primary sources is, of course, beyond the scope of this chapter; we therefore concentrate below on listing a few particularly useful web portals, databases, and guides to EU documentation that are likely to be useful to a broad range of scholars working on the law and politics of the EU. We begin with general EU resources, before looking at the more specific databases and other resources available on the specific institutions of the EU.

3.1 General EU Resources and Databases

Half a decade ago, official EU documentation was arcane, technical, and exceedingly difficult to find outside of Brussels. Today, much of that documentation remains arcane and technical, but its availability to scholars and the general public has increased significantly, and the institutions of the EU have done much to make this information available in electronic form for scholars and the general public. Perhaps the most obvious source of both qualitative and quantitative data—no doubt familiar to most readers of this chapter—is the European Union website (http://www.europa.eu.int/, January 15, 2003). The web site can be accessed in all EU languages. Once the language of preference has been chosen, the EU web site opens up a new window with six main categories: News, Activities, Institutions, the EU at a Glance, Official Documents and Information Sources. It is from this point that a wide variety of electronic data can be accessed. For example, statistics are collected by the EU on a wide range of issues, such as economics and finance, or population and social control, and can be found on the Eurostat website (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat, January 15, 2003). It is possible either to download for free or to purchase either in electronic or paper format a wide variety of statistical packages, such as the Eurostat Statistical Yearbook 2002, from this web site. In addition, each of the five main institutions that comprise the European Union can be accessed directly from the EU web: Commission (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/, January 15, 2003), Council (http://www.ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm, January 15, 2003), Parliament (http://www.europarl.eu.int/, January 15, 2003), European Court of Justice (http://curia.eu.int/, January 15, 2003), and the European Bank (http://www.ecb.int/, January 15, 2003).

Among these various sources, a few stand out as particularly useful sources for scholars undertaking research on the EU, most notably *Accessing European Union Information*, a web-based guide compiled by the EU Delegation to the United States (http://www.eurunion.org/infores/resguide.htm, January 15, 2003). Clear, well organized, and regularly updated, *Accessing European Union Information* provides an excellent introduction to official EU documentation, including information on the official publications of the Commission, Parliament, Court of Justice, and the other institutions of the EU. It also includes a superb chart outlining the complete documentation trail for EU legislation under different decision rules, and links to a broad range of electronic portals and databases, the most useful of which we summarize briefly here. Other useful sources maintained by the EU include the following:

- ECLAS is the on-line catalog of official documents as well as secondary sources (especially articles) in the Commission library, and is key-word searchable (http://europa.eu.int/eclas, January 15, 2003). The actual contents of the documents are not on-line, but ECLAS is an excellent source for finding useful official and unofficial sources on EU-related topics.

- SCADplus is another excellent place to pursue a thorough research program, in particular with the up-to-date summaries and legislative follow-ups to all major EU policies (http://europa.eu.int/scadplus, January 15, 2003). (Note, however, that the old SCAD database is no longer available, its contents having been incorporated into ECLAS.)

- IDNet, which sponsored by the Robert Schuman Center at the European University Institute, is an impressive collection of over 900 entries on issue of identity, with a focus on European identity (http://www.iue.it/RSCAS/Research/Tools/, January 15, 2003). The database can be searched like a regular library database.

- Eur-Lex is a particularly useful website for students of the EU's legislative process or of particularly policies (http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex, January 15, 2003). The site allows users to search for information about both existing legislation as well as legislation in preparation, the text of the EU's constitutive treaties, case law, and the *Official Journal* of the EU. A related site, Pre-Lex, provides the legislative histories of thousands of EU directives, regulations, and decisions, allowing scholars to re-trace the process of legislation and negotiation from initial Commission proposals through to the adoption of legislation by the Council and the European Parliament (http://europa.eu.int/prelex/apcnet.cfm?CL=en, January 15, 2003).

In addition to these on-line sources, the European Union has established a system of depository libraries throughout the United States, as well as in EU Member States. A complete list of US depository libraries, which receive all publicly available EU documentation (albeit often on microfiche) can be found on-line at the website of the EU Delegation to the US (http://www.eurunion.org/infores/libmap.htm, January 15, 2003). A number of university libraries provide excellent on-line guides to EU documentation, so check with your university library to find out about their holdings and/or the availability of specific guides to those holdings.

In addition to these official sources, it is always a good idea to check the best journalistic sources as well. Among the most useful are the following:

- *Europe–Daily Bulletin* is sometimes referred to by the name of its publisher, *Agence Europe*. Since 1953, Agence Europe (http://www.agenceurope.com, January 15, 2003) has published its trademark pink newsletter, which provides the most extensive journalistic coverage of events in the EU, including meetings of the Commission, the Parliament, COREPER, and many of the most important Court cases. A very few university libraries receive hard copies of *Europe*, which is also available electronically and CD-ROM from the early 1990s.

- *European Report* is the primary competitor to *Agence Europe*. It is published in Brussels by the Europe Information Service (http://eisnet.eis.be, January 15, 2003), and comes out twice a week. *European Report* is almost as thorough as *Agence Europe*, and its clear format makes it easier to use. It is, however, also phenomenally expensive to subscribe to, and is difficult to find in US libraries. Fortunately, articles from *European Report* are also available in electronic format directly from the publisher and on Lexis-Nexis from the early 1990s through the present; earlier issues are available in hard copy from the Commission library in Brussels.

- Among major newspapers, the London-based *Financial Times* provides excellent daily coverage of the EU, particularly major events such as meetings of the European Council as well as business-oriented news in areas such as international trade and merger control. Somewhat more focused, but also more sensationalist, is the EU politics weekly newspaper, *European Voice*, which is published by the Economist Group. The coverage in these and other European national newspapers here is less detailed than either *Agence Europe* or *European Report*, but typically far more in-depth than even the best American newspapers, where the EU appears sporadically at best.

- Finally, you may be lucky enough to have access to the mother of all databases, Lexis-Nexis, which has a licensing agreement with many universities (http://www.lexis-nexis.com, January 15, 2003). This database of legal and news sources is an extraordinary source of EU information, especially for the 1990s, allowing you to keyword-search from the *Financial Times*, *European Report*, hundreds of other European and American newspapers, and official sources like the CELEX database of EU law (http://europa.eu.int/celex/, January 15, 2003), and the RAPID database of Commission press releases (http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh, January 15, 2003).

The primary weakness of Lexis-Nexis, and of many of the other databases listed above, is that most of the sources listed above are available only from the early 1990s, or at best the 1980s, making them far less useful for historical research. For earlier periods, most researchers will have to descend into the printed and microfiche resources of the EU's official depository libraries, and/or travel to the Historical Archives of the European Communities, which are housed in Florence on the campus of the European University Institute (http://wwwarc.iue.it/Welcome.html, January 2003).

Finally, moving from qualitative to quantitative data sources, there are a number of easily accessible datasets on the European Union that have been collected both by European Union institutions and independent researchers. Depending on the unit of analysis, generally speaking, the best place to begin searching for possible datasets that could be used for a new research topic is the pertinent literature. Particularly useful in this regard is the journal *European Union Politics*, and in particular the review article by the journal's editors (Gabel, Hix, and Schneider, 2002), which lists many of the recent large-N research projects and related published works in a multitude of EU research areas. What follows below is a brief review of pertinent and recently collected datasets relating to the study of the European Union. Although by no means exhaustive, this list represents a solid starting point for scholars undertaking new, quantitatively oriented research on the European Union.

3.2 Parliament

Most commonly, the European Parliament has been studied in a manner similar to national parliaments and the U.S. Congress, e.g. according to party policy preferences as deduced from national party positions, the ideological position of MEPs, and MEPs specific roll call votes (Hix et al. 2002). Party policy preferences have generally been investigated by employing one of three methodologies: elite interviews, mass surveys, or content analysis of party platforms/statements (Gabel, Hix, & Schneider 2002). Perhaps the most information-rich data collection concerning party policy preferences has been conducted to date by Leonard Ray (1999). Ray's study consists of expert interviews collected in 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996, the data for which are contained in the appendix of his most recent work (Ray 1999). His study is a good point of beginning for further and diversified research of party positions and their influence on behavior within the European Parliament not only because of the richness of the data but also because he includes within the article a list of other expert surveys that have been conducted on party preferences and European integration. In addition to Ray's work, two other data collection efforts offer valuable resources to students of the EP. The first of these databases, collected by George Tsebelis with a grant from the National Science Foundation, is publicly available on Tsebelis' website (http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/tsebelis/eudata.html, January 15, 2003), while the second is being compiled by the European Parliament Research Group (http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/eprg/Default.htm, January 15, 2003).

3.3 European Central Bank

As one of the newer EU institutions, the European Central Bank lends itself to study. Accessibility is perhaps less of an issue than in comparison to other institutions. The web site for the ECB is also very information-rich. It contains in electronic format press releases, statistical press releases, key speeches, publications, public consultations, legal documents, research conferences, seminars and a call for papers, TARGET, and ECB Working Papers. The latter is an excellent place to begin to determine whether other scholars have collected data that may be needed for a proposed project. Since the papers can be downloaded, the turn around time on data-locating research is very quick.

3.4 Commission

The Commission web site is a good place to start collecting information on the general structure and organization of the institution, as well as its budget. The web site offers access to not only the various Directorates-General but also internal documents and international issues. The Commission also publishes information on its budget, internal organization and staffing in its General Reports on the European Commission. In recent years, Page (1997) has published a study of the Commission with extensive quantitative documentation; Liesbet Hooghe, moreover, conducted an original, large-*n* survey of the political attitudes of senior Commission officials, the results of which are available in her recent book (Hooghe 2002). Collected, multi-annual data on either the Commission or Council, however, are not yet readily available.

3.5 Council

The Council is perhaps one of the least transparent in its decision-making and thus harder to study institutions of the European Union; although the institution is making efforts to increase its transparency. On the web site, it is possible to obtain information on the Council structure, its activities, public relations, the Secretary-General (Javier Solana), transparency and references. Recent empirical work on the Council has focused upon recorded Council votes (Mattila & Lane 2001) and Intergovernmental Conference negotiations (Bräuninger et al. 2001; Hug & König forthcoming).

3.6 European Court of Justice

ECJ cases have, within the last seven years, become increasingly accessible. Within the last two years, the Court itself has put its cases on the web (http://curia.eu.int, January 15, 2003).

All cases from 1961 onwards can be accessed, and most can be read on-line in at least French and English. However, it is important to note that the on-line version of cases often has less information than the text version. For instance, sometimes, but not always, the on-line version of a case will not contain the "Facts of the Case" section or a summary of the written observations of the legal parties or Member States but the written version will. If this information is an integral part of the investigation, the European Court Reports will often be more helpful than the on-line cases. If a scholar is looking for a more in-depth discussion of some of the larger cases that have come before the ECJ, it is also useful to consult the *Common Market Law Reports (CMLR)*, which is an independent legal report that addresses not all, but rather specific ECJ cases, often including a reprint of the original decision to refer by a national court, as well as that court's final decision following the ECJ ruling.

In addition to the Court's listing of its cases the European Court Reports, and *CMLR*, various scholars have also begun to create publicly accessible databases of ECJ decisions. Alec Stone Sweet and Thomas Brunell have coded all preliminary reference cases from 1961-1998 (http://www.nuff.ox.ac.uk/Users/Sweet/, January 15, 2003). Stacy Nyikos, in turn, has collected the information contained in the ECJ database on the final action taken at the national level following an ECJ decision in a preliminary reference for cases from 1961 – 2000 (http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/ecj/, January 15, 2003). In addition, there has been recent empirical work done on infringement proceedings, Member States and the ECJ, which has also resulted in large-N datasets (Jönsson and Tallberg 1998; Tallberg 2000; Börzel 2001). Tanja Börzel, in her study of Member State compliance with ECJ decisions in Art. 226 EC Treaty infringement proceedings, has created a database of all accessible information on these cases from the Commission. These can be downloaded in part from the Robert-Schuman Centre of the European University Institute web site (www.iue.it/RSC/RSC_TOOLS/compliance/Welcome.html, January 15, 2003) or the author's personal web site (http://www2.hu-berlin.de/compliance/, January 15, 2003), or by contacting the author directly (tanja.boerzel@rz.hu-berlin.de). Finally, Matthew Gabel and Clifford Carrubba are collecting all ECJ cases, including preliminary references, infringement proceedings and otherwise, and creating a dataset of these, which will be available in the next two years. To inquire about obtaining these data, contact either author (mjgabe1@uky.edu or ccarrub@emory.edu).

3.7 Public Opinion Data: Eurobarometer

Finally, the European Union itself has since 1970 funded regular surveys of public opinion conducted by independent polling agencies in the various EU member states, and these *Eurobarometer* data have been made available to scholars and resulted in extensive social-scientific analysis (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/, January 15, 2003). The data for the core set of questions asked each year can readily be found on line under the file name, Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File for the years 1970-1999 (http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/eurotrend/Homepage.html, January 15, 2003), as well as on the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Science archive (http://www.icpsr.umich.edu, January 15, 2003). These data have been used to test hypotheses concerning not simply voter preferences (Eichenberg 1999; Green 2001; see also Kaase & Newton 1996), but also citizens' support for the ECJ (Caldeira & Gibson 1992, 1995, 1997), as well as government policy preferences (Schneider 1995; König & Hug 2000). Also, for projects that may require mass public opinion surveys, it is possible to pay to have questions added to a Eurobarometer survey (Caldeira & Gibson 1995; 1997).

In sum, contemporary students of the EU are now capable of finding at home, and usually via electronic databases, information that earlier scholars had to find, usually on microfiche, in the bowels of the Commission library in Brussels. By comparison with today's scholars, earlier generations of EU researchers had to trudge to the Commission through six feet of snow, barefoot. Going uphill. Both ways.

4. Accessing Brussels

4.1 Finding Information in Brussels

The European Union has no single capitol. Instead, in a reflection of a series of intergovernmental compromises, the institutions of the Union are dispersed to various cities, with the Commission and the Council Secretariat sitting in Brussels, the Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, and the European Parliament divided among three cities (Brussels, Luxembourg, and plenary sessions held in Strasbourg). Nevertheless, for most students of the EU, the first stop in any fieldwork experience will be Brussels, where the Commission, Council, the national permanent representations and many activities of the European Parliament collectively approximate the political life of a domestic capital. Reflecting the centrality of Brussels to the EU as an object of study, we devote this section to two practical topics: arranging access to the Commission library and other information sources, and arranging interviews with key actors in Brussels.[ii] This section is then followed up by a briefer section dealing with the one major EU institution without representation in Brussels, namely the Luxembourg-based ECJ.

Most researchers will wind up spending a great deal of time in what might be loosely termed the EU district of Brussels (there is no formal district á la Washington, DC), which is located in the *commune* of Etterbeek and host to the various buildings of the Commission, the European Parliament, the Council Secretariat, and the various Permanent Representations of the member states to the EU. For most purposes, your metro stop of choice will be Rond-Point Schuman, from which point radiate the various buildings of the EU institutions. The *European Public Affairs Directory* mentioned below also has excellent and detailed maps of all the EU buildings in the area, if you can afford to buy a copy. More general maps can be found in any good guidebook.

None of the EU institutions is housed in a single building: the Commission has its main (temporary) headquarters in the Breydel building (pending the completion of the traditional but asbestos-laden Berlaymont), but the various *fonctionnaires* of the Commission are scattered all over the Schuman neighborhood and beyond—some *very far* beyond—so you should make sure to get the specific address of anyone you plan to interview, and leave yourself time to find the place. Ditto for the European Parliament, which is mostly located in the massive Leopold building but still uses older buildings on the Rue Montoyer and the Rue Belliard. The Council Secretariat is now mostly in the immense Justus Lipsius building on the Rond-Point Schuman, but the national Permanent Representations to the EU are located all over the area, each requiring a special search with a good local map. So, when arranging interviews or library visits, be sure to leave yourself time to find your building, and bring your passport with you for the security people at the entrance to each building.

For most researchers, the best place to begin is the Commission Central Library, which has recently moved from its old home on the Place Schuman to a nearby renovated church at 18 Rue Van Maerlant. Although the Commission library is no longer the mecca that it once was in the days before remote access to the databases reviewed above, the library is still an excellent place to track down the more obscure COM docs and other sources that might be unavailable on-line or in your local depository library. Be aware, however, that the library is primarily for the use of Commission staff, and *visiteurs* are required to apply for permission to use the library well in advance (see the Central Library website at http://europa.eu.int/comm/libraries/centrallibrary/index_en.htm, January 15, 2003).

Moving out from Schuman, the Council of Ministers and the EP each have their own libraries, and each Commission DG has its own documentation center or archive, the address of which can usually be found on that DG's homepage on Europa. As a general rule, you should look first in the Central Library—or, better still, at home before leaving for Brussels—for any given document, since chances are that you will find it there and because the documentation centers in particular tend to be understaffed and should be used only as a last resort. The documentation centers also vary from one DG to another. Most will have large selections of journals for the use of the *fonctionnaires*, as well as piles of recent COM docs that are free for the asking. In addition, you *may* find the archivists willing to let you look at unofficial documents which are not available in the Central Library, but this depends on the subject, the archivist and the DG, with the less important or "low politics" DGs being more likely to let you snoop around. Once again, however, archivists will tend to be most impressed, and most helpful, when they see that you have done extensive research elsewhere and have come to them with very specific and well-informed requests.

4.2 Euro-interviews

One of the key reasons to go to Brussels for field research, rather than simply consulting printed resources at home, is to interview key actots in and outside of the EU's institutions. Arranging these interviews is not particularly difficult, but it involves careful prior research, particularly if you plan to visit Brussels only for a short period and need your interviews all lined-up before you arrive. The most important prerequisite to a good interview is a mastery of your brief, so that you have a good, clear sense of whom you want to speak to, and what you want to ask them. Once you have mastered your brief in this way, you can and should consult one of the several good directories of the EU institutions and the larger EU-centric community in Brussels. Some of these are official and freely available, others are frighteningly expensive, but may be worth the money if you are looking to interview people outside the official institutions. We recommend the following four sources in particular:

- The first, and most obvious, place to look is IDEA, the electronic directory of EU institutions (http://europa.eu.int/idea/en/index.htm, January 15, 2003), which allows you to search a large and up-to-date database of officials in all of the various institutions of the EU, either by name (if you know the name) or a hierarchical search by position. For each individual, you will get an internal phone number and a fax number and an e-mail address.

- Elsewhere on the Europa web page, you will find individual pages devoted to the various EU institutions as well as specific services and Directorates-General (DGs) of the Commission. Most of these institutions and DGs maintain individual directories, allowing you to examine their organizational charts (*organigrammes* in EU jargon) and find contact information for individuals.

- The preceding two sources were official and free. The next two sources are commercial and expensive, but have the advantage of reaching out beyond the official institutions to include members of the larger Brussels community, and lobbyists in particular. The *European Public Affairs Directory* is published by Landmark Corporate Publishers and features listings for corporate and non-profit groups and media, as well as the standard

EU institutions, but its high price tag of $130 may be off-putting to those us of without large research budgets. A comparably useful and slightly less expensive *EU Information Handbook* and other resources are published by the EU Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in Brussels, whose web site (http://www.eucommittee.be/, January 15, 2003) can be consulted for more information.

Finding your interview subjects, therefore, should not be hard. But how do you go about actually arranging the interview? Generally, direct phone calls can be frustrating and expensive, since one almost always gets a secretary at the other end who insists on receiving a fax before she will even contemplate setting up an interview for you. Most of the time, therefore, the best method is to send a letter, fax, or e-mail, introducing yourself (including your academic bona fides) and the nature of your research topic, asking for an interview, and suggesting a window of a few days or weeks when you will be in town and available. Typically, one gets a response after the first request, but if not, a follow-up message is a good idea. Ideally, you should line up as many of your interviews as possible, down to times, dates, and places, before you leave, particularly if your stay will be a short one. If you plan to stay for a longer period, you will almost certainly continue to make new appointments during your stay, but the rules of thumb suggested above should still apply.

Languages, incidentally, are not generally a problem. English and French are the working languages of the Commission, and all officials speak one or both reasonably well. Thus you can survive with only English, and if you speak both French and English you will have no problems whatsoever. National officials and MEPs are not required to speak French and English, but most of them speak at least one or the other, so here again languages should not be a major problem, although it may be worth checking with the person's secretary beforehand if you have any doubts.

5. Accessing the ECJ

The ECJ is located in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which is a small country snuggled in between Germany, Belgium, and France. Driving across Luxembourg takes about two hours, in any direction. Although small, the country is home to one of the most powerful courts in Europe, the European Court of Justice, located in Kirchberg, the European District located on the outskirts of the city of Luxembourg. Presently, the asbestos-laden building that originally housed the ECJ is under renovation and will be for approximately the next 5-10 years. The ECJ, its judges, personnel and staff are therefore currently sharing a building with the Court of First Instance. Thus, while it may be possible to park in front of the original ECJ building, one must walk to the Court of First Instance to enter the court complex. Access to any building requires that the individual either be a member of the Courts' staff or judge, or have a prearranged meeting which has been registered with the security personnel at the main doors.

The official language of the Court, and Luxembourg, is French. Consequently, at least rudimentary French is highly useful, as general staff often speak only French. Many of the Court's personnel, including its judges, however, also speak not only their native language and French but also English. However, when entering the court complex, knowing a few phrases in French are useful. In addition, it is helpful to have the phone number of the person or office that will be visited so that if security is not aware of a prearranged meeting, they can quickly call up and confirm the visit. Since most buildings that are used by court personnel are interconnected via underground walkways, once access has been granted, it is possible to move from one interview to another without again passing through security.

5.1 Libraries

The European Court of Justice has its own library and internal database. Access to both, however, is restricted to Court personnel. Accessing the Court's database is not possible for researchers. It is reserved for internal use only. The same is overwhelmingly true of the Court's library. Consequently, if a researcher wants to access the ECJ library, it is necessary first to write the Office of Research and Documentation and request permission. Since the Court has put all of its cases onto its official website, whether access to the internal library will be permitted is highly dependent upon the actual need to access the library. In other words, it will be necessary to show that the ECJ library has texts that the researcher cannot access at home or at other facilities. Consequently, library access may actually be a more fruitful endeavor at other educational institutions, such as the European University Institute in Florence, which has all legal periodicals for all Member States and the EU, rather than the ECJ. However, if conducting interviews at the ECJ, it may be possible to obtain access to the library for a general perusal of the texts and information contained there via a judge's chambers or staff. However, if access to the library documents is the sole objective, then prior authorization from the Office of Research and Documentation must be obtained.

5.2 Personnel

The Court is made up of fifteen judges, all of whom have their own personal law clerks, or, legal secretaries, whose backgrounds range from often freshly completed legal studies in various Member States, to long-time experience at home or with a specific ECJ judge. In addition, there are nine advocate generals, a wide range of staff, and two main divisions of interest to researchers, the Office of Research and Documentation and the Office of the

Registrar. Interviews with either judges or court personnel must be set up well in advance, and this is best done by writing, not emailing or calling, the judge or court personnel individually. All judges are listed with short biographies on the ECJ web site. When writing to them, it is necessary to address the envelope simply to the judge followed by the general address for the ECJ. When setting up interviews, it is best first to choose a potential travel period, then write to those at the Court whom the researcher wishes to interview, and request whether the possible time period will work. ECJ judges and personnel are as busy as, if not busier than, U.S. Supreme Court justices. Consequently, it is not unlikely that two trips will be necessary to meet all persons who agree to interviews. In addition, one trip may result in further contacts and possible interviews. Thus, it is good to plan on at least two trips to the Court when conducting interviews.

6. Conclusions

Overall, today's researcher faces a much broader range of collectible observations on various aspects of the European Union. In fact, EU students-turning-scholars are faced with not only with the choice of what to study among the staggering array of possibilities but also the prospect of working together with other researchers in creating, expanding and consolidating data on each of the many fields of EU research. This chapter has been written both as an introduction to new scholars in the field, and as a reintroduction to the ever-growing array of EU-related data sources and scholarship for more experienced researchers. It is with great hopes that we challenge EU scholars not only to collect and consolidate but also to use that great tool, the internet, to make their data available to others, thus working together to create an information-rich EU research community.

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[i] *The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children Ireland Ltd.* and *Stephen Grogan* and *Others*, Case 159/90 ECR [1991] 4685

[ii] For additional information about EU research in Brussels, including transportation and housing, see Mark Pollack's "Practical Guide to EU Research in Brussels," accessible on-line at: http://wiscinfo.doit.wisc.edu/eucenter/Teaching/Guide.html.