

**The Economy, Accountability, and Support for the President of the European
Commission**

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Paper prepared for presentation at the 1999 ECSA Sixth Biennial International Conference, 2-5 June, 1999,
Pittsburgh, PA

Recent years have seen a resurgent interest in the determinants of Europeans' perceptions about the operation and benefits derived from the European Union (EU) (Eichenberg 1998; Gabel 1998a). In all likelihood, this is at least in part due to the greater role that European mass publics have started to play in the integration process through the referendums on EU membership, the Single European Act (SEA), and the Maastricht treaty. The role of public opinion in the integration process has captured the attention both of scholars investigating European institutions and policy-processes and those interested in political behavior. While the former view mass publics as an important part of the development and functioning of EU integration and institutional evolution (e.g., Carrubba 1997; Hooghe and Marks 1999; Schneider and Weitsman 1996), the latter see the EU—and mass political behavior in the EU—as a fascinating laboratory for testing theories that have been developed in the context of stable nation-states (see, e.g., van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Franklin and Wlezien 1997).

Most of the literature on public opinion in the EU that has developed as part of this research agenda has focused on support for the integration process (see, e.g., Gabel 1998a) and has centered around utilitarian models of attitudes about integration. Based on notions of self-interest and cost-benefit considerations, a number of studies have suggested that Europeans are more supportive of the EU and the integration process if there are positive payoffs to be derived—either for their nation-state or for them personally (Anderson 1995a; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel 1998a).

This paper seeks to contribute to this literature in two ways. First, we examine the effects of utilitarian considerations on public opinion in an area that previously has not been examined by researchers: support for the President of the European Commission.¹ Specifically, we question whether citizens should have such utilitarian considerations in the first place, especially when they are ill-informed about the Commission and its President, and when the President and the Commission cannot not be held democratically accountable. Using data on the popularity of Commission President Jacques Delors during his last year in office (1994) collected in the (then) 12 member states of the EU, we find that Europeans are simultaneously utilitarian and

ill-informed when it comes to judging the performance of the President of the Commission. While we find that roughly half of all Europeans do not express an opinion on the performance of the Commission President, our analysis also shows that utilitarian considerations powerfully affect whether Europeans approve of the job the President of the Commission has done.

The next section reviews the literature on economic and utilitarian effects on public support for European integration and institutions. We argue that there are two ways to view people's attitudes toward the President of the Commission—utilitarian and uninformed—and that these may affect the formation of attitudes toward the President of the Commission in different ways. We then describe the data and discuss people's perceptions of the President of the Commission. Next, we develop a model of public support for the President that we estimate with the help of a series of multinomial logistic regressions. We conclude by discussing the results and suggesting avenues for future research.

UTILITARIAN MODELS OF PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD EUROPE

In recent years, much of the research on public support for European integration has sought to show that mass opinion is driven by economic conditions and people's cost-benefit calculi (Anderson 1995a; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel 1998a). This line of inquiry, at least in part, grew out of the research on economic voting in advanced industrialized democracies, which has shown that macro-economic conditions are systematically related to government popularity and electoral support (cf. Lewis-Beck 1988; Anderson 1995b). It also is grounded in theories about gains to be captured from free trade among the European states (Gabel 1998a). Given that European politicians have extolled the economic benefits of integration for the member states, one stream of this research contends that citizens will weigh the costs and benefits of integration for their domestic economy. Consistent with this argument, a number of empirical studies have found that macro-economic indicators and people's economic perceptions are systematically associated with cross-national differences in support for an integrated Europe (see, e.g., Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996;

Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Smith and Wanke 1993).²

While such “quasi-economic voting” models of support are difficult to attack on the basis of their empirical validity, their underlying micro-logic seldom has been explicitly argued or examined. We suggest that traditional economic voting models (or what we prefer to classify as utilitarian models more generally) may not apply *ipso facto* to the European Union, or may apply only with some modification. Specifically, two frequently implicit assumptions underlying the economic voting literature may not hold in the context of the European Union. First, researchers have long assumed that economic voting takes place because citizens seek to hold their governments responsible for the management of the economy (Alt and Crystal 1983; Holbrook and Garand 1996; Key 1961). However, citizens may not find it useful to judge political actors such as the European Commission on the basis of economic or any other policy outcomes when these actors cannot be held accountable through democratic elections. Second, economic voting analyses assume that citizens can gauge the effects of government actions on policy outcomes and therefore are able and willing to draw a connection between what the government does and economic conditions that exist in a country. Because Europeans frequently are ill-informed about the European Union (cf. Anderson 1998), and because the Commission and its President may have only a small impact on the European economy, citizens may not know or believe that economic outcomes are affected by European Union policies. If they do not link economic outcomes and evaluations of the Commission President, then economic voting should not exist. Taken together, the assumptions of economic voting as an accountability mechanism, the objective effects of the Commission’s activities on economic outcomes, and some reasonable degree of awareness on the part of citizens all may make it difficult to argue that Europeans judge European institutions and policymakers on the basis of economic conditions in the first place, or that economic effects are similar to economic voting effects found in democratic nation-states.

UTILITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

To examine the validity of utilitarian approval models, we examine support for the President of the European Commission. In contrast to the extensive research on approval of the U.S. President and other heads of government, no research to date has examined the popularity of the most visible representative of the European Union. Given that virtually all research on the political economy of government approval in the United States and elsewhere has focused on parties and political actors occupying the executive branch of government, a focus on the President is likely to yield insights into the economy-approval nexus at the European level.

Two competing visions of the relationship between the Commission and the European public seem particularly plausible to us. The first focuses on the importance and actual impact of the European Commission in the political economy of the EU. This perspective realizes the importance of what the Commission does and how its policies affect economic conditions in the member states in a variety of ways. According to this view, people should evaluate the President of the Commission on the basis of economic outcomes. Because the President of the Commission is not directly elected by the people of Europe and thus cannot be held directly accountable by them, we refer to this model as a “quasi-economic voting” model.

The second perspective argues that Europeans are notoriously uninformed about the EU in general and the Commission in particular (Anderson 1998; Janssen 1991). In a *Eurobarometer* survey taken across the EU in 1994, for example, fewer than half of the respondents (44%) were able to name the President of the Commission. According to this view, it may in fact be rational for Europeans not to pay too much attention to the Commission, given that the Commission is not directly accountable to the people of Europe. Under such conditions of low accountability and low information, however, it would not be particularly sensible for citizens to evaluate the Commission and its President on the basis of economic outcomes.

The Case for Quasi-Economic Voting: The Commission and the European Economy

In the ongoing study of the European Union, the role and importance of the European Commission often has been overlooked. Part of the lack of attention paid to the Commission has been the theoretical preoccupation with the view that member states are the principal engines driving and controlling EU integration. This intergovernmentalist perspective on the integration process views the subordinate Commission as simply carrying out the wishes of the member states (Hoffmann 1994; Keohane and Hoffmann 1991; Moravcsik 1991).³

However, a number of scholars recently have started to argue that the Commission is an important political actor that advances its own political goals through influencing the policy preferences of the membership (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997; Sandholtz 1996; Sandholtz and Zysman 1989; Smyrl 1998). In particular during times of favorable domestic economic conditions, growing international economic or security concerns, and when national leaders envision the EU as a possible tool to strengthen national objectives, the Commission has been able to use its entrepreneurial skills to advance EU integration (Christiansen 1997; Cini 1996; Dinan 1994; Marks, Hooghe and Black 1996).⁴

As the executive branch of the European Union, the Commission has the responsibility of proposing initiatives, implementing policies and regulating their compliance, and acting as the general guardian of the Treaties. In addition, the Commission acts as a mediator between member states, speaks for the organization in international trade negotiations, protects the interests of smaller member states, and represents the conscience and voice of the EU at large (Cini 1996). If the European Commission and its President have established a significant and public role in the economic domain of the EU, then questions regarding economic voting and public opinion about the President become all the more relevant.

The Commission's responsibility to initiate legislation is among its most important powers in the EU policy process. This sole power of agenda setting allows the Commission to exercise a leadership role within the organization because the Council of Ministers may lack the information, expertise, and coordination to act

quickly in matters of the internal market. In addition, the Commission is charged with monitoring EU policies and legislation. Because legislation and good intentions fail to ensure proper compliance (Calingaert 1996), the Commission is designed to ensure the proper working of the internal market, manages EU finances, and supervises EU activities generally.

Although it is difficult to assess the direct influence of the Commission on the economies of the member states in the EU, the power to initiate policies and monitor the workings of the internal market afford the Commission a central role in the EU policy process (it issues between six and seven thousand legislative instruments a year). In fact, former Commission President Jacques Delors boldly predicted that about 80 percent of social and economic legislation would be eventually generated from Brussels (The Economist 8 February 1997; see also Hitiris 1994; Wilks 1996).

The Commission's influence on the national economies of member states may be felt most directly in the agricultural and steel sectors, where the treaties give the Commission a direct role to set prices and manage production output. Furthermore, the role of monitoring the compliance of EU legislation and regulating competition policy can receive significant public and political attention (cf. Tarrow 1998)—in particular when the Commission requires state aid to be returned and/or fines are levied against firms. Moreover, the Commission can influence the economy through structural funds. Lastly, the Commission may be given the highly visible task of drafting initiatives to overcome economic problems by the member states.

The Budget

Although the EU budget is small in comparison to the national budgets of the member states, its size does not limit its importance to the member states and the EU as a whole.⁵ This would be to argue against public opinion and political realities. Because the budget is fixed and must balance, some member states are net beneficiaries while others are net contributors.⁶ Hence, budget negotiations can be of particular rancor when one country is contributing an inordinate amount of money to Brussels or budget reforms are required.

Prime Minister Thatcher's battle over a budget rebate for the UK in the early 1980s and the struggle over financial reforms required by the Delors II package provide other examples of highly public disputes over budgetary matters. Over the years, the EU budget thus has tended to be a hotly contentious and public event in the European Union with the Commission at the center of the contention.

The Commission's presence in the budgetary process is felt in several other ways. The first, again, is the power of agenda setting. Through the Delors I (1988) and Delors II (1992) packages, the Commission established an expenditure control instrument. These "financial perspectives" are five-year plans with fixed spending limits for the various EU policy categories. Before the budget is passed to the Council of Ministers for a first reading, a Preliminary Draft Budget is drawn up by the Commission Directorate General for Budgets (DG XIX) and presented to the rest of the Commission for discussion.⁷ Thus, the Commission establishes the broad spending outline of the budget based on its own five-year plans.⁸

Commission Policies: Policing the Internal Market and Providing Structural Funds

The Commission also polices the internal market. This includes minimizing unfair competition measures imposed by member states (such as state aid to manufacturing enterprises). EU Competition policy aims to ensure that firms and member states do not create barriers or cheat against one another, and to ensure that the internal market is not only an integrated market but also an "efficient competitive market" (Holmes and McGowan 1995). Prior to the early 1980s, EU competition policy did not play a prominent role. However, as the internal market developed, it became apparent that an effective competition policy was required for the efficient operation of the Single Market, and the Commission has monitored competition policies within the EU with increasing vigor.⁹ In addition, through a series of legislative acts including the 1989 Merger Regulation, the European Commission has developed a tough merger policy.¹⁰ Thus, what had been firmly in the hands of the national governments, has steadily moved into the domain of the European Commission.

Policing the Single Market is a highly sensitive role for the Commission to perform. Member states

have used state aid to develop national champions, sustain failing industries (and prolonging employment), or to improve the competitiveness of national firms. Thus, the Commission can come into direct conflict with national governments and firms, creating a highly charged political atmosphere (Smith 1996, 1998). Although most aid is eventually approved by the Commission, high profile rejections often receive substantial media coverage. Hence, the Commission's mission of monitoring EU competition policy can often place itself in the spotlight within the Union and on the political agendas of the member states.

The Commission has levied substantial fines against several European firms. Germany's Volkswagen has been the recipient of several unfavorable decisions regarding state aid and anti-competition practices. These include fines of \$111 million in 1998 and the forced repayment of state aid given by the German state of Lower Saxony.¹¹ In 1994, the Commission imposed fines of \$115 million on steel companies for operating an illegal cartel. British Steel, the recipient of about one-third of the fine, reacted fiercely and created public outrage in the UK as a result (*FBIS* 16 February 1994). Additionally, Commission decisions have caused disputes in the arena of merger control. The 1991 decision by the Commission to block a proposed merger of France's state-owned Aerospatiale and Italy's state-owned Alenai in favor of de Havilland, a Canadian subsidiary of America's Boeing, created great controversy within the EU. The French government accused Commission President Delors of not standing up for French interests (i.e. acting properly) and directed much of their anger toward him publicly (*The Economist* 12 October 1991). In 1997, the Commission went to the brink of initiating a trade war with the United States over a proposed merger between Boeing and McDonnell Douglas. The American merger of aircraft giants was seen by the Commission as a potential threat to Airbus projects. In a highly public battle, the European Commission forced Boeing to forfeit its exclusive 20 year contracts with Delta, Continental and American Airlines.

Another source of influence on the economies of the EU wielded by the Commission and perceived by the European public is the use of structural funds (Whitten, Gabel, and Palmer 1996). These EU expenditures, namely the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund

(ESF), are targeted for EU regions in economic difficulty.¹² Finally, the Commission also has exclusive competence in the arena of commercial policy. That is, the EU—and the Commission as the executive branch of the EU—negotiates all commercial agreements with third countries.¹³ Moreover, the Commission has exclusive authority over anti-dumping procedures. Once a complaint has been lodged, the Commission investigates and decides if anti-dumping policies have been violated. If anti-dumping violations are found, the Commission either secures corrective measures from the exporter or recommends anti-dumping action to the Council. This gives the Commission an additional and prominent role in a very political and publicized policy area.

Over the years, the European Commission thus has established itself as an important actor within the EU economic arena. This is not to say that the Commission has preempted the role of the member states to influence European economic policy and the performance of the European economy. Yet, it also must be recognized that the Commission has acquired responsibilities that had previously rested chiefly in the domain of the member states (such as competition policy); this has limited member states' abilities to "do all the things they could in the past" (Nicolaidis 1998).

The Case Against Quasi-Economic Voting: Low Accountability and Low Information

The Commission currently consists of 20 representatives chosen by mutual member consensus.¹⁴ By custom, member states do not interfere with each other's appointments to the Commission. However, the nomination of the President of the European Commission requires the unanimous consent of the member states, and the European Parliament is consulted over this choice. Once arriving in Brussels, Commissioners are supposed to put aside national interests and constituencies in favor of EU interests.¹⁵ While the President of the Commission appoints the Commissioners to specific responsibilities (also known as portfolios), s/he is not able to shuffle or dismiss any of the Commissioners.¹⁶

Once in place, Commissioners are afforded considerable tenure and leeway in office.¹⁷ Individual

Commissioners can be removed only if the Court of Justice, on application by the Council or Commission, finds that the Commissioner can no longer fulfill the duties of office or is guilty of serious misconduct. Moreover, individual Commissioners are not responsible to the European Parliament, which can only dismiss the entire Commission upon the approval of a censure by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast and a majority of members. Given the severity of dismissing the entire Commission, it is not surprising that the European Parliament has not opted to use the power of censure to remove the Commission, although it occasionally has threatened to do so (see Donnelly and Richie 1994; Nicol and Salmon 1994).

Given the lack of direct influence of Europe's citizens over the Commission and the President of the Commission, it is clear that they are not subject to accountability in the same sense as are national governments. In the absence of such electoral accountability, it is open to debate why European mass publics would have an incentive to pay much attention to the Commission and its policies' effects on the European economy (see also Duch and Taylor 1997).

Moreover, Europeans are notoriously uninformed about the EU and the Commission. Anderson (1998, 572-73) reports, for example, that "a significant majority—roughly 65 to 70 %—typically feels uninformed about the EU" and that only "about a third qualified as knowledgeable" about the EU. Numerous polls also have shown that citizens in advanced democracies believe that national governments have responsibility for economic outcomes. In fact, this belief has been increasing since World War II (Alt and Crystal 1983; Clarke et al. 1992). Thus, in the absence of effective mechanisms of accountability and reliable information on the part of European citizens, it would be reasonable to conjecture that there should not be any significant economic effects on support for the President of the Commission. In fact, we would argue that the absence of accountability engenders lower levels of awareness. Support for the President thus should be driven by variables that are unrelated to people's information or their perceptions of economic conditions.

A Case Study of Jacques Delors

Below, we investigate the determinants of public support for Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995. On the surface, it would appear that the President of the European Commission is not significantly more important than individual Commissioners. Indeed, the formal powers of the President are limited, and he can be outvoted on specific proposals in Commission meetings. However, the Presidency is more than simply a ceremonial post: the President defines the role that the Commission is to have in the integration process, and s/he exemplifies the personality of the institution as a whole (Cini 1996). Perhaps most importantly, the President decides whether the Commission is going to attempt to lead the integration process forward through initiating policies such as the Single European Act (SEA), or merely maintain a policy of status quo.

The ability of Commission Presidents to provide effective and decisive leadership has varied considerably. For example, Walter Hallstein (1958-1967) has widely been considered a very capable President of the Commission who was frustrated toward the end of his term by de Gaulle's actions to limit the amount of sovereignty transferred to the supranational institutions of the EU. The result of the clash between de Gaulle and Hallstein was two decades of Commission passivity, spanning the presidencies from Jean Rey to Francois-Xavier Ortoli (between 1968 and 1976), which were criticized for a lack of leadership and entrepreneurship. It was not until the presidency of Roy Jenkins (1977-1980) that the Commission started to regain the power it once had (Christiansen 1996; Cini 1996). Under Jenkins' leadership, the Community was able to establish the European Monetary System (EMS) and provide momentum for the presidency of Jacques Delors (1985-1995), widely considered the most effective of all Commission Presidents. Following Delors' presidency, however, the Commission's influence in the integration process under the leadership of Jacques Santer (since 1995) has been on the decline again (*Financial Times*, 22 February 1999; *Economist* 10 January 1998).

Delors' long and successful presidency has been applauded as an example of what a Commission President can accomplish. Several factors contributed to his success. First, Delors assumed the Presidency with

an extensive political background that helped him successfully operate in the EU's political environment. Not only was he a former member of the European Parliament, but he was also the former Economy, Finance and Budget Minister in the government of Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy. Thus, he was not only familiar with important matters of state, but he was accustomed to the haggling required to reach tough EU political and economic agreements and advance the goals of the Commission (Armstrong and Bulmer 1998).

Moreover, Delors was able to provide strong leadership within the European Union because he made skillful use of the institutional advantages that accompany the office. For one, the President of the Commission generally has a larger staff than other Commissioners. This allows the President to be better informed about the work of the entire body of the Commission. Second, the weekly meetings under the President's *Chefs de Cabinet* allows the opportunity for the President's office to control and shape the agenda for the weekly Commission meetings. This advantage was clearly exploited by Delors with the able assistance of Pascal Lamy, who earned a reputation of forcefully promoting Delors' agenda in these meetings.¹⁸ Third, the Secretariat General and the Legal Service each report to the President of the Commission, providing an "administrative, political and public relations power base of enormous skill and intellectual agility" (Spence 1994, 101).¹⁹ Hence, the President is the person best placed to know what is going on inside the Commission. Lastly, the President's power to determine portfolio distribution within the Commission provides an opportunity to control important policy areas. Although each Commissioner has one vote, Commissioners with greater policy expertise are given added consideration. Delors used this tool very effectively, for example, by claiming monetary matters for himself and dividing Commissioner Cockfield's internal market portfolio among three new Commissioners (Edwards and Spence 1994).

As a result of the successful utilization of his skills and powers, Delors was deemed an outstandingly successful Commission President. In fact, few people would question his important role in furthering EU integration (Ross 1995; Wallace 1994; Edwards and Spence 1994). As the longest-standing President of the European Commission, Delors added a new vigor to the integration process. *The Economist* observed, that

under Delors leadership, the Commission was “a fund of new plans and ideas, setting the agenda which national governments responded to” (*Economist* 3 September 1998, 49). For example, Delors gathered political support to focus on the “unfinished business” of the EU (i.e. the completion of the internal market) and to advance economic integration. He was able to secure the agreement of ideological opponents, such as British Prime Minister Thatcher, to complete the project first agreed upon in 1958. The Commission’s White Paper served as the blueprint to eliminate the remaining barriers in the common market and led to the implementation of the Single European Act. In addition, Delors was the architect of two packages, Delors I and Delors II, designed to reform the budgetary practices of the European Union, and he chaired the committee that proposed European Monetary Union (dubbed the Delors Plan) in 1989. Put simply, it would be difficult to argue that Delors had little influence over the future of the EU or how the European public saw the integration process.

This is not to say that Delors tenure in office was without strife or failure. Indeed, within the Commission, Delors’ style of “presidential” leadership created a certain degree of acrimony within the Commission. He periodically made important policy announcements before consulting with other Commissioners, and he was not above criticizing fellow Commissioners in public (McCormick 1996; Nugent 1994). Moreover, Delors’ ability to shape the Maastricht Treaty or Treaty on European Union (TEU) was not as successful as previous Union initiatives. Although he publicly supported and campaigned for the Treaty, it did not enhance the power of the Commission as he had wished; Delors distanced himself as a result:

I have been identified as the architect of European recovery, and this flatters me, on the strength of the single act, the 1992 objective, and the financial agreements embodied in what are referred to as packages one and two, but I am not the architect of Maastricht. An examination of the Commission’s proposals for the treaty will show that there are great differences between them and the final text. It would therefore be better to put the question to those who had a real say in the final drafting of the agreement, which, quite frankly is not mine. (*FBIS*, 16 February 1994).

Since the TEU, the ability of the Commission to set the European policy agenda has regressed vis à vis the member states (Garrett 1995; Wallace 1994). Although the member states essentially excluded the Commission from the bargaining process, Delors was associated with the founding of the Treaty by national

politicians and the media. Thus, after the political and economic climate turned against EU integration in several of the member states, Delors became a convenient scapegoat for actions called upon in the Treaty (Dinan 1994). As a result, Delors was forced to take a much lower profile in EU affairs.

During Delors' presidency, the Commission and the President increasingly have come under public scrutiny. With "citizens, politicians, businessmen, the press of the member states closely following the person serving in the highest office of the EU, the President has been exposed to the media limelight" (*FBIS* 25 July 1994). Through his high profile successes (the SEA, Delors I and Delors II, and the White Paper on European Monetary Policy), Delors established himself as a prominent European politician and international statesman. However, as Delors' profile grew, it became easier to attach blame to the President of the Commission for economic hardships (Edwards and Spence 1994; Ross 1994; Smith 1996). Delors' notoriety was clearly demonstrated in the UK by the tabloid newspaper, the Sun, which ran a front-page headline "Up Yours, Delors." In particular, the member states conveniently blamed Delors and the Commission for the necessary budget cuts required by the TEU for monetary union. Moreover, these budget restraints coincided with poor economic performances for most EU member states, reinforcing negative public opinions and questioning the legitimacy of the Commission.

MEASURING APPROVAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION

Our data on public support for the Commission President come from the *Eurobarometer* surveys, a semi-annual set of public opinion surveys conducted in the member states of the European Union since the early 1970s. Based on multistage probability samples with random selection of respondents, these surveys are based on the population of each member states, aged 15 and over. The countries included in our study were Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

Eurobarometer 42 (EB 42) was collected in the member states between 28 November and 31

December of 1994. Each country's survey included about 1,000 respondents.²⁰ Fieldwork for the survey was conducted during a time when European integration was more salient than ever, about three years after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. The political goals set forth in the treaty and the possible admission of new member states to the Union dominated EU discussions. The summer of 1994 had witnessed elections to the European Parliament, and in June (Austria), October (Finland), and November (Sweden and then Norway) four potential member states held referendums on EU membership. After these referendums passed in Austria, Sweden, and Finland, the three countries signed agreements to enter the European Monetary System as of January 1, 1995 and to enter the Union formally later that year. We believe that the political setting in which the data collection was carried out actually aids our efforts, as European issues were likely to be high on the political agenda, relative to other times during the post-Maastricht era. This should enhance people's ability to give meaningful answers to questions about European Union politics.

This particular *Eurobarometer* also is useful for the purposes of our analysis because it included a number of questions on economic perceptions, utilitarian considerations, and approval of the President of the Commission that have not been consistently asked in the poll over the years. Moreover, the countries in the study also included those that had reappointed Jacques Delors to be President of the Commission. Finally, the survey was conducted near the end of Delors' term of almost ten years in office. This should maximize the probability that Europeans were aware of Jacques Delors and the role he played in European affairs.

We define support for the President of the European Commission by measuring how respondents evaluate Delors' performance. The question is as follows:

“What is your view about the job that Jacques Delors has done as President of the European Commission? Do you think he has done a very good job, a fairly good job, a fairly bad job, or a very bad job?”

The answer categories ranged from “very good” to “very bad” and also included a category for “don't know”.

Note that this approval question is quite similar to the question Gallup has been asking of the U.S. President for many years (“Do you approve or disapprove of the way NAME is handling his job as president?” with

answer categories for “approve”, “disapprove”, and “no opinion”).

Taking the positive (“very good” and “fairly good”) and negative (“fairly bad” and “very bad”) responses together, Figure 1 shows the distribution of opinions taken from EB 42 (fall 1994) regarding public approval of Jacques Delors’ presidency. The graph reveals that there are significant differences in approval rates across countries, ranging from a high of almost 75 percent in Ireland and Luxembourg to a low of less than 30 percent in Italy and Spain. The average approval score across the member states is about 50 percent (47.6%), indicating that about half of all Europeans approve of the way Jacques Delors was handling his job as President of the Commission.

(Figure 1 about here)

What is even more noteworthy is the fact that very few Europeans disapprove of the President of the Commission—on average fewer than 10 percent (7.1%), with 15.9 percent of Danes disapproving at the high end of the distribution and .8 percent of the Portuguese at the low end. Thus, instead of saying they disapprove of the President of the Commission, Europeans may be saying that they do not know. In fact, Europeans on average are as likely to say they don’t know how to evaluate the President (45.3%) as they are to approve (47.6%). The highest numbers of Europeans saying they don’t know whether they approve or disapprove can be found in Italy, Spain, and Portugal at over 60 percent, whereas the lowest numbers are found in Denmark, Ireland, and Luxembourg at around 20 to 25 percent. Overall, thus, the modal answer categories are approval and an expression of no opinion on the performance of the President of the European Commission.

MODELING SUPPORT FOR THE COMMISSION PRESIDENT

To explain approval of the Commission President, we developed and then estimated a series of multinomial logit models that included three main elements: Utilitarian considerations, variables accounting

for differences across respondents with regard to information about the European Union, and considerations specific to Jacques Delors.

First, we sought to estimate utilitarian considerations by measuring people's perceptions of personal and national economic conditions, evaluations of whether the country has benefitted from being part of the EU, and attitudes about the Single European Market (as well as an indicator of human capital—education—commonly used in the literature). Europeans who have positive economic assessments, believe that their country has benefitted from EU membership, and who are favorably disposed toward the common market were expected to approve of the way Jacques Delors was handling his job as President of the Commission. In addition, individuals of high levels of human capital were hypothesized to have positive attitudes toward the President.

Second, we needed to account for the significant number of respondents who stated that they did not know when asked about whether Delors was doing a good or bad job as President. Were these responses reflective of people's feelings that they lacked sufficient information to express an opinion about Delors, or were they in fact simply negative responses? If Europeans used the "don't know" response category as a way to express disapproval, negative utilitarian assessments should be significantly associated with presidential disapproval. If, however, the Don't Knows simply did not know and said so, we expected significant relationships between indicators of awareness of, information about, and interest in European Union politics on one hand and the willingness to express *both* a positive *or* negative opinion about the President of the Commission on the other.

Finally, we hypothesized that people's views of Delors may be affected by factors that had to do with his personal and political traits as well as demographic differences across respondents. We expected that the fact that he was French and a prominent Socialist Party politician before becoming Commission President would affect people's views about him. Specifically, we expected that those respondents who felt close to France and those who supported socialist parties were more supportive of Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission. In addition, we controlled for the usual demographic variables age and gender.

The Dependent Variable

If respondents thought that Delors had done a very good or fairly good job, they were coded 2; a fairly bad or very bad job, they were coded 1, and if they said they did not know, they received a 0. Note that our dependent variable thus does not rank-order respondents' answers about the President.

Utilitarian Independent Variables

The utilitarian variables were designed to elicit respondents' evaluations of how they perceive their own and the country's economic situation as well as how they think their country to be affected by EU membership and the process of market integration.

Economic Perceptions

Economic evaluations were measured with the help of both egocentric (pocketbook) and sociotropic (national) economic perceptions. Because questions about the President of the Commission asked respondents to evaluate the job Jacques Delors *has done*, we employed retrospective economic assessments in our multivariate models. The variables were coded from 1 (much worse) to 5 (much better), and we expected positive relations between perceptions and presidential support (see appendix).

Benefit of EU Membership: Collective Benefits

We argued above that the Commission's activities frequently affect economic performance in the member states and affect who benefits from EU policies. To gauge the effects of people's utilitarian perceptions of whether their country has benefitted from EU membership on support for the President of the Commission, we made use of the following question: "Taking everything into consideration, would you say that our country has on balance benefitted or not from being a member of the European Union?" Respondents who indicated that their country had benefitted were coded 1, and 0 otherwise.

The Single Market

Probably the single biggest achievement of Jacques Delors' tenure that significantly affected the European economy was the Single European Act, which led to the single market by the end of 1992. To measure people's feelings about the single market, the *Eurobarometer* asked: "Personally, would you say that the Single European Market, which came about at the beginning of 1993, makes you feel very hopeful, rather hopeful, rather fearful, or very fearful?" Responses range from 1 ("very fearful") to 4 ("very hopeful"). Thus, if people associated their feelings about the single market with Jacques Delors' performance in office, we expected to see a positive relationship between favorable attitudes concerning the single European market and approval of the Commission President.

Human Capital (Education): Personal Benefits

In addition to perceptions of economic conditions and whether the country has benefitted from EU membership, the most comprehensive statement about potential differences regarding benefits produced by trade and market liberalization has been made in a series of studies by Matthew Gabel and his collaborators (see, e.g., Gabel 1998a, 1998c, 1998d; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel and Whitten 1997). Specifically, using people's levels of education as an indicator of human capital, these studies have examined attitudes toward integration from the perspective of which individuals are likely to have the skills and resources to take advantage of an integrated European economy (cf. Becker 1980). Those who are likely to benefit from further integration— individuals with high levels of education—also should be more supportive of a President of the Commission whose single most important legacy was the completion of the internal market. Education is measured on a scale from 0 (low) to 10 (high), and we thus expect a positive relationship between this variable and support for Jacques Delors as President of the Commission (see also Anderson and Reichert 1996).

Information-Related Independent Variables

To examine whether Europeans used the “don’t know” response category as a way to express disapproval or simply did not know and said so, we also investigated the relationships between indicators of awareness and information as well as interest in European Union politics on one hand and the willingness to express a positive or negative opinion about the President of the Commission on the other. We hypothesized that those who were interested in EU politics and indicated higher levels of subjective knowledge and awareness about the EU and the Commission would be significantly less likely to answer that they did not know when asked about the Commission President.²¹ This means also, however, that those who said they were interested and informed also should be more likely to have *both* a negative *or* positive opinion—that is, to have an opinion in the first place.

Interest in EU Politics

Because most Europeans generally do not think a great deal about the integration process, let alone the intricacies of EU politics, some scholars have argued that interest in EU politics is an important variable for understanding public opinion toward integration (cf. Janssen 1991). Specifically, we hypothesize that people who are motivated to seek out information about the EU also would be more likely to have an opinion (either negative or positive) and less likely to say that they did not know when asked about the Commission President. We measured interest in EU politics on a scale from 1 (not at all interested) to 4 (very interested) (see appendix for question wording) and expected a negative relationship with the “don’t know” category and a positive relationship with the two presidential approval categories (approve or disapprove).

Subjective Levels of Information about the EU

Respondents also were asked to rate their own levels of information about the EU: “All things considered, how well informed do you feel you are about the European Union, its policies, its institutions”? The answers were coded from 1 (“not at all well”) to 4 (“Very well”), and we expected a negative relationship

between this variable and the don't know category, as well as a positive relationship with the two other answer categories.

Heard about the Commission

To gauge people's specific awareness of the European Commission, we utilized a question that asked respondents: "Have you recently heard or read about the European Commission in Brussels, that is the Commission of the European Union?" If respondents indicated they had heard of the Commission, they were coded 1, 0 otherwise. As in the other cases, we expected a positive relationship between this variable and a willingness to give an opinion about the Commission President.²²

Delors-Specific Control Variables: Feelings Toward France and Socialist Party Support

Finally we sought to control for factors associated with Jacques Delors' personal and political characteristics as well as demographic differences across the respondents that may affect people's approval of how well Jacques Delors was handling his job as Commission President. First, we hypothesized that people who felt close to France also would have more positive feelings about Delors, given that he is French and because of the prominent role he played in French politics before becoming Commission President. In addition, we expected that socialist party supporters would be more positive toward Delors because he was a prominent member of the French Socialist Party. We measured feelings toward France with the help of the following question: "Please tell me for each of the 12 countries of the European Union, whether you feel close to it or not." If respondents indicated that they felt close to France, they were coded 1, and 0 otherwise. Socialist party support was constructed from the following question: "If there were a General Election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?" If respondent said that they would vote for a Socialist party (or one of the socialist parties) they received a score of 1, and 0 otherwise.

Demographic Control Variables

To fully specify the individual-level models, we also needed to control for demographic variables that have been found to be associated with support for European integration and policy issues. In addition, we also included a set of country dummy variables to estimate country-specific effects that are not captured by the other independent variables in our model (the reference category is France).

Age

Ronald Inglehart (1970; Inglehart and Rabier 1978; Inglehart and Reif 1991) was among the first scholars to explore the relationship between public opinion and European integration. Inglehart argued that a key factor in explaining public attitudes toward European integration was value change. His primary thesis stated that the younger generations in industrialized democracies experienced a fundamental change in their political values during the post-WWII era. Specifically, those who grew up during times of affluence no longer exhibited materialist value orientations—that is, a concern with economic and physical security—and instead developed “post-materialist” political values.

This new set of political values was expected to affect people’s attitudes toward international politics and cooperation (Inglehart 1970). Specifically, Inglehart argued that younger generations would be more cosmopolitan in their outlook, would abandon chauvinistic attitudes toward the world, and would embrace efforts to achieve international understanding and European integration. Consistent with Inglehart’s notion of value change, age thus should be negatively associated with support for the Commission President, provided that the President is seen as a symbol of the EU. Age was measured as the actual age of the respondent.

Gender

For quite some time, women have tended to be more critical of the integration process. Based on research which shows that women are among the losers of the integration process because of their position in

the labor market, and because the fiscal tightening that went along with the run-up to the euro has disproportionately affected women through cuts in the welfare system, we also expected a gender gap in attitudes toward the President of the Commission (Liebert 1998). We thus hypothesized a negative relationship between gender (coded 0,1; 1=female) and attitudes toward Jacques Delors' handling of the Presidency.

RESULTS

We estimated multivariate regression models of support for the President of the Commission (coded 0= "don't know"; 1= "bad job"; 2 ="good job") and the individual level variables as independent variables. Because the dependent variable has three unordered, multiple choice response categories, we relied on multinomial Logit estimations (cf. Whitten and Palmer 1996). The independent variables are the utilitarian and information measures discussed above, along with the controls for direct Delors effects and demographic variables. With k answer categories, multinomial Logit estimates k-1 equations, with the remaining category serving as the baseline. In our case, the baseline category is 0—that is, answering "don't know" to the approval question.

Multinomial Regression Results

In our case, the multinomial logit coefficients indicate the effects of an independent variable on increasing the likelihood that the respondent will choose "good job" (2) or "bad job" (1) over "don't know" (0). The probability of saying choosing the "don't know" category is 1 minus the probability of choosing the two other answer categories—that is, "good job" and "bad job."

(Table 1 about here)

Utilitarian Variables

The base category is no opinion. The results show that utilitarian considerations played a significant role in determining citizen attitudes toward Jacques Delors' performance in office. Specifically, we found that those who believed that their country had benefitted from EU membership also were significantly more likely to say that they approved of the Commission President; conversely, the results for the disapprove/don't know analysis showed that those who said their country had benefitted also were much less likely to say they disapprove relative to those in the no opinion category when asked about the President. This means that those who had a positive attitude about the benefits of EU membership were more likely to say that they did not know than to say they disapproved. Overall, the results revealed that those who considered EU membership to have benefitted their country were significantly more likely to approve and less likely to disapprove of the President.

We also found that feelings about the Single European Market had powerful effects on approval of the Commission President. In line with the quasi-economic voting expectations, we found that positive attitudes toward the single market engendered approval of the EU president and significantly reduced the likelihood of disapproval. Thus, both utilitarian questions about the benefits of European Union membership and prospective judgments about the Single European Market had significant effects on presidential approval—effects that were consistent with the quasi-economic voting thesis.

These results are particularly noteworthy because the questions measuring people's perceptions of national and personal economic conditions had much less significant effects. In fact, the analysis revealed no significant relationships between personal economic conditions and approval of the EU president, and the sociotropic question had only weak substantive effects on the probability of approval, and no effect on the probability of disapproval relative to having no opinion. Thus, we found no evidence of "quasi-pocketbook" economic voting with regard to approval of the President of the Commission, and the sociotropic effects were not particularly strong substantively. Taken together, our analyses discovered systematic evidence for the

effects of utilitarian variables on presidential approval in the EU. However, those variables measuring utilitarian considerations related specifically to the EU were more successful at explaining support for the President of the Commission than general perceptions of national economic performance.²³

Information and Awareness Variables

The variables measuring informational and awareness differences across the European public displayed extremely consistent results. Those who said they were interested in EU politics, said they had heard of the Commission lately, and those who felt that they were aware of EU politics were significantly more likely to say they *either* approved or disapproved of Delors' performance in office. Conversely, this indicated that those with high subjective levels of information were much less likely to say they did not know when asked about the performance of the Commission President. These results strongly suggest that higher levels of information, awareness, and interest significantly increased the probabilities that respondents were willing to voice an opinion about Delors in the first place. That is, those who were motivated to seek out information about the EU were more willing to say what they thought about the Commission President.

Control Variables

When we examined the results for the Delors-specific and demographic control variables, a few stood out. Those who felt close to France also were significantly more likely to approve of Delors' performance; however, they also were slightly more willing to say that they disapproved. This appears to indicate that feelings of closeness to France both increased the chances that respondents were satisfied with Delors and their willingness to voice an opinion about him. Thus, closeness bred both content and a willingness to express discontent.

In addition, the variable measuring socialist party support behaved as expected: socialist party supporters approved of Delors and also were less likely to disapprove of his performance. Finally, gender had

a significant impact on evaluations of Delors' performance. The coefficient for women was negative in both the approval and the disapproval categories, indicating that women were significantly more likely to say that they did not have an opinion when asked about the performance of the Commission President.

Marginal Effects

In nonlinear models such as multinomial Logit models, the reported coefficient is not equal to a marginal effect, or derivative of an expected value with respect to a variable. Thus, to get a sense of the overall independent effect of a variable, it is necessary to mix the results of two sets of estimates to obtain the marginal effects. Marginal effect estimates are computed at the overall means of the data set.

(Table 2 about here)

The marginal effects calculated from the model estimations confirm the story told by the coefficients. Positive EU-related utilitarian considerations—EU membership benefit and attitudes toward the Single European Market—significantly increased the probability that Europeans approved of the President and decreased the probabilities that they either disapproved or expressed no opinion. Moreover, we found that positive national economic assessments increased support for the President and decreased the probability of no opinion to almost equal degrees.

The information variables worked in two particular directions: First, more information increased the probability that citizens approved of the President; second, high levels of information and awareness decreased the probability that they did not express an opinion. Interestingly, the effects of information-related variables on the probability of expressing a negative opinion were negligible.

To gain additional insight into the substantive impact of the independent variables on the probability of approving of the Commission President, the graphs in Figures 2 and 3 show the changing probability of

approval (varying between 0 and 1) as a function of different independent variables. Four functions are presented. Holding all other independent variables at their mean and accounting for the probabilities of falling into one of the three response categories (cf. Greene 1997: 915), Figure 2 demonstrates the likelihood of approval as a function of changing responses to the utilitarian questions of EU membership benefit, attitudes toward the Single Market, and retrospective economic perceptions, while Figure 3 shows the changing probability of approval as a function of interest in EU politics, having heard of the Commission, and feeling informed about the EU.

The graphs show the changing probabilities of approving of the Commission President for the average respondent as a function of different answers to the various independent variables. The average person is a hypothetical person whose initial probability of responding positively to the approval question is equal to the sample frequency for the approval category and thus representative of the average respondent. This probability is .476.

(Figure 2 about here)

Figure 2 displays the independent effects of the utilitarian variables on the probability of approving of the Commission President. It reveals that the question about benefits derived from EU membership and attitudes about the Single European Market have significantly larger impacts on the probability of approval than retrospective sociotropic economic perceptions. Assuming that the initial probability of the average respondent to approve of the Commission President is approximately .48, having a hopeful attitude toward the Single European Market boosts the probability of approval to around 55 percent. Similarly, indicating that the country has benefitted from the EU increases a respondents likelihood of approving of the job Jacques Delors has done as President to over .55. In contrast, positive perceptions of the nation's economic performance increase the probability of approval only slightly to still less than 50 percent.

Figure 3 shows the effects of the information-related variables on approval. The graph reveals that feeling informed has the largest substantive effects on the probability of approval, whereas having heard of the Commission and being interested has much smaller though positive effects. Those who feel very well informed about the EU increase their probability to around .55. Thus, subjective awareness about the EU has as significant an effect as the most effective utilitarian variable.

(Figure 3 about here)

Do Awareness and Quasi-Economic Voting Interact?

When asked about the President of the Commission, Europeans fall into one of two camps: They either approve of the job the President is doing or they say that they do not know. Given this bifurcation and given the strong utilitarian and informational effects on approval of the President found in the multivariate estimation models, we sought to submit the utilitarian “quasi-economic voting” model to an additional test. Specifically, we examined whether quasi-economic voting was stronger among citizens with different levels of information, interest, and awareness.

Because utilitarian models make certain informational assumptions—that citizens can identify benefits and relate these to their attitudes about the EU—we hypothesized that quasi-economic voting, that is, the use of utilitarian considerations to express approval or disapproval of the Commission President, would be stronger among those with higher levels of information. The more informed, interested, and aware citizens were, the more likely it should be that economic considerations affected their levels of presidential support because they know how the Commission affects economic conditions in the European economy.²⁴

A plausible alternative hypothesis to the claim that better informed Europeans would make more use of utilitarian considerations when judging the President of the Commission can be developed from political psychological work on the rationality of people’s attitudes and the informational requirements for acting in a

sophisticated fashion. Specifically, researchers have found that ill-informed citizens can mimic the behavior of more informed ones through the use of heuristics and cues in a way that is consistent with their self-interest (Lupia 1994; see also Kinder 1998), such that it is virtually impossible to distinguish between sophisticated citizens and those who behave “as if” they were well-informed (see also Zaller 1992).

To test whether well-informed, highly aware, and interested Europeans differ from those who are less well informed about the EU, we examined the effects of the utilitarian variables on presidential approval among these two-subgroups. Specifically, we categorized those individuals who said they had not heard about the Commission, that they were not interested in EU politics, and that they did not feel well-informed about the EU as low information respondents and all others as high information respondents. Thus, if an individual fell into all three low-information categories, they qualified as less informed. Incidentally, this split the sample approximately in half. We then estimated multivariate multinomial Logit models of the effects of all other independent variables on presidential support separately for these two populations. To check for the robustness of the results, we then also estimated models using the full sample that included the information variable and interaction variables of information and the utilitarian measures. If respondents in the two informational categories responded systematically differently in terms of their use of utilitarian considerations to judge the President of the Commission, the interactive variables were expected to be statistically significant in their impact on approval.

(Table 3 about here)

For simplicity, we only show the results of the analysis for the approval category.²⁵ The results, shown in Table 3, revealed that there were no differences across individuals of high and low levels of awareness of, information about, and interest in EU politics. That is, the effects of the utilitarian variables on the probability of approving of the Commission President were virtually identical across the more and less informed

subgroups of the population. Moreover, there were no differences in the effects of the other independent variables on the probability of approval. Unsurprisingly, the marginal effects (not shown here) bore out these conclusions as well. Finally, when we examined the effects of the interaction models based on the full sample, we reached identical conclusions. Regardless of levels of information, awareness, and political interest, utilitarian considerations played a significant role in helping Europeans form assessments of the Commission President; and the most important of these considerations are attitudes about the Single European Market and whether the country has benefitted from EU membership. Moreover, our results strongly suggest that less informed, interested, and aware citizens—at least in the context of attitudes about the President of the Commission—behave like those with more information.

DISCUSSION

The results reported in this study have implications for our understanding of European integration and how Europeans make judgments about European institutions. Moreover, the analysis points to some general conclusions about the nature of public opinion toward international institutions and policies. Finally, the conclusions we reach have implications for economic voting theories and issues of information and accountability.

In contrast to most studies on public support for European integration, which have tended to focus on people's support for the integration process, their country's membership in the EU, or their feelings if the EU were dissolved, this study examined people's evaluations of the *performance* of the most visible policymaker—the President of the European Commission. Consistent with the general argument in the literature on support for European integration, we found that Europeans systematically take utilitarian considerations into account when assessing the performance of the Commission President (cf. Gabel 1998a).

Moreover, the results show that having information about the EU is a crucial ingredient in models of public opinion toward European institutions. The distribution of responses showed that many Europeans do

not give an opinion when asked about the President of the Commission. The results showed that those who had information (or felt they did) were much more likely to give an assessment of the performance of the President. This appears to indicate that a significant segment of the European public is not actively involved in European-level politics. And when these citizens lack the relevant information to make a judgment, they say they have no opinion because that is the sensible answer to give when one has less information.

Although this phenomenon may be associated with the general problem of a democracy deficit in the EU, it also means that a significant share of the European public *is* involved and makes fairly sophisticated choices when asked about EU politics. Moreover, and maybe more importantly, when we analyzed well and ill informed Europeans separately, we found no significant differences with regard to how they make use of utilitarian considerations when judging the performance of the President. Thus, consistent with research in other areas of public opinion, less well informed voters were able to mimic better informed ones (cf. Lupia 1994; Zaller 1992). This also means that although we appear to have two European publics—the interested, aware, and informed one and the impervious, oblivious, and uninformed one—they behave in ways that are difficult to distinguish empirically.

Our results also showed that party support can affect public opinion about European institutions. The consistently significant effects of socialist party support on approval of Jacques Delors suggests that citizens do link party affiliation with judgments about Europe when there is an obvious way to do so (cf. Hix and Lord 1997; Taggart 1998). This is also the case for other considerations, such as the nationality of the President. Those who felt close to France also tended to be more supportive of the job Delors did as President of the Commission.

These interpretations of the results need to be tempered by the conclusion that further studies are needed to establish the extent to which they are specific to the performance of Jacques Delors and the time of his term during which the survey was conducted. After all, Delors was probably the best-known President the Commission has had and the survey was conducted during his last year in office. Thus, finding any economic

or utilitarian effects at all should have been possible in an analysis of this particular Eurobarometer survey. Moreover, it would be useful to establish whether and to what extent the findings presented here for the European public as a whole hold for each member state or may be mediated by factors such as the media environment or objective benefits (such as structural funds) a country receives..

Finally, the results tell us something about economic voting in the absence of popular accountability and the presence of low information. Traditional economic voting theories would predict that economic effects would only weakly affect approval of the President of the European Commission because accountability is low—in fact, it does not exist. Consistent with this expectation, we find that the traditional economic voting indicators have small substantive effects. However, we also find that those “economic” attitudes referring to the European Union have a significant impact on approval of the relevant institutional actor—the President of the European Commission. Maybe as important, consistent with commonly accepted ideas about the importance of accountability for providing incentives for citizens to be involved in the political process, we found that fewer citizens express an opinion about political authority when accountability is absent.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the effects of utilitarian considerations on support for the President of the European Commission. Specifically, we examined whether the lack of democratic accountability and low levels of information about the EU affected citizens’ use of utilitarian motivations when judging the President of the Commission. Our analysis of the popularity of Commission President Jacques showed that Europeans were simultaneously utilitarian and ill-informed when it comes to judging the performance of the President. Utilitarian considerations systematically affected whether Europeans approved of the job the President of the Commission had done, and they did so both among informed and less informed Europeans.

For many politicians in modern democracies, high approval ratings are a political resource and, in many cases, a source of power (Brace and Hinckley 1992; Kinder 1998). This also should apply to the

President of the European Commission, with the crucial caveat that high approval usually generates power because of the potential for citizens to hold unpopular leaders accountable at the ballot box. Until the President of the Commission is elected by the people of Europe or more directly accountable in other ways, the power of high approval is obviously diminished. Moreover, in the context of public opinion about the President of the Commission, we need to think about what the approval of the President by the significant segment of less well-informed means in political terms. We would argue that high approval rates—even in the face of considerable lack of information on the part of European citizens—are a more useful political resource when highly salient policy issues are being considered. Given the recent “Europeanization” of politics in the Union (Tarrow 1998), we would argue that public support for institutional actors is likely to become more important in the future because the European public is paying more attention and because institutional actors are paying more attention to public opinion.

Notes

1. To be correct, what we refer to as the European Commission is officially known as the “Commission of the European Communities.” Moreover, press accounts sometimes refer to the President of the Commission as the European President. We will refer to the President of the Commission of the European Communities as the “President of the Commission”, “Commission President”, or “President” throughout this study.

2. An additional stream of research has argued that people consider their personal benefits when asked about the EU (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel 1998b; Gabel 1998c). Based on the notion of human capital, this research argues that those who can expect to take advantage of an ever more integrated European economy also will be more supportive of the political institutions driving such integration (i.e., the European Union).

3. A prominent example supporting this view was the Luxembourg compromise of 1966, when French President De Gaulle established the application of a national veto to any proposal deemed to be a vital interest to a member state. This established an environment that restricted the ability of the Commission to propose legislation since the objection of only one member state was needed to stall any proposal.

4. The negotiations leading to the Single European Act (SEA), for example, were held in a climate of increasing EU economic growth, intensifying international economic competition, and national leaders who felt that increased EU cooperation could bolster domestic economies.

5. In 1994, for example, the EU budget was about ECU 61478.7 million or about 1.3% of the combined GDP of the 12 member states. Of that amount, 53.6% went to EAGGF Guarantee Funding (i.e. agriculture expenditures), 25.8% to structural funds, 4.0% was spent on research and education programs, 5.0% on external aid, and only 5.8% was allocated for administration costs. The remainder (5.8%) was allotted to other programs or reserves (CEC 1998). The EU has guaranteed sources of income over which the member states have no legal control. These resources consist of common customs tariff duties and other duties collected in respect of trade with non-member countries, agricultural levies, premiums and other duties which are collected in respect of trade with non-member countries, the application of a uniform percentage rate to the VAT assessment base which is determined in a standardized manner for member states, and the application of a rate to a base representing the sum of member states' GDP at market prices. In 1994 the revenue raising proportions were VAT: 53.0%; GNP resource 27.4%; customs duties: 16.2%; agricultural levies: 3.3%; miscellaneous: 0.1% (CEC 1995).

6. Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Spain are net recipients in 1994. (CEC 1995).

7. All Commissioners must agree on the proposal.

8. Next, the Council (actually COREPER does much of the work) examines the document line by line, and negotiates changes. When the Council has finished its work, the budget is sent to the European Parliament for a first reading. The Parliament proceeds to modify the document and sends it back to the Council for a second reading. At this stage, the Council must obtain a qualified majority to accept or reject any of the modifications proposed by the Parliament. The budget then goes back to the Parliament for a final vote. Unless the entire budget is rejected, the Parliamentary President declares the budget to be adopted.

9. Directorate General IV has been assigned the role of carrying out EU competition policy. It can become aware of competition infringements in one of three ways: through the Commission's own investigative powers, a complaint by a member state, or a complaint from a private firm or citizen. Once investigated, the Commission can approve of the aid, demand its repayment, or even impose a fine (with a maximum ceiling

of ECU 1,000 million or 10% of a company's world-wide turnover).

10. Mergers fall within the scope of the Commission if the aggregate world-wide turnover of all the undertakings involved exceed ECU 5,000 million and the aggregate EU turnover of each of at least two of the firms involved exceeds ECU 250 million. The regulation does not apply if each of the firms involved has two-thirds of its EU-wide turnover within one member state. See Hancher (1996) and McCormick (1996) for a general discussion on competition policy.

11. See *The Economist* 31 January 1998 for a listing of significant fines applied by the Commission.

12. These policies concentrate on the following objectives: 1) development and structural adjustment of regions of poor regions 2) reconstruction of regions in economic decline 3) fighting long-term unemployment 4) facilitating workers to industrial changes 5a) adjustment of production, processing and marketing structures for agriculture and fishery goods 5b) development and structural adaptation of rural regions 6) the economic adjustment of sparsely populated regions (CEC 1997). The vast majority of these funds (73% in 1994) are devoted to assist in the economic development of regions that are falling behind (below 75% of the EU average) the rest of the EU. The biggest recipients from these funds in 1994 (with a budget of ECU 93.99 billion) were Spain (28%), Italy (15.8%), Portugal (14.8%), Germany (14.5%) and Ireland (6%) (CEC 1997).

13. The Commission also represents the EU in the WTO (previously GATT) discussions. The process starts with a Commission trade policy recommendation to the Council, which then issues a directive adopted by qualified majority. The Commission then negotiates, based on the directive, and reports back to the Council.

14. The large members (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom) are allotted two Commissioners while the other members are represented by one Commissioner each. Prior to the 1995 enlargement, the Commission consisted of 17 members appointed for a period of four years. The president and vice-presidents were appointed for two year renewable terms. Under the TEU the terms were lengthened to five years effective January 1995 for Commissioners, and two and a half years for the president and vice-presidents.

15. The quality of personnel sent to the Commission can be mixed. France, for one, tends to nominate highly qualified individuals, while other countries may dump corrupt or unpopular party officials on the European level. Such an example was the appointment of Ritt Bjerregaard to the Commission by the Danish government.

16. Interestingly, current Commission President Santer unsuccessfully requested that the national governments give the President such powers (see *The Economist* 24 February 1996).

17. Each Commissioner has the assistance of a *Cabinet* to help fulfill his or her specific duties and to keep up with the ongoing affairs of the Commission. In general, the *cabinet* consists of a *Chef* and four or five people personally selected by the Commissioner. The *Chefs de Cabinet* meet weekly under the President's *Chef* to prepare for the weekly Wednesday meeting of the Commissioners. In the weekly meetings, Commissioners try to reach a consensus on proposals. In principle each Commissioner has only one vote (including the President) and a proposal is passed with an absolute majority of votes.

18. See George Ross (1995) for a detailed look at the role of Lamy in the Delors Presidency. Indeed, Lamy's nickname was Delors' Exocet (*The Economist* 23, July 1994).

19. The Secretariat General provides the administrative structure for the processing of proposals and presides over the weekly meeting of the *Chefs de Cabinet*. The Legal Service issues a prior opinion on every

Commission proposal to ensure its compatibility with EU law.

20. There are two small exceptions to this: Germany, where the *Eurobarometer* conducted surveys with about 2,000 respondents (1,000 in East and West Germany each) after unification in 1990, and Luxembourg, the smallest member state, where the sample usually involves about 500 respondents. We treat the German sample as if it originated from one population. We believe that this is a reasonable assumption more than 4 years after unification, evidenced by the fact that the substantive results we report below do not change when we use only the West German sample.

21. Subjective indicators of information, interest, and awareness are closely linked to objective levels of information (Anderson 1998), and it is thus plausible to assume that the subjective indicators are good proxies for objective levels of information about the EU.

22. The bivariate correlations among the information variables range between .28 (heard of the Commission and interest in EU politics), .29 (heard of the Commission and feel informed), and .43 (feel informed and interest in EU politics). The correlations of these variables with education are even lower, ranging between .11 and .21. Multicollinearity thus should not be a source of inefficiency of the estimates.

23. Note that the weak results for the economic perception variables were not due to the inclusion of the EU benefits and Single European Market questions. When these questions were excluded from the analysis, the coefficients for economic perceptions remained virtually unchanged (e.g., sociotropic perceptions [approve/don't know] $\beta = .110$; $p < .01$ versus $.098$; $p < .01$ [Table 1]; egocentric perceptions [approve/don't know] $\beta = .063$ versus $.035$ [Table 1]). The same was true for the other response categories as well as the marginal effects.

24. Presumably, this could also work in the reverse. Citizens with higher levels of information could be less likely to take utilitarian considerations into account when judging the President of the Commission because they believe that the Commission is less important than national governments in producing economic outcomes.

25. The other results did not contradict the conclusions reached on the basis of describing only the results from this category. The additional results can be obtained from the authors.

APPENDIX A. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Presidential approval	0	2	1.02	.96
Benefits of EU membership	0	1	.68	.46
Hope/fear of single market	1	4	2.75	.78
Sociotropic prospective economic assessments	1	5	2.85	.99
Egocentric prospective economic assessments	1	5	2.88	.85
Heard of the Commission	0	1	.61	.49
Interest in EU politics	1	4	2.22	.90
Subjective information of EU	1	4	2.11	.78
Feel close to France	0	1	.15	.35
Socialist party support	0	1	.23	.42
Human capital (education)	0	10	4.78	3.23
Age	15	98	43.55	17.86
Gender	0	1	.51	.50

Source: Eurobarometer 42, November/December 1994.

APPENDIX B. MEASUREMENT OF THE VARIABLES

Presidential Approval

“What is your view about the job that Jacques Delors has done as President of the European Commission? Do you think he has done a very good job, a fairly good job, a fairly bad job, or a very bad job?” 2=very good/fairly good job; 1=fairly bad/very bad job; 0=don’t know.

Country Benefits of EU Membership

“Taking everything into consideration, would you say that our country has on balance benefitted or not from being a member of the European Union?” 1=benefitted; 0=not benefitted.

Hope/Fear of Single Market

“Personally, would you say that the Single European Market, which came about at the beginning of 1993, makes you feel very hopeful (4), rather hopeful (3), rather fearful (2), or very fearful (1)?”

Sociotropic Retrospective Economic Assessments

“Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in this country now is ...?” 5=A lot better; 4=a little better; 3=stayed the same; 2=a little worse; 1=a lot worse.

Egocentric Retrospective Economic Assessments

“Compared to 12 months ago, the financial situation of your household now is ...?” 5=A lot better; 4=a little better; 3=stayed the same; 2=a little worse; 1=a lot worse.

Education (Human Capital)

“How old were you when you stopped full-time education?” Age when respondent stopped full-time education collapsed categories ranging from 0 to 10 (10=high).

Interest in EU Politics

“To what extent would you say you are interested in European politics, that is to say matters related to the European Union (European Community): a great deal (4), to some extent (3), not much (2) or not at all (1)?”

Subjective Levels of Information about the EU

“All things considered, how well informed do you feel you are about the European Union, its policies, its institutions?” 4=Very well; 3=quite well; 2=not very well; 1=not at all well.

Heard of the Commission

“Have you recently heard of read about ...? The European Commission in Brussels, that is the Commission of the European Union.” 1=Yes; 0=no.

Feel Close to France

“Please tell me for each of the 12 countries of the European Union, whether you feel close to it or not.” France: 1=Close; 0=not close.

Socialist Party Support

Based on the question: “If there were a General Election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?” If respondent would vote for Socialist party (or one of the socialist parties) = 1; otherwise = 0.

Age

“How old are you?” (Years of age)

Gender

Male = 0; female = 1.

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TABLE 1. MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODELS OF APPROVAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

<u>INDEPENDENT VARIABLE</u>	<u>ln[Approve/Don't know]</u>	<u>ln [Disapprove/Don't know]</u>
EU country benefit (high=has benefitted)	.383*** (.063)	-.607*** (.104)
Single European Market (high=hopeful)	.294*** (.038)	-.503*** (.062)
Sociotropic economic assessments (retrospective) (high=positive)	.098** (.030)	.048 (.050)
Egocentric economic assessments (retrospective) (high=positive)	.035 (.034)	.074 (.056)
.....		
Information about the Commission (high=heard)	.735*** (.055)	.610*** (.097)
Interested in E.U. politics (high=interested)	.377*** (.034)	.386*** (.056)
Subjective information about EU (high=informed)	.429*** (.039)	.182** (.065)
.....		
Close to France (high=feel close)	.523*** (.105)	.435* (.206)
Socialist party support (high=yes)	.203** (.063)	-.266* (.111)
Human capital (education) (high=educated)	.029** (.010)	.021 (.017)
Age (in years)	.012*** (.002)	.010*** (.003)
Gender (1=female)	-.355*** (.052)	-.584*** (.090)
.....		

TABLE 1 CONT.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	ln[Approve/Don't know]	ln [Disapprove/Don't know]
Belgium	-.670*** (.130)	-1.581*** (.157)
Denmark	-.263 (.147)	.313 (.198)
Germany	-1.425*** (.117)	-1.542*** (.182)
Greece	-.225 (.135)	-.367 (.208)
Italy	-2.135*** (.154)	-2.980 (.268)
Ireland	.160 (.153)	-1.184*** (.339)
Luxembourg	-.094 (.178)	-1.349*** (.386)
Netherlands	-1.495*** (.131)	-1.214*** (.219)
Portugal	-1.416*** (.148)	-3.204*** (.426)
Spain	-1.418*** (.133)	-1.420*** (.104)
United Kingdom	-.688*** (.131)	.448 (.170)
Constant	-2.692*** (.200)	-1.232*** (.300)

-2LL	6522.631
% correct	67.0
Reduction in error	24.3
Chi-squared (d.f.)	3027.346 (46)
N	8,960

Note: "Don't know" serves as the baseline category. ***: $p < .001$; **: $p < .01$; *: $p < .05$; significance tests are two-tailed. France is the reference category.

TABLE 2. MARGINAL EFFECTS OF UTILITARIAN AND INFORMATION-BASED VARIABLES ON APPROVAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DEPENDENT VARIABLE CATEGORY		
	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
EU country benefit (high=has benefitted)	.112*** (.014)	-.046*** (.006)	-.066*** (.014)
Single European Market (high=hopeful)	.066*** (.009)	-.035*** (.004)	-.032*** (.008)
Sociotropic economic assessments (retrospective) (high=positive)	.022** (.007)	-.001 (.002)	-.021** (.006)
Egocentric economic assessments (retrospective) (high=positive)	.006 (.008)	.003 (.003)	-.009 (.007)
.....			
Information about the Commission (high=heard)	.153*** (.013)	.008 (.005)	-.160*** (.013)
Interested in E.U. politics (high=interested)	.076*** (.008)	.008** (.003)	-.083*** (.008)
Subjective information about the EU (high=informed)	.095*** (.009)	-.005 (.003)	-.090*** (.009)
.....			
Close to France (high=feel close)	.109*** (.023)	.005 (.011)	-.114*** (.023)
Socialist party support (high=yes)	.058*** (.014)	-.022*** (.006)	-.036** (.014)
Human capital (education) (high=educated)	.006** (.002)	.000 (.001)	-.006** (.002)
Age (in years)	.002*** (.000)	.000 (.000)	-.003*** (.000)
Gender (1=female)	-.064*** (.012)	-.019*** (.005)	.083*** (.012)
.....			

TABLE 2 CONT.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DEPENDENT VARIABLE CATEGORY		
	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
Belgium	-.103*** (.030)	-.062*** (.014)	.165*** (.030)
Denmark	-.073* (.030)	.026** (.009)	.047 (.032)
Germany	-.284*** (.027)	-.034*** (.009)	.317*** (.027)
Greece	-.040 (.030)	-.012 (.010)	.052 (.029)
Italy	-.437*** (.036)	-.032* (.014)	.469*** (.037)
Ireland	.080* (.034)	-.070*** (.019)	-.010 (.034)
Luxembourg	.025 (.040)	-.070*** (.021)	.045 (.039)
Netherlands	-.312*** (.030)	-.013 (.011)	.325*** (.030)
Portugal	-.223*** (.035)	-.124*** (.026)	.347*** (.034)
Spain	-.287*** (.030)	-.027* (.010)	.314*** (.030)
United Kingdom	-.179*** (.029)	.049*** (.009)	.130*** (.028)
Constant	-.596*** (.048)	.028 (.015)	.567*** (.045)

Note: Marginal effects for the independent variables were calculated by varying one independent variable's value while holding all other independent variables constant at their means. ***: $p < .001$; **: $p < .01$; *: $p < .05$; significance tests are two-tailed.

TABLE 3. MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODELS OF APPROVAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	Low Information	High Information	Full Sample
	ln[Approve/Don't know]	ln [Approve/Don't know]	ln [Approve/Don't know]
EU country benefit (high=has benefitted)	.508*** (.090)	.522*** (.080)	.330** (.101)
Single European market (high=hopeful)	.497*** (.053)	.271*** (.047)	.185** (.063)
Sociotropic economic assessments (retrospective) (high=positive)	.127** (.041)	.151** (.038)	.058 (.048)
Egocentric economic assessments (retrospective) (high=positive)	.039 (.047)	.055 (.043)	.081 (.055)
.....			
Information index (high=aware/informed/interest)	—	—	.557*** (.136)
EU country benefit • Information	—	—	.067 (.065)
Single European Market • Information	—	—	.024 (.039)
Sociotropic economic assessments • Information	—	—	.035 (.030)
Egocentric economic assessments • Information	—	—	-.035 (.035)
.....			
Close to France (high=feel close)	.426** (.142)	.699*** (.133)	.553*** (.104)
Socialist party support (high=yes)	.196* (.087)	.208** (.078)	.217*** (.063)
Human capital (education) (high=educated)	.106*** (.013)	.081*** (.012)	.036*** (.010)
Age (in years)	.023*** (.002)	.017*** (.002)	.012*** (.002)
Gender (1=female)	-.637*** (.073)	-.502*** (.065)	-.369*** (.052)
.....			

TABLE 3 CONT.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	Low Information	High Information	Full Sample
	ln[Approve/Don't know]	ln [Approve/Don't know]	ln [Approve/Don't know]
Belgium	-.656*** (.197)	-.611*** (.176)	-.681*** (.133)
Denmark	.211 (.215)	-.130 (.192)	-.158 (.146)
Germany	-.975*** (.166)	-1.133*** (.149)	-1.311*** (.116)
Greece	-.249 (.199)	-.173 (.180)	-.167 (.133)
Netherlands	-1.120*** (.189)	-1.402*** (.167)	-1.405*** (.130)
Italy	-2.085*** (.221)	-2.165*** (.200)	-2.088*** (.153)
Ireland	-.145 (.206)	.740 (.204)	.117 (.151)
Luxembourg	.585* (.252)	.203 (.217)	-.443 (.177)
Portugal	-1.299*** (.210)	-1.685*** (.187)	-1.450*** (.146)
Spain	-1.143*** (.188)	-1.370*** (.170)	-1.400*** (.132)
United Kingdom	-.449* (.192)	-.631*** (.174)	-.659*** (.129)
Constant	-2.526*** (.270)	-1.370*** (.243)	-1.360 (.252)
-2LL	3181.116	3990.233	6554.585
% correct	65.5	65.1	67.6
Reduction in error	22.6	16.9	3.05
Chi-squared (d.f.)	1286.595 (40)	1365.395 (40)	2963.438 (50)
N	4,278	5,336	8,960

Note: "Don't know" serves as the baseline category. ***: $p < .001$; **: $p < .01$; *: $p < .05$; significance tests are two-tailed. France is the reference category.

Figure 1

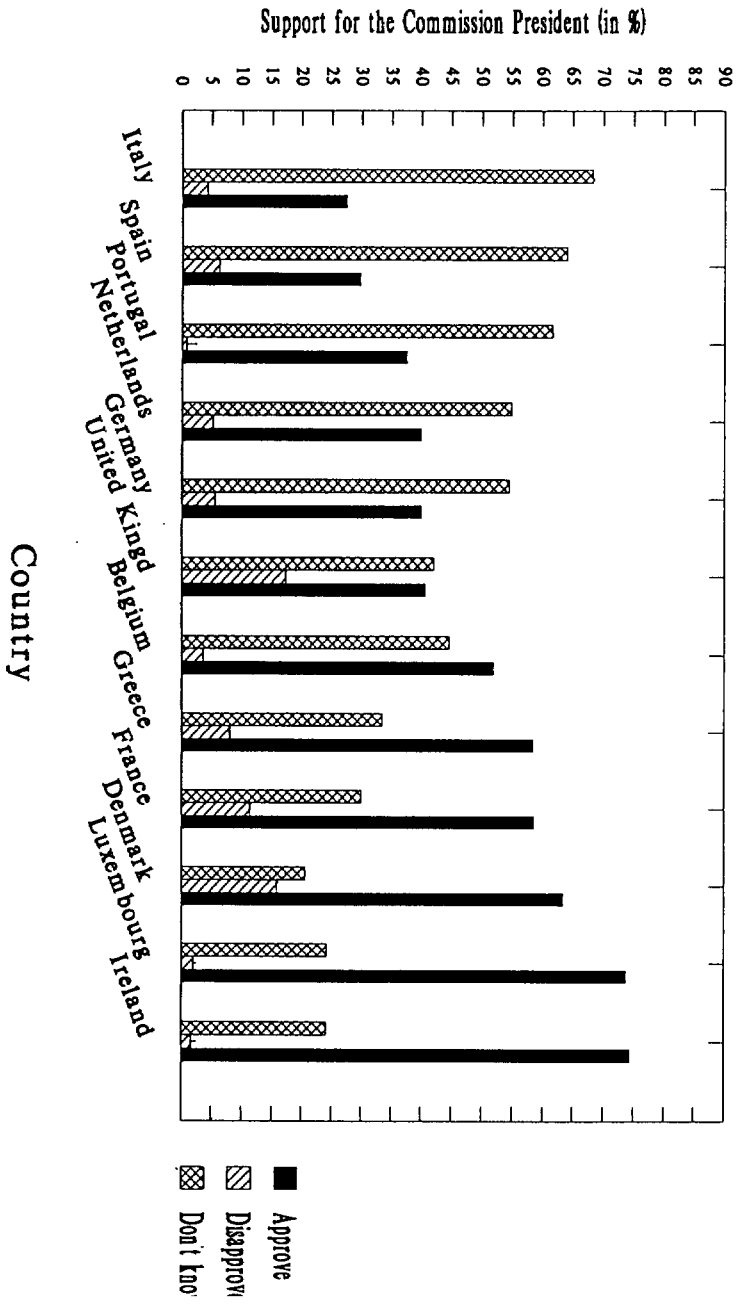


Figure 2

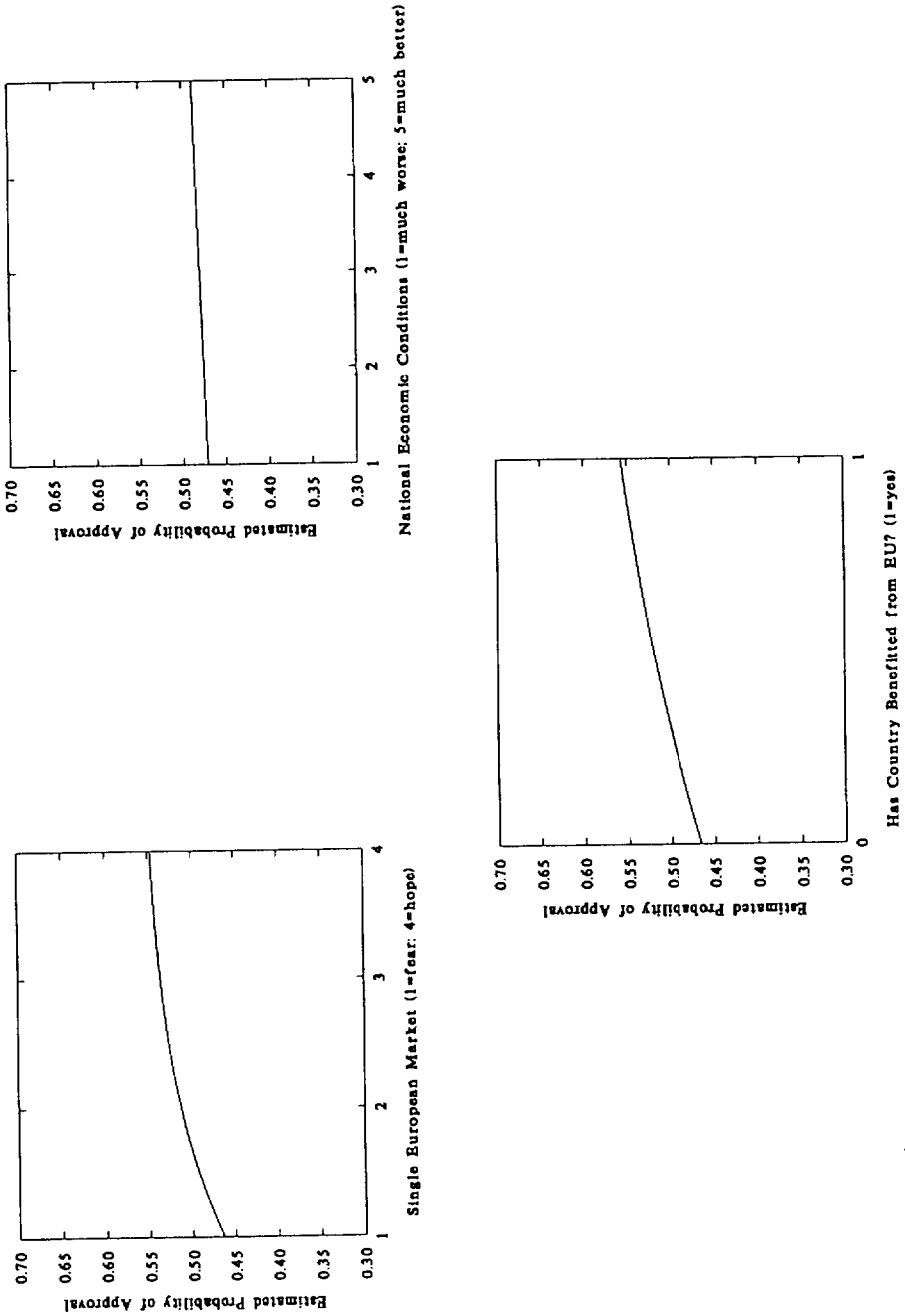


Figure 3

