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Matthew J. Gabel
University of Kentucky

Christopher J. Anderson
Binghamton University, SUNY

The Structure of Citizen Attitudes and the European Political Space

Jean-Monnet-Centre for European Studies (CEuS)

University of Bremen
SFG, Enrique-Schmidt-Strasse
D -28359 Bremen
Phone +49-421-218-9037
Fax +49-21-218-9143



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Abstract

A common concern regarding the viability of institutional reform of the EU is whether European citizens constitute a political community that facilitates democratic governance. One important aspect of this concern is whether or not public perceptions are structured so as to ease or impede political discourse across Europe. To investigate this question, we examine whether the EU mass public organizes its attitudes toward EU policy issues in systematic and meaningful ways. Specifically, we examine whether EU citizens' attitudes across a broad range of policies decided at the EU-level are structured consistent with several prominent models of the EU policy-space. Using Eurobarometer surveys collected in the 15 member states in 1996, we show that, for the mass public, policy positions on EU issues are systematically organized. Moreover, the substantive structure of this policy space is consistent with a common model of the EU policy space suggested by Hix (1998): a socio-economic left-right and a national sovereignty-supranational integration dimension.

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A variety of scholars have noted that the absence of a European demos is fundamentally problematic for the future political integration of the European Union. For example, Scharpf (1999: 187) argues that the democratic deficit is due large part to the lack of common identity and European-wide policy discourse. This deficit cannot be filled simply by institutional reforms designed to enhance the opportunity for popular influence through, for example, a more powerful European Parliament. Similarly, Weiler (1995) argued that a shared identity and common purpose are necessary for democratic institutions functioning legitimately under majority-rule. The evidence discussed previously supports the assertion in these arguments that the EU public lacks the sense of common European identity that defines a demos. I am less convinced that the lack of such a common identity is crucial for stable and legitimate democratic institutions (Gabel 1998a). If we define a legitimate democracy as one with a demos, then clearly the conclusion that democracy cannot be legitimate without a demos is true. But, at least empirically, there is ample evidence that regimes that lack a demos but that are commonly understood as democratic endure for long periods—e.g., consociational democracies. And, if we employ a common definition of a legitimate regime as one that enjoys voluntary compliance by the governed, then we also observe legitimate democratic regimes that endure—again, consider consociational democracies.

But, of course, a demos does facilitate legitimate democratic institutions, particularly those that rely on majority-rule. Given that proposals for further institutional reforms of the EU include the expansion of majoritarian decision-making in the European Parliament for a broad array of policy areas, it is therefore important to address the question of demos. Specifically, I want to focus on one aspect of mass attitudes relevant to EU governance: the existence (or not) of a common EU policy space. As Sharpf notes, one key aspect of the democratic deficit is the lack of a Europe-wide policy discourse. In national contexts, this discourse and policy space is usually defined by a simplifying language—often referred to in terms of ideology—that facilitates political communication and competition. For example, the left-right ideological dimension is crucial to how voter choose among parties, parties compete for voters, and policy positions are packaged in party platforms. In the absence of this structure on the policy space, citizens would lack a central component of political discourse, undermining meaningful political participation. Also, if citizens view all policies through a national or regional lens, then ideological discourse is basically impossible. In contrast, where a fairly simple ideological structure underlies political discourse, voters can identify policy packages that cross-cut ethnic or geographic differences and facilitate compromise and generate stable policy outcomes. Thus, one key question for whether future institutional reforms of the EU can succeed is whether or not an ideological structure underlies mass attitudes on EU policy.

In the remainder of this paper, we examine this question. In the subsequent sections we will describe several contending models of the EU policy-space that generate testable predictions about how citizens structure their preferences over EU policy. We then test these predictions using survey data collected in the fifteen member states.

Models of the EU Policy-Space

How do citizens structure their preferences over EU policies? In the study of citizens' policy preferences in representative democracies, this question is typically answered by developing an empirical model that simplifies voters' preferences across a host of issues into a small number of dimensions. Fundamental to this approach is the assumption that policy positions are structured by underlying ideological dimensions that account for covariation in these positions. These ideological dimensions represent the structure of political discourse, representing a linguistic short-hand for political communication and competition. Consistent with a long tradition of research on mass political behavior, previous studies have conceived of these dimensions as ideological constraints on citizens' policy positions, such that citizens' positions on a broad range of issues are related to each other in consistent and identifiable ways (e.g., Converse 1964; Kinder and Sears 1985: 664).

Ideology therefore reduces differences in citizens' positions over many policies to differences in positions on a small number of dimensions. This implies that if one can uncover the relationships between specific policies and the ideological dimensions (i.e., the *policy content* of the dimension), then one can infer citizens' positions on the ideological dimension from their positions on the specific policies. Put another way, if we know how policy positions are structured, we can infer a citizen's position on one issue from his or her position on another issue. Again, if such an ideological structure exists, this represents the political structure of political discourse. If such a structure does not exist, political competition and communication may be inefficient, at best, and impossibly complicated at worst.

In the absence of theoretical or conceptual guidance, such a model of the ideological space could be created inductively by searching for patterns in policy positions. However, exploratory analyses of this sort come at price. Usually, if the policy-space has more than one dimension, statistical techniques for identifying the policy-space do not generate unique solutions--i.e., there are multiple structures that fit the data equally well (Long 1983: 34). Consequently, we prefer to use conceptual models to specify *ex ante* the relationships between citizens' policy positions and the policy-content of the ideological dimension underlying these positions. We can then examine this underlying ideological structure through confirmatory analysis.

Previous research on EU politics provides several different models of the EU policy-space. None of these models has been explicitly specified for the mass public. Instead, these studies have modeled the policy space of competition between national governments and national political parties over EU policy (e.g., Garret and Tsebelis 1999). However, these models of the political space are generally based on a rationale that also applies to the electorate. For example, Marks and Wilson (2000) argue that the space of partisan competition in the EU is based on the cleavages that structure domestic politics—which is ultimately defined by voter preferences--because these cleavages structure the way parties view policy at the national and the supranational level. In other words, the simplifying maps and cues that parties use to organize their political world before voters at the domestic level constrain how they view EU issues.

European integration may involve some new issues regarding national sovereignty that do not fit onto these domestic political maps. For example, some scholars claim that EU

issues also involve a second dimension—national sovereignty versus integration (Hix 1999a). In the context of the present study, it is important to note that the basic arguments for how to characterize the political space in which parties or national governments compete for EU policy are easily applied to voters as well. Like party leaders, voters also have cognitive maps and cues (e.g., the left-right dimension) that they use to organize the political world in the domestic arena, and these maps and cues provide a prism through which they can organize their preferences over EU policies.

In the following analysis, we will focus on four models of the EU policy-space presented in previous research. These models consist of two important elements: an assumption about the number of dimensions and an assumption about the policy-content of that dimension. Two models are one-dimensional. First, underlying an intergovernmentalist or neo-functionalism view of integration is the idea that all EU issues are fundamentally about national sovereignty (McNamara 1998). Viewed from this perspective, the European Union is not unique. Instead, it is simply an advanced example of a new political space created during a time of fundamental changes in the role of the contemporary nation-state (Kriesi 2000). According to this view, recent processes of globalization and denationalization undermine modern nation-states based on “territorially defined, fixed, and mutually exclusive enclaves of legitimate dominion” (Ruggie 1993: 151). We will refer to this as the *national sovereignty model*.

As a consequence, according to this view citizens’ positions on issues ranging from the adoption of a common currency, increasing EU regulation of the environment, or decreasing EU aid to farmers are due to their position on a single national sovereignty-integration dimension. This dimension is defined by the concerns for the speed of integration and the delegation of national powers to the EU. Among others, this model of the political space was adopted in Garrett and Tsebelis (1996) and Garrett (1992).

A second one-dimensional model of the EU policy space is based on the economic component of the left-right dimension of national politics. Scharpf (1999) and Tsebelis and Garrett (2000) argue that the current political space is defined by battles over market regulation versus market liberalization. According to this view, issues of further integration and substantive EU policies are all have implications for the level of regulation in the EU market. If this model is correct, issues of regulation--environmental protection, consumer protection, labor market constraints--should be prominent in defining the policy-content of the EU policy-space. We will describe this as the *regulation model*.

The third model, presented in Hix (1999) and Schmitt and Thomassen (2000), contends that the EU political space is two-dimensional, and that the two dimensions are unrelated or orthogonal. One dimension spans the conflict over the proper allocation of authoritative competencies, similar to the national sovereignty-integration dimension described above. This dimension captures conflict over who has the power to implement political decisions. While some prefer that the Union exercise such authority, others favor the member-states as the proper forum. This dimension should structure citizens’ attitudes on EU issues due to their level of national attachment or concern for national sovereignty.

Hix also posits that the traditional socio-economic left-right dimension structures the political space, and that this dimension is orthogonal to (independent of) the national sovereignty-integration dimension. Hix conceives of this left-right dimension as a

combination of two components: economic intervention/liberalization and social authoritarian/liberal values (Hix 1999: 73). The first component involves government policies designed to address employment, redistribution of wealth, and public ownership. The second component involves government policies directed at freedom of association, freedom of speech, quality of life issues (e.g., environmental protection) and equality. According to Hix (1999: 74), the left is defined by libertarian social values and calls for redistribution while the right is defined by authoritarian social values and liberal economic policies.

If this two-dimensional model is accurate, the EU political space would resemble the traditional domestic political space on all issues but EU institutional or policy reform. Moreover, we would expect that the two dimensions are not correlated with one another. We refer to this as the *national sovereignty plus left-right model*.

Finally, a fourth model put forward by Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2000) essentially contends that the EU political space is defined by the same two dimensions that Kitschelt (1994) found in his study of the political space in current European democracies. These two dimensions are similar to the two components of the left-right dimension defined by Hix (1999) and discussed above. One dimension is the economic left-right dimension defined by distributive issues and regulation of the economy. The second dimension is a ‘new/old politics’ dimension that is defined by support for Green/ Alternative/ Libertarian (GAL) values at the one end and Traditional/ Authoritarian/ Nationalism (TAN) values at the other. The policy-content of this dimension is defined by issues involving government transparency, environmental protection, and advancing human rights on the GAL end and the control of immigration, crime prevention, and protection of national cultures on the TAN end.

Consistent with the argument of Kitschelt (1994, 1995), Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2000) contend that the new and old politics are correlated in their constraint on the EU policy space and combine to generate essentially a single dimension of political competition that cross-cuts the two dimensions. If this is the case, we would expect that there are two dimensions—economic left-right and ‘new/old politics’-that structure citizen views on EU policy issues, but that these dimensions also are correlated to a significant degree.¹ We refer to this as the *new/old politics plus left-right model*.

Data and Analysis

To investigate whether EU citizens’ attitudes to EU policy are structured according to the models described above, we conducted several confirmatory factor analyses of Eurobarometer survey data. Ideally, we would analyze a data set consisting of EU citizens’ preferences over all the policies that constitute the EU policy space--i.e., all policy areas under EU authority. Using confirmatory factor analysis, we would then estimate how well the hypothesized underlying structure of attitudes accounts for the observed covariation among respondents’ policy preferences.

¹ Empirically, this argument is difficult to separate from the argument Tsebelis and Garrett, for example, make because many of the policy indicators that would make up both a market intervention versus liberalization dimension and the traditional economic left-right dimension overlap.

Unfortunately, exactly such a data set does not exist. The Eurobarometer survey asks a uniform set of questions to respondents across all EU member-states, but rarely asks respondents' about their preferences over a large number of policies under EU authority.² However, one notable exception is the question presented in Table 1, which was asked in Eurobarometer 44.2 Bis (spring 1996).³ This question, applied to the list of policy statements (a-y), largely meets our data needs. First, the list of policy statements covers a broad range of areas of EU policy authority. Furthermore, while the list does not exhaust all EU policies, it does include policy areas that are central to distinguishing among the models of the EU policy space we seek to test. Second, the policy statements generally indicate a policy direction, not simply a policy area. For example, respondents were not asked whether EU activity in the area of international intervention is a priority. They were asked whether intervening "more firmly" is a priority. This directional component is important for our data analysis, since we want to examine how citizens' policy positions across policy areas covary so as to define the policy space.

(Table 1 about here)

The one clear weakness of this survey question for our purposes is that the respondent is not simply asked whether he or she agrees with each policy statement. The respondent is also asked whether the policy statement is a priority. Thus, it is possible that a respondent might support EU policies that fight against drug trafficking but not consider it a priority, resulting in a response of "not a key priority." If this is the case, we would not be able to distinguish such a respondent from one who was against more EU activity in the area of fighting drug trafficking. Put differently, the question is probably tapping salience and direction of each policy statement, and we simply want to extract the respondents' preferred policy direction.

Lacking a better survey, we have no solution to this problem. However, we should note that the survey question design helps minimize this concern. The survey question does not limit the number of policies the respondent can identify as a priority. Consequently, respondents are not forced explicitly to prioritize among policy statements and can state their directional preference regarding each policy statement. We will return to this issue when interpreting the results of the analysis.

Table 2 presents the correlations among the responses to the policy statements (a-y) in Table 1. The focus of our analysis is whether these correlations among the policy positions is structured according to the systematic patterns identified in the models described in the previous section. We used confirmatory factor analysis to bring evidence to bear on this question. Confirmatory factor analysis evaluates the performance of a particular factor structure in accounting for the covariation among a set of variables--in this case, the set of

² The Eurobarometer does include a variety of questions concerning the creation of new EU policy authority, but our focus is on preferences regarding existing EU policy areas.

³ The respondent could answer "key priority", "not a key priority" or "don't know." We coded these responses as (0) not a key priority, (1) don't know, and (2) key priority. We included "don't know" as an intermediate category because we expect it to capture indifference regarding the policy statement and because no indifference category was made available. Also, a dichotomous variable would be problematic for conducting factor analysis.

policy statements. The factor structure specifies (a) how many dimensions or factors underlie the covariation in policy positions, and (b) how specific policy positions relate to particular underlying dimensions and to each other. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis for each factor structure will then allow us to compare the fit of each structure to the observed survey data.

Each of the four models specifies a particular factor structure underlying the survey responses related to the set of policy positions. In order to test these models, we need to specify specific hypotheses about how these dimensions relate to particular policy statements and, in the case of two dimensions, how these dimensions are related. We can then assess which factor structure best accounts for the relationships in citizens' policy positions. Note that all of the models purport to define the policy space, which involves all issues. Thus we expect, for each model, that the underlying structure is associated with all policy statements. However, to clearly define the character of the dimension we must impose some constraints on how particular policies relate to particular dimensions. That is, we must force particular policy statements that we identify as 'markers' for specific dimensions. These markers serve to define the dimensions. We want to choose only enough markers for each dimension as necessary to capture the character of that dimension.

The *national sovereignty model* posits that the EU policy space has one dimension that accounts for respondents' positions on the policy statements. In particular, policy statements that raise issues of national sovereignty should load particularly strongly on that dimension. The set of policy statements provided in the survey does not include many of these statements. Partly, that is because we sought a survey question involving policy areas that the EU already exercises supranational authority over, not issues that are still largely controlled by national governments. However, several policy statements address issues areas over which, at the time of the survey (1996), the EU institutions did not explicitly exercise supranational authority. Specifically, policy statements (d) and (k) concern EU activity in policy areas that are traditionally central to national sovereignty (military and monetary authority) and that were not under EU independent EU authority. We also suspect that several other policies involve national sovereignty.⁴ The policies (b), (l), (m), and (p) all involve issue areas where the EU did not yet exercise concrete authority. At the time of the survey issues of immigration, international crime, drug trafficking, and border controls were decided through intergovernmental cooperation under the EU third pillar. Consequently, these policy statements refer to activity by the EU that would serve to increase supranational authority over these issues at the expense of national sovereignty. If the national sovereignty model structure citizens' EU policy space, we expect these policy statements to all relate to the dimension in the same direction (positive or negative) and to have particularly strong loadings on that dimension. If citizens strictly view EU policy based on their willingness to give up national sovereignty, then this dimension should dominate citizens' policy attitudes.

The *regulation model* also assumes one dimension that underlies citizens' positions on the policy statements, but that the dimension is characterized by economic concerns regarding regulation of the economy. The policy statements (i) and (r) most closely capture these concerns, as they call for activist policies at the EU level to intervene in economic

⁴ Note that we have also conducted the analysis with subsets of these statements as markers for this dimension. The results are consistent with those presented here.

markets (employment and consumer protection), presumably through regulation in the market place. Thus, if this model defines citizens' EU policy space, we expect these statements to relate to the dimension in the same direction and to demonstrate strong loadings on that dimension.

The *national sovereignty plus left-right model* posits that two dimensions underlie the covariation in respondents' policy positions. The first dimension is the national sovereignty dimension described above. The second dimension is the primary dimension of contestation in the EU member-states, which captures salient social and economic issues. In the set of policy areas available, we expect two particular policies to serve as markers for the two components of the left-right dimension. The issue of providing help to the poor should identify the economic redistribution component and the issue of equal opportunities for minorities should identify the equality component. We expect these two markers to relate to the left-right dimension in the same way and to have strong loadings on this dimension.

This model also assumes that these two dimensions are unrelated (orthogonal) to each other. Thus, in our analysis of this model we will specify two unrelated dimensions, where one is dimension structure attitudes on the national sovereignty policy statements and the other dimension structure attitudes on the policy statements concerning policy decided suprナationally.

The *new/old politics plus economic left-right model* also posits two dimensions. One dimension is structured by the 'new/old politics' cleavage based on a distinction between GAL values and TAN values. Since these dimensions should be related to each other, we must pay careful attention to capturing the subtle distinctions between the characters of these two dimensions. We expect several policy statements to serve as 'markers' for the new/old politics dimension. This fundamentally distinguishes 'new' from 'old' politics. Statement (g) focuses on the environment, which captures the 'green' component of the GAL pole of this dimension. Statement (m) address crime issues, which Kitschelt (1994: 28) argues constitute an important part of the 'old politics' component dimension. Statement (o) involves the protection of human rights, which is a new politics issue. Statement (h) refers to EU efforts to make policy-making more transparent, which is a part of the new politics agenda. Statement (p) captures a component of the 'old politics' dimension, which involves protection from immigration.

These statements capture important components of the new/old politics dimension and we find little reason to think they relate to an economic left-right dimension. Put differently, if this model of the EU policy space is correct, variance in respondents' attitudes on these policies will be due only to their position on the new/old politics dimension. However, we do not expect these items to load on the dimension in the same direction. If old/new politics defines the dimension, then (g), (h) and (o) to load in the same direction and in the opposite direction as statements (m) and (p).

For the economic left-right dimension, we consider statements regarding economic policy, redistribution, and regulation/protection of the market as 'markers.' Statement (i) involves a fundamental component of government economic policy: employment policy. Statement (w) refers to addressing income inequality. Statement (f) addresses regulation of the market to protect producers from imports. If an economic left-right dimension exists, we

expect these policies to load strongly on this dimension and to load in the same direction.⁵ That is, respondents on the left end of this spectrum should be for greater EU activity in fighting unemployment and addressing income inequality while those on the right should not.

It is important to note that this model is distinct from the national sovereignty plus traditional left-right model in that the dimensions are expected to correlate highly with each other. As Kitschelt (1994) argues in the domestic context, while these two dimensions should have some independent substantive character, they are closely related that they can form a hybrid dimension that cuts across their two dimensions. Consequently, we do not constrain the dimension to be orthogonal in estimating this model.

Results

Tables 3-5 present maximum likelihood results of the confirmatory factor analyses designed to estimate how well the four models of the EU policy space account for the observed structure of policy positions in the EU mass public.⁶ In addition to the standardized results for the loadings of the policy statements on each dimension, we also report measures of model fit. Consistent with recommendation of Hoyle and Panter (1995), we use the following fit indexes: the goodness-of-fit-index (GFI, Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1981), the non-normed fit index (NNFI, Bentler and Bonnett, 1980), the incremental fit index (IFI, Bollen, 1989), and the comparative fit index (CFI, Bentler, 1990). The values of GFI, NNFI, IFI, and CFI range from 0 to 1.0, with higher values indicating better model fit (Bentler and Bonnet, 1980; Hoyle and Panter, 1995). These measures are sensitive to the model complexity, so that greater model fit due simply to fewer constraints on the inter-relationships of the variables is discounted.

Note that the null hypothesis—that there is no structure to mass attitudes toward EU politics—is viable. Certainly the level of public sophistication and knowledge regarding EU policy issues would suggest that citizens lack any structure to their attitudes on EU policy. Model 1 in Table 3 provides evidence regarding the *national sovereignty model*. Consistent with expectations, the underlying dimension relates in the same direction (positive) to the policy statements calling for loss of national sovereignty over policy (e.g., creating an EU army). That is, respondents who felt that “having a strong European currency” was a key priority were also likely to consider “setting up a European army for common defense” a key priority. However, the marker policy statements regarding national sovereignty are not among the strongest loading policy statements on this dimension. Thus, we would not consider this evidence of a single national sovereignty defining the EU political space for the mass public.

(Table 3 about here)

The results in Model 1 in Table 3 also test the *regulation model*. The marker policy statements for this economic dimension load in the same direction (positive), as expected.

⁵ We do not use the statement about a “strong currency” as a marker because we do not have a clear expectation about whether this is a left or a right position.

⁶ We used EQS statistical software.

For example, respondents who considered “developing joint programs to fight unemployment” as a key priority were also likely to identify “protecting consumers” as key priorities for more EU activity. Thus, this dimension is consistent with the regulation dimension defined by Tsebelis and Garrett (2000). However, while some of the marker statements have strong loadings, the statements with the strongest loadings are difficult to characterize as economic in nature. For example, promoting human rights and improving EU transparency are certainly more representative of ‘new/old politics’ issues than economic regulation. Thus, while the substantive character of this dimension appears much closer to the regulation model than the national sovereignty model, the one-dimensional policy space has a broader character than simply regulation.

Model 3 in Table 4 is designed to capture the constraints imposed by the *national sovereignty plus traditional left-right model* of the EU policy space. Consistent with expectations, the sovereignty dimension (Factor 2) underlies responses to the marker statements in the expected way. Respondents who consider creating an EU army as a key priority also consider having a strong EU currency as a key priority. Put more generally, citizens who support (oppose) increasing supranational political authority at the expense of national sovereignty in one policy area tend to support (oppose) it in other areas.⁷ Other policies that load strongly on this dimension also support this interpretation of the dimension. The statement about increasing control of external borders refers to an aspect of EU activity that, at the time of the survey, was not part of the first pillar of the EU. Thus, the character of this dimension appears to involve national sovereignty.

In addition, the domestic left-right dimension (Factor 1) also has a substantive policy character that is consistent with expectations. Respondents who support economic redistribution and government involvement in the economy also set as priorities policies like environmental protection and equality of opportunity. This structure of attitudes is consistent with the substantive character of the domestic left-right dimension (e.g., Kitschelt 1994).

Finally, the model fit of this factor structure is good and an improvement on the one factor model presented in Table 3. Thus, given the substantive character of the dimensions and the model fit, we consider this model a better characterization of the EU policy space at the mass level than the one factor models discussed earlier.

(Table 4 about here)

Finally, Model 4 in Table 5 provides a test of the *new/old politics plus economic left-right model* of the EU policy space. The results for this model are ambiguous for the new/old politics dimension (Factor 2). On the one hand, the ‘new politics’ statements involving environmental protection and increasing EU transparency have strong loadings in the same direction. This is consistent with expectations. On the other hand, the ‘old politics’ statements involving crime and control of borders also load on this dimension in the same direction as the ‘new politics’. Moreover, two of the strongest loading statements—(x) and (y)—are ‘new politics’ issues and they load in the opposite direction to the other new politics

⁷ Note that if only the statements that most obviously involve a decrease in national sovereignty (creating an army and having an EU currency) are used to mark this dimension, the results are consistent with expectations.

statements. Thus, we do not find clear evidence that this dimension is a new/old politics dimension.

The economic left-right dimension (Factor 2) appears to have the expected substantive character. Two of the strongest loading policy statement on this dimension involved redistribution to the poor. Also, statements about addressing inequality (presumably economic inequality) and unemployment load in the same direction as the redistribution statements.

The results indicate that the inter-relationship between these two dimensions is partially consistent with expectations. The correlation between factors is quite high (.901) and positive. This means that those who identify policies on the economic 'left' as priorities are likely to consider policies with positive loadings on Factor 2 as key priorities. But, since the character of the second dimension is unclear, the results do not support the theoretical expectation about the connection between the policy content of the two dimensions. on the libertarian/alternative/green end of the 'new/old politics' dimension.

The model fit indices all indicate that this two-factor model performs worse than the Hix model presented in Table 4 in accounting for the covariation in respondents' priorities across policy statements. Thus, this model is inferior to the Hix model both in terms of the substantive interpretation of the dimensions and the amount of the policy space accounted for by the model.

(Table 5 about here)

Alternative Explanations

Before concluding, we want to return to our concern about the survey question and how this might influence the results of our analysis. Recall that the survey question asked respondents to identify whether or not they considered each policy statement a 'key priority' for more EU activity. The potential problem with this question design is that it asks both whether the respondent agrees with the policy statement and whether the respondent considers it a priority. Thus, the question taps salience as well as policy position. Our hope is that, because the question did not limit the number of priorities the respondent could choose, differences in the responses are largely reflecting policy positions. However, the variation in responses may actually represent differences in citizens' priorities over areas of EU governance. If respondents are not reading the statements closely enough to discern policy direction they may simply be responding based on their preferences over which issues should be conducted at the EU level. Thus, we want to consider whether such preferences could explain the results of the analyses before we accept the interpretations based on the models of the EU policy space.

Dalton and Eichenberg (1998) developed three hypotheses regarding how citizens vary in their preferences for EU governance over particular policies. We will examine whether the results of the confirmatory factor analysis are consistent with any of these hypotheses. First, based on functionalist theory, Dalton and Eichenberg (1998: 254) argued that support for EU governance of policy should be greatest (weakest) for issues that are difficult (easy) to solve at the national level and which have clear (dubious) benefits from international coordination.

For example, citizens should support EU policies that involve protecting the environment, fighting international crime, and managing immigration and oppose policies designed to address equal opportunity or protecting consumers. The evidence from Model 1 in Table 1 is inconsistent with this hypothesis. Respondents who considered environmental protection or fighting international crime as priorities also considered improving equal opportunities and protecting consumers.

Second, Dalton and Eichenberg (1998: 255) hypothesized that citizens would support EU authority in areas of “low politics” but oppose EU authority over “high politics” issues. “High politics” includes foreign policy, defense, and control of the national economy. “Low Politics” includes welfare policies and tariff policies. Thus, we would expect respondents to put identify issues such involving the creation of a single EU currency and EU army as “not a key priority” and issues such as trade policy and environmental policy as a “key priority.” This hypothesis is not consistent with the results of the confirmatory factor analyses. In Model 1, the low and high politics policies are positively related. Respondents who consider protecting the EU from imports and protecting the environment as key priorities also tend to feel that the creation of an EU army and having and a common currency are key priorities.

Third, Dalton and Eichenberg (1998: 255) hypothesized that citizens will support EU governance of policies that they personally benefit from and oppose those policies decrease their welfare in a utilitarian sense. While it is difficult to identify what this hypothesis implies about variation in respondents’ priorities across policy statements, it seems highly unlikely that the results of the factor analysis are due to such calculations by the respondents. Note that all the policy statements load positively on a single dimension (see Model 1). The only way that the utilitarian hypothesis could account for this is if respondents generally felt the benefited from all of these policy statements. This seems very unlikely, particularly since some of the policy statements concern redistribution of resources. Thus, we are confident that the results of the confirmatory factor analysis cannot be explained by alternative explanations related to these three hypotheses about citizens’ preferences over EU policy authority.

Discussion

Returning to our original concern, the results presented here indicate that citizens’ attitudes toward EU policies are far from random. In fact, we find systematic evidence that the cognitive map of European voters has a meaningful structure that is theoretically interpretable. Taken together, our results indicate that the European political space is two-dimensional in voters’ minds, with a left-right and a supranational component to their policy preferences. These dimensions are unrelated, so knowing a citizens’ attitude on left-right position does not provide guidance as to where he or she stands in terms of the transfer of national sovereignty to the EU

There are several questions this analysis was not designed to and therefore could not address. For example, we do not know whether the attitudinal structure uncovered here is stable over time; that is, whether this structure is a recent phenomenon or whether Europeans’ attitudes have been structured this way for a long time. Moreover, this study was not designed to examine the structure of attitudes *within* member states. Our working

assumption has been that the analysis of a truly *European* policy space requires the analysis of the European electorate as a whole. It is possible if not likely that there are cross-national differences that may be worth investigating. However, these should not detract from the finding that Europeans as a whole conceptualize the space of contestation in the EU in one dimension along a European left-right dimension. And, it is difficult to explain the results reported here with a story about widely varying structures underlying national publics' views on EU policy. We accept that the degree to which the findings here speak to any national public may vary in degree, but it is unlikely that very many national publics differ dramatically in the structure of the EP policy space from this model.

The results presented here also should be reassuring for those worried about representation in the EU. Even when people are not extensively informed about the details involved in governing the Union, they use the shortcuts they know to make sense of EU policy issues. These shortcuts are akin to what the shortcuts they use to make sense of politics at the national level, but they come with a distinctly European flavor. Thus, people simplify the complexities of European-level politics in a way that makes sense to them.

In addition, our results should be comforting to those interested in reforming the democratic institutions of the united Europe. They suggest that voters' conceptual map is not random, and that the considerable political heterogeneity that exists across the member-states does not necessarily pose an obstacle to achieving meaningful democratic representation in the European Union. Recall that the mass policy space identified in the issue is the same policy space that Hix (1999) contends structures competition among political parties at the EU level. If this structure endures at the mass level, existing parties will not have to reinvent themselves to contest European elections when truly European issues come to the forefront of voters' interests. As a result, building a European party system may not be as difficult as it may seem at first glance. However, a fairly stable set of ideological constraints on how people view European policy issues means also that parties may have a difficult time manipulating the policy space at the mass level.

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Table 1: Policy Areas Included in the Survey⁸

Some people expect the European Union to become (even) more active than now in certain policy areas.

For each of the following, please tell me if you consider it a key priority or not.

- a. keeping peace by intervening more firmly in possible conflicts
 - b. dealing with the immigration problem
 - c. protecting our European cultures in all their expressions: art, cinema, etc...
 - d. setting up a European army for a common defense
 - e. paying less attention to the economy and more to social justice
 - f. protecting European Union products from non-member countries' products
 - g. making joint efforts to protect the environment
 - h. giving more information about decisions taken at the European level and their practical consequences
 - i. developing joint programs to fight unemployment
 - j. protecting us from non-European competition, from the USA, Japan, etc...
 - k. having a strong European currency
 - l. fighting drug trafficking
 - m. fighting against international crime
 - n. preventing the import of manufactured goods from countries where working conditions are unacceptable
 - o. promoting the defense of human rights
 - p. increasing controls at all external borders of the European Union
 - q. supporting the poorer regions of the European Union
 - r. protecting consumers
 - s. being closer to the citizens
 - t. improving equality of opportunity between men and women
 - u. creating better opportunities for smaller European Union member countries
 - v. ensuring that every European Union citizen can live, work or study anywhere in the European Union
 - w. giving more help to the poor and socially excluded in the European Union
 - x. giving more help to people in Third World countries
 - y. improving equality of opportunities for minorities
-

⁸ Note that this is not an exhaustive list of all policy areas asked in the survey. We only list the policy areas that we felt were relevant for testing the theoretical models.

Table 2: Correlations among Responses to Policy Questions*

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	I	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x
a	-																							
b	.15	-																						
c	.12	.24	-																					
d	.20	.17	.23	-																				
e	.11	.12	.17	.14	-																			
f	.15	.19	.25	.23	.13	-																		
g	.16	.21	.20	.08	.16	.14	-																	
h	.13	.21	.26	.15	.16	.21	.27	-																
I	.17	.21	.17	.14	.19	.20	.25	.22	-															
j	.14	.19	.24	.24	.12	.50	.11	.20	.21	-														
k	.17	.17	.19	.31	.09	.27	.14	.19	.21	.26	-													
l	.16	.17	.12	.09	.12	.13	.22	.15	.21	.12	.11	-												
m	.17	.20	.14	.08	.13	.13	.28	.21	.22	.13	.12	.58	-											
n	.14	.19	.22	.15	.19	.27	.21	.26	.18	.28	.14	.18	.22	-										
o	.20	.22	.22	.12	.232	.16	.35	.30	.28	.15	.17	.24	.31	.27	-									
p	.16	.25	.23	.23	.13	.31	.17	.24	.16	.33	.19	.22	.22	.29	.21	-								
q	.17	.17	.25	.17	.21	.20	.25	.30	.26	.18	.24	.16	.18	.25	.34	.22	-							
r	.14	.22	.28	.17	.19	.24	.24	.28	.26	.24	.20	.21	.24	.28	.33	.28	.33	-						
s	.13	.18	.25	.16	.21	.18	.23	.33	.24	.19	.18	.18	.21	.25	.31	.25	.30	.46	-					
t	.15	.19	.27	.15	.23	.17	.26	.28	.24	.17	.18	.19	.22	.27	.38	.22	.34	.39	.41	-				
u	.17	.17	.26	.18	.20	.22	.23	.32	.24	.22	.22	.18	.19	.27	.32	.23	.46	.34	.34	.40	-			
v	.17	.19	.23	.19	.16	.21	.23	.30	.29	.28	.28	.16	.19	.22	.30	.20	.34	.30	.28	.31	.35	-		
w	.17	.18	.23	.14	.25	.17	.26	.27	.30	.20	.20	.20	.23	.26	.38	.18	.48	.32	.32	.37	.40	.34	-	
x	.15	.15	.22	.14	.22	.10	.21	.20	.20	.16	.16	.15	.16	.21	.29	.13	.42	.24	.25	.32	.35	.26	.47	-
y	.17	.18	.25	.16	.23	.16	.24	.29	.26	.21	.21	.17	.20	.26	.37	.18	.44	.33	.33	.41	.42	.35	.52	.52

*all correlation coefficients significant at .01 level

Table 3. Factor Patterns (Standardized Solutions) for Single-Factor Models

Key priority for more EU activity:	Model 1: One Factor	Model 2: One Factor
Intervention in intl. conflicts	.306*	.306*
Immigration	.367*	.367*
Protect EU cultures	.444*	.445*
Create EU army	.320*	.320*
Promoting social justice	.359*	.360*
Protect EU from imports	.390*	.390*
Protect environment	.439*	.439*
Increase EU transparency	.499*	.499*
Fight Unemployment	.453*	.454*
Protect from non-EU competition	.389*	.389*
Adopt a strong European currency	.378*	.360*
Fight drug trafficking	.360*	.360*
Fight international crime	.409*	.408*
Prevent import of goods made by child labor	.464*	.464*
Promote human rights	.571*	.571*
Increase control of EU external borders	.423*	.423*
Support poorer EU regions	.613*	.613*
Protect consumers	.575*	.575*
Being closer to the people	.555*	.555*
Improving equal opportunities between men and women	.592*	.593*
Creating greater opportunities for smaller member-states	.609*	.609*
Ensuring free movement of EU citizens	.533*	.532*
More help to poor and socially excluded	.631*	.631*
More help to third world	.530*	.530*
Improving equality of opportunities for minorities	.635*	.635*
Left-Right self placement	-	.065*
N	54004	54004
GFI	.884	.885
NNFI	.756	.753
IFI	.776	.773
CFI	.776	.772

Table 4: Factor Pattern (Standardized Solutions) for National Sovereignty/Left-Right Model

Key priority for more EU activity:	Model 3: Two Factor	
	Factor 1: Traditional L-R	Factor 2: Sovereignty/Integration
Intervention in intl. conflicts	.295*	-
Immigration	-	.289*
Protect EU cultures	.431*	-
Create EU army		.177*
Promoting social justice	.363*	-
Protect EU from imports	.357*	-
Protect environment	.427*	-
Increase EU transparency	.491*	-
Fight Unemployment	.440*	-
Protect from non-EU competition	.355*	-
Adopt a strong European currency	-	.205*
Fight drug trafficking	-	.734*
Fight international crime	-	.758*
Prevent import of goods made by child labor	.449*	-
Promote human rights	.568*	-
Increase control of EU external borders	-	.339*
Support poorer EU regions	.632*	-
Protect consumers	.567*	-
Being closer to the people	.554*	-
Improving equal opportunities between men and women	.603*	-
Creating greater opportunities for smaller member-states	.622*	-
Ensuring free movement of EU citizens	.531*	-
More help to poor and socially excluded	.656*	-
More help to third world	.557*	-
Improving equality of opportunities for minorities	.662*	-
N		54004
GFI		.875
NNFI		.723
IFI		.746
CFI		.746

Table 5: Factor Pattern (Standardized Solutions) for New/old politics/Economic Left-Right Model

Key priority for more EU activity:	Model 4: Two Factor	
	Factor 1 New/old politics	Factor 2 Economic Left-Right
Intervention in intl. conflicts	.218*	.100*
Control Immigration	.489*	-.104*
Protect EU cultures	.454*	-
Create EU army	.168*	.159*
Promoting social justice	.183*	.191*
Protect EU from imports	-	.364*
Protect environment	.467*	-
Increase EU transparency	.517*	-
Fight Unemployment	-	.442*
Protect from non-EU competition	-	.366*
Adopt a strong European currency	-	.376*
Fight drug trafficking	.404*	-
Fight international crime	.458*	-
Prevent import of goods made by child labor	.480*	-
Promote human rights	.588*	-
Increase control of EU external borders	.452*	-
Support poorer EU regions	-	.649*
Protect consumers	.600*	-
Being closer to the people	.579*	-
Improving equal opportunities between men and women	.351*	.267*
Creating greater opportunities for smaller member-states	-	.626*
Ensuring free movement of EU citizens	.136*	.414*
More help to poor and socially excluded	-	.675*
More help to third world	-	.583*
Improving equality of opportunities for minorities	-.171*	.840*
Inter-factor correlation	.840*	
N		54004
GFI		.898
NNFI		.778
IFI		.802
CFI		.802