

## *RESEARCH NOTES*

### *Public Support for the European Union: Cost/Benefit Analysis or Perceived Cultural Threat?*

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This research note argues that much of the literature on support for European integration misses the heart of the nature of opposition to this process by ignoring the notion of perceived threat. Essentially, people are hostile toward the European project in great part because of their perceptions of threats posed by other cultures. I analyze this hypothesis by replicating a piece of research that previously appeared in this journal, adding measures of perceived threat to that model. The results support the main contention, which is that perceived cultural threat is an important factor that has been mistakenly ignored in explanations of hostility toward the European Union.

**T**he European Union has grown in importance to such a degree that interest groups have begun mobilizing around the organization (Marks and McAdam 1996), and parties have begun responding to the preferences of their supporters for European integration (Carrubba 2001). As the EU has become more of a point of reference for citizens living in the member states, interest in those citizens' preferences also has increased. Previous research on public support for European integration has focused considerably on what can be termed "rational" calculations of costs and benefits of integration to the individual EU citizen. We argue that this research has missed an obvious but important factor that determines levels of support for, or hostility toward, the process of European integration. That factor is degree of antipathy toward other cultures stemming from nationalistic attachments. I illustrate the importance of this variable by replicating one of these pieces of previous research and then adding measures of perceived cultural threat to that model. The findings indicate that antipathy toward other cultures is indeed an important element in explaining attitudes toward the EU, with approximately equal effects compared to rational calculations of costs and benefits of EU membership to the individual's own life.

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## Cost/Benefit Arguments in Past Research

A number of different variables that have their basis in rational calculations of costs and benefits of EU membership have been offered by past researchers to explain variation in public opinion regarding European integration. For instance, Gabel (1998) and Gabel and Palmer (1995) argue that liberalization of the EU market affects citizens of different occupational and socioeconomic status backgrounds differently: a more liberal labor market should prove more threatening to individuals who have less developed job skills and low levels of education, while such a market will be more promising for those with good job skills and high levels of education. Similarly, the liberalization of capital markets is said to produce a situation in which those with high incomes benefit and those with low incomes lose out (Gabel 1998).

Another of the rational, cost/benefit hypotheses presented in past research revolves around the benefits that persons are likely to receive from their country's EU membership by virtue of *where* they live. Specifically, individuals who live close to a border with another EU country should benefit more directly from cross-border trade than individuals who do not live in border areas (Anderson and Reichert 1996; Gabel 1998). Similarly, citizens living in member states that have received considerable financial payoffs from the EU also tend to be more supportive of European integration (Carrubba 1997).

## Noneconomic Approaches

This is not to say that all research on public support for the EU focuses on such utilitarian concerns.<sup>1</sup> For instance, higher levels of cognitive mobilization—or involvement in politics—are thought to be associated with more support for European integration because—so the argument goes—the more information one receives about the EU, the less threatening the organization becomes (Inglehart 1970; Janssen 1991). Additionally, individuals who have a value system that emphasizes improving democracy and environmental protection over issues like economic and physical security are said to be more favorable toward European integration (Inglehart 1977). This is partly because the former—referred to as postmaterialists—can use such a process to further their goals of improving democracy and environmental protection. Also, as argued by Inglehart (1977), this group of individuals tends to think about politics at a more abstract level than the latter group—referred to as materialists—and since European integration is a rather abstract concept (in Inglehart's view), the postmaterialists will have an easier time thinking about such an idea and accepting it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, even some of the research that takes a very economic, utilitarian perspective finds little support for such hypotheses (e.g., Bosch and Newton 1995).

<sup>2</sup> However, as Janssen (1991) argues, this relationship is likely to be based on the higher levels of cognitive mobilization among the group called postmaterialists, not on the fact that their values are different. Indeed, it is possible that *materialists* would be more favorable toward European integration because the process itself has been mostly one of *economic* integration.

Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) specifically criticizes the notion that support for European integration is primarily a function of economic calculations and presents a strong case that the EU is seen by many Europeans as a solution to such problems as corruption, poor performance of the state, and lack of responsiveness of national-level political parties. Anderson (1998) is similarly critical of the economic-calculation approaches and argues that considering the lack of knowledge and information on the part of EU citizens about the EU, citizens are likely to use “proxies” in evaluating the organization. In Anderson’s view, these proxies are based on perceptions of the *national* government (see also Martinotti and Stefanizzi 1995). Thus, the argument is that individuals use information regarding something they know well (i.e., the national government) to make judgments about something with which they are less familiar (i.e., the European Union). Franklin, Marsh, and McLaren (1994) and Franklin, van der Eijk, and Marsh (1995) also argue that perceptions of current government performance affect attitudes toward integration—during referenda on European integration, that is—as well as voting in European parliamentary elections (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). Indeed, Gibson and Caldeira’s (1995) research on the European Court of Justice indicates that EU citizens are not very knowledgeable about this particular institution, nor is the level of information about other EU institutions very high (Anderson 1998), thus supporting the notion that attitudes toward the EU must be based on something other than knowledge of the organization.

As Anderson (1998) stresses, in the face of a lack of specific information about the EU—which is required by the utilitarian model—how are individuals supposed to make decisions about whether they are supportive of the organization or not? As indicated above, various scholars have differing theories about how to answer this question. For Anderson (1998), Franklin, Marsh, and McLaren (1994), and Franklin, van der Eijk, and Marsh (1995), the answer lies in general perceptions of how the national government is performing. For Sanchez-Cuenca (2000), specific problems in the functioning of national political systems lead to more support for a Europe-wide system of government, presumably because individuals see the EU as a remedy for such problems. We point to perhaps an even less sophisticated, less rational explanation for differing views on the EU.

### Perceived Threat from Other Cultures

The main contention of this article is that the arguments presented in past research—the utilitarian, cost/benefit arguments as well as the less utilitarian arguments presented above—miss a large part of the core of the nature of hostility toward the idea of European integration. Antipathy toward the EU is not just about cost/benefit calculations or about cognitive mobilization, postmaterialist values, or evaluation of the national government, but about fear of, or hostility toward, other cultures. I argue that people do not necessarily calculate

the costs and benefits of the EU to their own lives when thinking about issues of European integration, but instead are ultimately concerned about problems related to the degradation of the nation-state. In other words, the threat that integration poses may not be so much to the individual's own life but to the nation-state. As Taggart (1998) claims, one important reason for Euroscepticism stems from identity politics, in which people see the nation-state as the appropriate point of reference for identity and the EU as undermining the integrity of the nation-state.<sup>3</sup>

Let us assume that some individuals are more concerned about national degradation than others. These individuals are likely to be hostile toward any institution or practice that is in any way a threat to the nation-state, whereas those who are less concerned about national integrity will be less threatened by such institutions and practices. There are many threats to national integrity (such as immigration and globalization, for instance), and the European Union is but one of these. It is, therefore, a generalized worry about the changing nature of the nation and nation-state that will lead many Europeans to be critical of the EU—since this institution is likely to be seen as contributing to this change. This is because the EU is not just a free trade zone, but rather is making policies that were formerly within the prerogative of the nation-state, and it is likely to be seen as having a homogenizing effect on the member states. The uniqueness of national cultures and the exclusive control over the resources of the nation-state are, in turn, seen as being under threat by the EU. Thus, the same people who fear such changes from minority groups living in the country, for instance, are very likely to fear similar changes resulting from the process of European integration (see De Master and Le Roy 2000).

My contention is based on two main strands in the political science literature. First, previous research shows that when individuals evaluate public policy proposals, they mostly consider societal-level needs rather than their own personal needs (see Funk 2000 for a summary of these findings). This phenomenon is found in the realm of voting behavior (Fiorina 1981; Lewis-Beck 1990), but it also appears in studies of attitudes toward specific policies. For instance, research on attitudes toward immigration indicates that concern for the resources of the dominant nationality (in the form of “realistic group conflict”) tends to be a stronger predictor of hostility toward immigration than concern for one's own personal resources (see Citrin, Green, Muste, and Wong 1997). It is likely that this same phenomenon—evaluating the effect on society rather than on oneself—occurs when EU citizens consider the idea of European integration.

<sup>3</sup>In his analysis of Euroscepticism within European parties, however, Taggart gives the impression that identity-based Euroscepticism is limited mostly to fringe parties of the right. I contend that among the mass public, identity-based Euroscepticism is fairly widespread and that concern for national identity should thus serve as a powerful predictor of Euroscepticism.

Second, the “symbolic politics” approach argues that people’s attitudes toward particular policy proposals often stem from their reactions to certain symbols. These reactions, in turn, are based on what people learn in early childhood and might be thought of as “gut,” or instinctual, reactions to certain ideas or proposals (see Bobo 1983; Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979). In the current context, it seems highly likely that EU citizens are reacting to European integration in a symbolic way, in that they have been socialized to accept the power and sovereignty of the nation-state. The idea of European integration as such poses a threat to this important symbol.

Deflem and Pampel (1996) are the only researchers thus far who have pointed specifically to the importance of identification with national interests in explaining variation in levels of mass support for integration, but nationalistic interests are not actually measured in that study; instead, they are assumed to exist, based on the differences in the sizes of coefficients of the country dummy variables in a fully specified model of public support for European unification. The current research attempts to take this type of analysis a step forward by measuring the specific threats that a person may feel arising from national degradation.

This approach to the study of public support for the European integration project is a major departure from all of the approaches taken by previous research. The focus here is much more on the fundamental attachments of individuals to certain groups and identities. In this case, it is protection of the in-group (the nation) and the group identity that is at stake. In Hix’s words, “‘political preferences’ often derive from deep historical or cultural identities such as *nationality, religion or language*” (1999, 133; italics added). This is not to say that economic cost/benefit and other more rational or sophisticated approaches do not matter, only that these approaches have failed to grasp one of the more basic aspects of attitudes toward European integration. Even the less rational, less sophisticated proxy-based models, while considering national-level variables, fail to take into consideration national-level *attachments* and concern for the group’s integrity and benefits.

## Data

Using a recent Eurobarometer survey (EB 47.1, March/April 1997),<sup>4</sup> I attempt to replicate one of the above-mentioned studies (Gabel 1998) as closely as possible, adding measures of perceived threat into the model. Before discussing the findings, however, it is necessary to point out some of the differences in the replication.

The first point to note is that the construction of the dependent variable in the current study is necessarily slightly different from the study that is being

<sup>4</sup>The survey is available from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.

replicated. In Gabel's (1998) analysis, two questions were used in creating an indexed dependent variable:

- Generally speaking, do you think that (your country's) membership in the European Community (Common Market) is a bad thing (1); neither good nor bad (2); or a good thing (3)?
- In general, are you for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe? Very much against (1); somewhat against (2); somewhat for (3); very much for (4).

In the survey used for the current study, the first of these questions is available, but the second is not. Thus, a different question had to be substituted:

- Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (our country) has benefited from being a member of the European Union? Not benefited (1); don't know (2); benefited (3).

These two questions arguably gauge general attitudes toward the European Union and will thus be combined into an index.<sup>5</sup> Following Gabel's procedure, after summing the questions the index was converted from a 5-point index into a 100-point index.<sup>6</sup> Although the index in the current analysis would be more accurately described as "attitudes toward one's country's membership in the EU," this concept is strongly related to *support for the EU* and is quite similar to the Gabel index (see footnote five). In addition, while it would, of course, be far superior to have an identical index to that which appeared in Gabel (1998), this is simply not possible because of data limitations.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>In an attempt to validate that this index can be used as a substitute for the Gabel index, I have estimated the correlation between my index and the Gabel index in surveys where all three questions appear (for instance, EB 30 and EB 43.1). The correlation between the Gabel index and the index used here is 0.78–0.80, indicating that the two indices are indeed capturing concepts that are quite similar.

It should also be noted that the bivariate correlation between the two items in the dependent variable in the current analysis is 0.63. While it might be argued that the items could be capturing completely different concepts, I believe that such a strong correlation indicates otherwise. One specific problem that might be raised is that there are some who may think positively about their country's membership in the EU even if their country has not benefited from EU membership, while there are others who think negatively about their country's membership in the EU but believe that their own country has benefited from membership. This is only possible if people are able to separate these two concepts. However, research by Anderson (1998) indicates that people are most likely thinking more generally about the European Union and are very unlikely to be able to evaluate different aspects of the European integration process. Furthermore, cross-tabulations between the two items indicates that a mere 5.0% fit into the former category and 1.3% fit into the latter.

<sup>6</sup>I have also conducted the analysis using only the first survey question above—which is the same in both analyses—and the results are almost identical.

<sup>7</sup>Specifically, the key independent variables in the current analysis do not appear in any other recent Eurobarometers. As indicated in footnote 5, however, the correlation between my index and the Gabel index (where both are available) is quite strong.

Another major difference between the two studies is that in Gabel's (1998) work, surveys from 1978 through 1992 were combined, providing a vast number of observations across several time points. In contrast, the data here include only a single cross-section because the survey questions measuring perceived threat from other cultures do not appear in the surveys used by Gabel (1998). However, the same relationships found in Gabel's study should generally hold in a single cross-section and should not be dependent on utilizing identical data.<sup>8</sup>

### Measuring Perceived Threat

Measures of *perceived threat* were included to gauge the two alternative types of threat found in the literature—*realistic threat* (or realistic group conflict) and *symbolic threat*. To repeat, the notion of realistic group conflict implies that hostility toward other ethnic or national groupings is a function of the perceived threats that these groups pose to the resources of one's own group. In other words, people from one group may worry that people from other groups will take the resources that belong to "their own." In contrast, the *symbolic*

<sup>8</sup>Of course, the current analysis is unable to capture the dynamics of support for European integration, so the effect of *changes* in threat perceptions, perceptions of benefits, cognitive mobilization, postmaterialism, etc., on support for the EU cannot be studied here. I will speculate a bit regarding what differences might be found if such data were available. With regard to the perceived threat variables, on the one hand, the symbolic politics literature argues that reactions to certain symbols over an individual's lifetime are quite stable (see for instance, Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979). On the other hand, changes in attachments to the nation-state may occur—especially in younger generations—that could produce a change in the effect of such symbolic attachments on support for European integration vis-à-vis the other variables in the model. Thus, it is possible that if measures of all the key independent variables were available across time, we would see variables like cognitive mobilization and postmaterialism becoming increasingly important and nationalistic attachments decreasing in importance because of the documented changes that have occurred in post-World War II society (see Dalton 1996). Additionally, the effect of the utilitarian variables could increase as a result of (1) a greater awareness of how important the EU is for certain categories of people, and (2) the EU itself making greater strides to provide the promised benefits to certain groups through provisions for the free movement of capital, professions, labor, etc. On the other hand, group resource-based threat is thought to increase when the economy is bad (see Quillian 1995). Since unemployment has been on the rise in Europe since the 1970s and was close to being at its highest level in 1997, it is possible that our analysis is based on a survey during which there was a relatively heightened threat perception in Europe, perhaps increasing the size of the relationship between threat perception and anti-EU sentiment. However, without actual data, it is obviously impossible to know whether and how the effect of any of these variables has changed across time.

Although comparable data from previous time periods are not available, I have examined the effect of similar threat perception questions on attitudes toward the EU in EB 30 (from 1988) and find that the effect is quite similar. Specifically, people who claim to be disturbed by other nationalities and by other races tend to be more hostile toward the EU than those who claim to be not disturbed by other nationalities and races, with effects that are comparable to those of the self-interest questions. Once again, I compare with caution because the threat questions are very different in the two surveys.

*threat* (or symbolic politics) approach argues that people are not really concerned about resource distribution but about the threat that other groups pose to their culture and way of life (see Bobo 1983; Citrin, Green, Muste, and Wong 1997; Citrin, Reingold, and Green 1990; Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979; Sherif 1966; Sherif, Harvey, Hood, and Sherif 1961; Sherif and Sherif 1953; Stephan and Stephan 1996).

In keeping with the method of dichotomizing the independent variables in order to ease comparisons among them (see below), two representative items were chosen to gauge *realistic* and *symbolic threat* perceptions and the response choices were then dichotomized for each of these items.<sup>9</sup> They are:

- People from [these] minority groups *abuse the system of social benefits*.
- The *religious practices* of people from [these] minority groups *threaten our way of life*.

In both items, “these minority groups” refers to a previous question that asks whether the respondent feels that he belongs to one of the majority groups or one of the minority groups in the country, in terms of race, religion, and culture (to which only 6% of the EU sample responded in the affirmative; all of these individuals were removed from the statistical analyses below). Thus, while the items themselves are likely to pertain mostly to immigrants from outside the European Union (see below), I contend that they quite clearly capture a person’s general feeling of being threatened by other cultures and an underlying feeling of xenophobia. The first question—about *social benefits*—is a measure of concern for resources being taken by other groups, while the second question—about *religious practices*—is designed to gauge general fears of cultural degeneration (or fear of change to the culture and way of life of the nation).

These measures of *threat perception* might be seen as problematic for two reasons. First, it may not be all that clear to whom “minority groups” is referring. Of course, there is no definitive way to know exactly what the respondent is thinking when answering these questions, but, based on answers to other survey questions, we can infer that respondents are most likely imagining relatively recent (i.e., post-World War II) migrants to their country. One point that leads to this conclusion goes to what the items mean “on their face.” The respondent has been cued in a previous question to consider minority groups in terms of different race, religion, *and* culture. The use of the word “race” is especially likely to make the respondents think about non-Europeans (and thus, non-EU citizens). Indeed, when responses to questions from a previous Eurobarometer (EB 30) about who the respondent thinks of when she hears about

<sup>9</sup>The two items appear in a list of other items asking whether minority groups create unemployment, cause problems at schools where their children attend, contribute to the culture of the country, etc. From this list, there are some measures of resource-based threats and some of culture-based threats. The two chosen items were the ones that loaded most strongly on each of the factors that resulted from a factor analysis of the items.



people of a different race are examined, the vast majority in all EU countries point to “Blacks,” Arabs, Turks, the “Yellow Race,” Indians, Pakistanis, or Sri Lankans, depending on which of these groups have migrated in large numbers to the respondent’s country. Thus, if the respondent is asked to think about people from minority groups in terms of race, religion, and culture, she is most likely imagining Muslims from Turkey, North Africa, or Pakistan, Chinese Buddhists, or Hindus from India, not Basques living in Spain or Catholics in Northern Ireland. In other words, while the questions might appear to be extremely ambiguous at first glance, the reference is likely to be rather clear and the items should be capturing an underlying sense of threat or xenophobia.

Another piece of evidence that points to a similar conclusion is that these two items, along with a series of others asking whether schools suffer when there are “too many children from these minority groups,” and whether these minority groups increase unemployment in the respondent’s country, are very strongly related to attitudes toward legal migration (McLaren 2000). Those who are unthreatened by members of minority groups tend to be more positive about the treatment of legal migrants, whereas those who are more threatened by “these” minority groups tend to favor harsher treatment for such migrants. Thus, it appears that people are indeed mostly thinking about immigrants when they are asked about minority groups of different races, religions, and cultures.

The second problematic aspect of these measures is that they do not specifically gauge level of perceived threat from other EU citizens. Indeed, as just argued, the questions are very likely *not* to be measuring perceptions of other Europeans at all. While one might expect that EU citizens think very differently about other EU citizens compared to non-EU citizens, research by McLaren (2001) indicates that this is not necessarily the case—survey respondents generally prefer to treat the two groups identically when it comes to allowing them to migrate to the respondent’s home country, for instance. Thus, the distinction that one might expect does not appear in reality. Furthermore, I am arguing that it is a *general* fear of the degradation of one’s culture and one’s nation that leads some to be hostile toward the European Union (and indeed toward other threats to that culture, like immigration). While having measures of perceived threat from other EU citizens would have been far superior, I contend that the questions about perceived threat from minorities capture the more general notion of concern for the culture and resources of one’s own group, or nation.

## Analysis

As previous research (including the study being replicated) indicates, the relationships between the independent variables and support for the European Union are likely to be different for the original six EU member states versus

the later members. Thus, the pooled EU-sample has been divided into two groups: people from countries that were original members of the European Community and people from countries that joined the EC/EU later.<sup>10</sup> All of the above-mentioned variables were dummied<sup>11</sup> and entered into an OLS equation, which was calculated separately for the two groups of countries.<sup>12</sup> Although there are some differences in the sizes of coefficients when these results are compared to Gabel's, for the most part similar inferences for identical variables would be drawn from both studies.<sup>13</sup>

The findings indicate that while the cost-benefit, or self-interest, perspective certainly should not be discounted, perceived cultural threats also appear to have powerful effects on attitudes toward the EU (see Table 1).<sup>14</sup> The variables representing the rational, cost/benefit approach include: the job categories of *professionals*, *executives*, *manual workers*, and the *unemployed*; the various *educational categories*; the *income categories*; and whether the individual lives

<sup>10</sup>The second group is slightly different in our study because by the time of the survey (Spring 1997) Austria, Finland, and Sweden had joined the EU, whereas all of Gabel's data are from before the most recent EU enlargement. Also, see Anderson and Reichert (1996) for a thorough explanation of the reason for differences in the opinions of these two groups of countries.

<sup>11</sup>This is done to maintain maximum comparability with Gabel (1998).

<sup>12</sup>Note that the measure of cognitive mobilization used here and in Gabel (1998) is a survey question asking the respondent how much he or she discusses politics while spending time with friends.

<sup>13</sup>There are a few exceptions that deserve mention. First, in the current study, people whose job category is "professional" tend to be slightly less supportive of the EU than those in the omitted categories (desk workers, salesmen, drivers, service jobs, and supervisors) in countries that joined the EU later, although the coefficient is not statistically significant. In contrast, in Gabel's work, professionals in the later group of countries tend to be significantly more supportive of European integration. Second, the coefficient for the "high education" group is much larger in the current study, giving the impression that those with the highest level of education tend to be *much* more supportive of the EU than those with a low level of education. Gabel's results also indicate that support for European integration is higher among the better educated, but not to the same degree found here. Finally, the effect of support for a governing party on attitudes toward the EU among the original EU members is stronger in the current study, while the opposite is true among the later members.

The reason for these differences most likely lies in sampling variability. Especially in the case of the professional job category, it must be noted that in a single Eurobarometer sample, this category is quite small, representing approximately 1.5% of the entire sample (or 244 out of 16,154 observations in EB 47.1). In Gabel's (1998) analysis, several surveys had been combined, providing a much larger number of observations in this category and making statistical significance more likely. In fact, it is rather impressive that more differences were not found between the current study and the Gabel study due to the pooling of a large number of observations in the latter.

<sup>14</sup>The omitted categories in the analysis are: discuss politics occasionally; mixed values (a mixture of postmaterialist and materialist values); desk workers, salesmen, drivers, service jobs, and supervisors; low-mid education; low-mid income; living in a non-border EU region; not supporting the governing party; being male; thinking that minorities do not abuse social benefits and that their religion is not threatening; Italy for the original six; and Spain for the later EU members. Note that the omitted country dummies were chosen because they were closest to the overall mean value on the dependent variable.

TABLE 1  
Predictors of Support for EU

	Original Members		Later Members	
<i>Key Variables in Gabel's Analysis</i>				
Discuss politics never (cognitively immobilized)	-1.37	-1.17	-2.83***	-2.51***
Discuss politics frequently (cognitively mobilized)	-0.81	-0.71	-1.09	-1.25
Materialists	-4.36***	-3.41**	-2.67***	-2.32**
Postmaterialists	4.99***	3.35**	-1.43	-2.21*
Professional	0.66	1.12	-1.05	-1.68
Executive	1.40	0.85	3.92**	3.10*
Manual worker	-5.07**	-4.68**	-3.66**	-3.14**
Unemployed	-3.69	-4.17*	-4.43**	-4.29**
Low education	-3.07*	-2.72*	-2.37*	-2.35*
High-mid education	3.23*	2.49	4.76***	4.40***
High education	8.24***	6.49***	6.92***	5.95***
Low income	-1.41	-1.58	-3.39**	-3.09**
High-mid income	-1.52	-1.87	-0.53	-0.39
High income	4.43**	3.56*	4.02***	4.07***
Income—no answer	-1.66	-1.81	-1.84	-1.48
Border	0.67	0.62	-0.79	-1.03
Support governing party	5.49***	5.47***	4.63***	4.39***
Left-right self-placement	-0.94***	-0.55**	0.83***	1.02***
<i>Control Variables in Gabel's Analysis</i>				
Female	-1.39	-1.66	-3.20***	-3.49***
Retired	0.89	0.81	-1.39	-1.08
Small business owner	-1.99	-1.79	-0.62	-1.12
Farmer	-3.94	-4.68	-2.93	-2.17
Student	3.17	2.29	3.85**	3.21*
Housewife	-0.07	0.31	0.16	0.20
Age	-0.08*	-0.06	-0.07*	-0.05
<i>Perceived Threats</i>				
Abuse social benefits—don't know	—	-0.82	—	-1.68
Abuse social benefits—agree	—	-6.58***	—	-3.78***
Religion is threatening—don't know	—	-7.77***	—	-5.96***
Religion is threatening—agree	—	-9.84***	—	-7.68***
<i>Country Dummies</i>				
Belgium	-10.36***	-5.20**	—	—
Western Germany	-12.62***	-9.61***	—	—
France	-6.29***	-1.51	—	—
Luxembourg	13.32***	14.48***	—	—
Netherlands	8.60***	10.86***	—	—
Denmark	—	—	-2.50	0.09
Greece	—	—	12.52***	13.49***
Ireland	—	—	27.85***	27.68***
Northern Ireland	—	—	2.22	2.29
Portugal	—	—	12.13***	13.51***
Britain	—	—	-11.78***	-10.03***
Eastern Germany	—	—	-12.30***	-10.84***
Finland	—	—	-15.88***	-15.22***
Sweden	—	—	-28.04***	-26.30***
Austria	—	—	-16.28***	-14.36***
Intercept	74.65***	76.44***	64.28***	65.89***
Adj. R2	0.14	0.17	0.20	0.21
Number of observations	5648	5648	10478	10478

Note: figures are unstandardized OLS coefficients; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

in a *region bordering another EU country*.<sup>15</sup> From among these variables, *executives* in the later EU member states are significantly more supportive of the EU than the omitted job categories (see footnote 13), as are individuals with higher levels of *education*; *manual workers* and the *unemployed* in both groups of countries are significantly less supportive of the EU, as are those from lower levels of *education*. As for the measures of *threat perception*, both of these are also statistically significant, with those who are more threatened by other cultures being less supportive of the EU.<sup>16</sup>

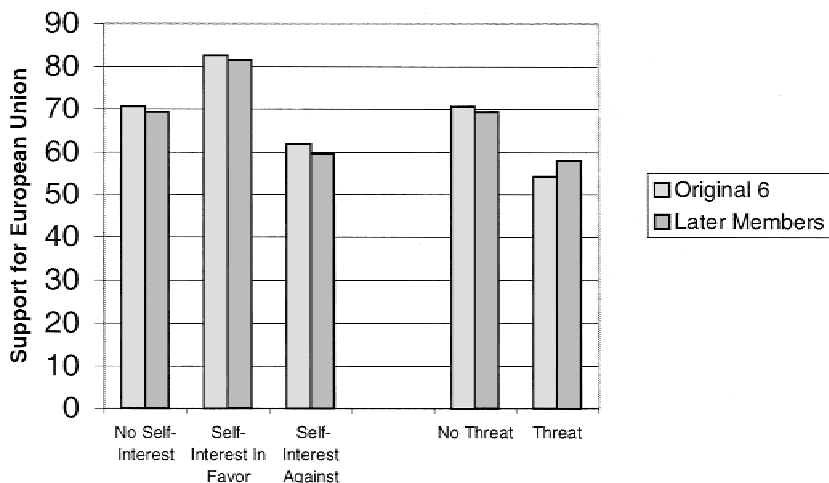
How can we determine the size of the effects of utilitarian variables versus perceived threat? Comparing coefficients is rather difficult, but I attempt to do so here. Figure 1 compares the model across different groups of people using the regression coefficients from Table 1.<sup>17</sup> Since self-interest can predict either extreme opposition or extreme enthusiasm to the European project, depending on the individual's characteristics, the situation in which self-interest is not likely to play a role in determining the individual's attitude toward the EU (see footnote 17) is compared to the situation in which the individual should be most supportive of the EU (being a *professional* in an original member state or being an *executive* in a later member, having *high education* and *income* levels, and living in a *border region*) and finally to the situation in which self-interest predicts opposition to the EU (being a *manual worker* in an original member state or being *unemployed* in one of the later members, being of the *lowest education* and *income* levels, and not living in a *border region*). The figure indicates that in the former case, self-interest increases support for the EU by approximately 12 points; in the latter case, self-interest decreases support for the EU by approximately 10 points.

<sup>15</sup>Left-right self-placement has also been included in the model because early work on public attitudes toward the European integration project argued that individuals who support parties of the left are more hostile toward European integration as a result of their hostility toward the capitalist market (Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987; but see Featherstone 1988; Wessels 1995.) It is also included as a proxy for party support (see Gabel 1998) since left-right self-placement and party support are very strongly related.

<sup>16</sup>For the religion question, even the "don't know" category shows statistically significant, strong effects. It is likely that this group of people feels as though other religions are threatening to the culture of their country, but perhaps are embarrassed about admitting this. Based on the size of the coefficient—in comparison to those who admit that the religion of minority groups is threatening—it appears that the "don't know" category might represent something more like "agree somewhat" than "don't know." Similar effects appear when this variable is used as a predictor of attitudes toward immigration, providing additional confirmation that it is likely to represent "agree somewhat."

<sup>17</sup>The "No Self-Interest" and "No Threat" models are designed to represent individuals who are at average levels of cognitive mobilization, postmaterialist values, etc., who should have no self-interested reason for supporting or opposing the EU, and who are in the omitted dummy categories (males who discuss politics only occasionally, who display a mixture of materialist and postmaterialist values, who are desk workers, salesmen, drivers, service employees, or supervisors, who are of low to mid education and income levels, who do not live in border areas, who do not support the governing party, who are not threatened based on perceived social benefit abuse or religious differences), and at the mean for left-right self-placement and age.

FIGURE 1  
The Size of the Effects



The right-hand portion of the figure compares the effect of no threat perception with maximum threat perception (i.e., claiming that minorities *abuse social benefits* and that their *religion is threatening*). Among the original members, *threat* decreases support for the EU by approximately 16 points; among the later members, *perceived threat* reduces enthusiasm for the EU by about 10 points. Thus, the two predictors—self-interest and threat—carry approximately equal weight. In other words, when self-interest predicts support for the EU, support does indeed increase by approximately 12 points; when self-interest predicts hostility toward the EU, support decreases by 10 points; and when high threat perceptions predict hostility toward the EU, hostility does indeed increase by 10–16 points. Thus, the more sophisticated self-interest model *and* the less sophisticated threat model are supported by the data.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

The purpose of this research note was to suggest that much of the past research on attitudes toward European integration has missed a rather obvious

<sup>18</sup>It is also possible that self-interest operates indirectly through perceived threat. Indeed, previous research indicates a connection between such vulnerability and out-group hostility (Hudson, Vallabhan, and Vedlitz 1994). However, both in that research and the current project, this particular connection is not very strong; thus, after extensive analyses of potential indirect effects, I have determined that the conclusions presented here would not be altered by including these in the analysis.

but important element in predicting support for, or hostility, toward such integration. The analysis here indicates that attitudes toward the European Union tend to be based in great part on a general hostility toward other cultures. More utilitarian concerns are indeed relevant in predicting attitudes toward the EU, but a high threat perception produces equally strong, negative effects on support for the EU. While self-interest plays an important role in shaping attitudes toward the EU, it assumes a great deal of knowledge about the EU and omits a perhaps less sophisticated reason for hostility toward the EU that stems from instinctual reactions to the idea of other cultures. Thus, these findings support the growing body of literature that points to the use of proxies in opinion formation regarding the EU but supports the more utilitarian arguments as well.

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