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## Taking Europe to its extremes: Examining cueing effects of right-wing populist parties on public opinion regarding European integration

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Catherine E. Netjes and Erica Edwards

## Taking Europe to Its Extremes

Examining Cueing Effects of  
Right-Wing Populist Parties on Public Opinion  
Regarding European Integration

Best.-Nr. SP IV 2005-202

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## **Abstract**

In this article we examine the role of right-wing parties in framing and mobilizing national identity against European integration. Using a multi-level analysis and combining individual-level and contextual data, we analyze public support for European integration within the Western European member states of the European Union from 1992 to 2002. The empirical analysis shows that national identities are contested and constructed within national contexts and that right-wing populist elites act as influential political cues in this process. Populist political entrepreneurs on the right side of the political spectrum play a decisive role in framing opposition to supranational governance with defense of the national community.

## **Kurzzusammenfassung**

In diesem Papier untersuchen wir die Rolle rechter Parteien bei der Gestaltung nationaler Identität und ihrer Mobilisierung gegen die europäische Integration. Mit Hilfe einer Mehrebenenanalyse und der Kombination von Daten auf der individuellen und der kontextuellen Ebene, analysieren wir die öffentliche Unterstützung für die europäische Integration in den westeuropäischen Mitgliedsstaaten der Europäischen Union von 1992 bis 2002. Die empirische Untersuchung zeigt, dass nationale Identitäten im nationalen Kontext ausgefochten und herausgebildet werden und dass rechte populistische Eliten in diesem Prozess als einflussreiche politische Signalgeber fungieren. Populistische politische Entrepreneurs auf der rechten Seite des politischen Spektrums spielen eine entscheidende Rolle bei der Herausbildung einer Opposition zur supranationalen Regierung im Namen der Verteidigung der nationalen Gemeinschaft.



*Catherine E. Netjes and Erica Edwards*

## **Taking Europe to Its Extremes Examining Cueing Effects of Right-Wing Populist Parties on Public Opinion Regarding European Integration**

With the creation of the European Monetary Union (EMU), the introduction of a single currency, the vast expansion of policy areas to the jurisdiction in Brussels, and the enlargement of the European Union (EU), the speed of the European project has gained full momentum. However, as the EU encroaches more and more on the everyday lives of its citizens, the integration process itself has become highly contested (Steenbergen and Marks 2004: 1). Public support for European integration has been in decline since 1992 (Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; Eichenberg and Dalton 2003). The referenda outcomes in Denmark, Ireland, and more recently Sweden, the low turnout in the elections to the European Parliament, as well as mounting levels of support for EU-skeptical parties in several national elections show the contemporary shift away from support for European integration.

How can we explain this recent rise in Euroskepticism? Variation in public opinion regarding the European integration process has been studied extensively using a variety of explanatory concepts and a range of statistical techniques. Four dominant perspectives have evolved: the utilitarian, the domestic politics, the partisan cueing, and national identity approaches. This article takes off from the latter viewpoint and develops the national identity approach further by amending three central deficiencies underlying the work thus far. First, none of the studies within the national identity perspective employs a longitudinal and dynamic approach to EU support. Second, studies within the national identity framework fail to account for the politicization of these identity considerations by political elites in the context of further European integration. Finally, the empirical examination of the national identity perspective fails to account for the multilevel or hierarchical structure of EU support data.<sup>1</sup> Steenbergen and Jones (2002: 233-235) have demonstrated the severe implications of ignoring multilevel data structure when examining EU support.

These deficits in the work on national identity and EU support are especially worrisome, as public opinion attitudes should be understood as dynamic rather than static. From this viewpoint—most strongly proposed in the work of Zaller (1992)—attitudes are not fixed

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<sup>1</sup> The one exception may be the study by Hooghe and Marks (forthcoming), which account for causal heterogeneity by using a multilevel analysis.

but rather dynamic, and respondents may exhibit conflicting attitudes simultaneously. Hence, expressed attitudes will differ across time and circumstance (Zaller 1992; Feldman and Zaller 1992). In this context, cueing effects of political elites become increasingly important. While framing effects may seem “[...] anomalies from the fixed position framework, [they] are logically necessary for the [dynamic] Zaller conception; they explain, when many considerations are possible, which are actually drawn” (Stimson 1995: 183).

In this article, we set out to amend the shortfalls within the national identity perspective on public opinion towards European integration by employing a longitudinal, multilevel, and framing perspective. The analysis explores public opinion towards European integration within fifteen Western European member states of the EU from 1992 to 2002.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, we account for the hierarchical structure of the data by using a multi-level analysis that combines individual-level Eurobarometer data with contextual data. Finally, we inspect the conditions under which national identity considerations may lead to a rise in Euroskepticism and specifically focus on the role of populist right-wing parties in cueing national identity against European integration.

This article is structured as follows: First, we describe the development of EU support in the decade under investigation. In the second step, we provide an overview of the different theories explaining EU support. Third, we theorize with regard to the cueing effects of political elites on public opinion and focus specifically on the mediating role of right-wing populist parties. In the fourth section, we present our hypotheses and the operationalization of our main theoretical constructs. Fifth, we present the empirical analysis of the role of right-wing populist parties in framing national identity against support for European integration. Finally, we conclude by discussing the implications of our findings.

## **Theories Explaining Public Support for European Integration**

Since the establishment of the Single European Act (SEA) and the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, the EU “[...] has been transformed into a multilevel polity in which European issues have become important not only for national governments, but also for citizens, political parties, interest groups, and social movements” (Steenbergen and Marks 2004: 1). With this qualitative and quantitative shift in the nature of the EU, the integration process itself has become contested. As European integration moves from a dominantly economic to a more political process, citizens may fear that the essence of territorial identity is threatened by the further politicization of integration in Europe. These uncertainties

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<sup>2</sup> Luxembourg is not included in the analysis.

about the nature and possible consequences of European integration are reflected in citizens' attitudes towards the integration process. Recently, most EU member states have witnessed a sizable drop in public support for European integration.

Table 1 displays the change of support for European integration in the fifteen EU member states between 1992 and 2002.<sup>3</sup> The table below shows that change in support for European integration is not equally distributed among these fifteen member states. The largest drops in EU support are found in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and France, where EU support decreased by more than 10 percent. This finding is surprising as two of these countries were among the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) established in 1951. Indeed with the exception of Luxembourg, all of the founding members (i.e., France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands) have witnessed a drop in support for European integration. While EU support has declined on average by 7.7 percent throughout the EU-15, five countries—Austria, Luxembourg, Finland, Ireland, and Spain—experienced a rise in support since 1992. Interestingly, two out of these five countries (Finland and Austria) joined the EU in the decade under investigation and hence may still be in the so-called “honeymoon-period.”

An extensive literature has evolved to explain public support for European integration. Though more than one hundred articles have been written on this specific topic, no scholarly consensus has yet to be reached. Theories explaining public support for European integration can generally be grouped into explanations based on utilitarian self-interest or macro-economic performance, domestic politics, partisan cues, and national identity. The utilitarian theory relies on self-interested or macro explanations of political attitudes and suggests that citizens are more likely to support integration if it results in a net benefit to the national economy or to their own pocketbook (Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel 1998a; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Anderson and Reichert 1995).

According to the domestic politics argument, citizens are generally uninformed about European integration and therefore lack the sophistication to act in their self-interest (Anderson 1998). Rather than self-interest, citizens may rely on assessments about their own political system, political parties, and government when forming opinions about integration, i.e., support for European integration is nested in domestic politics. From this perspective, support for the EU can be interpreted as a referendum on the national political system, the incumbent government, or established national political parties.

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3 Support for European integration is measured through the following Eurobarometer question: “Generally speaking do you think (your country’s) membership in the Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good or bad?” The values reported are the relative percentages of respondents replying that their country’s membership in the EU is a “good thing.”



*Table 1: Country Differences in Change in Support of European Integration, 1992-2002*

	Level of Support of European Integration 1992	Level of Support of European Integration 2002	$\Delta$ in Support of European Integration 1992-2002
EU-15 average	67.4	59.7	-7.7
United Kingdom	51.0	38.0	-13.0
Netherlands	86.6	75.9	-10.7
France	59.3	49.1	-10.2
Greece	76.5	66.5	-10.0
Germany	63.5	56.1	-7.4
Portugal	71.1	66.2	-4.9
Italy	76.9	73.1	-3.8
Belgium	66.3	62.6	-3.7
Denmark	64.5	61.5	-3.0
Sweden*	41.0	39.3	-1.7
Austria*	37.5	39.7	+2.2
Luxembourg	79.1	83.1	+4.0
Finland*	35.4	41.2	+5.8
Ireland	76.4	82.9	+6.5
Spain	63.5	70.5	+7.0

\* The changes in support for European integration summarized in this table display the changes in the several member states between 1992 and 2002, except for three countries, in which the changes documented correspond to different time-periods: Finland, 1993-2002, and Sweden and Austria, 1994 and 2002.

Following a similar logic, a number of scholars have suggested that opinions about European integration are largely driven by elites (Janssen 1991; Franklin, Marsh, and McLaren 1994; Wessels 1995; Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Ray 2003). Research has shown that the human capacity for calculation is far more limited than utilitarian models presume (Chong 2000; Kinder 1998). Cues presented by political elites provide citizens with cognitive short-cuts that help them decide what is in their interest. In the case of support for European integration, studies focus on the effects of partisan cueing, hypothesizing that parties' stances on European integration are used by party supporters to inform their own position. Empirical studies have indeed found evidence that party supporters adapt their opinions to those of their party (Franklin, Marsh, and McLaren 1994; Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Ray 2003).

The final explanation of EU support highlights national identity as a decisive force shaping support for European integration (Carey and Lebo 2000; Carey 2002; McLaren

2002; Hooghe and Marks forthcoming). Carey and Lebo (2000) show that declining levels of support can be explained by an increase in feelings of national identity. The authors argue that “[t]his increase in nationalism is negatively related to support for the European project because of the conflicts over sovereignty that developed in this era, such as the creation of a single European currency, the European Central Bank, and the increased primacy of European law” (Carey and Lebo 2000: 3). McLaren also shows that “[a]ntipathy toward the EU is not just about cost/benefit calculations [...] but about fear of, or hostility toward, other cultures” (2002: 533).

Of the theories elaborated above, explanations focusing on utilitarian self-interest or macroeconomic performance dominate the literature. This cost/benefit approach hypothesizes that as the material gains of a country increase, through market and trade liberalization throughout the EU, citizens’ support for European integration increases. This hypothesis has been tested at the micro- as well as macro-levels. At the micro-level, Gabel (1998b) shows that those who directly benefit from these economic gains, for example the highly educated or farmers, exhibit higher levels of support. Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) have demonstrated the relevance of national macroeconomic performance on approval to European integration and found macroeconomic variables, such as GDP, to be positively related to support for the EU. However, a more recent study by Eichenberg and Dalton (2003: 19) shows that macroeconomic performance no longer explains EU support after the Maastricht Treaty. The relationship between support and annual percentage change in GDP or inflation is no longer significant. The authors conclude that “[t]he contrast in the pre- and post-Maastricht periods indicates that as citizens became aware of the implications of the EMU and the EU’s changing policy role, their calculus for support changed” (Eichenberg and Dalton 2003: 19).

This article builds on the expectation put forward by Eichenberg and Dalton (2003: 19) regarding a possible change in the nature of support among EU citizens. We argue that following the shift in the process of European integration from a mostly economic to a more political project, the criteria for evaluating the EU include economic as well as symbolic political considerations (see also Carey 2002: 390). These symbolic considerations refer to feelings of national identity. The national identity perspective draws on the psychology of group membership to consider how national identity influences support for European integration. The core contribution of the national identity approach to the EU opinion literature is demonstrating that group loyalty affects support for European integration and that a citizen is not merely a *homo economicus*. “Humans evolved an emotional capacity for group loyalty long before the development of rational faculties. These loyalties can be extremely powerful in shaping views towards political objects” (Hooghe and Marks forthcoming: 5).

The research thus far has found conflicting results regarding the influence of national identity on support for European integration. Whereas some studies argue that regional or national identities are consistent with European identity and support for European integration (Marks 1999; Haesly 2001), others have shown that national attachment combined with national pride have a significant negative effect on EU support (Carey 2002). In this article, we shed light on the impact of national identity on support for European integration by examining the relationship across time and space. In order to examine this relationship empirically, it is important to understand the concept of national identity and its possible effect on support for European integration.

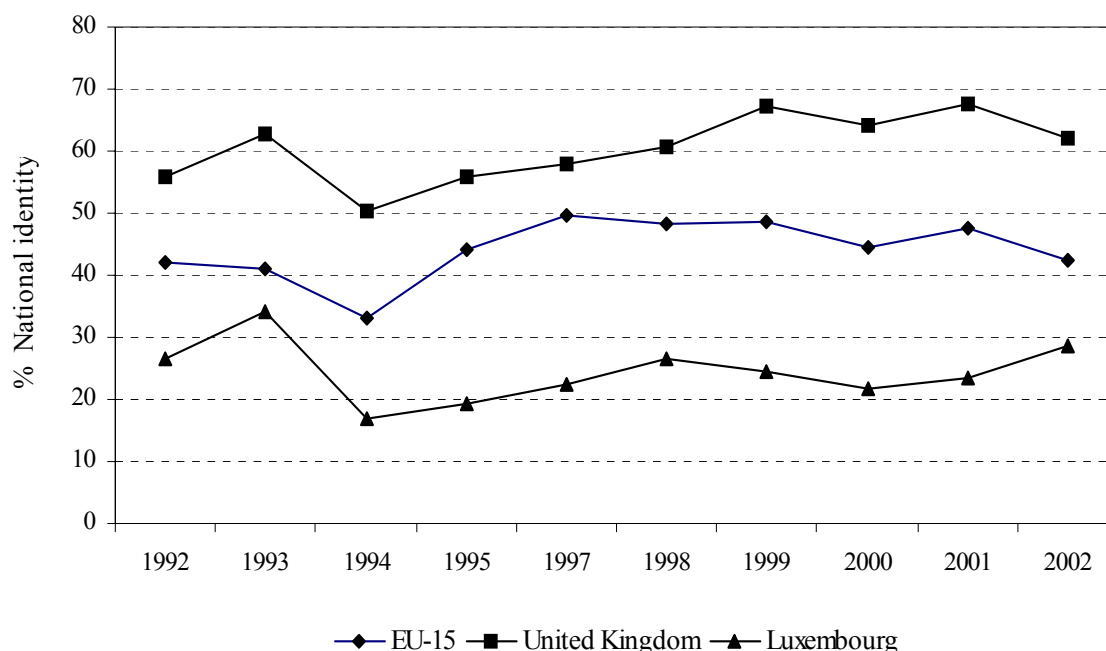
We understand national identity as “[...] a sense of community” that “[...] consists of the feeling of belonging together as a group which, because it shares a political structure, also shares a political fate” (Easton 1965: 185). National identity thus refers to a sense of collective community which distinguishes a particular community from another. National identity implies a feeling of us against others. Moreover, the definition of national identity posed here points to the fact that national identity must be understood in relation to the political structure. This idea is of great relevance in the context of the EU, as it raises the question if the EU as a polity can form an object of identification. European integration can be seen as a process of multilevel governance, in which supranational, national, and sub-national political institutions and elites share control over policy making (Hooghe and Marks 2001: 1-10). From a multilevel governance perspective, the EU can be considered as a polity or regime that “overarches” national communities and as such can be the object of identification. While some people may identify solely with one level of governance, i.e., their nation-state, others may feel they owe allegiance to several levels of governance, their nation-state as well as the EU for example.

Against this backdrop, we need to distinguish between two types of national identity. As Hooghe and Marks (forthcoming) note, it is important to judge the extent to which national identity is exclusive or inclusive. Individuals with an inclusive national identity have multiple identities, which may include regional, national, and European identities. Individuals who conceive of their national identity as exclusive, however, identify only with the national level of governance and may therefore consider multilevel governance a threat. Thus, exclusive national identity can be expected to form an obstacle to support for European integration, as individuals adhering to exclusive national identity view the nation-state as the level of political organization to which they owe allegiance.

It is important to point out that although national identities are shaped through socialization, they are contested within national contexts. In this respect, research on the origins of national identity highlights the socialization aspect of identity and the importance of myths, symbols, and traditions in the development of “imagined communities” (Anderson

1992: 5-6). However, national identity is also seen to be subject to *reinvention* or *reinte*-pretation over time (Smith 1991). This idea implies that feelings of national identity are not necessarily stable, but may vary over time, as they are subject to processes of societal conflict and political contestation. Figure 1 shows the variation in national identity across time within the EU-15. National identity is measured using the following Eurobarometer question: “*In the near future, do you see yourself as (1) [nationality] only, (2) [nationality] and European, (3) European and [nationality], or (4) European only?*” The values in the figure represent the percentage of respondents that see themselves as being of their respective nationality only and do not identify themselves as European.

Figure 1: Feelings of National Identity across Time, 1992-2002



The figure above demonstrates that feelings of national identity indeed fluctuate over time, varying between 30 and 50 percent on average within the EU-15 in the time-period from 1992 to 2002. The figure also shows national identity levels in the United Kingdom and Luxembourg. In the latter country, feelings of national identity are significantly lower than the EU average (0.5 standard deviations below the EU-15 mean), fluctuating mainly between the 20 and 30 percent. In contrast, feelings of national identity among British citizens are almost one standard deviation above the average mean level within the EU-15. Here, the percentages vary between 50 and 70 percent. In all, the figure supports the idea of possible reinterpretations of national identities over time within national contexts. In the next section, we consider to the cueing effects of right-wing populist parties in this respect.

## Conceptualizing the Cueing Effects of Right-Wing Populist Parties

The idea that public opinion is fundamentally top-down and elite-driven is virtually an orthodoxy among political scientists. In the words of V. O. Key, “[t]he voice of the people is but an echo” (1966: 2). Research has shown that citizens are often ill-informed and exhibit low levels of political knowledge about foreign policy and international politics, including EU matters (Bennet 1996; Holsti 1992; Janssen 1991). Hence, political elites provide citizens with cognitive short-cuts that help them decide what is in their interest (Zaller 1992; Page and Shapiro 1992). By taking a stance on a particular issue, elites attempt to persuade citizens to adopt like-minded positions (Popkin 1991; Zaller 1992; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). The support cited above stems from the study American public opinion; however, we also find evidence for a top-down perspective in the context of Europe. There is an expansive body of scholarship within the EU support literature suggesting that political elites shape public attitudes toward European integration (Franklin, Marsh, and McLaren 1994; Wessels 1995; Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Ray 2003). Looking to the research on public opinion and mass behavior, we find strong support for elite cueing on integration issues. Wessels, for example, analyzes the direction of influence between the parties and their electorates and finds that “parties are able to mobilize their supporters, bringing them closer to the party, whether for or against the EC” (1995: 161). In his test of various theories of support for integration, Gabel (1998a) demonstrates that class partisanship and incumbent support are important influences on electorate opinions.

Research on referenda campaigns has also produced support for a top-down connection. Work by Franklin and his colleagues on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty demonstrates that voting behavior in the referenda was linked to support for incumbency parties (Franklin, Marsh, and McLaren 1994; Franklin, Marsh, and Wlezien 1994; Franklin, van der Eijk, and Marsh 1995). Similarly, more recent work by Hug and Sciarini (2000) on all EU referenda shows that support for incumbency parties is an important influence on EU support. Against this backdrop, we adopt a top-down perspective on public opinion on European integration.<sup>4</sup> This perspective is especially relevant in the context of EU support since citizens show low levels of political interest and knowledge on EU matters, especially when compared to the national context (Niedermayer and Sinnott 1995). Hence, it seems reasonable to expect EU citizens to be responsive to cueing by political party elites when forming their opinions about European integration.

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4 Note that authors have criticized this top-down approach and demonstrated a bottom-up connection between public and party preferences regarding the EU (see Carrubba 2001). Although we are aware of the debate with regard to the top-down or bottom-up nature of public opinion concerning the EU, in this article we nonetheless adopt an elite driven model on the basis of the extensive evidence from work on European and American public opinion.

Whereas the studies on elite cueing effects on EU public opinion thus far focus on the correspondence between parties' opinions regarding the EU and the opinions their respective party supporters, our aim here is slightly different. We do not restrict the cueing effect of right-wing populist parties only to party supporters as most of the elite cueing models propose. Rather, we argue that right-wing populist parties frame the European integration process in nationalist terms and hence mobilize feelings of national identity against the EU regardless of whether citizens would support these parties in a specific election. Recall that figure 1 demonstrated that feelings of national identity fluctuated extensively from 1992 to 2002. Hence, it seems reasonable to assume that a significant number of citizens may be affected by the mobilization of right-wing populist parties. Table 2 presents an overview of the parties included in the analysis. The table shows that nine out of the fifteen Western European EU member states had a Euroskeptical right-wing populist party in the time-span of this analysis.<sup>5</sup> The vote share of right-wing populist parties in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden between 1992 and 2002 never surpassed 20 percent of the eligible voting population.

Every party included in the table above opposes European integration. These parties all received at least 1.5 percentage of the vote in parliamentary elections held in the EU-15 between 1992 and 2002 or obtained at least one seat in parliament during this same period. We expect these right-wing populist parties to tap into feelings of nationalism to reject further integration and to defend the nation against control from Brussels. Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2002) point out that such parties have formed the largest reservoir of Euroskepticism across the EU since 1996.

A prime example of a party mobilizing national identity against European integration is the Danish People's Party. This party views the EU mainly as a threat to Danish identity, values, and sovereignty. For example, they voiced their opposition to the Amsterdam Treaty in the 1998 campaign with the slogan "vote Danish, vote no."<sup>6</sup> Their party program for the 2001 general election was entitled "Denmark for the Danes" and portrayed a clear anti-immigration and anti-EU sentiment.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in the wake of the upcoming referen-

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5 The term right-wing populist parties may be misleading in some respects, as the populist parties presented in table 2 may be right-wing on some policy areas but may also include left-wing issue positions in their party programs. A good example of such a party is the Danish People's Party. Whereas the party clearly has anti-immigration and xenophobic programmatic elements, it is also highly supportive of welfare state provisions in Denmark, i.e., incorporates left-wing issue positions. However, in this analysis we focus on the mobilizing of exclusive national identity of these parties against European integration, so the anti-immigration, xenophobic, and anti- or EU-skeptical character of these parties is of main relevance to us. Therefore, we characterize these parties as right-wing populist parties. Notwithstanding, we realize that the programmatics of the parties summed up in table 2 cover an array of different policy positions.

6 See article *Past 'No' haunts EU referendum* in the Copenhagen Post under [www.cphpost.dk/get/55301.htm](http://www.cphpost.dk/get/55301.htm).

7 <http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk>

dum on the Constitutional Treaty on June 1, 2005, Dutch political entrepreneurs in the no-camp are attempting to utilize fears with regard to the possible accession of Turkey to the EU.<sup>8</sup>

*Table 2: Right-Wing Populist Parties in the EU, 1992-2002*

	Right-Wing Populist Party	
<i>Austria</i>	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Freedom Party of Austria
<i>Belgium</i>	Vlaams Blok	Flemish Block
	Front National	National Front
<i>Denmark</i>	Fremskridtspartiet	Progress Party
	Dansk Folkepartis	Danish Peoples' Party
<i>France</i>	Front National	National Front
	Mouvement pour la France	Movement for France
	Mouvement national républicain	National Republican Movement
<i>Germany</i>	Die Republikaner	Republican Party
	Deutsche Volksunion	German Peoples' Union
<i>Italy</i>	Allianza Nazionale	National Alliance
	Movimento Sociale Italiano – Destra Nazionale	Italian Social Movement
<i>Netherlands</i>	Centrum Democraten	Center Democrats
	Lijst Pim Fortuyn	List Pim Fortuyn
<i>Sweden</i>	Ny Demokrati	New Democracy
<i>United Kingdom</i>	British National Party	
	United Kingdom Independence Party	

*Note:* All parties included here 1) received at least 1.5 percent of the vote in a parliamentary election between 1992 and 2002 or 2) obtained at least one parliamentary seat between 1992 and 2002.

In all, we argue that national identities are constructed within national contexts and that the cueing of political elites is influential in this process. We expect right-wing populist parties to take on a key role in mobilizing national identity, as these parties frame opposition to supranational governance with defense of the national community (Hooghe and Marks forthcoming). Hence, these parties provide citizens with negative cues regarding European integration. The explanation of public support for European integration presented in this article combines elements of the elite-cueing and national identity perspectives on EU support. Moreover, we also control for the utilitarian approach in the empirical analysis.

8 See the website of the Groep Geert Wilders under [www.geertwilders.nl](http://www.geertwilders.nl) for a prime example of this strategy.

## Hypotheses and Operationalization

In order to examine the role of right-wing populist parties in framing national identity against the EU, we analyze public support for European integration within the fourteen Western European member states using a multilevel analysis, which allows us to combine both individual-level as well as contextual data. In this section, we define the key theoretical factors influencing EU support, focusing on the following two main hypotheses:

**H1:** *Exclusive national identity is negatively related to support for European integration.*

**H2:** *There is an interaction effect between national identity and the presence of a right-wing populist party, which is in turn negatively related to support for European integration.*

The post-Maastricht transition to the EMU and particularly its convergence criteria has brought the EU further into the political realm. Against this backdrop, we expect that national identity has become an important element in explaining EU support. As the nature of European integration has changed over time, supranational governance may increasingly be perceived as a threat to national traditions. We therefore expect exclusive national identity (*Exclusive National Identity*) to be negatively related to EU support (see H1). Moreover, national identities can be expected to become contested and constructed within national contexts; accordingly, we hypothesize an interaction effect between exclusive national identity and the presence of a right-wing populist party (*RWPP \* Exclusive National Identity*).<sup>9</sup> Our expectation is that this interaction effect is negatively related to support for European integration (see H2). Right-wing populist parties are expected to play a decisive role in mobilizing exclusive national identity against European integration. These parties tap nationalism to reject further control from Brussels and thus provide citizens with negative cues regarding European integration.

As highlighted earlier, the dominant perspective on support for European integration focuses on utilitarian self-interest or macro-economic performance. Acknowledging the centrality of this perspective and in light of Eichenberg and Dalton's (2003) recent study suggesting that macroeconomic importance may have a waning impact on EU support in a post-Maastricht world, we include a number of variables that tap the effect of utilitarian self-interest and national economic performance in our analysis. At the individual level, we consider levels of income and levels of education by including dummy variables for higher (*Higher Income*) and lower (*Lower Income*) levels of income and for higher (*Higher Edu-*

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<sup>9</sup> In the model presented here, we operationalize RWPP using a dummy variable indicating if a country has a right-wing populist party (1= yes, 0 = no). Note, however, that analyses using percentage vote obtained in national parliamentary election and percentage seats in parliament to weight RWPP yielded similar results.



cation) and lower (*Lower Education*) levels of education. Here, we assume that those with higher levels of income and education are more likely to directly benefit from the economic gains of integration and should therefore exhibit greater levels of support for the EU. At the country level, we utilize a global measure of economic well-being by including gross national product (*GDP*) as a measure of macroeconomic performance. Our expectation is that as GDP increases, support for the EU should increase.<sup>10</sup>

To test Anderson's domestic politics argument at the individual level, we include a variable tapping citizens' satisfaction with national democracy (*Satisfaction National Democracy*). Anderson's findings suggest that "citizens who are more supportive of the way political institutions work at home are more likely to support European institutions and their country's participation in them" (1998: 14). Thus, we anticipate satisfaction with national democracy to have a positive effect on support for European integration.

We incorporate three additional country-level variables. First, we take into account a country's tenure in the EU, i.e., the number of years a country has been an EU member state (*Tenure*). Our expectation is that support for European integration will be stronger in older EU member states than in new member states. The EU accession process is largely elite-driven. Accordingly, it is not uncommon to find that citizens in countries that have recently acceded to the EU exhibit negative attitudes towards European integration, but that as time passes their attitudes grow more favorable (see also Steenbergen and Jones 2002).

Second, we include a dummy variable indicating whether a country has had a referendum on European integration (*Referendum*). The 1990s have seen increasing reliance on referenda on EU issues. Although not explicitly required by their constitutions, all four candidates for the 1995 enlargement held referenda, and treaty amendments have been subject to referenda in several member states. National referenda on EU issues inflame conflict on European integration, because contestation is taken out of the hands of parties and delivered to citizens who cast votes not for a particular party, but for (or often against) a particular issue. Arguably the greatest divide on European integration is the gap between generally pro-European elites and a more skeptical public (Hooghe 2003). Referenda provide an excellent opportunity for anti-European political entrepreneurs to exploit this gap. Thus, mobilized public opposition is likely to strengthen the hands of Euroskeptics. We therefore expect the presence of a national referendum on an EU issue will have a negative effect on support for European integration.

Third, we incorporate a dummy variable for membership in the European Monetary Union (*EMU*). The EMU was launched in the Maastricht Treaty and carries tremendous

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10 As a test for robustness, we also ran the model with two measures of economic hardship—unemployment and inflation—and found similar results.

symbolic significance as it entailed the provision that in 2002 the national currencies would be replaced by one common currency. The convergence criteria, which set the conditions for the transition to the Euro and after, have become highly contested, as they mainly focus on budgetary restraint and in turn can be seen to strain redistributive provisions. However, European and national elites tend to highlight the positive contribution of the EMU (and more recently the Euro) to trade and economic growth within the EMU area (Eichengreen and Dalton 2003: 15ff.). Overall, we expect membership in the EMU to have a positive effect on support for European integration.

In addition to the substantive variables discussed above, we include two demographic control variables at the individual level. Work on EU support has highlighted the existence of a gender gap in political attitudes on European integration (Liebert 1997; Nelson and Guth 2000); thus, we include the dummy variable *Female*. Since the distribution of income and identity may have generational trends, we also include a variable to capture age (*Age*).

Table 3 summarizes the indicators used to operationalize the dependent and independent variables employed in the empirical analysis. The source for the data for the dependent variable and individual-level independent variables is the Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File, 1970-2002. Due to the fact that the identity question is only incorporated in the Eurobarometer trend file since 1992, we use 1992-2002 as the period of analysis.

## Empirical Analysis

In order to evaluate the relevant theoretical factors influencing EU support, we incorporate the predictors described in the previous section in a multi-level model. This method is particularly useful given that we are interested in examining variation both at the individual and the country level. Particular country characteristics, namely the presence or absence of right-wing populist parties, provide important political contexts that interact with individual attributes, namely exclusive national identity, to produce certain political effects. To explain variation among citizens, we must account for variation across national contexts. Using a multi-level approach allows us to examine how the economic and political contexts shape individual differentiation in EU support.

We use a two-level hierarchical linear model (HLM) that combines both individual-level measures from the Eurobarometer trend file and country-level indicators. The data we use to test hypotheses about the relationship between context, identity, and EU support are necessarily hierarchical, consisting of multiple units of data that are nested. The contextual unit in our analysis is the country. Because the Eurobarometer data are collected across the EU member states, individuals are nested within each country. Steenbergen and Jones

Table 3: Variable Description

Variables	Description
<b>Dependent Variable</b>	
Support for European integration	Respondent's support for European integration as measured by the following item: "Generally speaking, do you think [your country's] membership of the European Union is (1) a bad thing, (2) neither good nor bad, (3) a good thing?" <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
<b>Independent Variables (Individual Level)</b>	
Exclusive National Identity	Respondent's feeling of national identity as measured by the following item: "In the near future, do you see yourself as (1) [nationality] only, (2) [nationality] and European, (3) European and [nationality], or (4) European only?" Exclusive national identity is coded as (1 = 1) (2, 3, 4 = 0). <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
Inclusive National Identity	Respondent's feeling of national identity as measured by the following item: "In the near future, do you see yourself as (1) [nationality] only, (2) [nationality] and European, (3) European and [nationality], or (4) European only?" Inclusive national identity is coded as (2, 3, 4 = 1) (1 = 0). <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
Satisfaction with National Democracy	Respondents' satisfaction with national democracy as measured by the following item: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)?" <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
Lower Income	A dummy variable indicating that a respondent falls in the bottom quartile of the income distribution. <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
Higher Income	A dummy variable indicating that a respondent falls in the top quartile of the income distribution. <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
Lower Level Education	A dummy variable indicating that a respondent has had up to 15 years of education. <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
Higher Level Education	A dummy variable indicating that a respondent has had 22+ years of education. <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
Female	Respondent's gender (1 = female, 0 = male). <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
Age	Respondent's age (in years). <i>Source:</i> Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File.
<b>Independent Variables (Contextual Level)</b>	
GDP	The percent change in GDP in a given year. <i>Source:</i> OECD <i>Employment Outlook</i>
Referendum	A dummy variable indicating if a country has held a referendum on European integration (1 = yes, 0 = no).
Tenure	The number of years a country has been an EU member state. This variable was centered around the mean.
EMU	A dummy variable indicating if a country is a member of the eurozone (1 = yes, 0 = no).
Right-wing Populist Party	Dummy variable indicating if a country has a right-wing populist party (1 = yes, 0 = no). Here, we only consider parties that 1) received at least 1.5 percent of the vote in a parliamentary election between 1992 and 2002 or 2) obtained at least one parliamentary seat between 1992 and 2002.

(2002: 219-220) suggest that using a technique for modeling multi-level data of this type allows for a single model that incorporates the different levels of data without assuming a single level of analysis. This facilitates the exploration of causal heterogeneity and provides a test for the generalizability of findings across different contexts. Additionally, our data are collected at the individual level but the individuals reside within a country and are more likely to share common characteristics with citizens in the same country than citizens of another country. Because the clustering of the data is a particular statistical problem, we must use a method to estimate models with multilevel data that takes into account the associated problems with standard errors.<sup>11</sup>

We begin our analysis of EU support by defining a level 1 (individual-level) model. This model is represented by equation 1. The dependent variable  $EU_{support_{ij}}$  denotes the level of EU support for each respondent (i) in country (j).<sup>12</sup> In addition to the nine individual-level predictors, the model includes an individual-level constant  $\beta_{0j}$ , which enables us to bring in our level 2 (country-level) predictors.

$$(1) EU_{support_{ij}} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} ExclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \beta_{2j} InclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \beta_{3j} SatisfactionNationalDemocracy_{ij} + \beta_{4j} LowerIncome_{ij} + \beta_{5j} HigherIncome_{ij} + \beta_{6j} LowerIncome_{ij} + \beta_{7j} HigherIncome_{ij} + \beta_{8j} Female_{ij} + \beta_{9j} Age_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

For each level 2 case (in our analysis a country), a unique level 1 model is estimated. This produces intercept and slope estimates specific to each country-year. At the second level, each of the level 1 coefficients (and their intercepts) could become a potential dependent variable (for a more detailed discussion see Byrk and Raudenbush 1992). The level 2 model is represented by equation 2 and includes our five country-level predictors.

$$(2) \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} GDP_j + \gamma_{02} Tenure_j + \gamma_{03} Referendum_j + \gamma_{04} EMU_j + \gamma_{05} RWPP_j + \delta_{0j}$$

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11 More specifically, as contextual measures are constant for individual cases residing within a given country, using standard modeling techniques, such as logistic regression, violates the assumption of independent observations. The result is that estimates of standard errors are reduced which increases the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis. HLM avoids this by estimating distinct models at each level and by estimating unique level 1 models for each level 2 unit (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). For our purposes, we estimate distinct individual level models that test the influences of national identity and other variables on EU support for each country. Next, we estimate a second level model that uses the country-level contextual measures to account for variation in the effects of the individual variables. In effect, this allows each country to have unique intercepts (average EU support), slopes (effects of individual characteristics, such as national identity, on EU support), and error terms. At the second level, contextual effects are estimated by modeling the slopes for the influence national identity on EU support (i.e. the level 1 slope estimates are treated as dependent variables).

12 Here, we measure support for European integration using the standard Eurobarometer “membership” question described at the outset of the article. To ensure that our findings are robust, we also ran the analysis using the Eurobarometer “speed” question and obtained similar results.

Substituting equation 2 into equation 1 enables us to summarize our multi-level model in a single equation.

$$(3) EUsupport_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}GDP_j + \gamma_{02}Tenure_j + \gamma_{03}Referendum_j + \gamma_{04}EMU_j + \gamma_{05}RWPP_j + \gamma_{10}ExclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \gamma_{20}InclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \gamma_{30}SatisfactionNatDemocracy_{ij} + \gamma_{40}LowerIncome_{ij} + \gamma_{50}HigherIncome_{ij} + \gamma_{60}LowerEducation_{ij} + \gamma_{70}HigherEducation_{ij} + \gamma_{80}Female_{ij} + \gamma_{90}Age_{ij} + \delta_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

The model specified in equation 3 is useful in that it brings together the predictors from the two levels. Moreover, since it does not assume that the predictors account for all of the variation in EU support at the two levels, the model yields variance components for  $\delta_{0j}$  and  $r_{ij}$ . This allows us to consider how to account for EU support at different levels of analysis.

The model described thus far assumes that the level 1 predictors have fixed effects. Recall, however, that one of our central hypotheses (H2) suggests heterogeneity in the effect of one of our level 1 predictors, namely exclusive national identity. We hypothesize right-wing populist parties to have a decisive role in mobilizing exclusive national identity against European integration. Such parties draw upon nationalism to reject further control from Brussels thereby providing citizens with negative cues regarding European integration. For the sake of comparison, we also consider the cueing effects of right-wing populist parties on individuals with inclusive national identity (i.e., those who view themselves as both national and European). To model these interaction effects, we must relax the assumption that exclusive national identity and inclusive national identity, given by  $\beta_{1j}$  and  $\beta_{2j}$  respectively in equation 1, are fixed and instead stipulate that the effects vary as a function of right-wing populist parties. In other words, we model this effect as:

$$(4) \beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{15}RWPP_j + \delta_{0j}$$

$$(5) \beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{25}RWPP_j + \delta_{0j}$$

Our final model is specified in equation 6 and includes the cross-level interactions:

$$RWPP_j * ExclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} \text{ and } RWPP_j * InclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij}.$$

This allows us to evaluate our second hypothesis, namely whether exclusive national identity interacts with the presence of a right-wing populist party to negatively impact to support for European integration.

$$(6) EUsupport_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}GDP_j + \gamma_{02}Tenure_j + \gamma_{03}Referendum_j + \gamma_{04}EMU_j + \gamma_{05}RWPP_j + \gamma_{10}ExclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \gamma_{20}InclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \gamma_{30}SatisfactionNatDemocracy_{ij} + \gamma_{40}LowerIncome_{ij} + \gamma_{50}HigherIncome_{ij} + \gamma_{60}LowerEducation_{ij} + \gamma_{70}HigherEducation_{ij} + \gamma_{80}Female_{ij} + \gamma_{90}Age_{ij} + \gamma_{15}RWPP_j * ExclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \gamma_{25}RWPP_j * InclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \delta_{0j} + \delta_{1j}ExclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + \delta_{2j}InclusiveNationalIdentity_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

We begin our empirical analysis by first ascertaining if there is significant variation in EU support at the individual and country levels. To do so, we conduct an analysis of variance on our indicator for EU support. The maximum likelihood estimates of the overall mean and variance components are provided in table 4.<sup>13</sup> The results from this base model suggest that the multi-level character of the data should not be ignored. Both of the variance components are significant, providing evidence of considerable variance in EU support at both the individual and the country levels. To obtain a better understanding of the relative importance of the various levels of analysis, we also consider the ratio of each variance component to the total variance of support for EU membership. We find that 90.8 percent of the variance is explained at the individual level  $[(0.485 / 0.485 + 0.049) * 100]$ , while only 9.2 percent is explained at the country level  $[(0.049 / 0.485 + 0.049) * 100]$ . Given that the data is measured at the individual level, this is not surprising.

*Table 4: Multi-level Data Variance Components*

Parameters	Estimates
<i>Fixed Effects</i>	
Constant	1.558* (0.011)
<i>Variance Components</i>	
Country-level	0.049* (0.004)
Individual Level	0.485* (0.001)
-2 x Log Likelihood	1487027.000

*Note:* Table entries are maximum likelihood (IGLS) estimates with estimated standard errors are in parentheses; \* =  $p < .05$ , one-tailed

Having established that there is in fact significant variation in EU support at both the individual and country levels of analysis, we can consider whether the model specified in the previous section can account for this variance. The maximum likelihood estimates of the fixed effects and the variance components of the multi-level model are provided in table 5. Comparing these results to those provided in table 4, we find that our model is a significant improvement over the base model:  $\chi^2 = 117859$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $p < .01$ . This indicates that at least some of the predictors included in our model have effects that are significantly different from zero. How powerful are our individual-level and country-level predictors in explaining support for European integration? We evaluate this by calculating the relative change in the variance components from our base model in table 4 to our fully specified

<sup>13</sup> All estimates included in this paper were obtained using MLwiN V1.1.

model in table 5 (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). Taken as a whole, our individual-level predictors perform reasonably well, as the individual-level variance components explain 15.6 percent of the individual variance in support for the EU  $[(0.485 - 0.409) / 0.485 * 100]$ . With regard to the country-level, we find that our predictors perform even better. As a set, the country-level variance components account for 44.9 percent of the cross-national variance in EU support  $[(0.049 - 0.027) / 0.049 * 100]$ .

Turning to the individual parameter estimates, we find strong support for our two main hypotheses. Recall that our first hypothesis suggested that both exclusive national identity and the presence of a right-wing populist party should be negatively related to support for European integration. A quick glance at our results suggests that this is indeed the case for exclusive national identity; exclusive national identity has a significant negative impact on EU support ( $-0.189$ ). Note that the coefficient for inclusive national identity is both positive and significant, suggesting that citizens who have multiple identities (i.e., view themselves as both national and European) are more supportive of European integration. Regarding our second hypothesis—that there is an interaction effect between exclusive national identity and the presence of a right-wing populist party, which is negatively related to support for European integration—we find strong support. The interaction between exclusive national identity and the presence of a right-wing populist party is significant and is in the anticipated negative direction ( $-0.295$ ). While the interaction between exclusive national identity and a right-wing populist party is significant, the presence of such a party by itself does not exert a significant influence on EU support.

Our results also demonstrate the lasting importance of utilitarian self-interest and macroeconomic explanations of EU support. In contrast to Eichenberg and Dalton's (2003) recent work, we find continued support for macroeconomic performance explanations of EU support. Increases in GDP have a positive and significant effect on support for European integration (0.023). Similarly, at the micro-level we find that lower levels of income and education have a significant negative effect on EU support, while higher levels have a positive effect. Thus, it appears that individuals who reap the benefits of increased openness associated with European integration are more likely to support the process.

At the individual level, we also find strong evidence for the domestic politics explanation of support for European integration. The coefficient for satisfaction with national democracy is positive and significant (0.172). This bolsters Anderson's assertion that citizens who are satisfied with the democratic performance of their national institutions are more likely to display trust vis-à-vis political institutions in general and are consequently more likely to support the EU (Anderson 1998: 572). Neither of our individual-level demographic control variables—female nor age—reached levels of statistical significance.

Table 5: Determinants of EU Support

Parameters	Estimates
<i>Fixed Effects</i>	
Constant	1.179* (0.049)
Exclusive National Identity	-0.189* (0.035)
Inclusive National Identity	0.076* (0.029)
Satisfaction with National Democracy	0.172* (0.003)
Lower Level Income	-0.041* (0.006)
Higher Level Income	0.040* (0.006)
Lower Education	-0.038* (0.007)
Higher Education	0.085* (0.006)
Female	-0.038* (0.005)
Age	0.000 (0.000)
GDP	0.023* (0.004)
Referendum	-0.077* (0.021)
EMU	0.042* (0.028)
Tenure	0.006* (0.001)
Rightwing Populist Party	-0.009 (0.045)
Exclusive National Identity * Rightwing Populist Party	-0.295* (0.041)
Inclusive National Identity * Rightwing Populist Party	-0.117* (0.033)
<i>Variance Components</i>	
Country-level	0.027* (0.001)
Individual Level	0.409* (0.002)
-2 x Log Likelihood	1369168.000

Note: Table entries are maximum likelihood (IGLS) estimates with estimated standard errors are in parentheses; \* =  $p < .05$ , one-tailed



The three remaining contextual variables are signed in the predicted direction and are statistically significant. Though the effect is small, the length of time a country has been in the EU has a positive influence on citizens' support for European integration (0.006). Similarly, individuals residing within the euro zone are more likely demonstrate support for the EU (0.042). Finally, our results indicate that the occurrence of a national referendum on an EU issue has a statistically significant negative influence on EU support (−0.077). This finding lends credence to the notion that referenda are increasingly becoming an outlet for Euroskepticism.

## Conclusion

Over the past decade, the process of European integration has become contested. As the EU increasingly becomes a more political project, the criteria for evaluating the supranational organization focus more on symbolic political considerations, such as the feeling that the EU poses a possible threat to national identity. These uncertainties about the future of European integration are politicized by Euroskeptical elites. Using a multi-level analysis and combining both individual-level Eurobarometer data and contextual indicators, we have examined the relevance of national identity and the presence of right-wing populist parties in explaining levels of public support for European integration since the Treaty of Maastricht. The analysis presented in this article supports the notion that feelings of exclusive national identity, i.e., respondents that identify themselves with their nation-states rather than with the EU, are a major factor in explaining levels of support for European integration. Exclusive national identity is negatively related to EU support. Moreover, we have demonstrated that Euroskeptical populist right-wing parties play a decisive role in cueing these feelings of national identity against European integration, as they meld opposition to supranational governance with defense of the national community.

Next to the impact of national identity considerations and the cueing effects of populist right-wing parties, the empirical analysis also highlights the lasting importance of economic considerations, both at the individual and national levels. We find that individuals with higher education and income view European integration more favorably than those with lower education and income. Moreover, we find that increases in GDP have positive effects on levels of support for European integration, indicating that when national economies perform, support for European integration is secured.

Whereas previous studies have highlighted the dominance of macroeconomic performance in explaining public support for European integration, this article demonstrates the importance of incorporating national identity considerations into an explanation of trends

in support for European integration. The empirical analysis indicates that national identity has become a relevant factor in explaining EU support in the 1990s. With the shift in the nature of the integration process from mainly economic to deeper political cooperation, national identity has become an essential factor in predicting levels in EU support and hence should be included in analyses attempting to explain support for European integration in the future. Methodologically, our investigation follows recent work by Steenbergen and Jones (2002), Brinegar and Jolly (2005), and Hooghe and Marks (forthcoming) in highlighting the utility of employing hierarchical models to more fully explain public support for European integration.

This article has taken a first step toward understanding the cueing effects of political parties in mobilizing feelings of national identity against European integration. Next to the right-wing populist parties examined here, one could also imagine a role for conservative parties in this respect. While to a lesser extent than populist right-wing parties, many conservative parties also defend national culture, identity, and sovereignty against influxes of immigrants or external pressures from international organizations (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004: 136). As a result, some conservative parties have witnessed the development of Euroskeptical factions that may not oppose European integration as such, but argue for a looser Union under a more intergovernmental rubric. It will be the task of future research to determine the extent and significance of conservative parties in utilizing Euroskepticism.

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## **WZB** Forschungsschwerpunkt IV „Zivilgesellschaft, Konflikte und Demokratie“

### **Auswahl der Arbeitspapiere (Stand: Juni 2005)**

Der Forschungsschwerpunkt IV „Zivilgesellschaft, Konflikte und Demokratie“ wurde im Jahre 2003 gegründet. Discussion Papers, die ab 2003 erscheinen, haben die neue Seriennummer der Veröffentlichungsreihe: „SP IV“ gefolgt von der kompletten Jahreszahl und der Abteilungsreihenanzahl. Discussion Papers, die bis Ende 2002 veröffentlicht wurden, haben noch die alte Seriennummer der ehemaligen Forschungsschwerpunkte bzw. Abteilungen: „FS“ gefolgt von den bisherigen Schwerpunktzahlen (römisch), gekürzter Jahreszahl und der alten Abteilungsreihenanzahl oder „P“ gefolgt von der gekürzten Jahreszahl und der alten Abteilungsreihenanzahl.

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