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Public Opinion in the EU

Cognitive Mobilization, Mass Media and
Euroscepticism

Bachelor's thesis in European Studies

Supervisor: Anna Brigevich

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Abstract

Euroscepticism is a term that has become frequently more used, especially after Brexit. There have been many attempts of exploring the mechanisms behind Euroscepticism amongst the public. One such attempt was made by Ronald Inglehart in his article about Cognitive Mobilization and European Identity. By combining this theory with the RAS-model made by John R. Zaller this paper explores the role of the media and cognitive mobilization in the development of political opinions amongst the public. Through a statistical analysis the impact these variables have on Euroscepticism is tested. The results show that more media consumption makes the public more Eurosceptic, whilst longer education tends to make them more pro-EU. These results, however, are weak compared to the control variables which tells us that the political standpoint of national state-apparatuses has a much higher impact on the public opinion regarding the EU than the two theories in question.

Sammendrag

Euroskeptisisme er et begrep som har blitt hyppigere tatt i bruk de siste årene, spesielt etter Brexit. Det har blitt gjort mange forsøk på finne årsakene til økt Euroskeptisisme. Ett av disse forsøkene ble gjort av Ronald Inglehart i sin artikkel om Kognitiv Mobilisering og Europeisk identitet. Ved å kombinere hans teori med RAS-modellen laget av John R. Zaller utforsker denne teksten rollen media og kognitiv mobilisering har i utformingen av politiske meninger i en befolkning. Ved hjelp av en statistisk analyse blir påvirkningen disse variablene har på euroskeptisisme målt. Resultatene viser at et større konsum av media øker euroskeptisisme, mens en lengre utdanning fører til mer positivitet ovenfor EU. Allikevel er disse resultatene svake i forhold til kontrollvariablene som forteller at det politiske ståstedet til nasjonale statsapparater har mye større innvirkning på folkeopinionen om EU enn variablene som i hovedsak ble testet.

Preface

I would like to thank my friends and fellow students for inspiration and motivation throughout the writing process.

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List of Abbreviations

EC	European Community
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union

1 Introduction

Euroscepticism is a term that has become rapidly more used the last few years, especially since Brexit. The term is defined as being sceptic or opposed to further European integration and is often tightly connected to a desire for reestablishing national sovereignty within the already integrated Europe (European Center for Populism Studies, 2023). The phenomenon could be measured amongst groups such as political parties or at the individual level. There have been several attempts trying to explain the drivers behind Euroscepticism amongst the public. One of those attempts was made by Inglehart (1970) with his theory of cognitive mobilization, where he found that increased education will affect the public opinion to become more pro-EU, given that the media attention the EU gets is predominantly positive. As both levels of education amongst the public and the ways of mass media has changed drastically since 1970 it is not given that Inglehart's theory is still valid. The research question for this paper will therefore be if cognitive mobilization in combination with the consumption and framing of the media are key drivers behind Euroscepticism amongst the public.

The changes in public opinion about the EU clearly occurs in times around referendums regarding the EU. Examples of this can be seen in Denmark and Ireland. Ireland is one of the EU countries which has held the most referendums, as they are bound by their constitution to hold a referendum whenever a change or amendment to the constitution is to be made (Irish Constitution, Article 46). In 2008 Ireland were to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon, and held a referendum as required. This election ended with a no from the Irish people. A year later in 2009 after a few alterations to the treaty a new referendum was held, which resulted in a yes (Center for Research on Direct Democracy, 2022). With the help of two Eurobarometer surveys, I have measured the Euroscepticism in the immediate time after the first and the second referendum. After the first referendum 78,30% supported Irelands membership of the EU. After the second referendum the number had risen to 85,38% (Europäische Kommission, 2008, 2010). This increase in support for EU membership of 7,08% shows us that there has to be one or several factors to be found during this period that causes this change.

Another country in the same situation as Ireland in terms of being constitutionally bound to hold a referendum when giving up national sovereignty is Denmark (Folketinget, 2023). In 1992 they were to ratify the Maastricht treaty and held a referendum, which got rejected by its citizens. The next year the government had revised the treaty and held a new referendum, where the treaty was approved (Center for Reasearch on Direct Democracy, 2023). After both these referendums a Eurobarometer survey was held in the country asking people their opinion on Denmark's membership in the EC. After the first referendum in 1992 56% of the respondents found EC membership to be a good thing. After the second referendum however, this number had decreased to 46% (Europäische Kommission, 1993; Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, 1993). Even though this is the opposite result compared to that of Ireland it is still apparent that the Referendum influenced the public opinion somehow.

As seen in Denmark and Ireland it is quite clear that levels of Euroscepticism in a country is affected by one or several factors that occur around the time of referendums regarding the EU. These findings raise the question as to what aspect of referendums affect the

public opinion about the EU. During a referendum the theme in question gets a lot of attention from the media and other actors with loud voices in the society (Udris & Eisenegger, 2023, p. 1). Due to this increased salience caused by campaigns, political commercials and the theme of the referendum constantly being on the agenda of the news, the argument made by Inglehart (1970) in his article about European identity and cognitive mobilization could lay the foundation for a hypothesis that answers the research question. Inglehart argues that increased education amongst the public in combination with easier access to mass media makes people more likely to generate subjective political opinions. These opinions often correlate with how the mass media frames the theme in question. Combining Inglehart's argument with other theories on the effect mass media and its framing has on public opinion I have hypothesized that due to increased salience about the EU in the time around these referendums, cognitive mobilization and the consumption of media are drivers that will increase the levels of Euroscepticism as the framing of the EU in the news is predominantly negative.

In order to answer the research question, I have conducted a statistical analysis which describes the relationship between Euroscepticism and different aspects of cognitive mobilization. These results are then compared to the relationship between Euroscepticism and other control variables such as age, political standpoint and income. The results show that indicators of one aspect of cognitive mobilization, such as education and interest in political affairs tend to make people more pro-EU, while the indicators referring to consumption of mass media tend to make people more Eurosceptic. However, other factors such as the political opinions of the state-apparatus are found to have a much greater impact on Euroscepticism and in this case decreasing it.

2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Cognitive mobilization

The term cognitive mobilization was first used by Inglehart (1970) to explain the ability of the public to understand and comprehend the abstract nature of extensive political communities. It is an extension of the term social mobilization, which explains the process of developing "parochials" into cosmopolitans by "*integration of new groups into extensive communications networks, thus expanding their horizons beyond the scope of word-of-mouth communication and bringing them increasingly in touch with national politics*" (Inglehart, 1970, pp. 45-46). As a more specific term, cognitive mobilization refers to the "*increasingly wide distribution of the political skills necessary to cope with an extensive political community.*" (Inglehart, 1970, p. 47). Cognitive Mobilization is thus a phenomenon where the public develops political skills preparing them for dealing with the complexity of politics and enabling them to develop subjective opinions free from external influence.

Cognitive Mobilization is achieved through two types of development. The first being rising levels of education in combination with the motivation to grapple with the complexities of politics, which evolves the public's ability to understand and process political information. The second development is the increasing accessibility of political information through mass media, internet, and other modern sources of information (Dalton, 2007, p. 265).

Inglehart argues that the process of cognitive mobilization increases the "*individual's capacity to receive and interpret messages relating to a remote political community.*" (Inglehart, 1970, p. 47). He further argues that if the messages received about this remote political community is predominantly positive, the public opinion among the people experiencing cognitive mobilization will be positive and vice versa. When this article was written the information in the media about the European Community was mostly positive, which is why Inglehart hypothesizes that cognitive mobilization leads to more public support for this European cooperation (Inglehart, 1970, p. 48). As 50 years have passed and the EU has experienced several changes, expansions, and withdrawals of different degrees, this might not be the case anymore.

In addition to Inglehart there are other authors using cognitive mobilization in relation to public opinion. One of them is Dalton, which in his article writes about the American public and their increased cognitive mobilization since the 1950s. This development has made them less reliant on partisan cues to participate politics (Dalton, 2007, pp. 264-266). Dalton's findings are important for this paper as it confirms that cognitive mobilization possess the ability to impact how individuals vote and help them break free from voting patterns connected to their socioeconomic status.

Another author using cognitive mobilization is Janssen (1991) in his article about postmaterialism, cognitive mobilization and public support for European integration. In this deductive study the author tests Inglehart's theory by reviewing changes in support for European integration in several EU countries. Janssen finds that the public opinion about European Integration is mainly based on vague feelings of familiarity influenced by

factors such as when their country joined the community and elite support for membership rather than cognitive mobilization, therefore debunking Inglehart's theory (Janssen, 1991, p. 468). These findings are interesting as the results are the opposite from that of Inglehart, even though there was only 21 years between the two studies. One could therefore ask whether this study with data from 2010 would have a more similar finding to that of Inglehart or Janssen.

2.2 Public opinion and mass media

An author supporting Inglehart's claim that public opinion is shaped by mass media is Zaller (1992). In his book "The nature and origin of mass opinion" he explains how the public form political preferences based on information from the mass media. The model used to explain this is based on four axioms; The first being that the likelihood of a person being exposed to and comprehending a political issue increases with their cognitive engagement with that issue. Cognitive engagement is defined as the factual knowledge about politics obtained by an individual and is separated from political interest, as one can be very interested in politics without sitting on enough factual information to fall under this category. This first axiom is called "The Reception Axiom" (Zaller, 1992, pp. 42-44)

The second axiom is called the Resistance Axiom and claims that the public is only able to be critical to political statements to a degree matching the knowledge they already have about the political affairs in question. It is also claimed that people tend to resist arguments that are not in line with their political predispositions (Zaller, 1992, pp. 44-47). The third axiom: the Accessibility axiom claims that the more recently a person has thought about an issue, the less time it takes to retrieve considerations connected to that issue or related issues from memory, to use when asked for opinions (Zaller, 1992, p. 48). The fourth and final axiom called the Response axiom claims that when asked for their opinion like in a survey, people will answer based on an average of the most accessible considerations in their mind. With other words, the opinions laying at the top of their head (Zaller, 1992, pp. 49-50).

These four axioms make up the model Zaller calls Receive-accept-sample or "RAS" for short. The model explain how opinion statements are made through a process of *receiving* information, deciding whether to *accept* or reject it and then *sample* it when answering a question (Zaller, 1992, p. 51). Zaller differentiates between "true attitudes" and "opinion statements", where the latter refer only to the true feelings an individual has in the moment of answering a question. He claims that one cannot measure true attitudes by simply asking survey questions (Zaller, 1992, pp. 50-51).

Dependance on mass media when forming political opinions is a known phenomenon. In their article about news coverage and support for European integration Vlienghart et al. (2008) talk about exactly this while examining how the framing of those news affect the public opinion on the EU. They found that citizens tend to think of EU membership as more beneficial the more often the news regarding the EU were focused on benefits of membership. At the same time if the news were focused on conflict the general support for the EU decreased. However, news framed in terms of disadvantages with EU membership did not show relationship with how the people precepted the EU (Vlienghart et al., 2008, pp. 433-434).

The last finding is surprising as there has been conducted a fair amount of research on how the framing of news and headlines affect interaction. One recent example is an

article that have looked at more than 105 000 news stories and their interactions where they found that negative words in the headlines increased consumption rates, as well as positive words decreased consumption rates. They even found that for every negative word in a headline the interactions went up with 2,3% (Robertson et al., 2023). This contradiction did however cross the minds of Vliedhart et al. (2008) where they explained their results with a theory stating that when the news coverage around a theme is primarily negative, positive news will be perceived as a surprise and examined more thoroughly than other news. This theory is applied to the EU as they referred to research showing that the general salience regarding the EU has become increasingly more negative (Vliedhart et al., 2008, pp. 433-434).

Zaller's RAS model in combination with the other theories on the relationship between public opinion, mass media and its framing underline the significance of cognitive mobilization in the creation of political opinions at the individual level, as citizens during a referendum will receive loads of information and needs to be capable of processing it. Cognitive mobilization ensures that the public has the capabilities, while the RAS model tells us what the public will do with the information as soon as they receive and understand it. We thus have a foundation for our hypothesis in claiming that increased salience around the EU will increase Euroscepticism.

3 Methodology

To conduct my analysis I will be using the round 5 of the European Social Survey dataset (ESS ERIC, 2018). This survey includes responses from individuals in most of the European countries, making it solid ground to create generalizable statistics valid for the EU as a whole. I chose this round which took place in 2010 as it was the survey closest in time after the treaty of Lisbon referendums in Ireland. Given the survey results in Ireland after the second referendum on the treaty of Lisbon in combination with high levels of general EU support across Europe at that time, we would expect to find variables correlating strongly with support for the EU, increasing the visibility of the hypothesized outcome.

To measure the dependent variable, which is Euroscepticism, I have used the variable *Trust in the European Parliament*. Here the respondent was asked how much they trust the European Parliament on a scale from 1-10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is complete trust. This was the only question related to Euroscepticism in the survey, and it is not the ideal measurement of the phenomena as Euroscepticism is far more complex than the general trust of a single institution, however it gives a good indicator of the public opinion on the EU as the European parliament represents the legislative branch of the EU and thus their ability to make decisions. Trust in the European Parliament will therefore be sufficient as the dependent variable for this analysis.

The first independent variable is Cognitive Mobilization. I will be measuring this by using several variables from the dataset, which all explain a small part of the term. First, is the variable *politics watched on TV*, which measures how much time the respondent spends watching news or other politically relevant content on TV daily. They could answer on a scale from 0 to 7 where 0 is no time at all and 7 is more than 3 hours. The second variable is *Politics listened to on radio*, which measures how much time the respondent spends listening to news or other politically relevant content on the radio on an average weekday. Here the answers are also listed on a scale from 0 to 7 where 0 is no time at all and 7 is more than 3 hours. The third variable is *politics read in the newspaper*, which measures how much time the respondent spends reading about news politics and other current affairs on an average weekday. Again, the answers are listed on a scale from 0 to 7 where 0 is no time at all and 7 is more than three hours. The fourth variable is *use of internet*. It measures how much time the respondent spends on internet. The answers are listed on a scale from 0 to 7 where 0 is no access to internet and 7 is every day. These four variables cover the part of cognitive mobilization related to more and easy access to information.

In addition to the last four variables, I will be using the variable *years of education*, which asks the respondents how many years of full-time education they have completed. The answers here start at 0 years of education and ends on 55 years. This variable gives us a good insight in the part of cognitive mobilization that refers to more and better education. The last variable I will be using to measure cognitive mobilization is *interest in politics*. This variable asks the respondents how interested they are in politics. They could answer on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is very interested and 4 is not interested at all. However, to make the variable match the others I recoded it so that the answers are listed from 0 to 3 where 0 is not at all interested and 3 is very interested. As Inglehart (1970) states that higher cognitive mobilization would make the public more capable of understanding complex politics as well as it would make them partake to a higher degree, this variable could give an indicator of the levels of cognitive mobilization.

I have also included 7 control variables in the analysis, which all could cause Euroscepticism in some way. The first variable, *trust in national parliament*, asks the respondent how much they trust their national parliament on a scale from 0 to 10. This variable could affect Euroscepticism as trust in your own parliament would likely mean trust in their decisions and standpoint regarding the EU. The second control variable is *Political standpoint*, which measures where in the political spectrum you would place yourself from 0 which is far left to 10 which is far right. This variable is relevant as skepticism towards supernational institutions is often connected to the political far right and in some cases the political far left. The third variable is *gender*, which asks the respondent their gender. This variable has been recoded to become dichotomous where the value 0 is male and 1 is female. The fourth variable is *age*. The youngest respondent was 14 and the oldest 102.

The fifth control variable is *view on immigrants*. Here the respondents are asked whether immigrants make their country a better or worse place to live. They could answer on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 is worse place to live and 10 is better place to live. This variable is relevant as the EU has made immigration between member countries easier and the wish for less immigrants could be used as an argument against continued membership. The sixth control variable is *satisfaction with the national economy*. The respondents are here asked how satisfied they are with the current state of their national economy. They could answer on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 is Extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied. The last control variable is *household income*. Here the respondents were asked to share their households total net income from all sources. As the exact income of each household is unique the respondents were divided into 10 different deciles where decile number 1 contains the households with the lowest incomes and the 10th contains the households with the strongest incomes.

I have used these variables to conduct a nested linear regression analysis. The first block looks at the relationship between the variables representing cognitive mobilization and Euroscepticism, while the second block includes all the control variables. The reason for having two blocks in this analysis is to get a better picture of the impact the control variables have on the independent variable as one can compare the R² value of the two blocks, gaining a clear visual of which variables have the most impact.

Table 1: Description of variables

Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Err
Trust in European Parliament	45 804	0	10	4,22	0,012
Politics watched on TV	50 080	0	7	1,92	0,006
Politics listened to on radio	36 932	0	7	1,92	0,006
Politics read in newspapers	33 851	0	7	1,19	0,005
Use of internet	52 336	0	7	4,08	0,013
Years of education	51 829	0	55	12,29	0,018
Interest in politics	52 189	0	3	1,32	0,004
Trust in national parliament	50 901	0	10	3,84	0,012
Political standpoint	43 875	0	10	5,17	0,011
Gender	52 437	0	1	0,55	0,002
Age	52 305	14	102	48,5	0,082
View on immigrants	49 379	0	10	4,69	0,01
Satisfaction with national economy	51 306	0	10	3,88	0,011
Household income	39 838	1	10	5,05	0,014

4 Results

The results of the first block of the nested regression analysis were quite expected, though somewhat weak. In the first block where only the variables measuring cognitive mobilization were included all variables are statistically significant except for politics listened to on radio, as I will not accept any P value above 0,05. I will therefore leave this variable out of the discussion. The R^2 value is 0,0267 meaning that cognitive mobilization only describes about 2% of the reason people trust the European Parliament. The correlations found were also quite weak. Starting with politics watched on TV on can see there is a weak negative correlation, meaning if you watch more TV, you would be more Eurosceptic. The two other variables concerning the consumption of news has a positive correlation with the dependent variable, but quite weak as politics read in newspapers is at 0,06 and use of the internet has a value of 0,045. Number of years of education does also correlate positively, but quite weak with a value of 0,027. Interest in politics however, corelates somewhat stronger with a value of 0,337.

In the second block there are three statistically insignificant variables. Politics watched on TV, politics read in the newspaper and household income. Their P value is respectively 0,763, 0,125 and 0,199 and will be left out of the discussion. The other P values are close to zero except for politics listened to on radio with a value of 0,04 and satisfaction with national economy with a value of 0,02. The R^2 for this second block is significantly higher than the first with a value of 0,3109, meaning the control variables are affecting Euroscepticism significantly more than cognitive mobilization. As for the coefficients the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variable are still quite weak. Politics listened to on radio, use of internet and age are all correlate negatively with Euroscepticism, though none of them with a number higher than -0,022. All other variables have a weak positive correlation except for attitude towards immigrants which is slightly higher with a value of 0,093 and trust in national parliament which has a strong correlation with a value of 0,474.

Table 2: Nested linear regression analysis

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coeff	Std. Err	P-value	Coeff	Std. Err	P-value
Trust in European Parliament	3,522	0,077	0	2,261	0,099	0
Politics watched on TV	-0,063	0,016	0	-0,004	0,014	0,763
Politics listened to on radio	-0,017	0,013	0,178	-0,022	0,011	0,04
Politics read in newspapers	0,06	0,022	0,008	0,029	0,019	0,125
Use of internet	0,045	0,007	0	-0,074	0,007	0
Years of education	0,027	0,005	0	0,015	0,005	0,001
Interest in politics	0,337	0,023	0	0,067	0,02	0,001
Trust in national parliament				0,474	0,007	0
Political standpoint				0,036	0,007	0
Gender				0,283	0,03	0
Age				-0,015	0,001	0
View on immigrants				0,093	0,008	0
Satisfaction with national economy				0,017	0,007	0,02
Household income				0,008	0,006	0,199
	$R^2 = 0,0267$			$R^2 = 0,3109$		
	N = 16 104			N = 16 104		

5 Discussion

The results of the regression analysis gave answers to several questions. First, looking at the aspect of cognitive mobilization related to consumption of news, more specifically *politics watched on TV*, we see a weak negative correlation. Taking into consideration that the news about the EU is more negatively framed than positively as well as assuming the theories to be correct this result portrays a picture similar to the reality we know and does not come as a surprise. As for the weak positive correlation we see with *politics read in newspapers*, there are several factors that could explain this. First, one could argue that there are more news making it to the newspaper than on the TV, meaning journalists would have more time and space to write nuanced articles framing both sides of a case, presenting the reader with arguments both positive and negative decreasing the chance of the negative news taking up the most space at the top of the head of the reader.

The results also showed us that people who use the internet more often tend to be more positive towards the EU. This could have something to do with access to information that is not biased by someone other than yourself. Meaning that the internet makes it easier to find arguments that support your own opinions about a specific theme, giving you a stronger claim. However, the internet is a good place to find contradicting arguments as well, if one only were to look for it, which makes this a poor argument. Still, as negative headlines generate more interaction and people to a larger degree decides what to read on the internet than on other sources, it could be that the people using internet often are more frequently exposed to these negatively framed texts. If this is the case, it could explain the outcome of the analysis.

Additionally, the fact that this data is from 2010 a time where about 30% of the European population did not have access to internet and most of these people had low levels of education one could make the assumption that this variable is tightly connected to the one regarding years of education (Seybert & Lööf, 2010). The analysis shows us that the more years of education the respondent had the more pro-EU they become, though the correlation here is weak as well. Our theories could explain this outcome as people with higher education tend to have the capability to understand complex political structures like the EU which in turn makes them more likely to support it.

The last variable under cognitive mobilization which also has the highest correlation with the dependent variable is interest in politics. This outcome is expected as the EU is highly complex and requires a fair amount of effort and interest to understand. Again, the more you understand a political issue the more likely are you to support it. Additionally, as the general levels of education are high across Europe, most people with interest would be able to understand how the EU works, thus the argument made by Zaller that people could be interested in politics without having the knowledge to actually form subjective political opinions would not apply here.

All over one can see that increased cognitive mobilization does in fact favor the EU, even if it's only to a small extent. The R^2 value of the first block also tells us that there are more and better explanations as to why people become Eurosceptic. Some of these explanations can be seen in the second block which has a significantly higher r^2 of 0,31. The first thing to mention is that the two variables regarding consumption of media discussed in the first block are no longer significant, however the variable concerning politics listened to on radio is. The variable has a weak negative correlation with

Euroscepticism. As previously discussed, this could be caused by the negative framing of the media. Secondly the use of internet has become negatively correlated with the dependent variable, though very weak. The argument made earlier regarding access to the internet would not be valid here. However, the argumentation for it being a good source of information to back your predisposed opinions still stand.

When looking at the correlation between years of education and Euroscepticism it has somewhat decreased. However, it still shows that the more years of education you have the more likely you are to have a pro-EU opinion. As for interest in politics the coefficient has decreased drastically, however, there is still a positive relationship between the variable and Euroscepticism.

The results from the control variables are quite interesting. First, we can look at how much people trust their national parliament. There is a strong correlation between this variable and the dependent variable, meaning the more a person trusts their own parliament the less Eurosceptic they are. The reason for this result is likely that most respondents were from EU countries, meaning their parliament most likely supports the country's membership in the union. The respondents would then trust the decision of their national parliament and agree. Additionally, if you trust your national parliament and the politicians there, you would probably be more likely to trust politicians in general, including those on EU level.

Looking at political standpoint we can see that people towards the right side of the scale tend to be less Eurosceptic. There could be a simple answer to this as the EU is mainly an economic union and the right wing of the political scale tend to favor open capitalist markets. However, right wing parties tend to be more sceptic towards immigration. As the EU has made travelling to, working in, or moving to another member state a lot easier one would assume the union to be less appealing to those in favor of stricter immigration policies. This conflict between the economic aspect and the immigration aspect of the union in the right wing of politics could be the reason for the weak correlation.

Closely related to political standpoint is the variable asking the respondents how satisfied they are with their national economy. We see a weak positive correlation between this and the dependent variable. Blaming the EU for economic problems has not been unknown as a way of criticizing the union (BBC, 2018; Krik, 2006). If the national economy is doing fine, there would be less reason for this type of argumentation and hence less reason for people to be influenced to become more Eurosceptic. Moreover, the EU and its internal market gives its member states access to trade and other economic benefits it would not have otherwise. It's probable that many would think of EU as the source of their national wealth and therefore support with the union.

The way people look at immigrants is also an interesting variable. We can see a weak positive correlation with the dependent variable, meaning people that think immigrants are good for their country tend to be more pro-EU. The explanation for this could be quite straightforward as the EU does soften its internal borders with the four freedoms making it easier to move to other countries. If you believe that immigrants, make your country a worse place to live it is reasonable to believe that you would dislike the EU which enables more immigrants across the borders.

In the regression analysis I also controlled for gender and age. We can see that people become more Eurosceptic as they get older. An explanation for this could be that

younger people have grown up in the EU and are more used to a union like this than the older people. Another explanation could be that people with a liberal view have a higher chance of becoming conservative, than people with a conservative view has of becoming liberal as they age. This could mean that more of the older people would want to stick to the way things were and oppose further European integration (Peterson et al., 2020). As for gender we see that men tend to be slightly more supportive of the EU than women. It is difficult to think of a reason as to why men tend to support the EU more than women. It could of course be connected to interests or levels of education, as men has had easier access to higher education, especially in the early 1900s, which is when several of the respondents grew up.

Overall, the results from the regression analysis gave us some answers, though not the ones we hoped to find. Cognitive mobilization does affect the public opinion regarding EU, but to a small extent. Why is it that we get such a different result than Inglehart? First, a lot has happened since the 1970s when the article was written. The EU has expanded both in terms of members as well as in jurisdiction. High-quality education up to university level have become more accessible to the public. In other words, people have become more cognitive mobilized and should in theory be able to create subjective political opinions, just as Inglehart argued in his article.

Second, mass media has expanded and become significantly more accessible, especially with the internet. As we already know, news with negative framing gets more interaction as well as the general framing of the EU the latest years have been more on the negative side. Still, the findings from this analysis fits the narrative of Inglehart's hypothesis, the only change is that the empirical data used to find the results are different, making the conclusions opposite.

However, it is worth discussing the role cognitive mobilization plays in today's society. First one could discuss the content of the education in the different countries. Would countries with more EU on their curriculums show a more significant correlation between cognitive mobilization and Euroscepticism than countries with less EU in their education system? If that is the case, is cognitive mobilization still relevant when talking about public opinion in today's society? I buy the argument that education helps you understand how a government, that you cannot physically see, works, but have we reached a point in general education, at least in Europe, where the question to whether you understand a political system is more about specific knowledge of that particular system, rather than general education? This could indeed be the reason the correlation between education and trust in the European parliament is as low as it is.

On the other hand, when looking at education in relation to easier access to mass media it could be relevant after all. As access to information have become easier, the spread of false or misleading information has become easier as well. An important part of the general education of citizens in a democracy is source criticism. This skill would ensure that people are not affected by fake news and develop opinions based on false claims. Cognitive mobilization would therefore be an indicator of how well the public are able to gain the specific knowledge needed to understand a complex political community.

Assuming Zaller to be right in his theory when claiming that people will make arguments based on the information that is most easily accessible in at the top of their head, the public should have no problem developing an opinion about the EU, as the EU will be on people's minds during a referendum due to the increased salience. If that were to be the case however, it should have been showing in the regression analysis. One explanation

for it not showing significant results could be that the survey data is taken from all over Europe, where in most places no referendums regarding the EU was held. This would mean that the EU might not be easily accessible for most respondents and therefore not have much of an opinion about the theme. Still, the tiny correlation between the variables regarding the media and Euroscepticism gives us an indication that this relationship could play a larger role if one were to look at a data from a single country in the time around an EU-related referendum.

Another thing connected to Zaller's RAS-model worth discussing is the reject axiom and the statement claiming that people tend to resist arguments opposing their political predispositions. If this is true, we would expect to see a stronger correlation in either direction, as the media then would strengthen the opinions of the readers with arguments similar to their beliefs, while arguments opposing these opinions would be disregarded fully. Still, it is not apparent in the results. This could be because the affect would work in both directions, zeroing out the results. Eurosceptic people would become more Eurosceptic, while people supporting the EU would support it even more. This cannot be seen from the regression analysis. It would be interesting to statistically account for this, to test Zaller's theory further.

The most interesting finding this analysis has provided however, is not linked to cognitive mobilization or the consumption and framing of the media. It is the fact that the control variables explain a significantly larger proportion of what affects the public opinion towards the EU than Inglehart's theory. Most noticeable is the strong correlation between trust in national parliament and trust in the European parliament. As previously discussed, there could be many reasons for this correlation, though neither Inglehart or Zaller's theories could explain it. However, one of the authors discussed in the literature review could. In his article Janssen (1991) argues that public opinion quite unstable and is based on vague feelings of familiarity.

The claim stating that public opinion is based on feelings of familiarity could be seen in this analysis as well. Even though there is a lack of variables measuring feelings of familiarity and belonging, it can be argued that trust in the national parliament could give an indicator of it. You would probably be less likely to give your trust to a parliament that you don't at all familiarize with. If that parliament makes it clear that they support the EU and makes sure it is on the agenda, it could make the public feel closer to the union. However, this is an explanation full of "ifs", and at best we could say that this variable gives us a very vague indicator of familiarity to the EU.

The second claim Janssen makes, about public opinion being unstable could be a good explanation as to why the survey results conducted in Denmark and Ireland are as different as they are. However, as this analysis is based on survey data from only one year it would be impossible to test this claim without further empirical evidence from one or more surveys conducted in different years.

6 Conclusion

It is clear that referendums impact public opinion. It puts the theme in question on the political agenda and gets a lot of media attention. This attempt of determining what aspects of the referendums is affecting public opinion has been conclusive, even though the results did not match the expectations from the hypothesis. Inglehart's theory of cognitive mobilization have been tested together with Zaller's theory on how the media contributes to shape public opinion. The results from our statistical analysis partly confirm both theories as higher levels of education in combination with interest in politics makes people more pro-EU and more time spent consuming news makes people develop political opinions matching those of the media they consume.

These findings were, however, weak compared to those from the control variables. It seems that the public opinion about the EU is mainly caused by factors such as view on immigrants, satisfaction with national economy and especially how much you trust your national parliament. These findings are similar to the ones made by Janssen (1991) as he concluded that the factors causing Euroscepticism is tied to feelings of belonging and elite discourse.

Raising these findings to the bigger picture, we cannot say for certain what underlying mechanisms might affect the levels of Euroscepticism. We know that they are more visible during referendums and moves the public opinion one way or another. We also know that referendums actualize the theme in question in a manner that makes it get more attention from the media. People will have the arguments generated from this sudden media attention freshly in mind and make opinion statements out of them. With a long education which holds high quality they should also have the cognitive capability to understand the mechanisms and institutional traits of the EU, needed to develop an opinion. These factors tell us that more people can develop political opinions, but not what direction the opinions will take.

However, the results from one analysis based on a survey conducted in one year would not be able to generate a generalizable conclusion for the research question. It would be necessary to see if the results were the same at the time of Denmark's referendums, in the time of other referendums as well as it would be interesting to see how the results would look like today. That would also enable us to see the developments over time. Still, this analysis gives some insight into what mechanisms are affecting the development of opinions amongst the public, at the same time as it links it to referendums in an attempt to find generalizable aspects which could help explain voting behavior.

In retrospect, variables measuring feelings of belonging such as those described by Janssen (1991) should have been included in the analysis. This would have given a deeper insight into the actual mechanisms causing the public to develop opinions regarding the EU. Additionally, it would be valuable to add another variable better suited for describing the public opinion towards the EU in a future survey as "trust in the European parliament" only covers part of the phenomenon.

Further research should focus on the role of the media and how its framing affect voters and their opinion about the EU specifically. Other factors such as specific knowledge

about the EU, the utilization of EU-granted privileges at the individual level as well as the feeling of a European identity should also be explored in relation to public opinion. These potential drivers for change in public opinion should be tied up to referendums in a comparative study with different cases to see if there are any generalizable factors affecting voters across Europe or if there are individual drivers in each country.

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