

What Contributes to Change and Stability in Individual-level Attitudes towards Britain's Membership of the EU? An Analysis of the British Election Panel Studies, 1987-1992 and 1992-1997

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Abstract

The sources of support for the European Union amongst individuals have been studied exhaustively in recent years, but those factors which contribute to stable and unstable opinions have received less scholarly attention. This article uses the best available panel data to assess which factors contributed to both stable and unstable opinion on the European issue in Britain during a period when the major parties were in the process of revising their positions and we might also expect individuals to change their views. Analysis of the British Election Study Panel Studies shows that there is apparently significant individual-level change between 1987-1992 and 1992-1997. Using multinomial logistic regression estimation, this article then assesses which particular sociological and psychological factors are associated with stable and unstable views between 1987-1992 and 1992-1997. It shows that particular individual-level characteristics are related to stable and unstable opinions in the two periods examined here. The paper represents a contribution to the fuller understanding of the social and psychological underpinnings to individual-level attitudes on the European issue.

Keywords

Panel studies; Britain and the European Union; Changing attitudes; Manifesto data

CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEYS PROVIDE A GREAT DEAL OF USEFUL EVIDENCE AS TO whether aggregate political preferences have changed and which individuals (or social groups) have supported (or opposed) the process of European integration in recent years. The same sort of evidence provides little or no indication, however, as to the stability of those individual preferences over time.¹ Alker discussed the notion of a “cross-sectional

¹ One exception, however, is a study of public opinion in Poland towards EU membership (prior to its accession in May 2004) undertaken using both cross-sectional surveys from 1995 and 1998 - to test the determinants of public sentiment on this issue, and a three-wave panel study (1995-1997-1999) - to investigate what impacts upon the stability of pro- and anti-EU views, with a strong focus on the role of values in determining opinion change (Slomczynski and Shabad 2003). Even when sociological and political controls are included, the

fallacy”, whereby inferences based upon observations from a single time-point are generalised to other time points (1969: 69-86). In order to assess the stability of preferences, the total (or gross) change in opinion over time, it is necessary to consult panel data, which is based on repeated measurement of individual characteristics (Weisberg *et al.* 1996: 163; Markus 1979: 7). This article builds upon existing studies in the direction of opinion on the European issue and examines what factors contribute to the stability and instability of European opinions over time.

The foundations of individual opinions on the European Union (or individual support for European institutions) have been studied exhaustively in recent years (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel 1998). Scholars have established that a wide range of social and psychological factors are associated with positive or negative responses to a wide range of questions related to the EU, its various institutions, or associated policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy and the Single Currency (Karp and Bowler 2006; Gabel and Hix 2005; Banducci *et al.* 2003; Karp *et al.* 2003; Kaltenthaler and Anderson 2001). It has been established, for example, that age, social class, education and values are all associated with opinions on the EU (McLaren 2004; De Master and Le Roy 2000; Deflem and Pampel 1996; Janssen 1991; Inglehart 1971, 1970). It has also been demonstrated that variations in economic conditions influence support for the EU (Gabel 1998; Duch and Taylor 1997; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Anderson 1995; Inglehart and Rabier 1978). Furthermore, more recent studies have revealed that particular psychological states, such as national identities, a xenophobic disposition or illiberal views on immigration, are related to attitudes towards the integration process (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005; Luedtke 2005; McLaren 2001, 2002). In general terms, this research has produced a familiar portrait of the typical “Europhile” on the one hand (young, well-educated and cosmopolitan) and typical “Eurosceptic” (old, less educated and parochial) on the other.²

The cumulative literature on public support for the EU is impressive, but has one clear limitation. Studies have tended to rely on evidence from a single cross-sectional survey. As such, these “snapshots” of opinion lack any temporal dimension (Bartels 2000; Finkel 1995; Markus 1982). It is therefore not possible to assess the dynamics of opinion formation or recognise that opinions are sensitive to measurement error. Furthermore, while some of these studies have indeed examined attitudes over time they have usually relied upon analysing data from a series of cross-sectional studies, with freshly-drawn samples, such as Eurobarometer. Moreover, while aggregate time-series studies have provided additional evidence, they have suffered from the general limitations associated with such studies (such as ecological fallacy, failure to offer precise causal mechanisms, and lack of appropriate controls) (Weisberg *et al.* 1996: 19). As a result, few studies have examined in any detail the stability or strength of individual opinions towards the EU.

This article provides a partial correction to the literature on opinions towards the European Union. It uses panel data that provides a direct measure of the stability and instability of opinions over time (Bartels 2000; Finkel 1995). It analyses two panel studies which together cover a period in the British political landscape when the two main parties – Conservative

researchers find a “strong impact of democratic and capitalist values on individual-level stability and change in attitudes towards Poland joining the EU” (Słomczynski and Shabad 2003: 531). It should be noted, however, that the sample size for the panel study analysis is $n=81$.

² Other studies have used the British Election Panel Survey (BEPS) to investigate a range of questions regarding changing patterns of public opinion and voting behaviour, attempting to determine what particular factors have affected vote choice over the entire electoral cycle or during an individual election campaign (Andersen *et al.* 2005; Andersen 2003; Evans 1999), what underpins feelings of national sentiment or identity (Heath *et al.* 1999), and how partisanship mediates economic perceptions (Evans and Andersen, 2006). It is also worth noting that various waves of the British Household Panel Study have also carried questions relating to aspects of the European issue, and presents another rich survey resource for analysing opinion-change on a range of social and political issues.

and Labour - altered course on the European issue - between 1987 and 1997. Similar models are estimated in order to see which sociological and psychological characteristics are related to opinion change and stability during these periods. The models specifications are guided, firstly, by well-established findings from the existing literature on cross-national support for the EU and, secondly, by well-documented features of the changing British political landscape in this period.

The structure of the article is as follows. The first section provides an overview of the party political context for the period covered here, analysing the relevant manifestos to show how the two main parties revised their positions towards Europe. In particular, it uses manifesto data to underline this positional change. The second section then focuses upon grassroots opinion on the European issue in relation to sociological characteristics, psychological factors and policy preferences. Based upon this, a series of hypotheses are specified, setting out which particular factors are expected to be related to stable or unstable opinions on the European issue. Next, descriptive statistics are presented, in the form of "turnover" tables, for the dependent variable of interest from each panel study in order to show the "flow of opinion" between 1987-1992 and 1992-1997. Next, the analytical procedures and the data source used for the analysis are discussed. Then, the models estimations are presented and the results discussed. Finally, some concluding remarks are provided.

The party political context, 1987-1997

It is useful here to provide a general overview of party positions during the period under examination in this article. This can be done by using evidence obtained from the manifestos of the parties. Specifically, data from the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) can be used which systematically measures the negative or positive positions of the parties on the European issue between 1983 and 1997. This evidence can be buttressed with selected extracts from individual manifestos to show in more detail the changing emphases in language that reflect the shifting concerns and priorities of the parties on the European issue.

It is important to acknowledge, though, that formal statements of party positions are not drawn up in a political vacuum and that the pressures of internal debates, electoral competition and rival party policy positions are all relevant factors to take into account (Pennings 2006: 265-7). Manifesto contents reflect "a compromise between different viewpoints in the party and convey an impression of unity" (emphasis added) (1981: 10). That said, however, election manifestos are clearly important documents on two counts:

It is the only official statement of policy made by the parties. In contrast, leaders' speeches are to considerable extent expressions of opinion, which are not necessarily binding in government. Second, although not read directly by many electors, the manifesto is designed to pre-empt and direct media discussion. It thus helps set the agenda to an extent not equalled by any other document or pronouncement (Bara and Budge 2001: 591).

This discussion of party manifestos focuses on the period between 1983 and 1997, when the Conservatives were in office and Labour confined to opposition. During this period, the two parties changed course on the European issue. Two noteworthy features are worth remarking upon before analysing the manifestos of the parties in turn. Firstly, these extracts give a clear indication of the polarised positions of the parties on the European issue in 1983. Secondly, they show how these earlier positions subsequently underwent considerable adjustment in the period leading up to the 1997 General Election.

As a starting point, the 1983 Labour Party manifesto emphatically declared that “British withdrawal from the Community is the right policy for Britain - to be completed well within the lifetime of the parliament” (Dale 2000b: 280). The long-standing left-wing antagonism within the party to what the Common Market represented, both in terms of its underlying economic basis and the necessary pooling of national sovereignty, was captured in the statement declaring: “We are seeking to extricate ourselves from the Treaty of Rome and other Community treaties which place political burdens on Britain” (Dale 2000b: 281). Under the steadying influence provided by Neil Kinnock’s leadership and more moderate opinion after the 1983 election debacle, however, “The 1987 manifesto was agreed with little fuss and marked a step back to the middle ground” (Kavanagh 2000: 5). By 1992, after a wide-ranging policy review had been undertaken within the party, the Labour manifesto was more enthusiastic, albeit cautiously so, as to what the positive aspects of the EU were for Britain and what the priorities of a Labour government would be on this issue:

The Labour government will promote Britain out of the European second division into which our country has been relegated by the Tories ... We shall use that presidency [the British presidency, starting on 1 July 1992] to end the Tories opt-out from the Social Chapter, so that the British people can benefit from European safeguards. We will also use our presidency to help ensure that poorer countries are not disadvantaged as a result of the Single Market. We shall play an active part in negotiations on Economic and Monetary Union. We shall fight for Britain's interests, working for Europe-wide policies to fight unemployment and to enhance regional and structural industrial policy (Dale 2000b: 341).

By 1997, the European conversion of the Labour Party was largely complete, with the manifesto containing “a detailed agenda for reform”, enabling a Labour government to lead “from the front during the UK presidency in the first half of 1998” (Dale 2000b: 379). On the Euro, the Labour manifesto was balanced and cautious, adamant that entry could only be “determined by a hard-headed assessment of Britain’s economic interests. Only Labour can be trusted to do this: the Tories are riven by faction” (Dale 2000b: 380).

In contrast, comparing the manifestos of the Conservative Party between 1983 and 1997 offers an insight into the party’s growing criticism of developments within the integration process from the late 1980s onwards. This was above all demonstrated in strong opposition towards the emergence of a “social dimension” to the EU. In 1983, however, the Conservative election manifesto claimed that the party possessed the middle-ground on this issue and, thereby, had the most pragmatic approach towards the EEC:

We came to office determined to make a success of British membership of the Community. This we have done ... The Labour Party wants Britain to withdraw from the Community, because it fears that Britain cannot compete inside and that it would be easier to build a Socialist siege economy if we withdrew. The Liberals and the SDP appear to want Britain to stay in but never to upset our partners by speaking up forcefully. The Conservatives reject both extreme views (Dale 2000a: 308).

The 1987 manifesto was broadly positive in its statements on the EC, though, unlike 1983, it did not make any critical remarks on the policies held by the other parties. It stressed the success of the Conservative government in realising the goal of a single market within the EC with the signing of the 1986 Single European Act, an objective very much in keeping with Thatcherite economic policies. It declared that “Britain has led the way in establishing a genuine common market, with more trade and services moving freely across national boundaries” (Dale 2000a: 349). The 1992 Conservative manifesto, meanwhile, clearly reflected the growing concern of the party about the need to protect the Thatcherite settlement on economic, social and labour market policy built during the 1980s:

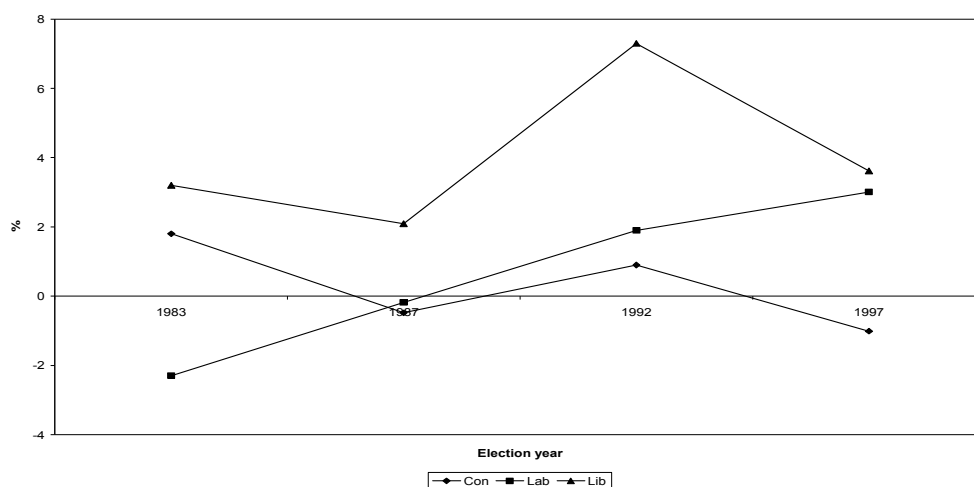
Britain refused to accept the damaging Social Chapter proposed by other Europeans, and it was excluded from the Maastricht Treaty ... We will continue to resist changes to the Treaty of Rome that would damage British business ... We will insist on more effective control over Community spending and will resist pressure to extend Community competence to new areas (Dale 2000a: 360).

The 1997 manifesto, in distinct contrast to the position of the Labour Party on this issue, reiterated the strong opposition of the Conservative Party to the social dimension of the EU. It also emphasised the party's concern at the prospects of further extensions of EU competence, with Britain's economic flexibility being impeded by regulations imposed from Brussels:

The European social model is not social and not a model for us to follow. But if Britain signed up to the Social Chapter it would be used to impose that model on us – destroying British jobs. No Conservative government will sign up to the Social Chapter or introduce a national minimum wage ... We will resist the imposition of other social burdens on the work place through a new European employment chapter (Dale 2000a: 426).

Thus, the 1983 and 1997 party manifestos both contained statements of policy on Europe that offered clearer differences in position, whilst this was less so in the 1987 and 1992 documents. In 1983, the principal dividing line between the two main parties was their opposing viewpoints on the economic basis on which the EEC operated. By 1997, and this is also somewhat evident in 1992, the social dimension of the EU was the major point of contention in references to the European issue. As well as highlighting selected Labour and Conservative manifesto statements on European policy for particular elections, it is also useful to visually track the change of direction of the main parties. To this end, Figure 1 provides an overview of how the two major parties, Conservative and Labour, shifted their stance towards the integration process between 1983 and 1997. It provides a summary indicator of the direction of opinion towards Europe by subtracting the number of negative references to this issue contained in each party manifesto from the number of positive references. As a result, scores above zero indicate an overall positive stance and minus scores denote an overall negative position.

Figure 1: Changing party positions towards European integration, 1983-1997



Source: Data taken from the *Comparative Manifestos Project* (Budge and Klingemann 2001).

Next, in response to the shifting positions of the parties on European policy, it is useful to provide some evidence bearing upon the views of the public on the European issue over a similar period.

The British electorate: Evidence from cross-sectional studies, 1987-1997

As the previous section documented, the two main parties – Labour and Conservative – considerably revised their positions on the European issue during this period. It is important, therefore, to explore whether the relationships between individual characteristics and opinions have also shifted over time. Here, opinions are displayed on the European issue, specifically in relation to membership of the EU, with respect to three sets of factors for the period 1987-1997 - sociological characteristics, political and psychological variables, and policy preferences. In the 1987, 1992 and 1997 BES surveys the same dichotomous question was used for the European issue – should Britain withdraw from the EU or should its membership of the EU continue?

Table 1: Sociological characteristics and opinion towards EU membership, 1987-1997

Variable	1987		1992		1997	
	Continue	Withdraw	Continue	Withdraw	Continue	Withdraw
Gender						
Male	68.0	29.1	75.0	21.5	63.7	30.0
Female	64.1	29.5	70.7	20.6	52.1	28.7
Age cohort						
18-24	75.9	17.2	81.0	13.6	65.4	21.7
25-34	69.6	26.3	76.8	16.0	60.1	25.1
35-44	68.2	28.0	72.7	21.7	58.7	27.9
45-54	64.8	32.3	75.3	20.3	63.1	27.9
55-64	61.5	34.5	69.4	25.2	55.4	32.0
Over 65*	58.3	35.2	65.0	27.4	50.9	36.3
Age left full-time education						
15 or younger	56.2	38.7	64.0	28.3	46.3	37.4
16 yrs	70.3	24.0	74.6	18.6	50.9	32.2
17 yrs	74.8	21.6	78.2	17.2	68.7	24.2
18 yrs	80.7	15.9	77.4	18.9	70.7	20.3
19 or older	81.5	16.2	90.7	7.2	82.5	13.6
Social class						
Salariat	82.0	16.0	85.3	12.3	72.3	20.1

Routine non-man.	69.2	26.8	75.1	18.0	56.0	29.7
Petty bourgeoisie	65.0	31.5	69.4	25.2	57.1	31.6
Supervisory	55.7	39.4	73.7	22.2	56.9	34.7
Working class	54.4	39.3	63.2	28.4	45.9	37.0

Source: *BESIS*, at www.besis.org, and *BES surveys*, 1987, 1992 and 1997.

"Don't know" responses not shown; weighted percentages.

* For the BES 1997 only those cases within the age range of 65-74 are included.

Table one displays several interesting shifts and continuities in opinion. The continuities tend to reaffirm what has long been known about the relationship between social characteristics and support for the EU. The salariat (professionals) are, for example, much more in favour of membership than the lower social grades. The same pattern also applies to education (measured here in less than ideal terms as the age an individual completed full-time education). Men are also consistently more positive about Europe than women, though the difference is greatest in 1997. The patterns for age cohorts again largely confirm prior research. The oldest cohort, those age 65 or older, are most likely to support withdrawal while those in the 18-24 and 25-34 categories are more in favour of continued EU membership.

Table two cross-tabulates opinion towards the EU with two indicators of party support: vote choice and party identification. Noticeable changes occur within both vote choice and partisanship. The shifts that occur are complementary. Both Labour voters and identifiers become more favourable to membership of the EU while, conversely, those supporting and identifying with the Conservative Party become more Eurosceptic in their views. For Labour identifiers, an important shift in the changing direction of opinion occurred between 1983 and 1987 (not shown here), which is confirmed by the annual data available from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) series on opinions towards the EU by partisan attachment. This evidence suggests that there are two instances in which year-on-year opinion swung strongly in a pro-EU direction – between 1984 and 1985 and 1987 and 1989 (no BSA survey was conducted in 1988). This provides some support for the social-psychological proposition that those who "identify" with a party are inclined to follow its lead on policy, particularly on less salient issues.

The shift in opinion for Conservative identifiers took place between 1992 and 1997. Again, the yearly data from the BSA series provides further evidence of this major shift in opinion. From 1994 to 1995 and 1995 to 1996, Conservative identifiers become emphatically more Eurosceptic (though this trend is based on a differently worded question regarding Britain's EU membership).³ Yet it is also clear that opinion as a whole becomes somewhat more Eurosceptic during this period. For instance, the combined proportion of the entire electorate choosing the options "leave the EU" or "stay in the EU and try to reduce its powers" were: 1994 - 36.4 per cent; 1995 - 36.9 per cent; 1996 - 58.2 per cent. The equivalent figures for Conservative Party identifiers are: 1994 - 45 per cent; 1995 - 53.2 per cent; and 1996 - 70.9

³ The wording for the first BSA EU membership question, asked between 1983 and 1991, is: "Do you think that Britain should continue to be a member of the EEC or should it withdraw?" The second, amended question, with a revised five-item response format, has been asked since 1993 and is worded: "Do you think the Britain's long term policy should be ... to leave the Europe Union, to stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers, to leave things as they are, to stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers, or, to work for the formation of a single European government?" The BSA datasets on which this evidence is based were obtained from the UK Data Archive, University of Essex.

per cent. It is clear then, that both Conservative partisans and public opinion as a whole moved in a more Eurosceptic direction, with this shift most evident between 1995 and 1996.

Table 2: Party support and opinion towards EU membership, 1987-1997

Variable	1987		1992		1997	
	Continue	Withdraw	Continue	Withdraw	Continue	Withdraw
Vote choice						
Con	73.8	22.6	76.3	20.0	55.2	36.1
Lab	55.5	39.5	70.0	22.3	61.5	24.8
Lib Dem	68.6	27.9	77.3	16.8	61.2	27.7
Party identification						
Con	72.7	24.1	74.5	22.4	55.8	36.5
Lab	56.0	39.1	66.9	25.1	61.1	25.7
Lib Dem	70.6	25.9	70.9	20.9	64.9	26.3
Tabloid	64.0	32.7	66.5	27.3	53.8	35.1
Broadsheet	84.8	13.5	88.3	9.6	77.4	18.4

Source: BES surveys, 1987, 1992 and 1997.

"Don't know" responses not shown; weighted percentages.

Table three completes the profile of public opinion towards the EU. It consists of a series of policy questions which have been asked in four BES surveys used in this article. The policy questions included here tap into both traditional left-right issues, such as the appropriate role of government and matters of social morality. On the whole, the non-economic issue preferences display consistent relationships over time with opinion towards the EU. These include views on the death penalty, abortion and equal opportunities for ethnic minorities. On questions concerning economic redistribution and the appropriate role of the state, however, there are clear shifts in direction between 1987 and 1997. For instance, while right-wing preferences on the redistribution of income, the role of the government in directly creating employment and the abolition of private education are clearly associated with pro-EU views in the 1980s, by 1997 this pattern no longer holds true.

Table 3: Policy preferences and opinion towards EU membership, 1987-1997

Variable	1987		1992		1997	
	Continue	Withdraw	Continue	Withdraw	Continue	Withdraw
Government should spend more money to create jobs						
Should	65.2	30.4	70.6	22.6	56.4	32.4
Should not	71.1	26.2	78.3	16.1	65.0	27.3
Government should redistribute wealth and income						
Agree	62.0	33.9	68.0	24.3	57.1	30.7
Disagree	74.6	21.8	77.6	18.5	63.5	29.2
Government should abolish private education						
Should	55.8	39.5	67.4	26.2	63.5	25.2
Should not	71.7	25.0	74.6	20.3	60.6	30.4
Britain should bring back the death penalty						
Agree	64.6	31.6	62.9	30.3	48.1	40.7
Disagree	78.6	19.4	82.0	13.3	76.9	14.3
Abortion has gone too far on the NHS						
Agree	61.9	32.9	61.8	29.6	51.8	36.4
Disagree	62.1	34.9	69.2	26.1	58.7	28.8
Equal opportunities for Blacks and Asians have gone too far						
Too far	57.3	38.1	60.3	33.6	45.8	42.1
Not far enough	73.9	22.3	80.8	15.0	70.3	21.4

Source: BES surveys, 1987, 1992 and 1997.

"Don't know" responses not shown; weighted percentages.

As a "first cut", the evidence presented here suggests a shift in the left-right policy alignments underpinning opinions towards the EU during the 1980s and 1990s. This shift in left-right issue preferences appears to broadly parallel the changes in the basis of partisan support for the EU. There is, from the evidence examined in this section, much continuity evident in terms of anti-EU views being rooted in socially conservative beliefs and parochial sentiment. Previous research showed that opposition to the Common Market was related to low occupational status and to ethnocentrism (Nias, 1973: 255). While it became harder to distinguish support and opposition to the EU by left-right policy preferences, clearly questions of social morality were still a powerful discriminator of views on the European issue. The next section sets out the hypotheses to be tested, drawing upon general insights from existing studies on public opinion towards the EU in its member states and from the review of party movements and public opinion trends discussed above.

Hypothesis specification

The hypotheses to be tested here concern both sociological and psychological variables, including those which are, on the one hand, more long-term and enduring and those which, on the other, are more short-term and responsive to other factors. Standard social controls in the models are also included, namely age and gender. Firstly, the sociological variables are as follows:

- Education: better educated voters tend to have more relevant knowledge and organise that information in a structured and accessible way (Bartle, 2000; Converse, 1964). They are arguably less vulnerable to question order and question wording effects or guessing at random.⁴
- Social class: aside from the pervasive interest in the effect of class on British politics (Heath *et al.* 2001, 1991), there are specific reasons for believing that opinion stability varies with social class. Salaried employees are far more likely than the working class to come into contact with European issues (directives, regulations) in their everyday lives and be exposed to relevant information. They are far more likely, therefore, to form consistent positive or negative impressions of the EU and this is likely to be reflected in their opinions.

Secondly, the expectations regarding the psychological and politico-economic variables are as follows:

- Partisanship: partisan voters are often supposed to follow the cues provided by the parties (Bartels 2002; Green *et al.* 2002; Miller and Shanks, 1996; Butler and Stokes, 1974). If party positions on the EU are stable, then partisans should be more stable than non-partisan voters. Since the parties did shift their positions on the EU over both periods (the Conservative Party became more Eurosceptic and Labour more supportive in both periods under consideration), there are reasons for suggesting that opinion change and stability might differ between the parties' supporters. As a result, it is expected that Conservative identifiers will be more likely to have unstable opinions between 1992 and 1997, specifically in relation to moving from a positive to a negative stance. Conversely, it is expected that Labour identifiers will demonstrate the opposite shift during the same period (more likely to move from a negative to a positive position).
- Ideological positions: ideology may also have an effect on opinion stability. Those citizens with strong images of the good society (Downs 1957) may have more consistent attitudes that push them towards certain policy preferences. The two ideological predispositions used here are the left-right and liberal-authoritarian scales. Firstly, as a result of the changing context documented above, it is expected that those respondents advocating right-wing positions will be more likely to be consistently supportive of EU membership between 1987 and 1992 and the economically liberal Single Market programme, although the EU's promotion of a "social dimension" in the late-1980s onwards is noted here. Secondly, and building upon from previous findings on the relationship between authoritarian sentiments and positions on the European Union, it is expected that those respondents with generally

⁴ It is also plausible to argue that that more highly-educated individuals, those with university degrees for instance, could be prone to greater levels of instability, due to their being more likely to alter their political opinions on receiving and thinking about, new information and evidence. Suffice to say, the findings given later in this chapter with regard to the measures of education should hopefully shed some new light, in the British context, on the interrelationships between respondents' levels of education and opinion stability.

authoritarian positions will be more likely to be consistently opposed to Britain's EU membership than liberals over both five-year periods covered here.

- Economic evaluations: here, findings from previous studies are followed, which found that positive economic evaluations tend to be associated with pro-European views. Therefore, it is expected that positive appraisals of both indicators of economic performance used here – prices and unemployment – will be positively related to stable pro-European views in both panel studies.⁵
- Policy preferences on immigration/minority rights: as previous studies have demonstrated, hard-line opinions on questions relating to immigration and minority rights often correlate with opposition to the integration process in EU member states, perhaps reflecting an underlying nationalistic or xenophobic disposition. It is expected, therefore, that individuals holding illiberal views on immigration are more likely to hold stable anti-EU opinions during both periods in question (1987-1992 and 1992-1997).
- Political attention: the more likely individuals are to pay attention to news in the mass media, the more knowledgeable they are about politics and less likely to change opinions (Zaller 1992). This is in part because each additional piece of information represents a smaller proportion of total knowledge and thus can exert a weaker influence on attitudes (Fiorina 1981). It may also be in part because knowledge is indicative of sophistication and this reduces temporal and contemporary contradictions (Luskin 1990, 1987). As a result, it is anticipated that those individuals who report paying more attention to news and current affairs will be more consistent in their views on EU membership and, since previous studies have shown that greater information leads to more positive views, this is expected to particularly apply to holding stable pro-European positions.

With the hypotheses outlined, the next section discusses the “turnover” in opinion on the European issue in the two panel studies, presenting the necessary descriptive statistics before reporting the multivariate analysis.

The flow of opinion on the European issue, 1987-1992 and 1992-1997

A clear indication that opinion on British membership of the EU is unstable in the period under investigation is provided by individual-level evidence from the panel studies. The “turnover” tables four and five together show the “flow of opinion” on EU membership for the 1987-1992 and 1992-1997 British Election Panel Studies (BEPS). In the first study, covering 1987-1992, some 72.7 per cent of the sample expressed fully consistent opinions over the space of five years. In the second study for 1992-1997, 65.3 per cent expressed the same opinions five years apart. In both panel studies a significant minority crossed over from “continue” to “withdraw” (5 per cent in 1987-1992 and 10.9 per cent in 1992-1997). Equally, significant minorities crossed from “withdraw” to “continue” (16.3 per cent in 1987-1992 and 6.5 per cent in 1992-1997). The net flows of +11 points net support for the EU (between 1987 and 1992) and -4 points net support (between 1992 and 1997) reflect the changes in the aggregate-level evidence from MORI polls for the same periods (net flows of +9 points net support between 1987 and 1992 and -17 points net support between 1992 and 1997).⁶ In

⁵ A recent study has levelled serious criticisms at the applicability of utilitarian approaches to explaining public support for the EU (see Duch and Palmer, 2006).

⁶ These figures were taken from the trend data on EU membership available at <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/europe/membership.shtml>.

both cases significant portions also move to and from registering no opinion (5.6 per cent in 1987-1992 and 17.5 per cent in 1992-1997, including don't knows and non-responses).

Table 4: Flow of opinion on Britain's membership of the EU, 1987 by 1992 (per cent totals in cells)

%	1987			
1992	Continue	Withdraw	Don't know	Not answered
Continue	63.1	5.0	0.7	0.6
Withdraw	16.3	9.6	1.0	0.2
Don't know	2.4	0.5	0.3	
Not answered	0.1	0.1		

Source: BEPS 1987-92

Table 5: Flow of opinion on Britain's membership of the EU, 1992 by 1997 (per cent totals in cells)

%	1992			
1997	Continue	Withdraw	Don't know	Not answered
Continue	53.7	10.9	2.0	7.8
Withdraw	6.5	10.7	0.7	2.5
Don't know	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.4
Not answered	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.1

Source: BEPS 1992-97

Taken together, tables four and five provide evidence of substantial temporal variation in responses to the same survey question across both panel studies. This further suggests that analysis of panel study data might provide a useful supplement to those studies that have examined opinions at one point in time or analysed opinions over time using cross-sectional surveys. The next section outlines the analytical procedures used in this analysis.

Analytical procedures

For the three panel surveys, the question asking directly about respondents' preferences on Britain's EU membership is available on two waves (1987 and 1992; 1992 and 1997). Reflecting the nature of the dependent variable, the estimation technique used is multinomial logistic regression. Before presenting and discussing the results, it is worth reviewing the data and methods in more detail.

Data source

This analysis uses data drawn from the best available source: the British Election Panel Studies (BEPS). These comprise a series of stratified random sample surveys with repeated interviewing of the same set of respondents.⁷ The 1987-1992 study only interviewed respondents in 1987 and 1992, though the latter component consisted of five separate stages. The 1992-1997 panel study, on the other hand, conducted in total five waves of interviews with the same set of respondents, but in separate years (1992, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997).⁸ The BEPS contains an extensive and continuous range of measures on topical political issues, along with a wide range of other variables.

Dependent variable

For the first study, the EU opinion variable was asked in 1987 and in the post-election face-to-face stage of the 1992 component. For the second study, the standard EU question used here was only asked on the first and last waves (1992 and 1997). The question asked on the issue of EU membership in both studies was: "Do you think Britain should continue to be a member of the European Community (European Union) or should it withdraw? (1) Continue, (2) Withdraw, (3) Don't know, (4) Not answered".

As a simple dichotomous measure could potentially hide much of the detail within a multivariate analysis, the dependent variable used here is a multinomial, non-interval level measure. For this analysis, respondents are classified into one of four categories: (1) stable pro-European, (2) stable anti-European, (3) unstable pro- to anti-European and (4) unstable anti- to pro-European. Accordingly, those respondents who reported "don't know" across both waves, or who moved from "don't know" to a clear position or vice versa, have been excluded from this analysis.⁹ The next section briefly discusses the explanatory variables used in the analysis.

Independent variables

As the section outlining the hypotheses section made clear, the analysis explores the role of both sociological and psychological variables. Full details of how the sociological and psychological variables used in this analysis are coded are provided in the appendix. Opinions are rooted in sociology and so is opinion stability. Both are also influenced by psychological factors that are more difficult to measure. It is therefore important to try and

⁷ The BEPS surveys have all been weighted and those cases with missing data have been excluded from the analysis conducted here. The survey data were taken from the UK Data Archive, University of Essex.

⁸ Between 1992 and 1995, then six-monthly interviewing began in the period leading up to the 1997 General Election. "A sample of people drawn from the electoral register of those eligible to vote on April 9 1992 who were initially surveyed in Spring 1992 and who agreed to take part in further surveys."

⁹ The sample sizes for the 1987-92 study are N=3,826 for Wave 1 (1987 cross-section) and N=1,608 for Wave 4 (1992 face-to-face stage).⁹ There is, however, some missing data in response to the question on the EU (1604 responses were coded for this variable on each of the two waves). The number of respondents who were interviewed and gave responses to the question on both occasions was N=1508 (94 per cent of the total sample). Therefore, 96 respondents either expressed "don't know" or didn't provide a response on both waves or, alternatively, moved from a clear preference to no preference or vice versa. For 1992-97 the sample size is N=2855 for the first wave (1992) and N=1573 (1997) for the fifth wave. Yet again, not all respondents gave responses to the question and the number offering a response on both waves is N=1287 (81.8 per cent of the sample). The total number of respondents offering non-responses on both waves, including "don't knows" and those supplying no answer, or switching from a clear preferences to a non-response or vice versa, is N=288.

assess the relationship between changing and unchanging opinions on the European issue and psychological variables.¹⁰

Social and demographic characteristics tend to be fixed throughout the lifetime of these studies and are, therefore, usually measured on only the first wave. Psychological characteristics, such as party identification, ideological positions, political interest and knowledge are usually measured on both waves. For the sake of consistency and in order to reduce criticisms about causal order, political and psychological measures are used from the first wave of both panel studies where available. With the explanatory variables outlined, the next section presents the results of the analysis and discusses the main findings.

Results

Multinomial logistic regression estimates the impact of a range of sociological and psychological factors upon the four-category dependent variable. This section discusses the main findings from the models for 1987-1992 and 1992-1997, looking at the separate estimations for the categories of the dependent variable in turn. The results reported here show the parameter estimates – specifically the B coefficients, level of statistical significance, standard errors and the odds ratios for the explanatory variables (displayed in table six - 1987-1992 and table seven - 1992-1997).

Table 6: Estimation results from multinomial logistic regression for opinion change and stability on the European issue, 1987-1992

	Parameter estimates			
	Variable	B	Std. Error	Exp(B)
Stable continue	Intercept	3.94	0.94	-
	Gender	0.36	0.24	1.44
	Aged 25 to 34	-0.73	0.46	0.48
	Aged 35 to 44	-0.76*	0.45	0.47
	Aged 45 to 54	-0.75	0.46	0.47
	Aged 55 to 64	-0.53*	0.47	0.59
	Aged 65 and over	0.19	0.57	1.21
	Left education at 16	0.51*	0.29	1.66
	Left education at 17	0.49	0.41	1.63
	Left education at 18	0.70	0.49	2.02
	Left education at 19 and over	0.56	0.41	1.74
	Salariat	0.79***	0.32	2.20

¹⁰ Unfortunately, variables measuring an individual's sense of national identity are not available for the 1987-92 study and, in order to maintain a consistent model specification, those available in the 1992-97 BEPS are omitted from the analysis.

	Routine non-manual	0.17	0.28	1.19
	Petty bourgeoisie	-0.02	0.43	0.98
	Con ID	-0.66	0.50	0.51
	Lab ID	-0.99*	0.50	0.37
	Lib ID	-0.60	0.52	0.55
	Other ID	-1.33	0.79	0.27
	Left-right scale	1.37	0.77	3.92
	Liberal-authoritarian scale	-2.48***	0.77	0.08
	Immigration	-1.56***	0.58	0.21
	Prices	1.23	0.69	3.42
	Unemployment	-0.52	0.38	0.59
	Watch PEBs	0.74***	0.29	2.10
	Read news during campaign	0.18	0.24	1.20
Withdraw to continue	Intercept	3.11	1.05	-
	Gender	0.04	0.27	1.04
	Aged 25 to 34	-0.29	0.51	0.75
	Aged 35 to 44	-0.48	0.50	0.62
	Aged 45 to 54	-0.66	0.52	0.52
	Aged 55 to 64	-0.25	0.53	0.78
	Aged 65 and over	0.44	0.63	1.55
	Left education at 16	0.36	0.34	1.43
	Left education at 17	0.28	0.48	1.32
	Left education at 18	-0.60	0.67	0.55
	Left education at 19 and over	0.49	0.47	1.64
	Salariat	-0.06	0.38	0.94
	Routine non-manual	-0.20	0.32	0.82
	Petty bourgeoisie	0.24	0.48	1.27
	Con ID	-0.74	0.54	0.48
	Lab ID	-1.10**	0.53	0.33

	Lib ID	-0.95**	0.57	0.39
	Other ID	-1.10	0.86	0.33
	Left-right scale	-1.16	0.89	0.31
	Liberal-authoritarian scale	-2.06**	0.86	0.13
	Immigration	-0.02	0.68	0.98
	Prices	0.51	0.80	1.67
	Unemployment	-0.40	0.45	0.67
	Watch PEBs	0.36	0.33	1.43
	Read news during campaign	0.11	0.28	1.12
Continue to withdraw	Intercept	1.03	1.35	-
	Gender	-0.03	0.36	0.97
	Aged 25 to 34	-0.90	0.62	0.40
	Aged 35 to 44	-1.08*	0.61	0.34
	Aged 45 to 54	-1.12*	0.64	0.33
	Aged 55 to 64	-0.97	0.66	0.38
	Aged 65 and over	-0.12	0.76	0.89
	Left education at 16	0.19	0.44	1.21
	Left education at 17	0.02	0.62	1.02
	Left education at 18	0.55	0.67	1.73
	Left education at 19 and over	0.30	0.59	1.35
	Salariat	0.15	0.49	1.16
	Routine non-manual	0.01	0.42	1.01
	Petty bourgeoisie	0.63	0.58	1.88
	Con ID	-0.08	0.71	0.92
	Lab ID	-0.72	0.72	0.49
	Lib ID	-0.39	0.75	0.68
	Other ID	-1.22	1.40	0.29
	Left-right scale	0.86	1.13	2.37
	Liberal-authoritarian scale	-0.20	1.16	0.82

	Immigration	-1.03	0.86	0.36
	Prices	-0.09	1.06	0.91
	Unemployment	-0.89	0.59	0.41
	Watch PEBs	0.06	0.42	1.06
	Read news during election	0.23	0.37	1.26

*p≤.10, **p≤.05, ***p≤.01; N=1140

The reference category is stable withdraw. Base categories: those aged 18 to 24; those who finished education aged 15 and younger; working class; non-identifiers.

Table 7: Estimation results from multinomial logistic regression for opinion change and stability on the European issue, 1992-1997

	Parameter estimates			
	Variable	B	Std. Error	Exp(B)
Stable continue	Intercept	2.23	0.85	-
	Gender	-0.12	0.24	0.88
	Aged 25 to 34	-0.36	0.49	0.70
	Aged 35 to 44	-0.03	0.51	0.97
	Aged 45 to 54	-0.13	0.51	0.88
	Aged 55 to 64	0.14	0.55	1.15
	Aged 65 and over	-0.77	0.54	0.46
	Left education at 16	0.14	0.28	1.15
	Left education at 17	0.52	0.44	1.69
	Left education at 18	0.22	0.47	1.24
	Left education at 19 and over	1.29***	0.47	3.62
	Salariat	0.70**	0.33	2.01
	Routine non-manual	0.50	0.32	1.65
	Petty bourgeoisie	-0.20	0.40	0.82
	Supervisory	0.43	0.46	1.54
	Con ID	0.76**	0.38	2.14
	Lab ID	0.67	0.41	1.94

	Lib ID	0.98**	0.51	2.67
	Other ID	1.44	0.97	4.23
	Left-right scale	0.17	0.88	1.18
	Liberal-authoritarian scale	-2.42***	0.95	0.09
	Equal opps for minorities	-1.80***	0.49	0.17
	Prices	0.52	0.77	1.68
	Unemployment	-0.99	0.63	0.37
	Attention to news on TV	0.88**	0.41	2.40
	Attention to news in press	0.22	0.48	1.24
Withdraw to continue	Intercept	-1.76	1.23	-
	Gender	-0.27	0.34	0.77
	Aged 25 to 34	-0.15	0.63	0.86
	Aged 35 to 44	-0.58	0.67	0.56
	Aged 45 to 54	-1.26*	0.71	0.28
	Aged 55 to 64	-1.15	0.78	0.32
	Aged 65 and over	-1.06	0.72	0.35
	Left education at 16	-0.09	0.42	0.91
	Left education at 17	0.75	0.57	2.11
	Left education at 18	0.83	0.60	2.29
	Left education at 19 and over	0.24	0.68	1.27
	Salariat	0.46	0.46	1.58
	Routine non-manual	0.22	0.45	1.25
	Petty bourgeoisie	-0.14	0.59	0.87
	Supervisory	0.32	0.67	1.38
	Con ID	0.81	0.64	2.26
	Lab ID	0.76	0.68	2.15
	Lib ID	1.61**	0.75	4.98
	Other ID	1.98	1.22	7.25
	Left-right scale	0.12	1.27	1.12

	Liberal-authoritarian scale	1.09	1.34	2.98
	Equal opps for minorities	-0.04	0.69	0.96
	Prices	0.38	1.05	1.46
	Unemployment	-0.42	0.87	0.66
	Attention to news on TV	-0.13	0.58	0.88
	Attention to news in press	0.77	0.70	2.16
Continue to withdraw	Intercept	0.31	1.03	-
	Gender	-0.34	0.30	0.71
	Aged 25 to 34	-0.07	0.62	0.93
	Aged 35 to 44	0.18	0.63	1.20
	Aged 45 to 54	0.20	0.63	1.22
	Aged 55 to 64	0.16	0.68	1.17
	Aged 65 and over	-0.09	0.66	0.92
	Left education at 16	0.15	0.34	1.16
	Left education at 17	0.36	0.52	1.43
	Left education at 18	-0.10	0.58	0.90
	Left education at 19 and over	0.13	0.59	1.14
	Salariat	0.23	0.40	1.26
	Routine non-manual	0.34	0.38	1.41
	Petty bourgeoisie	-0.14	0.48	0.87
	Supervisory	0.01	0.61	1.01
	Con ID	0.96**	0.48	2.61
	Lab ID	0.17	0.54	1.19
	Lib ID	0.85	0.63	2.33
	Other ID	0.85	1.21	2.35
	Left-right scale	0.09	1.05	1.10
	Liberal-authoritarian scale	-1.09	1.14	0.33
	Equal opps for minorities	-0.84	0.59	0.43
	Prices	0.73	0.91	2.07

	Unemployment	-0.32	0.73	0.73
	Attention to news on TV	0.14	0.49	1.15
	Attention to news in press	-0.16	0.58	0.85

* $p \leq .10$, ** $p \leq .05$, *** $p \leq .01$; $N=904$

The reference category is stable withdraw. Base categories: those aged 18 to 24; those who finished education aged 15 and younger; working class; non-identifiers.

Stable continue versus stable withdraw

With regard to the first comparison, it is clear that the members of the salariat are more likely to hold stable pro-European opinions compared to the working class, the base category, both between 1987-1992 and 1992-1997, though the effect is slightly larger in the earlier period ($B=0.79$, $p \leq 0.01$; $B=0.70$, $p \leq 0.05$). This confirms the hypothesis that the higher social grades should be continually supportive of the integration process as it progressed with the Single Market programme. Previous research has clearly demonstrated that members of higher social grades (the professional and managerial classes) are more likely to hold favourable attitudes towards the EU (Gabel 1998), and the opportunities afforded by the ongoing single market programme during this period, combined with greater economic liberalisation, may have helped to cement their consistent support for the integration process. Also, leaving education at aged 19 or over is also related to holding consistently pro-European views compared to the base category comprising those with no qualifications, although it is only statistically significant in the later study, between 1992-1997 ($B=1.29$, $p \leq 0.01$). Beyond that, however, none of the other sociological characteristics reach a relatively demanding level of statistical significance in either panel study model.

In terms of the political and psychological variables, what is most striking is the strong and negative impact that holding authoritarian views (on both the general scale and in relation to the specific items on immigration and equal opportunities for ethnic minorities) has on holding stable pro-European views, with the former variable having the strongest effect of any explanatory factor in this comparison (1987-1992 – $B=-2.48$, $p \leq 0.01$; 1992-1997 – $B=-2.42$, $p \leq 0.01$). Again, this confirms the hypothesis that individuals holding more illiberal or socially-conservative positions on non-economic issues would be more likely to be consistently opposed to Britain's EU membership during this period.

In the model for 1992-1997, moreover, both Conservative and Labour identifiers are more likely to have consistently pro-European views compared to the base category, comprising those with no partisan identity (Con – $B=0.76$, $p \leq 0.05$; Lab – $B=.98$, $p \leq 0.05$). Interestingly, this reverses the direction of the relationship for both sets of identifiers evident in the results for 1987-1992 (although not reaching statistical significance) and could be expected for Labour identifiers as their party cemented its pro-European credentials in this later period. Also, in either model, one of the political attention measures has a positive impact upon holding consistently pro-European views: watching party-election broadcasts in the case of 1987-1992 ($B=0.74$, $p \leq 0.01$) and watching news on television for 1992-1997 ($B=0.88$, $p \leq 0.05$). This perhaps indicates that respondents who are more likely to consume news and current affairs via the mass media receive information which reinforces their existing position – and perhaps filtering out discordant or contradictory information – on the European issue, and in this case sticking to their pro-European views over the period in question. More generally, this underlines previous findings that the most politically engaged individuals are more likely to have consistent and crystallised opinions. It may be that, just as Zaller (1992)

suggests, political awareness may increase the strength of predispositions and exposure to political information. The relationship between such variables and opinion stability may be altogether more complex than simple theories might suggest. Still, these analyses point the way for further research.

Withdraw to continue versus stable withdraw

For the next two comparisons, however, it is immediately evident that there is less going on in the MNL estimates, as fewer variables – either sociological or psychological – appear to have a statistically significant impact upon the dependent variable. It is worth noting here that the two categories comprising respondents moving from withdraw to continue and vice-versa were considerably smaller than the two groups representing those with either consistently pro- or consistently anti-views. There are some interesting findings worth reporting. While none of the sociological variables reach relatively demanding levels of statistical significance, some of the political and psychological variables do. During the earlier period, between 1987 and 1992, both Labour and Liberal identifiers are less likely to move from withdraw to continue while, conversely, between 1992 and 1997 the direction of the relationship reverses, although it is only statistically significant for Lib Dem identifiers ($B=1.61$, $p \leq 0.05$). Also, in line with the hypothesis about those individuals holding authoritarian or illiberal views, such respondents were much less likely to move between these two positions than those expressing more liberal opinions ($B=-2.06$, $p \leq 0.05$).

Continue to withdraw versus stable withdraw

With regard to the final comparison, the empirical findings are pretty meagre (and, once again, the concern about smaller numbers in this group applies). The interesting, and expected, finding is the coefficient for Conservative identifiers in the second panel study. Compared to the base category – those with no partisan identity – Conservative partisans are more likely to hold unstable views and change from supporting continue membership to believing that Britain should withdraw from the EU ($B=0.96$, $p \leq 0.05$). There is some suggestion, therefore, that during this period, supporting the Conservative Party predisposed individuals to change their view on the European question, perhaps reflecting at the grassroots level the increasing Euroscepticism evident in the parliamentary Conservative Party during John Major's administration (Turner 2000; Norton 1998; Baker 1998).

Conclusion

This article has investigated which sociological and psychological factors are related to consistent pro-European views amongst the British public. It goes beyond cross-sectional analyses that examine the underpinnings of the direction of opinion – for or against EU membership – and has looked at which factors drive opinion change and which help reinforce opinion stability over two waves of a panel survey. It has analysed two panel studies based on the best available evidence, which together encompass a period (1987-1997) when the two major parties, Labour and Conservative, had revised their stance on the EU in significant ways. Moreover, as was documented earlier, public opinion had shifted to the extent that left-right opinions especially, no longer discriminated between positions on the European issue so neatly as in previous years (during the 1970s and early 1980s).

The most interesting results were obtained for the comparison between the two groups with stable views over time – those consistently supportive and those consistently opposed to Britain's membership of the EU. The results from the models demonstrate that those individuals with a higher status in society, and who would expect to be more secure in their

materialist circumstances, are generally more likely to be consistently pro-European over both waves of the panel study. Therefore, in sociological terms, those positioned higher up in the social strata, in terms of social class and level of education, have more stable opinions (at least as far as pro-European views are concerned).

Turning to the political and psychological variables, the performance of partisanship in the models was somewhat patchy, especially in relation to Labour or Conservative identifiers, although the latter variable was statistically significant and in the expected direction between 1992-97, the period when the Eurosceptic messages from the party leaders and MPs both increased and hardened (particularly so from the latter group). Also of note were the findings for individuals with authoritarian sentiments on non-economic issues. Underlining the results from previous studies of public opinion towards the EU, holding socially-conservative views was clearly a factor in maintaining stable anti-European opinions between 1987-1992 and 1992-1997. This holds for both the general liberal-authoritarian scale and specific policy preferences on immigration and equal opportunities for ethnic minorities. Evidently, this finding also supports insights from earlier research into the psychological dispositions underpinning opposition to Britain's membership of the EU (Nias 1973).

Evidently, the results reported here invite further empirical analyses of which sociological and psychological factors contribute to stable or unstable opinions on the European issue in EU member states – not just in Britain – and, of course, studies of referendum campaigns offer opportunities to do this over a shorter period of time. It is also important, moreover, to examine the grassroots responses to major parties which revise their positions on European policy in significant ways over a longer period, with a particular focus upon the partisans, ideologues and social-reference groups who have traditionally been a core part of their electoral base. Also, the availability of other panel data sources in Britain, such as the BHPS, means that subsequent analyses could also examine whether, on particular issues, public opinion shifts considerably – and why – even if the leading parties have not embarked upon a clear change of course.

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Appendix: Coding of independent variables

- *Age*: age is scored to represent membership of a series of cohorts (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65 plus, with 18-24 being the base category).
- *Gender*: gender is scored as a dichotomous variable (1 if male, 0 otherwise).
- *Education*: education is represented by a series of dummy variables representing the age at which a respondent finished their full-time education (the base category being those individuals who finished at age 15 or under).
- *Social class*: social class is measured by a series of dummy variables (salaried, routine non-manual, petty bourgeoisie, manual foremen and supervisors, and working-class), using the Goldthorpe-Heath five-category schema (Heath et al., 1991). The working-class group constitutes the base category.
- *Partisanship*: this analysis uses answers to the traditional British Election Study (BES) question on party identification ("Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat or what?"). This is scored as a dummy variable for the three main parties and for the other smaller parties – those who report no partisan identity form the reference category.
- *Ideological positions*: measures of an individual's position on both the left-right scale and liberal-authoritarian scale are available - two important dimensions of enduring conflict within society. Each scale is constructed from a battery of six separate statements with which respondents are asked to register their agreement or disagreement. The items are scored so that higher values represent more right-wing and authoritarian positions.
- *Policy preferences towards immigration/minority rights*: for the 1987-92 study, the question used here asks whether immigration has gone too far – higher scores represent views in agreement with this statement; that is more illiberal views. For 1992-97, however, no equivalent item on immigration is available; instead a question asking respondents whether equal opportunities for ethnic minorities have gone too far is used. Again, higher scores represent agreement with this statement.

- *Economic evaluations*: separate variables are included for respondents' evaluations of prices and unemployment, scored on a scale from 0 to 1 so that higher values represent more positive assessments (i.e. falling prices and lower unemployment).
- *Political interest*: the analysis controls for level of interest by using two measures of attention: to news on the TV and in the newspapers. For the 1992-1997 survey, the measures use a scale format and they are scored: none (0); a little (0.25); some (0.5); quite a bit (0.75); a great deal (1). In the 1987-1992 survey, however, these scale items were not included. Instead, dummy variables are created from two items probing whether respondents watched/listened to media election broadcasts and whether they read news articles about the election in that year (scored 1 if yes, 0 if no).
