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The Engaged Eurosceptic: Explaining Eurosceptic Success and Failures in European Parliamentary Elections

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THE ENGAGED EUROSCEPTIC: EXPLAINING EUROSCEPTIC
SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

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Abstract

Eurosceptic political parties are predicted to over perform in second-order elections such as the European Parliamentary (EP) elections. Yet, not all eurosceptic parties have been successful in taking electoral advantage of their second-order electoral benefits. I argue that EP voters respond to EP legislative behavior and reward eurosceptic parties that actively oppose the EU by posing questions and attending plenary sessions, while EP voters punish eurosceptic parties that do not actively participate in the EP. Furthermore, the media provide the vital link between eurosceptic party EP legislative engagement and EP voters by providing increased levels of media exposure for engaged eurosceptic parties. There is an electoral benefit to public grandstanding, and eurosceptics who behave strategically are able to tap into EP voter malaise in ways that extend beyond mere anti-EU ideology.

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Chapter I

The Engaged Eurosceptic

At the time of finishing this dissertation, spring 2017, it hardly requires an explanation for why it is important to conduct social scientific research on extremist political parties. The rise of populism is now global. The rhetoric utilized by extreme right populists like Jean-Marie Le Pen, Nick Griffin, or Pim Fortuyn during Europe's previous generation of hard eurosceptics has given way to a more mainstream message of right-wing populism epitomized by Marine Le Pen, Nigel Farage, and Geert Wilders. Globally, right-wing populism and anti-globalization movements are now being seen throughout the world in democracies ranging from the US with Donald Trump's presidential victory, the UK with the *Leave* vote besting the *Remain* vote during the Brexit referendum, the continued rule of the right-wing nationalist BJP in India, and even Germany is now experiencing its first competitive eurosceptic party *Alternative für Deutschland* becoming a true third party in German politics. Right-wing populism, and in particular euroscepticism, are encroaching upon mainstream politics, and understanding how these types of parties behave is becoming a literature of its own.

This was not always the case, however, as the previous generation of eurosceptics were generally considered political lunatics whose rants and ravings were simply either ignored or laughed at as inconsequential to any real political development with the EU. When this research project nascently began in 2012, research focused on euroscepticism was still largely a niche research agenda. At conferences, relatively few projects were focused on euroscepticism and many times there were not even any panels solely devoted to research on eurosceptic parties.

Quite simply, this type of party was not considered to be consequential to European politics. An interesting sideshow, no doubt, but not a topic worth expending the requisite effort and time to study systematically. Of course, there were a number of scholars who had been researching euroscepticism (see Evans 1998; Taggart 1998; Forster 2002; De Vries and Edwards 2009; Werts et al. 2013), but general political science had yet to realize what these parties were truly capable of achieving. This was not due to any inherent bias against eurosceptic parties, since Green parties and regionalist parties had also been largely neglected by researchers. By spring of 2017, though, everyone has realized that hard euroscepticism¹ does have a tangible effect on European politics.

Previously, as noted in Spoon (2007; 2009; 2011), Green parties were not thought to be rational political actors and were dismissed as unimportant to political science research. Likewise, eurosceptic parties have only relatively recently become the focus of larger amounts of scholarly research. At times, it has been easy to dismiss hard eurosceptic politicians and parties as irrational ideologues who rant and rave nonsensically about perceived injustices originating from the EU. In public speeches or on television news shows, hard eurosceptics have routinely given in to over-the-top rhetoric and blustery monologues that often leave even sympathetic softly anti-EU viewers scratching their head. Emotion appeared to be the sole driver of their political arguments. There has also been an inherent contradiction between hard eurosceptics rhetoric and their professional activities within the European Parliament (EP). In public, these eurosceptics were fiery in their opposition to the EU, but legislatively many of them failed to show up to their day jobs within the EP on a regular basis. So sharp was the distinction between

¹ “Hard” eurosceptics are to be understood as a different type of eurosceptic party from “soft” eurosceptics. Hard eurosceptics see no point at all in having an EU, and these are typically niche parties whose sole ideology is anti-EU. Soft eurosceptics tend to be center-right, mainstream parties that disagree with certain issues of the EU and usually EU enlargement and deepening; but, they do not seek to disband the entire union altogether.

the various eurosceptic parties in Europe that several typologies emerged (see Brack 2012; 2013; Usherwood and Startin 2013). The first type does not even bother to phone it in or even to pretend to care about the job of being an elected MEP. This type does not bother to give many EP speeches or pose many EP questions that could have shown their willingness to fight for their ideological and policy goals. On the other hand, some eurosceptics are quite active while in Brussels or Strasbourg as elected MEPs, and this second type takes the job seriously even if they do not see any value in having an EU. This engaged eurosceptic makes anti-EU speeches on the floor of the EP, demonstrating to all that they are willing to fight the beast from within its elected branch belly. The third type is a soft eurosceptic who generally takes the job seriously, but who is not there to give fiery speeches or lambast EU bureaucrats. Typically this third type of eurosceptic belongs to a mainstream, center-right party that is eurosceptic to an extent, but that generally does not believe that the EU ought to be scrapped altogether.

I am most interested in the first two types of eurosceptic. Largely hailing from niche parties, these two types of eurosceptic parties are not mainstream politicians. Their parties are not forming national governments like the Tories in the UK or the ODS party in the Czech Republic. These eurosceptics have no hope of national parliamentary dominance, so there is no need to use the EP as a way to train future party leaders. For hard eurosceptic niche parties, seats in the EP are oftentimes the only elected positions they have outside of municipal and other local elected offices, and yet many of them do not seem willing to assume their EP seats and to become engaged. Other hard eurosceptics do, and even though they do not have the numbers to affect any EP legislative outcomes, they take full advantage of the European platform to espouse their anti-EU views in speeches and questions. This legislative engagement can then be used to demonstrate to their party loyalists that they are worthy of supporting during an EP election.

Because of the large difference between engaged and not engaged eurosceptic parties, I expect to see another difference emerge. I expect to see an electoral difference between these two types of hard eurosceptics.

Due to the types of speeches they make, and the sort of language they employ, it can be difficult to realize that some of these eurosceptics are actually quite calculating in how they act and in what they say. Nigel Farage is perhaps the quintessential engaged eurosceptic MEP. Routinely taking to the mic on the EP floor, he regularly proceeds to insult EU and EP officials, other MEPs, and most notoriously the EU flag and national anthem which he compared to Nazi-era propaganda. Far from the previous notions of a eurosceptic MEP not bothering to take part in EP legislative behavior, Farage appears to enjoy the moment. He often has a smile on his face even when being booed and heckled by non-eurosceptic MEPs. While his disdain for all things EU was clear, his behavior suggested an MEP who enjoyed the process of parliamentary debate. I suggest that this type of demeanor was about much more than enjoying the limelight. For UKIP, and other like-minded eurosceptic parties, this type of EP engagement also meant the creation of social media videos and elevated levels of traditional media coverage. Had UKIP not been an engaged eurosceptic party within the EP it is very much likely that the *Leave* vote during the Brexit referendum would have handily failed, since the *Leave* campaign would not have had the social media infrastructure, and large cache of UKIP eurosceptic EP speeches, at its disposal going into the vote.

My theory is predicated on the electoral differences between the eurosceptic parties that are active and engaged in the EP and those eurosceptic parties that adopt a more passive approach. In observing that many eurosceptic parties do not over perform in EP elections, the

question beckons on why that is the case.² Furthermore, if there exist electoral differences between niche party eurosceptics, then one would predict that there would also be observable differences in other characteristics between these two groups. I answer this question of *why* there is an electoral difference by highlighting the stark differences in EP legislative behavior between engaged eurosceptic parties (largely those in the Freedom and Democracy EP group) and non-engaged eurosceptic parties (largely those parties in the Not-Attached EP group).

The engaged eurosceptic will recognize when and where to combat the EU publicly, and will use precise language to portray the EU as hostile toward Europeans' self-interest. When done correctly, not only will the engaged eurosceptic succeed in reformulating the debate, but to the casual observer can even appear at times to be the sole level-headed MEP at a plenary session. Repeated references to the liberty of individuals, to the freedom from a bureaucratic autocracy, and to the logic that one ought to be allowed to be proud of their national heritage are common themes when engaged eurosceptics speak on the EP floor. Moreover, parties such as UKIP will repeatedly denounce racism and insist that it is not xenophobia that is driving their ideological opposition to the EU, but rather a strong sense of national sovereignty that is the driving force behind their ideology.

This is in clear contrast to many non-engaged eurosceptic parties. Not only do they fail to take advantage of the bully pulpit that the EP provides, but they tend to show up to EP plenary sessions less often than do the engaged eurosceptics. The non-engaged eurosceptic also tends to become bogged down in debates with racist and xenophobic undertones. This aspect cannot be overlooked when comparing different typologies of eurosceptics, since it helps to explain why otherwise like-minded parties such as UKIP and the French *Front National* (FN) do not see

² By "over perform" I refer to a party that does better in EP elections than they do in national parliamentary elections. Since Reif and Schmitt (1980), EP elections have been considered to be *second-order* elections in which opposition and niche parties are expected to benefit electorally.

themselves as natural allies beyond both opposing the EU. While Nigel Farage will go to great lengths to distance himself publicly from overtly xenophobic statements, Jean-Marie Le Pen, and to a lesser extent Marine Le Pen, will seamlessly insert crass xenophobic comments into their interviews and speeches. The engaged eurosceptic will make the most of any opportunity to speak in a manner that does not come across as blatantly racist or xenophobic, while the non-engaged eurosceptic fails to realize the public platform afforded to them by being an MEP and instead creates sound clips laden with off-topic and xenophobic comments. One takes advantage of the low-cost high-reward situation that the media provide, while the other appears disinterested in trying to reach mainstream EP voters who would be open to supporting an anti-EU party in EP elections.

The electoral difference between engaged and non-engaged eurosceptic parties are observed after an EP election. Naturally, I began to question why certain niche eurosceptic parties managed to underperform in EP elections when all conventional thought would predict that they would do better in EP elections than they did in their own national parliamentary elections (see Reif and Schmitt 1980; Hix and Marsh 2007; 2011). Since the difference in tone and EP engagement levels of the two types of niche party eurosceptics is so distinct, a starting point is to focus on how each type approach their MEP duties in explaining why non-engaged eurosceptics routinely underperformed in EP elections. Those eurosceptics who make it easy for the media to disseminate their messages perform just as the literature would predict. Conversely, the non-engaged eurosceptics do not make it as easy to disseminate their message by not participating in EP plenary sessions. Research on the subject matter of EP questions support how Not-Attached eurosceptic MEPs (the non-engaged eurosceptics) rarely even troubled themselves to make their questions relevant to EU policy when they did show up to work (Jensen et al.

2013). These eurosceptics do not make the most of their EP seats, and a direct result of this is that they fail to take full advantage of their standing during EP elections.

Throughout this dissertation, I will use EP party group as a heuristic for party types within the EP. This is not a controversial approach, as previous research has shown that like-minded parties from various EU member states join EP groups that are ideologically homogeneous (see Kreppel and Tsebelis 1999; Kreppel 2002; Hix et al. 2003). An EP party group is a caucus of like-minded parties that span the member states of the EU. In the current 8th EP session (2014-2019), there are eight EP groups and a 9th group of Non-Attached MEPs. While the Non-Attached MEPs do not form an EP group in the traditional sense, I treat them as if they were a 9th EP group. Additionally, every EP session new EP groups tend to emerge on the far-right. Instead of constantly referring to different EP group names, I adopt the EP group names that were used during the 7th EP session (2009-2014). During that EP session, there were only seven EP groups plus the Not-Attached. A new EP group, *Europe of Nations and Freedom*, emerged after the 2014 EP election that is led by formerly Not-Attached MEP Marine Le Pen. Because I posit that EP legislative behavior has an effect on EP electoral results for eurosceptics, I will not be able to test this relationship on the 8th EP session until the 2019 EP electoral results are published. Therefore, even though such parties as the French FN are now participating members of an EP group, they are still considered to be non-engaged eurosceptics for this dissertation because that was what they were previous to the 2014 EP elections.

In Table 1.1, I provide the EP party group names with the member parties that comprise the group. While all data were collected at the party-level, I use EP groups to illustrate the findings, since these are all parties that generally adhere to the same ideology. Since membership in an EP group is voluntary, I assume that parties that join any particular EP group are doing so

because they view themselves as ideological colleagues that are merely from a different EU member state.

EP Party Group	Ideological Description	Prominent Examples of Member Parties
European Left-Nordic Green	Communist	Communist Parties, Socialist Parties (such as SF in Denmark, Die Linke etc) Sinn Fein
Greens-European Free Alliance	Environmentalist	Green Parties, Pirate Party, various regionalist parties
Progressive Alliance of Socialists	Social Democracy	Social Democratic Parties, Labour Party
Alliance of Liberals	Liberal	Liberal Parties, FDP, MoDems
European People's Party	Christian Democracy/Conservative	Christian Democratic Parties, CDU/CSU, Republicans (UMD), Forza Italia
European Conservatives and Reformists	Soft Euroscepticism/Conservative	Tories, PiS, New Flemish Alliance
Europe of Freedom and Democracy	Hard Euroscepticism (niche parties)	UKIP, Northern League, Danish People's Party, United Poland
Not-Attached	Hard Euroscepticism (niche parties)	National Front, Golden Dawn, Jobbik, Vlaams Belang, FPO

Table 1.1: Summary of Party Groups

Not only are parties that join an EP group ideologically similar to the other member parties, but when the hard eurosceptic EP groups are analyzed more closely the general electoral outcomes of the member parties are also very similar. As is shown in Table 1.2, over or underperformance by niche eurosceptic parties largely aligns with a specific EP group. Not-Attached parties generally underperform, while Freedom and Democracy parties generally over perform. So, while the data are collected at the party level, they become much easier to digest when illustrated at the EP group level. Nonetheless, the fact that so many niche eurosceptic parties routinely

underperform in EP elections, and thus behave in contradiction to what the literature would predict, warrants a closer examination of why this unpredicted phenomenon is occurring.

Underperforming Eurosceptic Parties	Mean Change in Vote Share	# of EP Elections Underperformed (since winning an EP seat)	Historical EP Group
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (AT)	-3.21	4/4	Not-Attached
Vlaams Belang (BE)	-.44	3/5	Not-Attached
True Finns (FI)	-6.2	1/1	ECR
Front National (FR)	-.72	4/6	Not-Attached
British National Party (UK)	-.76	1/1	Not-Attached
Jobbik (HU)	-5.5	1/1	Not-Attached
Lega Nord (IT)	-.53	1/3*	Not-Attached
Slovak National Party (SK)	-.94	1/1	Freedom/Democracy
Over performing Eurosceptic Parties	Mean Change in Vote Share	# of EP Elections Underperformed (since winning an EP seat)	Historical EP Group
Dansk Folkeparti (DK)	3.4	1/3	Freedom/Democracy
UKIP (UK)	17.8	0/3	Freedom/Democracy
Order and Justice (LT)	3.23	1/2	Freedom/Democracy
Partij voor de Vrijheid (NL)	3.24	0/1	Not-Attached
Partidul România Mare (RO)	3.48	0/2	Not-Attached

Table 1.2: Over and Underperformers

Niche and opposition parties are predicted to over perform in EP elections, but as is noted in Table 1.2, this is hardly the case when it comes to niche eurosceptic parties. In fact, there are more niche eurosceptic parties that underperform in EP elections than there are that over perform. Concomitantly, there are niche eurosceptic parties that engage while in the EP, and there are those whose participation is negligible. Both electorally and in terms of EP legislative behavior, these two types of niche eurosceptic parties align strongly with a particular EP group. The Freedom and Democracy parties are more engaged and they generally over perform in EP elections. The Not-Attached parties are less engaged and they generally underperform in EP elections.

While I do not use an overabundance of acronyms throughout this dissertation, I do regularly refer to a number of them. To help the reader, I have included a list of acronyms in Table 2 in the Appendix. I define each acronym in the body of the dissertation, but for a quick reference one can turn to the Appendix.

Previous work on niche parties has tended to focus solely on extreme right-wing parties (see van der Brug et al. 2000; Norris 2005; Werts et al. 2013), or Green Parties (see Rudig 1985; 1988; Spoon 2011). I focus primarily on eurosceptic parties by highlighting the differences between engaged eurosceptics and non-engaged eurosceptics. I include other parties, however, in order to provide a fuller explanation and understanding of the electoral effects that EP legislative behavior has. Moreover, by directly comparing not only engaged versus non-engaged eurosceptics, but also niche parties on the left versus niche party eurosceptics on the right and the various EP groups to one another, that a more complete picture is drawn that shows how surprising it is that there exist niche eurosceptic parties that fail to over perform in EP elections.

Additionally, in showing how the media, both social and traditional, play a role in disseminating parties' messages and conveying information to voters, I am able highlight the relationship between parties and the media, and the relationship between the media and voters. Higher levels of EP participation by parties posing questions lead to substantially higher levels of media coverage. When taken in conjunction with the amount of media that is consumed by the public, the relationship between EP legislative behavior, the media, and the public becomes clear.

The engaged eurosceptic already knows this and has been actively engaging in grandstanding for some time. The non-engaged eurosceptic continues to ignore this EP engagement-the media-voters relationship to the result of consistently underperforming in EP

elections. In this dissertation, I present my theory for why some eurosceptic parties underperform while others do not. I posit that EP legislative behavior matters even if EP elections are generally considered to be second-order and merely referenda on national government performance. Via social and traditional media outlets, engaged eurosceptic parties can maximize their second-order election benefits because they are engaged at the EP level.

Chapter II

Theory of Engaged Euroscepticism

As the literature into eurosceptic parties has grown over the years, several models have emerged that begin to explain this phenomenon (see Kitschelt 1997; Veugelers and Magnan 2005; Arzheimer and Carter 2006). In this chapter, I present a theory based on European Parliamentary (EP) legislative behavior and its effects on over or under performance in EP elections. As an ideology, euroscepticism is inherently a protest movement. I posit that its parties must appeal to their supporters in a fashion that is different from how mainstream parties reinforce their supporters' intent to vote in EP elections. As a protest movement, eurosceptic parties must publicly display their opposition to the EU and its institutions in order to invigorate their supporters to cast votes for them in an election that they do not believe should exist in the first place. Public grandstanding and actively participating in EP legislative activity is one avenue by which eurosceptic parties can achieve this goal.

The consensus of second-order election literature is that being in the opposition or a niche party is sufficient to realize electoral gains in elections such as the EP (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998). This has not been the case, however, for parties such as the *Front National* (FN) or the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ). In fact, only briefly within the extremist party literature has it been noted that the FN does not generally realize their expected second-order electoral gains in EP elections. Givens (2005) acknowledges this electoral phenomenon, but she glosses over it as it was not the central focus of her book on the radical right. Had this phenomenon only occurred once or twice, it could be accepted as an outlier to the literature.

Because this has occurred numerous times by a handful of eurosceptic parties, however, it warrants further explanation for when and why it occurs.

In Table 2.1, I show a depiction of the puzzle that I seek to solve. Eurosceptic parties are either engaged or not engaged in the EP legislative process via questions and attendance at EP plenary sessions. These parties are then placed in the cell that corresponds to whether they over performed or underperformed in EP elections.

	Active EP Engagement	Passive EP Engagement
Over Performs	UKIP (Uk) Dansk Folkeparti (Dk) Order and Justice (Lt)	Partij voor de Vrijheid (Nl) Partidul România Mare (Ro)
Under Performs	True Finns (Fi) Slovak National Party (Sk)	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (At) National Front (Fr) Jobbik (Hu) Northern League (It) Vlaams Belang (Be) British National Party (Uk)

Table 2.1: Engagement and Electoral Interaction of Parties

I propose an explanation that emphasizes legislative behavior as a driving force behind eurosceptic EP electoral success. Economic conditions and domestic governing status clearly play roles in second-order election outcomes, but I control for these factors to isolate how legislative behavior affects parties' EP vote shares. The more publicly obstinate a eurosceptic party can behave while in the EP, the better it can position itself to maximize its EP vote share.

I calculate over or under performance in EP elections by subtracting the previous national parliamentary election vote share from that party's subsequent EP election vote share. In the formula below, VS refers to the vote share a party receives during an election. This is the percentage of the total vote, which I take to the tenth decimal point. $VS_{(EP_t)}$ refers to the vote share the party receives in a specific EP election, while $VS_{(P_{t-1})}$ refers to the vote share the party receives in the previous national parliamentary election. I subtract $VS_{(P_{t-1})}$ from $VS_{(EP_t)}$ in order to calculate the ΔVS . This will indicate whether a party underperformed ($\Delta VS < 0$) or overperformed in an EP election ($\Delta VS > 0$).

$$VS_{(EP_t)} - VS_{(P_{t-1})} = \Delta VS$$

For example, because the FN received an 11.1% vote share in the 2002 French parliamentary election and a 9.8% vote share in the 2004 EP election, I subtract 11.1 from 9.8 to result in a change in vote share of -1.3. This would be an underperformance. Conversely, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) had a 1.5% vote share in the 2001 UK General Elections and a 16.2% vote share in the 2004 EP elections to give them a change in vote share of 14.7. In this case, this would be an over performance. I calculate the change in vote share with the EP election minus domestic election so that it is more intuitive of whether a certain party performed better or worse in the EP election. A positive change in vote share reflects over performance, while a negative change in vote share reflects an underperformance.

The table below differentiates between eurosceptic parties that over perform and those that under perform in EP elections. Concurrently, it also separates these parties by whether they generally are active in the EP by attending plenary sessions and posing questions. What becomes clear is that over or under performance appears to be correlated with active or passive behavior in the EP, respectively.

If this relationship between EP legislative behavior and EP electoral success is as closely related as what Table 2.1 suggests, then my theory will shed light on this by providing a possible explanation to a phenomenon that has not been truly identified by the extant literature by proposing that public grandstanding and the public attention that results from outspoken EP legislative behavior have electoral effects for eurosceptic parties in EP elections. Euroscepticism has become an entrenched force in European politics. Eurosceptic parties and the far right saw notable electoral successes in the 2014 EP, and further success in national elections in Greece, Denmark and Poland since. Moreover, the UK's referendum vote to leave the EU showcased how eurosceptics such as UKIP's Nigel Farage and the Tories' Boris Johnson were able to create public spectacles highlighting their side's cause in hopes of mobilizing sympathetic anti-EU voters. The goal of this dissertation is that a legislative behavior theory for EP eurosceptic electoral success is able to fill some voids within the literature. Moreover, it can be generalizable to other parliamentary systems that include MPs from small, yet outspoken, parties. In breaking with previous second-order election literature, I argue that there is more to EP electoral success for eurosceptic parties than domestic political factors and protest voting. As the EP is a supra-national parliament, legislative behavior at the supra-national level ought to have an electoral impact on EP elections. Eurosceptic parties are likely to be more electorally sensitive to this impact, since they are relatively much smaller than mainstream parties, and they rarely take part in governing coalitions in their national parliaments.

Eurosceptic Parties and Second-Order Elections

Second-order elections are those elections upon which voters assign lower importance. National, or general, elections are understood to be the most important elections to most voters. While

Europe is an ideal setting for studying second-order elections, this type of election can be found in most parliamentary democracies. In fact, there are numerous forms of second-order elections that devolve from national non-general elections to regional and municipal elections. Each type has its own peculiarities and voter turnout rates, but unites these various forms of second-order elections is that voters have traditionally not perceived them to be as important as first-order ones.

Arguably, the earliest research into second-order elections can be traced back to research into US midterm elections. Tufte (1975) found that US midterm election voters tended to punish the incumbent President's party. In many ways, US midterm elections were behaving like referenda on the President's performance in office. Instead of critiquing an individual Congressperson or Senator, voters were critiquing the US President's accomplishments even though he was not on the ballot. Several years later, this type of election was labeled a *second-order* election in the comparativist literature.

EP elections have become, perhaps, the most important of the second-order elections in Europe. Research into EP elections has confirmed them to be second-order elections due to the difference in motivations that EP voters were placing while casting their votes. (see Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998). Because voters do not prioritize this type of election, second order elections generally have lower voter turnout rates. Researchers have observed that second-order elections are fertile grounds for elevated levels of protest voting (see Hobolt, Spoon, and Tilley 2008; Hobolt and Wittrock 2011). In such elections, highly motivated groups of voters can have unexpectedly large influence on election results (see Hobolt and Spoon 2012).

Small, opposition parties that build their support on challenges to the established parties can often thrive in second order elections. Thus, while mainstream and governing parties tend to

lose votes in most second-order elections, those parties that are either niche or in the opposition will be able to over perform because voters who would not normally cast their vote for that particular party replaced their lost votes. Eurosceptic parties are typically both niche and in the opposition domestically, and as such this type of party should not be underperforming in EP elections. If they are underperforming, and there are multiple examples of eurosceptic parties failing to take advantage of their second-order election advantage, then an explanation is needed that addresses this electoral deficiency found with certain eurosceptic parties.

Previous work focusing on niche parties predicts a clear electoral benefit for niche and opposition parties in EP elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980). Simply being a niche party is assumed to be sufficient for over performance in EP elections by the literature, which has never directly acknowledged that some eurosceptic parties do not conform to consensus. Moreover, it has been shown that parties can benefit electorally from opposing the EU (Hobolt et al. 2008; Hobolt and Wittrock 2011). If parties benefit electorally by casting themselves as eurosceptic, then it makes sense for eurosceptic parties to make their euroscepticism as visible as possible. I extend this logic to observations of eurosceptic behavior in the EP. In particular, I am interested in determining whether this type of legislative behavior is able to reinforce the public perception of a eurosceptic party's opposition to the EU. If so, is active engagement in anti-EU rhetoric a necessary condition for a euroceptic party to realize their second-order gains? Empirical evidence that this is the case would establish legislative activities as an important electoral tool for eurosceptics to project their anti-EU bona fides.

There is still debate about whether, and to what extent, second-order elections involve issue saliency on topics outside of the domestic political sphere. Using survey data, those voters who saw little benefit in what the EU had to offer had elevated abstention rates in EP elections

(Blondel et al. 1998). Eurosceptic parties will need their eurosceptic party loyalists to show up at the polls, and they cannot rely disproportionately on protest votes from voters who would normally prefer a mainstream party to support. If Blondel et al. are correct, and it still holds that the EU has not assumed a more central role in voters' minds, then eurosceptic parties face an uphill battle when mobilizing their supporters. In this case, eurosceptic parties must seek avenues to energize their core constituents to arrive at the polls. The best way to combat eurosceptic voters' apathy could be to remind them via grandstanding in the EP that their votes are not wasted, and it is worth the time and effort for eurosceptic voters to cast their votes. Public grandstanding during EP sessions is a cost-effective way to signal to eurosceptic voters that a party is serious about fulfilling campaign promises. I believe that it is reasonable to assume that if a eurosceptic party's MEPs are sufficiently loud while protesting the EU during EP sessions that this legislative behavior can mitigate voter apathy issues that some have found to be inherent in EP election cycles and in particular among the eurosceptic voting bloc.

In more recent research on EP voter abstention, however, Schmitt and van der Eijk concluded that "nowhere does anti-EU sentiment play a major role in the decision to participate in, or abstain from, EP elections" (2008, 232). If EU sentiment is not a differentiating factor in voters choosing whether to cast votes in EP elections, EP legislative behavior could still be the central legislative activity by which to demonstrate a eurosceptic party's willingness to oppose the EU from within its own parliament. In this case, such legislative behavior would not be needed to overcome a distinct eurosceptic voter apathy, since eurosceptics would behave similarly to non-eurosceptic voters. Here, it would signal a reinforcement to eurosceptic voters that a party is willing to fight for their cause. In the end, eurosceptic legislative behavior functions generally in the same fashion regardless of whether there is a distinct difference in

eurosceptic voters' electoral behavior. The only difference would be the amount of voter apathy a eurosceptic party must overcome via its EP legislative behavior.

The amount of voter apathy should not be adversely affecting eurosceptic parties to the point that they manage to do worse in EP elections than they do in national parliamentary elections, since generally any losses should be alleviated from the votes these parties gain from *protest* and *sincere* voters defecting from mainstream parties. If a disaffected eurosceptic voter fails to cast an EP vote for a far-right party, that vote can be made up with a mainstream voter deciding to send a message to the mainstream parties by voting for a far-right, eurosceptic party in an election that is perceived as less important than a national parliamentary election.

Logically, voter abstention rates are assumed to be positively correlated to voter apathy rates. In large regard, voter abstention rates are simply the macro-level results of micro-level voter apathy sentiment. While voter abstention rates must be taken into account for analyses of EP elections, a second dimension emerges that appears to separate eurosceptic parties and MEPs into different typologies based on EP legislative behavior. Just as with individual voters, MEPs can also behave in legislatively apathetic fashion by abstaining from EP legislative debate and activity. I posit that eurosceptic MEPs can seek to mitigate high levels of voter apathy by signaling to eurosceptic that it is worthwhile to cast EP votes by actively engaging the EP legislative process. Consequentially, if eurosceptic parties can successfully signal their legislative activity by publicly grandstanding during EP legislative debate, they ought to be able to lower eurosceptic voter abstention rates.

Taggart (1998) finds evidence that EU issue saliency matters, but it is really only to be found for the parties on the ideologically extreme fringes. Since those ideological positions are precisely where eurosceptic parties are found, this supports the notion that EP elections are not

simply referenda on domestic political issues, and that EP legislative behavior can be a successful avenue by which grandstanding eurosceptic MEPs can reinforce their bona fides to the eurosceptic voting bloc. Additionally, he identifies four different ways that euroscepticism can manifest itself within parties: *Eurosceptic Parties*, *Protest Parties with Euroscepticism*, *Established Parties with Euroscepticism*, and *Parties with Eurosceptic Factions* (1998, 368). With different types of euroscepticism existing one expects that there also would be differentiating factors such as legislative behavior, campaigning behavior, or general importance placed by the party on winning EP seats. Because legislative behavior can provide the foundation for campaigning and public grandstanding, I expect the differences between eurosceptic parties to be most stark in this arena.

Focusing on euroscepticism and EU integration, Vasilopoulou (2009; 2011) finds evidence that there are clear differences between eurosceptic parties. Additionally, she highlights that these differences can also be observed in party behavior and attitude. Here, she identifies three types of eurosceptic party behavior toward further EU integration: *The Rejecting Eurosceptic Party*, *The Conditional Eurosceptic Party*, and *The Compromising Eurosceptic Party*. Likewise with Taggart (1998), Vasilopoulou identifies eurosceptic party typology, which provides evidence that there is likely to be different party attitudes toward EP legislative behavior and engagement.

Brack (2013) examines the issue of different types of eurosceptics, but she switches focus to the micro-level. According to Brack, individual MEPs can be categorized into several types including: *The Absentee*, *The Public Orator*, and *The Pragmatist* (92-99). It appears that these same three types of eurosceptic MEPs roughly fit the three main EP Groups for eurosceptics, namely: The Not-Attached (*the absentee*), The Freedom and Democracy (*the*

public orator), and The Conservatives and Reformists (*the pragmatist*). While this dissertation does not address the mechanism of *how* or *why* political parties decide which party group to join once they are elected to the EP, there is likely to be something driving these parties to act in a way that forces their inclusion into specific EP groups (see McElroy and Benoit 2010).

If euroscepticism were as monolithic as the Greens, then there would be no reason to have multiple eurosceptic EP party groups. Particularly among the niche party eurosceptics, there is no logical reason to divide an ideology into two separate camps, which only diminishes the relative power they would have otherwise. That this occurs suggests that there is likely to be observable differences in EP legislative behavior between eurosceptic parties that join an established EP party group and those eurosceptic parties that remain Not Attached. Furthermore, if there is a clear difference in EP electoral success between these niche eurosceptic groups then a theory incorporating EP legislative behavior as a causal variable in EP electoral over or under performance has an intuitive foundation. Because scholars have identified multiple eurosceptic typologies based on different observable behaviors, these differences lead us to question whether there will also be electoral difference between the different typologies of eurosceptic parties within the EP. If these electoral disparities exist, which they do, then there ought to be a reason that certain eurosceptic parties fail to over perform when they are the type of party that is best suited to do well in EP elections.

Over Performance/Under Performance

Niche parties are expected to do better in second-order elections than they do in first-order ones. Greens and most eurosceptic parties do exceedingly well in EP elections. Regardless of ideological positions, these parties can expect better electoral showings in EP elections than they can expect to do in their domestic parliamentary elections where voters are more likely to

support a mainstream party that places an emphasis on winning seats and that is competitive in seeking to govern. The difference in a party's electoral results of domestic, parliamentary elections and second-order, EP elections is that party's *over performance* or *underperformance* for EP elections. Simply put, over performance for my theory is when a party does better in EP elections than it does in its domestic parliamentary elections as measured by vote share. For my model's specifications, I only use official electoral results, so a party cannot over or underperform in an EP election based on *expected* electoral performance.

The dependent variable throughout most of this dissertation is a change in vote share. By comparing a party's vote share in a national parliamentary election to the vote share it receives in the subsequent EP election, I am able to gain an understanding of whether a party is doing relatively better or relatively worse when they are competing for seats in the EP. Particularly for niche parties, change in vote share is a telling sign of whether a party is behaving electorally as the literature predicts they would. Namely, for these types of political parties second-order elections represent the best chance they have for winning parliamentary seats of any kind. In the preceding section, a brief literature review outlined the reasons why non-mainstream eurosceptics, or hard eurosceptics, should routinely over perform in EP elections.

According to the literature there should only be positive changes in vote share for niche parties, and certainly this should be the case for niche, eurosceptic parties that are thought to be advantaged by being both a recipient of protest voting and an ideological opponent of the EU. In the event that a niche, eurosceptic party has a negative change in vote share it would be behaving in opposition to scholarly consensus. If this underperformance is repeated by other eurosceptic parties, and is observed over multiple EP elections, then there must be some sort of effort aimed

at explaining why these eurosceptics are not behaving electorally as the literature and consensus would have them.

Angry and Strategic; Not Angry or Strategic

My theory assumes that MEPs, and eurosceptic niche parties in general, are rational strategic actors. Therefore, I assume that all parties want to win as many votes and seats as possible regardless of whether an election is second-order. I remain agnostic as to whether a party is *office-seeking* or *policy-seeking* because parties are most likely to be a combination of both, not to mention that a party cannot truly seek policy change in the absence of any office holding. Therefore, I assume that parties, regardless of whether they are mainstream or niche, want to perform as best they can electorally during any election. Because I focus on eurosceptic parties' over or underperformance in EP elections relative to their performance in national parliaments, my theory questions why these eurosceptics do not take advantage of the second-order election benefits that should be propelling them to higher vote shares when competing at the EP level.

Engaged eurosceptic parties will realize the value of grandstanding during EP plenary sessions. Furthermore, previous research using spatial modeling found that parties and firms will act in accordance to maximize their vote share (see Hotelling 1929; Downs 1957). If parties perceived an electoral advantage by centripetally shifting their policy positions, and they proceeded to do so, then parties are independent actors capable of influencing their electoral outcomes via conscious decisions of how to position themselves ideologically. Using spatial modeling to illustrate how voters will choose their preferred party relative to the voters' bliss point, this theory requires voters to be informed. Moreover, parties are capable of similarly strategic behavior that they believe will best transmit to voters who are consuming media.

Likewise, later evolution to proximity models further reinforced the notion that voters will behave strategically while casting their vote. To frame this activity theoretically, voters will have a utility function that is negatively related to where a party is positioned ideologically relative to the voter's ideal point (see Enelow and Hinich 1984). Again, this type of micro-level modeling is focused on the voter, while parties are essentially exogenous actors behaving independently of voters. If the micro-level focus of the voter-party relationship is reversed, though, can parties be assumed to have the same general type of utility function that includes a legislative exposure variable that allows them to get the message out to voters about what they are doing legislatively. I suggest that eurosceptic parties have a strategic incentive to provide voters with information about their legislative activities while in office that will complement their ideological positioning that attracts voters in the first place, particularly for European elections that provide them with better electoral outcomes than they have while competing for national parliament seats. While spatial, proximity, or directional voting models can help explain which party a voter chooses to support; a party's legislative exposure component can help explain why a party's supporter will choose to cast a vote.

By referencing spatial and proximity models to eurosceptic niche parties, the notion that these parties can choose to behave legislatively as they best see fit is reinforced. Viewing parties as utility maximizing, unitary actors allows them to be modeled similarly to a singular voter's choice in the process of utility maximizing; regardless of whether a voter is policy or ideologically minded. Eurosceptic parties, by definition, will have trouble moderating their ideological positions, since there are already large mainstream parties inhabiting the center-right portion of the ideological spectrum. Thus, in order to maximize their vote share, eurosceptic

parties will have a utility function that incentivized their public grandstanding and active legislative behavior while in the EP.

Moreover, alternative models of voter choice such as *directional voting* (see Rabinowitz 1978; Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989) further support a eurosceptic party's incentive to make clear that it has ownership over its ideological position of opposing the EU and is the most equipped party to do act on that ideology. For individual voters, casting a pragmatic, sincere, or directional vote is a mutually exclusive behavior in that their choice cannot include multiple motivations unless there is an overlap that is coincidental.³ For a eurosceptic party, however, there need not be any distinction between sincere and directional voter motivations because both types of voters can be equally drawn to casting an EP vote for a eurosceptic party. Pragmatic voter motivations are largely absent in EP elections because there is no ruling party in the sense that a singular party will oftentimes dominate a national parliamentary system after an election. Laid bare, voter choice is a question of *why* a certain voter casts a vote for a certain party, parties care only about *if* and *how* they can secure a cast vote.

Niche parties will not be ideologically centripetal in nature, and in fact could be punished if they are not ideologically centrifugal (see Adams et al. 2006), the underlying principle that parties are able to position themselves is indicative of a party being capable of being strategic even if a particular party is a relatively small niche one. Eurosceptic parties have an underlying incentive not to alienate their supporter base, in fact for this type of party that is not a catch-all party, there are increased marginal costs in losing supporters relative to mainstream parties that are much larger and that can compete for centrist voters as well as those found firmly in their respective side of the ideological spectrum.

³ For example, a voter can be both pragmatic and sincere if he casts a vote for a mainstream party likely to win the election because he truly supports that party's positions more so than any other party's.

Formal modeling can be used, as well, to explain eurosceptic parties' strategic behavior in EP elections. Grofman (1985) presents a model that incorporates party "competence" and "situational constraints" (233) into a voter's calculation in casting a vote. Like other models, this assumes a sophisticated voter capable of paying attention not only to party behavior, but also to the institutional constraints of changing the status quo. While there is no explicit mention of how parties can affect the voter's choice calculation, there is an implicit assumption that parties would be in control of their messaging to convey institutional constraint information, and most importantly that party's *competence* to effect change. Applying this theoretical foundation to eurosceptic parties vying for EP seats, those eurosceptics who make clear their competence to oppose the EU would reinforce faith among ideologically sympathetic voters that they are worth their votes, while legislatively unengaged eurosceptic parties would not be reinforcing their competence to the ideologically sympathetic voting bloc.

In a more *applied* version of parties and politicians as strategic actors, Mayhew (1974) focused on what US Congressional politicians appeared to hold as most important: Getting re-elected. In order to dispel any notions that re-election or electoral outcomes are simply some predestined political occurrence, Mayhew shows that politicians are self-interested, rational actors. If they are not, then logically political Darwinism will remove them from the political landscape at some point. This appears to be the case with eurosceptic niche parties. If the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen was not willing to put in the work required to expand his party's EP vote share, then it would continue to underperform in EP elections. Legislative behavior has electoral consequences, and a party or politician who behaves passively cannot expect to be rewarded in elections. Thus, whether Nigel Farage publicly remonstrates against the EU because he sees an electoral benefit from doing so, or because he simply enjoys performing political *skits*

in the EP is inconsequential. The point is that he does this behavior, and that it enables UKIP to over perform in EP elections because it signals to eurosceptic voters that voting for UKIP is voting to oppose actively the EU.

Work on American parties and elections, as well as on the U.S. Congress, has a long history of incorporating theory and positivism into coherent works that explain electoral outcomes. Elections are not won or lost due to predestined occurrences or derived from the *ether*. While mainstream parties will hold advantages over niche parties in certain political arenas, in EP elections all bets are off. In these elections, niche parties benefit on a number of fronts, and as such they are able to take advantage of these benefits or they can behave passively and leave it up to chance whether they do well or not. Those eurosceptic niche parties that do not behave passively do not leave their electoral outcomes to chance, and they are able to maximize their vote share by acting strategically.

Niche Parties, Ideologies, and Voters

My theory includes a number of assumptions. While there will continue to be debates around how *rational* or *strategic* political parties and politicians are, none of these assumptions is new or controversial. In fact, all of the following assumptions are routinely included either explicitly or implicitly in rationalist works on parties and elections. That being said, I stress the notion that these same assumptions are still valid for niche eurosceptic parties that do not always appear to be behaving in the same fashion as do mainstream parties.

First, parties are assumed to be rational and prefer higher vote shares to lower vote shares (see Downs 1957; Mayhew 1974; Muller and Strom 1999). Moreover, I assume that voters do not vote randomly and without prior consideration for which party best represents their political wishes whether they be ideological or pragmatic goals. At times it can appear that eurosceptic

party leaders do not care about how well they do in EP elections. For example, the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen seemed not to care about how its EP electoral results. He routinely never bothered to attend EP plenary sessions, and while he always accepted his EP seat and salary he typically never put forth much effort to campaign in front of EP elections. The FN under his daughter, however, did campaign in the lead up to the 2014 EP election by making media appearances in which the EP and its elections were discussed and by putting out traditional campaign materials such as posters and party websites. I would argue that the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen always preferred to do better rather than worse in EP elections. The difference between Le Pen father and daughter, though, was that Marine Le Pen was more willing to put in the hard work necessary to compete successfully in EP elections. If Jean-Marie Le Pen truly did not care about the FN's EP vote share then he could have given his EP seat to another FN party leader, but he never did that which indicates that he cared enough to win a seat for himself in the EP even if he did not care enough to campaign and try to win more EP seats for his FN party colleagues.

Intuitively it is a eurosceptic party's best interest to want to do as well as possible in EP elections. UKIP's Nigel Farage was actively opposed to the EU from within the EP for nearly two decades. Had UKIP taken the approach that it would not accept seats within a parliament that it did not agree should even exist in the first place, Farage likely would not have had the impact he did during the Brexit vote in 2016. A Brexit-type vote in France is the preferred outcome of the FN as well, and following UKIP's lead it becomes clear that there is an incentive for eurosceptic parties to win EP seats and do perform electorally as best they can in EP elections. In the event that a eurosceptic party truly does not care whether they do well or poorly in EP elections, then there is no way to systematically analyze their EP electoral performance. In

the end, the difference between actively engaged eurosceptics and unengaged ones is not likely to be a situation where the latter do not care how they perform electorally in EP elections, but simply an issue of how hard they are prepared to work in order to maximize their EP electoral results.

Likewise for eurosceptic voters, even if they refuse to vote in an election they do not believe should exist, I argue that they will still prefer that the eurosceptic party will do better in EP elections rather than worse. Particularly when social and traditional media allow for an outspoken eurosceptic MEP to publicize his or her verbal assault against the EU, eurosceptic voters ought to receive elevated utility from knowing and observing eurosceptic MEPs taking on the EU and its institutions from within. When this type of legislative behavior is able to be witnessed either online or on television, the incentives for a eurosceptic voter to abstain from EP elections is minimized, all else being equal. In the event that a eurosceptic voter is contemplating whether or not to vote in an EP election, the desire for their party to better than to do worse provides a solid foundation upon which a eurosceptic voter is being pushed in the direction of casting an EP vote as he or she reaches a decision of whether to vote in an EP election.

There are some problematic issues that arise, though, when assumptions about strategic parties reduce them to single-focused utility maximizers. This approach can mask vital aspects that can lead otherwise rational and strategic parties to make poor decisions that lead to worse electoral outcomes (see Aldrich 1995). Regardless, even underperforming eurosceptic parties should still be regarded as behaving rationally even though they may not be behaving in as sophisticated of a manner that one would expect. An instance of this type of situation would be Not-Attached eurosceptic parties that do not convey any information about their legislative activities to their voting bloc because they are not engaged in the first instance to convey

anything. I believe that eurosceptic voters pick up on this, and electorally these unengaged eurosceptics fail to fulfill their electoral potential in EP elections.

Kedar (2005, 2009) posits that not only are voters paying attention to parties, but that they are also prone to voting strategically to advance their desired policy outcomes.

Compensatory voting inherently requires a high level of sophistication among voters. In her work, Kedar finds that in parliamentary elections voters will be willing to vote for parties they would not typically support in order to pull governing parties in the direction of the voters' preferred policy outcomes. If this same phenomenon were to be present in EP elections, EP voters would have to be attentive to what transpires in Brussels and Strasbourg. While my theory does not require voters to be nearly as sophisticated in their knowledge and voting behavior as what her theory does, this work provides strong support that voters will vote strategically and that they must attention to what politicians do while in parliament. If EP voters pay attention to EP legislative behavior at even a fraction of what Kedar finds they did in 1990s across several dozen democracies, then eurosceptic parties are acting strategically when they publicly grandstand their opposition to the EU in EP legislative debates.

To be clear, I believe that there is strong evidence that voters and parties are both sophisticated and strategic in their behavior. Work on voter choice and issue voting has demonstrated that there are patterns to voting across democracies (see Lichbach and Zuckerman 2009). Voting is not a random activity. There are two sides to this relationship, however, and parties are likely to be as sophisticated and strategic as the voters they seek to appease.

Research by Meguid (2005, 2008) demonstrates that smaller parties are essentially fighting over the scraps left on the table by the larger and mainstream parties. In her work, eurosceptic niche parties are not entirely in control of their electoral outcomes, since they can

only gain voters when large mainstream parties ignore segments of voters. But, would this hold for second-order elections such as EP elections? In these elections, it can be argued that ideologically pure niche parties now have the upper hand. Eurosceptic parties such as UKIP can now drive the debate, and if they behave strategically these parties now can behave similarly to their mainstream opponent in national parliamentary elections. If this is, indeed, the case then it is possible to take Meguid's findings and simply switch the parties. My model posits that niche eurosceptic parties gain electoral benefits from their EP legislative behavior, and in EP elections it becomes the niche party that is strong and the mainstream parties that are now begging for scraps. Should a eurosceptic party abstain from EP legislative behavior, however, then it is surrendering its second-order electoral advantage.

Because eurosceptic parties are typically single-issue parties by their very nature, solidifying their ideological position ought not to be as difficult as it is for mainstream parties. Large, mainstream parties are more prone to having a wide variety of policy preferences across their elite power base and party supporters (see Inglehart 1984; Aldrich 1995). The more ideologically heterogeneous a party is the more difficult it will be to speak publically with a single and clear voice. Eurosceptic parties do not face this issue, since their opposition to the EU works as the glue that binds them all together. This makes public grandstanding, and staking a clear claim to a policy position, much easier to accomplish. Failure to become legislatively engaged in the EP and to grandstand whenever possible, then, becomes an even larger electoral failure, since speaking with one voice is an inherently easier task for a eurosceptic party than it is for a larger, mainstream one. Likewise, it would be intuitive that failure to achieve a strong public presence would punish eurosceptic parties more harshly than their mainstream counterparts.

Focusing on how small parties can survive electorally, Spoon (2009, 2011) sheds light on how Greens compete ideologically with center-left mainstream parties in France and the UK. She found that there is an ideological *sweet spot* at which smaller parties are able to maximize their electoral outcome vis-à-vis their mainstream party competition. For this to occur, voters have to be capable of knowing where parties stand ideologically in order either to punish or to reward them electorally. I apply Spoon's findings to my theory as further evidence that EP voters are aware of what MEPs are doing while in session. At the macro-level, if voters in France and the UK can create electorally an ideological *sweet spot* for Greens, then voters are capable of paying attention to how eurosceptic parties behave legislatively in the EP. Of course, there are ecological issues at play whenever macro-level findings have strongly inferred micro-level implications, but Spoon's work supports the notion that both parties and voters are able to act strategically in parliamentary elections. If this occurs in first-order parliamentary elections, then it is a smaller step to posit that this could occur in ever-increasingly important EP elections.

Adams et al. (2006; 2012) provide evidence that niche parties are able to compete if they are ideologically rigid and unambiguous. Their findings that niche party voters will punish niche parties if they are seen to be ideologically flexible naturally infers that this type of party can be a strategic actor. A logical extension of this argument is that eurosceptic niche parties that behave rationally will be acting strategically in signaling to their supporters that they are doubling down on their anti-EU ideology, and in being legislatively active in the EP they are fulfilling their campaign promises. If niche parties are to be punished for not being ideologically rigid, then the best way to reinforce their bona fides is to publicly grandstand against the EU during EP debate. Their speeches and legislative behavior can be used to reinforce their eurosceptic ideology to potential voters that they are a party worth supporting in EP elections.

Scholarly research on *party emergence* also demonstrates the ability for eurosceptic parties to solidify an ideological position and retain ownership of those issues, particularly in EP elections. Hug's (2001) work on when new parties are created provides insight into how niche parties emerge, and similarly how they must behave to survive. Logically, if center-right parties held and displayed strong anti-EU and anti-immigration viewpoints eurosceptic niche parties such as FN, UKIP, or the FPO would have a difficult time surviving as political parties. Why would a eurosceptic voter who is happy with the ideology and legislative behavior of their country's center-right mainstream party choose to cast a vote for an ideologically similar niche party that stands almost no chance of winning enough seats to govern? It is in this ideological space that eurosceptic voters who feel their ideologically-proximate mainstream party is ignoring their wishes can choose to switch their vote to the ideologically pure eurosceptic niche party. But, this party will need to signal to this type of voter that it is fundamentally different from the center-right mainstream party, and that it will not waver ideologically in its opposition to the EU. Legislative behavior is an ideal activity to portray ideological rigidity because it is public and can be easily transmitted via the media to voters.

Niche party ideological positioning is a growing literature within comparative politics, particularly since the far right's show of strength in the 2014 EP elections. This literature plays a central role in explaining possible legislative behavioral objectives in that it shows that niche parties are able to be strategic, and that they have some level of power over their electoral outcomes. Eurosceptics can choose whether to be active within the EP, and more precisely they can choose whether to publicly grandstand in order to signal to voters that they are serious parties worth supporting at the polls.

Legislative Behavior Matters

Why are some euroceptics able to take electoral advantage of their status as a *niche* and *protest* party in second-order EP elections while others are not able to capitalize on their inherent electoral advantages? In my model EP legislative behavior matters, and by publicly engaging the EP eurosceptics are able to signal to their supporters their willingness to oppose the EU. Voters who are open to the notion of voting for a eurosceptic niche party must be publicly reminded that their votes are not wasted on MEPs or parties that will abstain from politics once their EP seats have been won. EP elections do not hold the importance that national parliamentary or presidential elections hold, but I maintain that the EU is now large enough, and its policies wide-reaching enough, that EP elections are beginning to matter in ways resembling national parliamentary elections. If this is, indeed, the case, then parliamentary behavior will begin to matter, as well.

I assume that parties want to win seats in the EP, even if they do not intend on participating. While all parties are *rational*, some will not be legislatively *engaged*. It is in this distinction that EP electoral results for engaged eurosceptic parties will be predicted to overperform while unengaged eurosceptic parties will be predicted to underperform. Parties and MEPs will signal their active euroscepticism to voters via various forms of traditional and social media. Eurosceptics who fail to legislatively engage the EP, and in doing so publicly confront the EU from within, will be the parties that will commonly underperform in EP elections.

My argument is sequential in nature. If political parties do not care whether they win EP seats, then no model can explain their electoral performance because it will be a random outcome preceded by no apparent campaign or legislative behavior choices. It would also mean that voters who support such parties do not mind wasting their votes, since the EP's proportional representation election system still rewards parties that do not finish in first place. Furthermore,

if a eurosceptic party truly does not care whether they win any EP seats, then the situation becomes such that nothing in political science can explain the occurrence. In other words, there could be no *behavioral* explanation because the entire endeavor is left to chance and the whims of a party leader who does not care if he is successful. Even if a party's intention is to leave its seats empty as a display of protest, it still has an incentive to win parliamentary seats as a show of political defiance. Thus, I argue that even eurosceptic parties that do not engage legislatively would still prefer to win EP seats than not to win any at all.

I generate three initial hypotheses to test how well eurosceptic and niche parties do electorally in EP elections. Before I can put forth any possible explanations for why certain eurosceptics do not over perform in EP elections, I must make sure that there exists a group of underperforming eurosceptic parties. This initial group of hypotheses are meant to support the notion that not all eurosceptic parties adhere to the literature's predictions concerning EP electoral performance. Later clusters of hypotheses will be built upon the 3.1 Hypotheses as I expand my argument that public grandstanding and EP engagement differentiate between over and underperforming eurosceptic parties.

Hypothesis 3.1 A: Parties within the eurosceptic Not-Attached EP group will not realize the second-order election boost.

Hypothesis 3.1B: The eurosceptic Freedom and Democracy EP group parties will realize a second order election boost.

Hypothesis 3.1C Not-Attached parties will do less well than other niche-party dominated EP groups (EUL/NGL and G/EFA).

I present a model that posits that EP legislative behavior has an effect on EP electoral over or underperformance for eurosceptic parties. EP engagement is envisioned as a causal variable, and as such, I expect to find empirical evidence that eurosceptic parties that choose to take the initial

step of joining an EP party group are likely to have a higher level of EP legislative activity than eurosceptic parties that choose to remain Not-Attached.

Hypothesis 3.2: The eurosceptic Freedom and Democracy EP group will be more active in the EP than will the eurosceptic Not-Attached EP group.

Because I am attempting to measure EP legislative activity, I propose an index that can capture a party's attendance rate at EP plenary sessions and the number of EP questions a party poses. My *Legislative Exposure Score* (LE score), takes both forms of a party's EP legislative behavior into account to provide an index score that can be used to compare various eurosceptic parties. LE scores are calculated with a party's total number of MEPs in mind, so each score reflects the abstract *median MEP's* participation level. Because I believe voters pay attention to, and care about, what occurs within the EP, eurosceptic parties that participate at higher levels would be predicted to receive higher electoral bumps in EP elections.

Hypothesis 3.3 A: Eurosceptic parties *Legislative Exposure Score* will be positively correlated with electoral performance in EP elections.

Hypothesis 3.3 B: An elevated *Legislative Exposure Score* is a necessary condition for a eurosceptic party to over perform in EP elections.

I address the inherent ecology issue that arises whenever a political phenomenon includes macro-level data with voting, which is by definition a micro-level activity, by positing that voters are signaled a eurosceptic party's active opposition to the EU via the media. In previous decades, eurosceptics were forced to rely on traditional media to relay to voters what they were doing in Brussels or Strasbourg. By the 2014 EP elections, however, parties were expanding their social media presence in much of Europe (see Rodriguez and Madariaga 2015). In Chapter 4, I address this issue in detail, and I show that EP voters are most likely to receive their information via various forms of media. This is also highly intuitive, since the costs of obtaining first-hand

information concerning EP legislative behavior would be quite high, and the fact that eurosceptic voters would not likely enjoy their time at a political institution they do not believe should exist in the first place.

Voters make a conscious decision of whether to cast a vote in an EP election, and it is logical that if they feel their vote is wasted they would rather stay at home. Eurosceptic parties that actively participated in EP legislative debate signal to their party's supporters that it is worth their time to cast a vote in an EP election. In doing this, actively engaged eurosceptic parties position themselves to over perform relative to their national parliamentary showing by taking full advantage of their second-order election boosts.

Hypothesis 4.1: The public consumes sufficient levels of media outlets to be informed of political developments and issues related to the EU.

Hypothesis 4.2: Parties will prominently display their EP legislative behavior on Facebook and Youtube.

Hypothesis 4.3: Parties on the extreme left and right will have a disproportionate amount, relative to seat share, of social media presence as compared to mainstream parties.

If voters perceive themselves to be adequately informed about EU and EP issues, it would make electoral sense for parties do their utmost to advertise their EP legislative behavior. Not only would this provide parties with relatively low-cost campaign material, but it would also reinforce the notion that they achieving something while seated in the EP. Conversely, even if it is the case that voters do not pay attention to EP events, it would be highly unlikely that a party's supporters would punish them for publicizing how their MEPs are legislatively behaving. Parties, and in particular eurosceptic parties, are assumed to want to maximize the media and social media coverage of their EP activities as a low-cost mechanism to reach their supporters.

Engaged eurosceptics use their EP platform to oppose the EU publicly, and they do so in ways that easily translate to the media for mass dissemination. Eurosceptic voters are cognizant of whether a eurosceptic party is willing to follow through on its campaign promises to fight the EU because they can view their EP speeches online or they see on television the verbal belligerence of eurosceptic MEPs. When the subsequent EP election takes place, eurosceptic voters are reminded of whether their country's eurosceptic niche party had bothered to air its grievances on the EP floor.

Hypothesis 4.4: Total amount of all EP questions posed is positively correlated with media hits at the EP party group level.

Hypothesis 4.5: Eurosceptic parties, as well as far left parties, will receive a disproportionate amount of media coverage and exposure.

This model consists is built upon an assumption that a party choosing to participate, and that voters prefer that to a party that does not participate. I test my model quantitatively (Chapters 3 and 4) in order to observe if EP legislative behavior does, in fact, help to explain why there is a group of eurosceptic parties that do not perform as the literature would have them in EP elections.

Testing The Theory Statistically

I quantitatively test my model in several ways in Chapters 3 and 4. In both chapters, I adopt a multi-stage approach, which consists of statistically testing hypotheses at each step. Because the phenomenon of eurosceptic niche parties underperforming in EP elections goes against the consensus that niche and opposition parties will over perform in second-order elections the first step in testing my model is to demonstrate that this situation exists in the first place. Accordingly, the first step I take in testing my model is to show that Not-Attached

eurosceptic parties regularly underperform in EP elections. To achieve this, I test a series of EP party group dummies that statistically support my basic hypothesis that not all eurosceptic niche parties over perform in EP elections. The unit of analysis is *party-year change in vote share*, but I group all parties in the EP into their respective EP party groups, while controlling for national governing status and lagged unemployment rates.

After showing that there is, indeed, a phenomenon to explain I posit that EP legislative behavior is helping to cause this electoral difference between eurosceptic niche parties. I hypothesize that outspoken eurosceptics that also join an EP group will be more engaged in EP legislative activity than will those eurosceptics that do not join any EP group. I test this hypothesis to observe whether there are statistically significant findings showing that Freedom and Democracy eurosceptics engage in EP legislative debate more than do Not-Attached eurosceptics. I operationalize this hypothesis by introducing a *Legislative Exposure Score* (LE score) that allows the measurement of EP legislative activity by small parties outside of any EP pivot position or governing coalition. I calculate LE scores by determining the number of EP questions (Q) divided by the number of MEPs a party has (MEP), which I then multiply by their attendance rate as decimal (A). By operationalizing LE scores in this fashion I can compare across parties regardless of how numerous their presence is in Brussels and Strasbourg.

$$LE\ Score = (Q/MEP) * A$$

The higher the LE score, the more involved a party is (at the abstract median MEP-level). I argue that eurosceptic niche parties that have elevated LE scores will naturally position themselves in advantageous positions to signal to their supporters that they will actively oppose the EU should they be supported at the polls. Lastly, I statistically test LE scores' effects on parties' *change in*

vote share in order to gauge how much of a direct effect LE scores have on electoral results even though I have a relatively low number of observations in which to achieve a correlation.

Chapter 3 addresses the situation from both ends of the political process: parties' behavior at the EP and the voters measured by vote share. Obviously, there still remains the space in between that will need to be examined and explained. To address the ecological issues inherent to any model that looks at party behavior and electoral results, I posit that parties are able to signal to their supporters their active opposition to the EU in EP legislative debate via traditional and social media outlets. Chapter 4 addresses the space between parties and voters.

I group Chapter 4's hypotheses into two groups in order to explain the link between parties' EP legislative behavior and the media (both social and traditional), and the link between the media (both social and traditional) and the public. This requires that each individual link that involves the media be analyzed separately from the other. Once both directions of the media relationship have been established, the entire relationship is able to be seen. Behavior at the EP level is picked up by the media, which in turn is disseminated to the public.

Few projects have attempted to conduct interviews with extremist voters (see Stockemer 2015; Stockemer and Amengay 2015). Given the recent political trends in Europe, however, this type of party is gaining political ground in many European countries and the EP. As such, the parties and elections literature is in need of theoretical alternatives that can help to explain and predict extreme right parties and the electoral consequences of their public rhetorical and parliamentary grandstanding. I believe that focusing on eurosceptic parties' parliamentary speech and legislative engagement can partially explain this growing phenomenon.

On the other hand, by complementing my statistical analyses with micro-level interview data provided by Stockemer (2015) my theory is able to include certain party-specific

peculiarities that arise when researching small political parties. In this case, the French FN and its activists can be analyzed to provide qualitative insights into a leading eurosceptic party's composition. By partially bridging the gap between quantitative and qualitative research approaches, my model provides a more thorough explanation of how ideological extremism functions in multiparty systems and second-order elections. My contribution to the literature is establishing a theoretical approach and alternative to understanding a growing political influence in Europe that is focused on the EP legislative behavior of eurosceptics.

Conclusion

The value of developing a theory to analyze euroscepticism's electoral successes or failures in EP elections is that it will help to explain a growing phenomenon within Europe, and that it can be applied globally where extremist parties seek to gain electoral and political influence. EP elections are the ideal testing ground for this theory because it is multiparty and a second-order election. This theory allows for the easy typology of Engaged eurosceptic parties to be contrasted with non-Engaged eurosceptic parties. Furthermore, it also predicts the electoral outcome that such types of hard eurosceptic parties are likely to receive in EP elections depending on their EP legislative engagement levels.

While this dissertation focuses solely on EP elections and euroscepticism, it is also rather generalizable. By examining and testing how public grandstanding benefits extreme right parties in the EP, this model can be generalized to other multiparty or multi-individual elections such as municipal elections or US primary elections wherein voter turnout levels are depressed and the electorate becomes more ideologically rigid. Far from a European phenomenon, outspoken parliamentary behavior is likely to have the same effect elsewhere in the world. Via social and

traditional media, public grandstanding is an activity with a direct link via media outlets to reach voters. The higher the level of legislative engagement, the higher the level of media exposure that will result from it, which leads to an extremist party reinforcing its message with its party loyalists.

Chapter III

The Electoral Benefits of Being Engaged

Abstract

Eurosceptic, niche, and opposition parties are predicted to receive electoral gains in second-order elections such as European Parliament (EP) elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Hix and Marsh 2011; Hobolt and Spoon 2012). Eurosceptic parties in particular should have electoral advantages in EP elections due to their dual roles as opposition parties domestically and anti-European Union (EU) parties within Europe (Hobolt and Wittrock 2011). In other words, eurosceptic parties ought to see higher vote shares in EP elections than in national elections. Those parties affiliated with the Not-Attached EP group, however, do not follow the expected pattern. I argue that an anti-EU ideological position alone is not sufficient for a party to achieve its second-order electoral boost. Eurosceptic parties must make it known loudly and publicly that they are not simply eurosceptic, but that they are fighting the EU at every turn. By actively engaging the very institution they oppose, eurosceptic parties demonstrate to voters that they will act on the political rhetoric they display. My findings suggest that it is necessary to participate actively in order for eurosceptic parties to realize routinely their second-order election boost.

As discussed in the previous chapters, niche and opposition parties are supposed to fare better in second-order elections (see Reif and Schmitt 1980; Hix and Marsh 2011; Hobolt & Spoon 2012), and eurosceptic parties are commonly both niche and part of the opposition. As second order elections, European Parliamentary (EP) elections, ought to be electoral successes for opposition political parties in general and Eurosceptic parties in particular. This is not true, however, for all eurosceptic parties, such as the French *Front National* (FN) or the Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ). The question then becomes *why* do some eurosceptic parties massively overperform while others underperform?

In this chapter, I take the eurosceptic parties that underperform in EP elections that I identified in chapter 2, and I compare these parties with eurosceptic parties that realize their

expected second-order electoral boost. While no one doubts Jean-Marie Le Pen's eurosceptic ideology, UKIP's Nigel Farage is more public about his disdain for the EU while in Strasbourg. Yet, no quantitative work has tested this difference in legislative behavior on electoral results. How, then, do a handful of eurosceptic parties go about in failing to take full advantage of their electoral position as both niche and opposition? As the evidence shows, the type of behavior that a eurosceptic party displays while in the EP can help to explain this. Grandstanding leads to higher levels of public exposure, and subsequently higher levels of public exposure lead to higher vote shares in EP elections. In other words, simply being a eurosceptic niche party is not sufficient to realize second-order election boosts. While they may be vocal domestically, and their ideological position on the EU known, they do not mobilize their supporters or convey the importance of voting in EP elections in the way that actively engaged eurosceptic parties do by publicly grandstanding against the European Union (EU) within the EU's only democratic body, the EP. As was outlined in the previous chapter, there appears to be a clear distinction between eurosceptic parties that are active and over perform electorally, and those eurosceptic parties that are not active within the EP and have routinely underperformed electorally.

This chapter is divided into the following sections. First, I will introduce my hypotheses and include a brief overview of where the literature stands on EP groups, their parties, and the importance of legislative participation. Second, the data and methods that are used for this chapter's statistical testing will be further explained. Third, the results from the hypothesis tests will be discussed. Lastly, an in-depth discussion about why these findings matter and what they mean for eurosceptic parties will follow that will set forth the context in which Chapter 4 will address the ecological issues arising with this study.

Hypotheses

To summarize my theory and model from chapter 2, the EP is a supranational political institution with well over 700 Members of the EP (MEPs). EP elections are considered to be second-order elections, and even though the EP has had direct elections of MEPs for over 30 years, there still has not been an emergence of any truly pan-European Union (EU) political parties. To overcome the inherent problems of a parliament divided not only by ideology, but also along linguistic and national cleavages, an EP party group system emerged that allowed for likeminded political parties to organize themselves (see Kreppel 2002). As such, German Social Democrats and French Socialists place themselves within the *Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats* EP party group. While there is still no EU Socialist political party standing for EP elections across the EU, referring to EP party group would appear to be an appropriate heuristic for combining ideologically similar parties for a cross-national analysis. Of particular importance, by starting at the EP group level I am able to compare the two groups of eurosceptics of interest to observe if statistically significant findings can be had for the Not-Attached and the Freedom and Democracy EP groups.⁴

Building on the findings of previous work that showed that in most cases MEPs vote according to their ideological position rather than their nationality (Hix et al. 2006), it is logical to extend this approach and to posit that EP party groups can be analyzed as cohesive groups across nationalities. Moreover, I expect to see similar electoral outcomes for parties within the same EP group when other factors are controlled. Because parties that are found on the ideological extremes are rarely in governing coalitions domestically⁵, I posit that there should be

⁴ In the sense that the Not-Attached EP group represents a de facto EP group even if it is by definition a non EP group.

⁵ Therefore, there should be no *governing* effect on these types of parties because they are rarely ever part of a governing coalition.

clear electoral differences in terms of over performing or underperforming in EP elections between these EP party groups that share similar eurosceptic ideologies and that are rarely if ever part of a ruling coalition domestically.

Hypothesis 3.1 A: Parties within the eurosceptic Not-Attached EP group will not realize the second-order election boost.

Hypothesis 3.1B: The eurosceptic Freedom and Democracy EP group parties will realize a second order election boost.

Hypothesis 3.1C Not-Attached parties will do less well than other niche-party dominated EP groups (EUL/NGL and G/EFA).

Because representative democracy requires politicians to garner the constituents' support, a logical explanation would be that a party's behavior would have an effect on how energized and mobilized its supporters are for an upcoming election. Parties that display clear signals of fulfilling their tasks and responsibilities at the parliamentary level would be assumed to be sending a stronger message to its supporters that it is worth their time and effort to cast a vote in their favor. A vote for their party is a vote for sending an MEP to Brussels and Strasbourg who will work on their ideological behalf.

How best, though, to capture the legislative behavior of an MEP, and by extension that MEP's political party? Previous work has identified behavioral types of MEPs, and in particular several types of eurosceptic MEPs such as *The Public Orator*, *The Pragmatist*, or *The Absentee* (Brack 2013). Departing slightly from Brack's work, I shift the unit of analysis away from the individual MEP-level to the EP party group-level under the assumption that it could be a behavioral difference that causes there to be different EP party groups when the member parties of both Freedom and Democracy and Not-Attached typically share the same eurosceptic ideology.

Of the eurosceptic EP groups, one group will likely demonstrate a more engaged approach to the EP. This measurement will differ from other conceptions of legislative activity⁶ due to the fact that these parties do not number large enough to govern. By demonstrating that certain EP groups are clearly more involved in EP activities and debate, however, I will be able to distinguish not just between individual MEPs, but between EP groups in the number of questions and rate of attendance while in Brussels or Strasbourg.

Hypothesis 3.2: The eurosceptic Freedom and Democracy EP group will be more active in the EP than will the eurosceptic Not-Attached EP group.

By largely abstaining from EP legislative debate and scrutiny, eurosceptic MEPs and their parties do not reinforce the notion among their loyalists that EP elections are important events. After all, if the MEPs themselves do not care enough to attend plenary sessions or to be bothered to submit official questions, then why would their supporters be bothered to cast a vote in an election for a parliament of which they do not even support the existence? With such a clear qualitative distinction between MEPs such as Jean-Marie Le Pen and Nigel Farage, it is not an illogical jump to predict that differences in EP behavior would have a tangible effect on a party's vote share. Moreover, any electoral effect ought to be amplified for niche eurosceptic parties that already have a *cult of personality* aspect to them that requires a visible leader, which would likely lead to higher levels of electoral volatility. Therefore, I propose a formula, and albeit relatively crude, I feel that it is able to capture at least a minimal amount of the legislative behavioral difference between ideologically similar eurosceptics. I call this the *Legislative*

⁶ Such as introducing and/or passing legislation, or ministerial positions held.

Exposure Score (LE score) because this is the type of open and public legislative behavior that can lead to public exposure to voters of what an MEP or party is doing legislatively.

At this point, I shift the unit of analysis to the national political party-level. By starting at the aggregated EP party group-level for the first four hypotheses, I seek to establish a gradual covering of all the relevant bases to demonstrate the effect that legislative behavior has on electoral results. I introduce LE scores to show the difference in EP engagement between the various eurosceptic parties. I calculate LE scores by determining the number of EP questions (Q) divided by the number of MEPs a party has (MEP), which I then multiply by their attendance rate as decimal (A). By operationalizing LE scores in this fashion I can compare across parties regardless of how numerous their presence is in Brussels and Strasbourg.

$$\text{Legislative Exposure Score} = (Q/MEP) * A$$

Clearly, this formula is not able to capture other EU and EP behavior that would increase an MEP's public exposure such as organizing a protest march in Brussels or taking to Twitter, Facebook, or Youtube to vent frustration. It is merely a rudimentary first step in quantifying the behavior of a still relatively small number of eurosceptic MEPs.

Hypothesis 3.3 A: Eurosceptic parties *Legislative Exposure Score* will be positively correlated with electoral performance in EP elections.

Lastly, it is important to test how important an LE score is to a party's electoral outcome in EP elections. Is it sufficient to have a higher than median LE score in order to over perform in EP elections? Or is it necessary to have a higher than median LE score in order to over perform in EP elections, but there must be several other components present for it to occur? Does ideology play a crucial role? Green party supporters are already primed to view EP elections as important

political events, but eurosceptics are routinely told by their party leaders that the EU is detrimental to their national identity and well-being. It would be logical, therefore, for an LE score to be more consequential to a eurosceptic party that must funambulate the tightrope of disparaging the very institution to which it hopes to win seats.

I adopt a behavioral understanding of parties, voters, and elections. Naturally, external shocks to the system such as the late 2000s recession or the mid 2015 wave of refugees will have an effect on party support; particularly for those niche parties that are found in the opposition and that have *cultural threat* as a centerpiece of their party's platform. Still, voters need reinforcement that those they send to a parliament of any kind will show up to work and do the job they promised in the run-up to the election. Active participation of a party's MEPs in the EP legislative process would signal to voters that this is a party worth supporting even within the context of not supporting the parliament to which they are sending that party's MEPs. In short, how does a party get its supporters to cast votes in an election that they do not believe should exist in the first place? I answer that by saying that they can achieve this by publically demonstrating that they are fighting the monster from within the monster's own lair.

Hypothesis 3.3 B: An elevated *Legislative Exposure Score* is a necessary condition for a eurosceptic party to over perform in EP elections.

These six hypotheses should be read, generally, to be sequential in nature. Because I am attempting to demonstrate quantitatively that there are systematic differences between eurosceptic parties, I need to address this phenomenon from a multilevel perspective. In order to dispel the notion that the effects are driving solely by one national party, I start at the EP group level so that I can aggregate handfuls of likeminded parties. Subsequently, I then disaggregate

the EP party groups to the party-level to show a more direct correlation between actual party behavior and its electoral outcomes. By adopting a multilevel approach, I am able to demonstrate that legislative behavior has an electoral effect, and that it is not confined or driven only by one party's exceptional behavior and electoral outcomes.

Data and Methods

The data used for testing this chapter's hypotheses all originate from official government sources. In some instances, I use data collected from official government sources that have been collected by a third party such as ParlGov's (Döring and Manow 2016) elections datasets. For other data, namely economic indicators or governing status dummies, I collect these from official government sources directly or code them in accordance to which party is in government coalition or opposition, respectively. No data used in this chapter is subjective in nature, and the ideological scores used are ParlGov's composite that combine several ideological placement projects in order not to become too exposed to any researcher bias.

The dependent variable for all hypotheses other than H 3.2 is a party's over or underperformance in EP elections, and I look at all EP elections from 1984-2014. The unit of analysis is party over or under performance of vote share for each EP election, though not all parties are included in every EP election. In order to calculate over or underperformance, a party must have contested a previous national parliamentary election and a subsequent EP election. Furthermore, if a party has not previously won any seats in the EP, they are dropped until they do. I do this because I need to know which EP party group they join in order to start to differentiate between how parties behave legislatively once they arrive in Brussels. Therefore, in combination with both requirements, parties must have contested previous national parliamentary elections, a subsequent EP election, and have won at least one EP seat in the prior

EP election before I include them in my statistical testing. This is why the dataset starts with the 1984 EP election rather than with the 1979 one.

The electoral data used to calculate the dependent variable come from ParlGov (2016), which itself sources its data from each EU member state's official election results. I calculate over or under performance in EP elections by subtracting the previous national parliamentary election vote share from that party's subsequent EP election vote share. For example, because the French *Front National* (FN) received an 11.1% vote share in the 2002 French parliamentary election and a 9.8% vote share in the 2004 EP election, I subtract 11.1 from 9.8 to result in a change in vote share of -1.3. This would be an underperformance. Conversely, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) had a 1.5% vote share in the 2001 UK General Elections and a 16.2% vote share in the 2004 EP elections to give them a change in vote share of 14.7. In this case, this would be an over performance. I calculate the change in vote share with the EP election minus domestic election so that it is more intuitive of whether a certain party performed better or worse in the EP election. A positive change in vote share reflects over performance, while a negative change in vote share reflects an underperformance.

For economic controls, I use both Eurostat (2016) and the OECD (2013) to provide data on unemployment rates. According to best practices, I use a six-month lagged unemployment rate at the national level (Pacek 1994; Roberts 2008). Most EU member states employ regional districts for both domestic parliamentary and EP elections, but because these boundaries are oftentimes not the same for both elections I choose operationalize unemployment by taking the national unemployment rate to keep the unit of analysis consistent across variables.

I control for governmental factors in order to isolate the effect of EP party group membership from outside influences deriving from governing or opposition-status effects. I

operationalize this by including dummies to capture whether a party is a *governing power*, a *minor coalition partner*, or in the *opposition*. I characterize *governing power* to be if a particular party has the head of government position. In the case of co-habitation, I define the governing party as the one that holds the Prime Ministership. In my models, I use the *governing power* dummy as my baseline.

I control for party ideological position using ParlGov's left-right, 1-10 scale that is a composite of expert survey data (Döring and Manow 2016). Again, I include this control in order to isolate as much as is possible the effect of simply being a member of any certain EP group. Additionally, since eurosceptics are typically from niche parties, it is useful to compare the far right to the far left in order to observe if the same legislative behavior is having the same electoral effect when exhibited by other niche party MEPs.

For H3.2, I use a data set that includes EP questions during the 2004-2009 EP session, and I sort out the raw number of questions each MEP and party pose. I take the total number of questions each party asks, and I divide them by the number of MEPs each party has in the EP. This approach allows for me to reach a mean number of EP questions per party MEP, which I use as an abstract notion of how active each party is at the EP when controlled for their delegation size. I calculate political party attendance rates by taking the attendance record of all of a party's MEPs at plenary sessions during the EP session. I then find the mean, which is used for the party as a whole. I use attendance data from Vote Watch (2014) to calculate each party's mean attendance rate. I label this index the *Legislative Exposure Score*.

The dependent variable for H3.2 is a party's EP engagement level as measured by the indicators in the aforementioned paragraph. EP questions are the clearest and most visible way of

participating, while attending plenary sessions would capture a more passive form of EP participation. For this hypothesis, I combine both forms of engagement.

Researching eurosceptics, and in particular non-mainstream eurosceptics, restricts the number of observations available. In addition, because EP elections only occur every five years and parties must meet several criteria before they can be included into my data set, I must be content with a relatively small N-size. For statistical analysis, I employ a Time-Series regression model.⁷

I start by including some general descriptive statistics, which I break down into EP party groups. Once I have shown that there are clear differences in mean over or underperformance between the various EP party groups, I statistically test my hypotheses using several models that all use OLS regression. I do not include any clustering of standard errors or country dummies because I am intending to show that there is a phenomenon across the EU for eurosceptics who participate versus those who choose not to do so.

Findings

Clear differences are apparent between EP groups. These findings are the aggregates of all the parties within each EP group over time. While some of these EP group names have changed over the years, I use the 2004-2009 names in order to provide consistency across time. Even though these findings are still at the EP party group level, they indicate that there is likely to be distinct electoral differences between parties that affiliate themselves with various EP groups.

⁷ For robustness checks, I also run my models as pooled cross-sectional, which results in slightly weaker findings, but coefficient signs stay in the same direction and remain statistically significant at the .05 level (see Appendix Table 1). I do not use panel corrected standard errors, since my data are not panel data. I do not cluster standard errors by country because previous research has shown that ideologically similar parties have more in common across EU member states than they do with other parties from their home country. I also do not cluster standard errors by EP group because EP group dummy variables are used as my causal variables in the time-series model.

Table 3.1 provides descriptive differences between EP groups by their mean change in vote share. As can be seen in this table, eurosceptic EP Groups generally perform better in EP elections than they do in domestic ones, but there is an obvious outlier to this trend. The Not-Attached parties underperform in EP elections by nearly a full percentage point. It is worth noting that these descriptive findings cannot be the result of just one or two Not-Attached eurosceptic parties that routinely under perform.

EP Groups	Mean Change in Vote Share	# of Observations
Not Attached	-.86	21
Freedom/Democracy	3.48	12
Conservatives/Reform	.41	17
Nordic Greens	.96	36
Group Greens	2.20	54
Liberals/Democrats	-1.87	83
Christian Dems (People's)	-.01	137
Social Dems	-3.82	121

Table 3.1: EP Electoral Performance by EP Group

Additionally, in order to observe the extent to which Not-Attached parties underperform in EP elections, I compare their mean change in vote share to that of both other eurosceptic EP groups and EP groups dominated by niche parties. The eurosceptic Freedom and Democracy group has a mean over performance of 3.48 percentage points in EP elections, while the softer and mainstream eurosceptics in the Conservatives and Reformists group over perform by .41 percentage points.

The most similar group of eurosceptics to the Not-Attached parties is the Freedom and Democracy group. As such, a comparison between these two EP groups highlights the unpredicted underperformance of Not-Attached parties such as the FN, FPO, or Jobbiks. If

Freedom and Democracy parties are able to realize substantial over performance in EP elections, why are the Not-Attached parties unable to do so? Descriptive statistics allow us to show that a phenomenon is occurring, but they cannot tell us *why* it is occurring.

An additional aspect of note here is that some of the Conservatives and Reformists group parties had been in the national opposition during much of 1990s and 2000s, which accounts for their positive change in vote share even though they are mainstream eurosceptics. The Tories, for example, over performed during the Tony Blair years; just not to the same extent as UKIP has over the last 15 years.

Not-Attached parties can be compared to other parties on two general dimensions: their euroscepticism and their status as niche parties. Descriptively, Not-Attached parties demonstrate a peculiar underperformance in EP elections, particularly when compared to other eurosceptics. This logically leads one to question what is causing this difference between ideologically similar parties. The second dimension also warrants attention because there is predicted to be shared electoral over performance outcomes for niche and oppositional parties. Opposition party over performance leads to ambiguous findings due to domestic shifts between center-right and center-left governing parties, which results in mean changes in vote share washing out over the long term.⁸ Yet, it is predicted that niche parties on both the right and left will realize similar second-order election boosts. Here again, however, the Not-Attached parties do not realize the second-order election boosts that parties in the Group Greens⁹ and Nordic Greens¹⁰ do.

Group Greens and the Nordic Greens both benefit from their second-order status in EP elections. Parties within the Group Greens see a mean change in vote share of 2.35 percentage

⁸ See Christian Democrats mean change in vote share being -.01 over 137 EP election results, and with stronger center-right electoral outcomes more recently one would expect the center-left to start over performing in EP elections as the domestic oppositional party.

⁹ Group Greens are the environmental Greens.

¹⁰ Nordic Greens are comprised of hard left parties.

points in EP elections, while the Nordic Green parties have a mean change in vote share of .88 percentage points. Parties within both of these EP groups ideologically located on the left over perform in EP elections, which is to be expected. What is unexpected, though, is how glaring the underperformance of Not-Attached parties is when viewed against not only other eurosceptics, but against other niche parties as well. By including leftist and eurosceptic niche parties, it becomes apparent that the phenomenon of parties such as the FN, FPO, Jobbik, or BNP¹¹ underperforming occurs regardless that they are both niche and opposition parties.

Descriptively, there is support for H3.1 A, B, and C because the Non-Attached group is the only EP group that is comprised of niche parties, but does not generally over perform in EP elections. By starting with simple descriptive statistics, I try to construct a solid foundation upon which to answer what I believe is the most fundamental question posed in this dissertation: why does this happen? Before providing an explanation for this phenomenon, I need to see if this routine underperformance by Not-Attached eurosceptics that I predict actually exists in the first place.

Next is to show that these differences are statistically significant, and that they support the notion that a certain type of eurosceptic party exhibits a type of behavior that results in them managing to squander two electoral advantages¹² that should be working in their advantage. In Table 3.2, I present three regression models that each support the claim that there is something different about Not-Attached parties other than their inability to form an EP group.

In Model 1 of Table 3.2, I test all the EP groups except for the Social Democrats and

¹¹ British National Party.

¹² The two dimensions are: being eurosceptic (able to take protest votes away from center-right parties) and being a niche party.

Christian Democrats on change in vote share¹³. I choose to leave out the two largest EP groups to demonstrate the effect that simply being in a certain EP group has on change in vote share when only the smaller EP groups are included. I control for economic conditions with a six-month lagged unemployment rate, and for governing status using opposition-status and minor coalition partner-status dummies. Lastly, I control for any ideological variation with a left-right ideological score.

In Model 2 of Table 3.2, I test the Not-Attached EP group and the centrist EP groups on change in vote share.¹⁴ Again, I control for economic conditions with a six-month lagged unemployment rate, governing status as either in the opposition or a minor coalition partner using dummies, and ideological position using a left-right ideological scale.

For Model 3 of Table 3.2, I include only the Not-Attached EP group.¹⁵ I do this to see what the simple effect of being a Not-Attached party has on vote share while still controlling for economic conditions with a six-month lagged unemployment rate variable, the governing effects of being in the opposition or a minor coalition partner, and ideological position using a left-right ideological scale.

¹³ **Model 1:** $\Delta \text{Vote Share} = \alpha + \beta(\text{NotAttached}) + \beta(\text{EuropeFreedom}) + \beta(\text{ConReforms}) + \beta(\text{NordicGreens}) + \beta(\text{GroupGreens}) + \beta(\text{LibDems}) + \beta(\text{Unemployment}) + \beta(\text{OppositionStatus}) + \beta(\text{MinorCoalitionStatus}) + \beta(\text{Left-Right}) + \epsilon$

¹⁴ **Model 2:** $\Delta \text{VoteShare} = \alpha + \beta(\text{NotAttached}) + \beta(\text{LiberalDems}) + \beta(\text{SocialDems}) + \beta(\text{ChristianDems}) + \beta(\text{Unemployment}) + \beta(\text{OppositionStatus}) + \beta(\text{MinorCoalitionStatus}) + \beta(\text{left_rightposition}) + \epsilon$

¹⁵ **Model 3:** $\Delta \text{VoteShare} = \alpha + \beta(\text{NotAttached}) + \beta(\text{Unemployment}) + \beta(\text{Oppositionstatus}) + \beta(\text{MinorCoalitionStatus}) + \beta(\text{left_rightposition}) + \epsilon$

Determinants of Δ Vote Share	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Not Attached	-3.65** (1.46)	-4.74*** (1.62)	-3.25** (1.41)
Europe of Freedom and Democracy	2.44 (1.56)		
European Conservatives and Reformists	1.62 (1.67)		
European Left-Nordic Green	3.14** (1.29)		
Greens-European Free Alliance	4.14**** (1.03)		
Alliance of Liberals	-1.32* (.79)	-3.49**** (.97)	
Progressive Alliance of Socialists		-3.82**** (.79)	
European People's Party		-1.25 (.94)	
<i>Controls</i>			
Unemployment	-.05 (.07)	-.06 (.07)	-.03 (.07)
Opposition Status	6.60**** (.75)	6.63**** (.74)	7.54**** (.72)
Minor Coalition Partner	5.39**** (.86)	5.32**** (.85)	5.41**** (.86)
Left-Right Ideology Scale	.81**** (.19)	.38** (.18)	.41*** (.14)
<i>constant</i>	-10.01**** (1.28)	-5.15**** (1.26)	-8.03**** (1.13)
N	544	544	544
R ²	.21	.22	.17
P>Chi ²	.0000	.0000	.0000
*(p<0.10), **(p<0.05), ***(p<0.01), ****(p<0.001)			

Table 3.2: Times-Series Regression Analysis of EP Party Group Effect on DV

In all three models, the Not-Attached dummy has negative coefficients that are statistically significant. Particularly when viewed in conjunction with other niche party EP groups, it becomes clear that this particular type of euroscepticism is not resulting in the predicted over performance in EP elections that the literature would predict. As such, it appears that there is

sufficient empirical evidence that there is, in fact, a clear difference between the different types of eurosceptics. This statistically significant evidence supports Hypotheses 3.1A, B, and C, which posited that Not-Attached eurosceptics will not realize the second-order election boosts that Freedom and Democracy eurosceptic parties will. Furthermore, the Not-Attached parties also prove to be the only niche EP group that does not routinely receive a second-order election boost, which is observed when they are compared to Greens and Nordic Green EP group parties.

How Legislative Behavior Happens

For hypothesis 3.2, I introduce a possible explanation for *why* a eurosceptic party may underperform in an election in which it should be massively over performing. Due to the limited number of EP elections and data available, my model for this chapter relies solely on the 6th EP session, which ran from 2004 to 2009.

I posit that there are electoral benefits to EP legislative behavior, and I operationalize this claim based on EP questions and attendance rates at plenary sessions. Activities outside of these two areas are difficult to quantify, and data reliability becomes a major issue. Nonetheless, there are clear differences in the number of EP questions that each EP party group poses. In Figure 1, each EP party group is separated out, and the number of EP questions that were posed by member parties is depicted. Bear in mind that I have calculated these questions on a per-MEP basis, since the total number of MEPs varies widely between EP party groups. For example, the Not-Attached EP party group poses just over 140 total questions per Not-attached MEP.

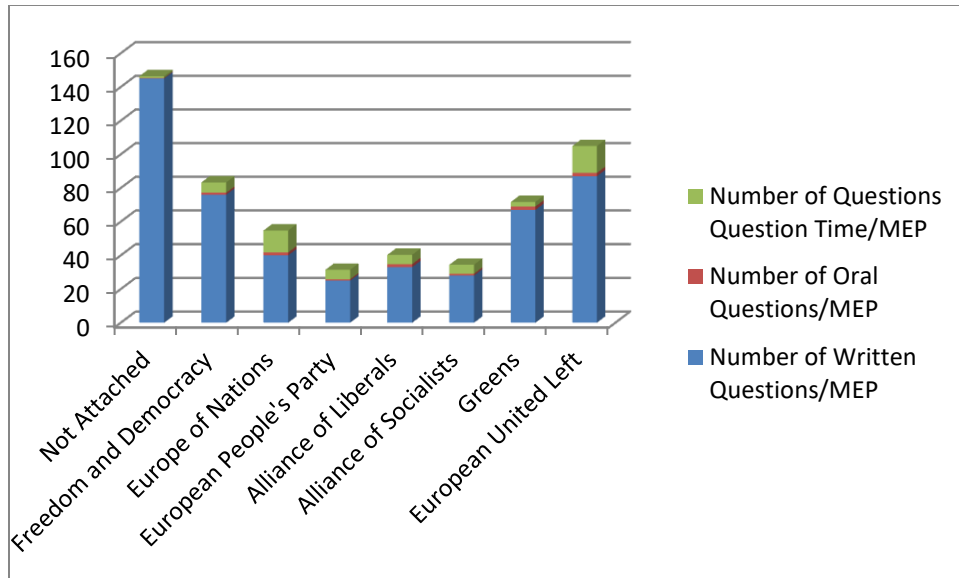


Figure 3.1: Number of EP Questions Posed by EP Group

As is indicated in the figure, the blue amount represents the number of written questions per MEP. The red portion represents the number of oral questions posed per MEP, and the green section at the top shows the number of questions posed per MEP during *Question Time*.

Immediately, the Not-Attached appear to be the more active EP participants compared to the Freedom and Democracy EP party group. Upon closer inspection, however, Not-Attached parties barely ever pose any oral questions or questions during *Question Time*, which highlights the notion that these parties do not participate in the EP activities that require attendance at the rate of any of the other EP party groups. Chapter 4 delves into the differences between the types of questions more thoroughly than I do here in the chapter 3, but it worth noting that there is a difference in behavior between the Not-Attached parties and the Freedom and Democracy parties in terms of EP questions. In conjunction with hypotheses 3.1 A and B, there is mounting evidence that the distinction between eurosceptics is more than just electoral in nature.

To illustrate further the differences between eurosceptics, and between other EP party groups, Figure 3.2 shows the mean LE score for each EP party group. I argue that a possible

explanation for why certain eurosceptics do not over perform is that they do not participate in the EP as much as do the eurosceptics who do consistently over perform. In Figure 3.2, I calculate mean LE scores for each EP party group, and there is a noticeable difference between the Not-Attached and the Freedom and Democracy EP groups.

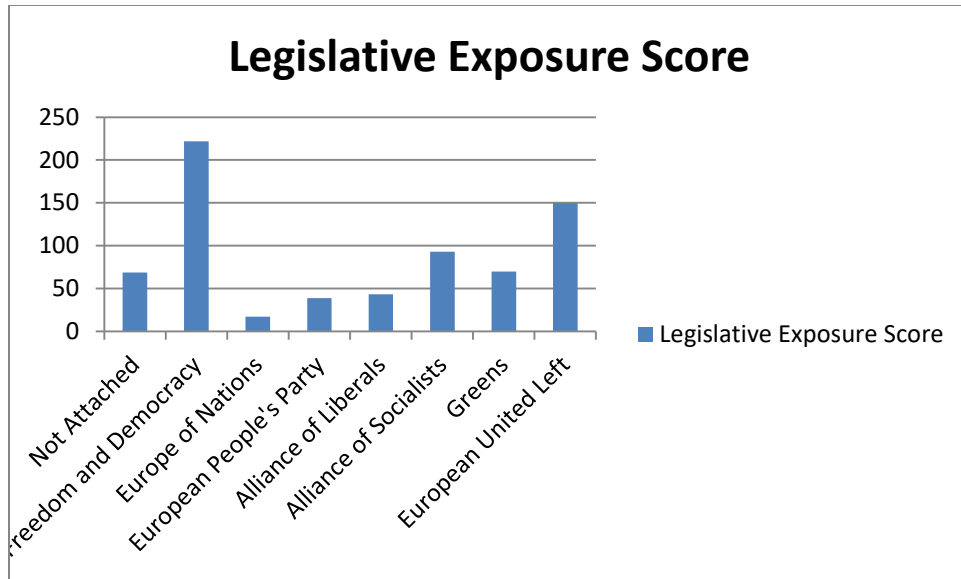


Figure 3.2: LE Score by EP Group

Further supporting H 3.2, LE scores take into account each party’s number of MEPs, and they combine EP questions and attendance rates. Ergo, it is safe to compare each EP party group’s mean LE score across groups regardless of how many MEPs happen to be members of any specific EP party group. The Freedom and Democracy group’s mean LE score is quadruple that of the Not-Attached. While the Not-Attached parties may pose a higher number of written EP questions per MEP than the Freedom and Democracy parties, they do not attend plenary sessions at nearly the frequency of the Freedom and Democracy MEPs. They appear to be phoning it in rather than participating in EP debate. Attendance matters, and because I have already shown

that Not-Attached parties routinely underperform in EP elections, this captures a difference between similarly-placed ideological eurosceptics.

The next step in testing Hypothesis 3.2 is to include a dependent variable in order to observe whether the differences between EP party groups is a possible explanation for why the Not-Attached regularly fail to achieve their second-order election boosts. In table 3, a correlation matrix is used to see if LE scores are positively correlated with EP groups that have been known to be loud and obnoxious within the EP. If there is a positive correlation with these EP groups, then LE scores are measuring what they are intended to be measuring, which is how much exposure a party can potentially receive from their legislative behavior.

Overall, LE scores are very weakly correlated for most of the niche EP party groups, and are essentially not correlated for the mainstream EP party groups. There is still, however, some value to be had in Table 3.3. The highlighted LE score correlations show positive, though very weak, correlations for the two loudest and typically most disruptive EP party groups: Freedom and Democracy and the Nordic Greens. Of note here is that this captures only the 6th EP session from 2004 to 2009.

	Left-Right Score	Legislative Exposure Score	EP Attendance Rate	Number of EP Questions Posed
Left-Right Score	1.0000			
Party MEP Public Exposure Score	-0.0722	1.0000		
EP Attendance Rate	-0.1239	0.0925	1.0000	
Number of EP Questions Posed	0.1516	0.3485	-0.2014	1.0000
Not Attached Group	0.4139	-0.0159	-0.2775	-0.0544
Europe of Freedom Group	0.3239	0.1390	-0.2511	0.1985
Conservative Reformers Group	0.2451	-0.0834	-0.0889	0.0701
Nordic Greens Group	-0.5066	0.2288	-0.1967	-0.0438
Group Greens	-0.4067	-0.0262	-0.1573	-0.1773
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats	0.2199	-0.0943	0.0929	-0.0955
European People's Group	0.3300	-0.1328	0.2270	0.0629
Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	-0.3008	0.0141	0.0599	0.0574

N=64

Table 3.3: Correlation Matrix of EP Activity and EP Party Group

While a strongly positive correlation for the loudest EP party groups would have been optimal, Table 3 contributes additional evidence of the differences in legislative behavior between eurosceptic EP party groups. The final step of testing Hypothesis 3.2, which states that LE scores will be positively correlated with change in vote share, is to include the dependent variable. In Figures 3.3 through 3.6, I compare scatter plots for each of the niche EP party groups, though, of course, the emphasis is on the differences between the eurosceptic Not-Attached and Freedom and Democracy EP party groups.

In Figures 3.3 and 3.4, I compare Freedom and Democracy parties and Not-Attached parties. LE scores are from 2004-2009, and the change in vote share is from the 2009 EP

election. While LE scores were not strongly correlated in the correlation matrix, by using a descriptive scatter plot it is noted that no Freedom and Democracy parties underperformed in the 2009 EP election. The inverse is true for the Not-Attached parties of whom none over performed in the 2009 EP election.

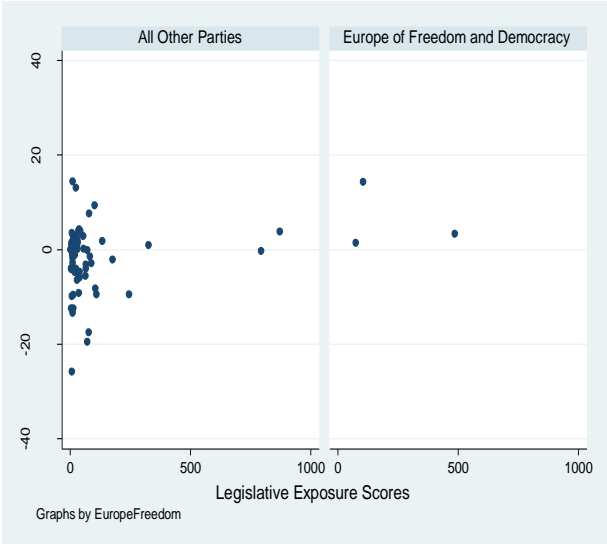


Figure 3.3: Two-Way Plot

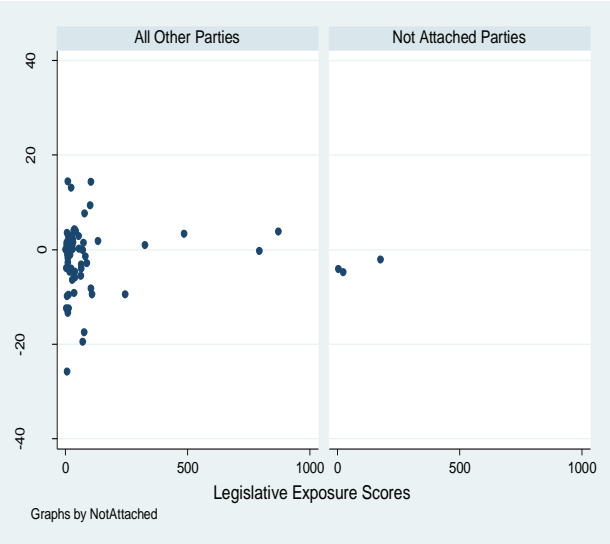


Figure 3.4: Two-Way Plot

Moreover, all of the Freedom and Democracy parties had scores higher than the cluster of the *All Other Parties*. Meanwhile, two out of the three Not-Attached eurosceptic parties had LE scores that would place them within the cluster of the *All Other Parties*.

I include scatter plots of the Nordic Greens and the Greens in Figures 4 and 5 in order to capture any phenomenon that might exist across niche EP party groups. For these parties there is no obvious connection between over performing in EP elections and elevated LE scores. While the Nordic Greens are clearly more vocal and make their presence known more than do the environmentally-minded Greens, they do not appear to gain any electoral advantage by doing so.

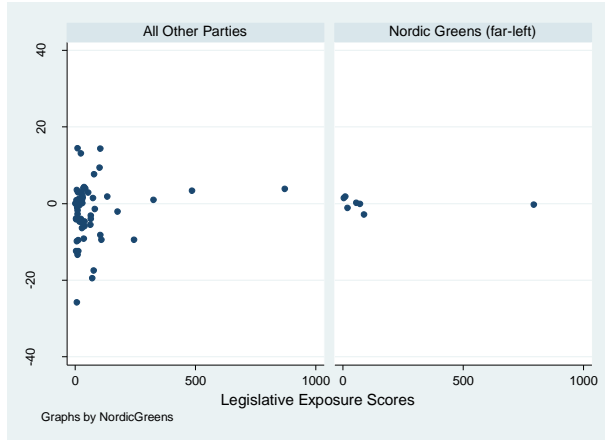


Figure 3.5: Two-Way Plot

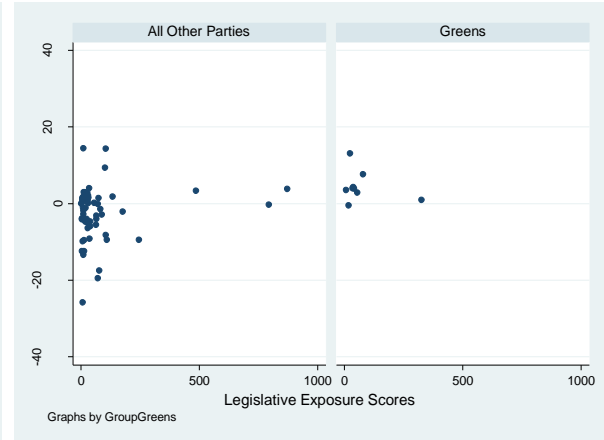


Figure 3.6: Two-Way Plot

When the leftist EP party groups are contrasted with the right-wing eurosceptic groups, there appears to be an ideological component at play, as well. Freedom and Democracy parties have higher LE scores than do the Nordic Green parties, but the Communists are the second loudest EP group, and they did not benefit from this during the 2009 EP election like the Freedom and Democracy parties did.

Hypotheses 3.1A, B, and C are all supported by the evidence. Not-Attached parties do worse in EP elections than do the Freedom and Democracy parties. Not-Attached parties are also less frequently involved in EP legislative activities than Freedom and Democracy parties as seen with their much lower mean LE scores. Thus, there is ample empirical support for all 3.1 hypotheses.

For Hypothesis 3.2, the results confirm that there is a difference in EP legislative behavior between the EP groups. Furthermore, this is a possible explanation for the difference between underperforming and over performing eurosceptics. I find evidence that indicates that an elevated LE score results in over performance by all Freedom and Democracy parties, and a lower LE score results in under performance by most of the Not-Attached parties.

Hypothesis 3.3A is supported in that LE scores are weakly, but positively correlated to positive changes in vote share for eurosceptic parties. However, the Not-Attached *Vlaams Blok* managed to have an elevated LE score (176.7) while under performing by 2.15 percentage points in the 2009 EP election.

Lastly, there is strong support for Hypothesis 3.3B. While it cannot be said that an elevated LE score is sufficient for over performing in the 2009 EP elections, it can be said that it was necessary to have an elevated LE score to over perform in the 2009 EP elections for eurosceptic parties.

Discussion

Looking beyond the 2009 EP elections, a handful of parties tend to be driving the Not-Attached group's under performance: the FPO, the FN, and the *Jobbiks*. To a lesser extent, historically the *Vlaams Blok* and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* also have underperformed, but not to the same extent as the former parties. The FPO underperformed in the 2004 and 2009 EP elections by an average of 4.28 percentage points, while the FN underperformed by 2.97 percentage points over the time period 1986 to 2009. It is worth noting that in general these parties are not included in governments, but in the FPO's case this was actually a party in a governing coalition from 2000 to 2003. The *Jobbik* party appears to be following the path of the FPO and FN, but because Hungary only joined the EU in 2004 they have not had the same effect of pulling down the Not-Attached party group's change in vote share to the extent that the FPO and FN have had. They do, however, fit the FPO and FN mold very well, and it would be expected that they will continue to underperform rather badly in future EP elections.

In addition to the *Vlaams Blok* and *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, there are Eastern European eurosceptics that could be heading in the same direction of minor underperformers. *Solidarna*

Polska and *Partidul Romania Mare* are in a state of transition, and unlike the *Jobbiks*, these eurosceptics could mold themselves after UKIP rather than the Not-Attached eurosceptics. Time will tell how these parties behave and evolve.

Interestingly, neither the FN nor the FPO were originally anti-EU (Topaloff 2012). Their populism, however, led them to take harder stances against Brussels over the years. Whether these were strategic decisions at the outset taken in order to establish political policy space where available (Hug 2001), the behavior of voters to partake in compensatory voting (Kedar 2009), or the idea that they would benefit from adopting a hard anti-EU position and subsequently not waver from that position (Adams et al. 2006) is difficult to ascertain. Logically, though, if they intentionally constructed a more anti-EU party platform to tap into EU voter malaise, then they would be capable of re-establishing themselves as more vocal opponents of the EU in the EP. In fact, a case-study on the FN under the leadership of Marine Le Pen suggests that they have done just that leading up to the 2014 EP election.

Public opinion is intrinsically linked to any study of euroscepticism. The EU has had notoriously low approval ratings in the UK, and in Austria only 37% declared the EU to be “a good thing” in 2008, which contrasts with the EU-wide average of 53% (Fallend 2008). It seems like the FPO is clearly deficient in maximizing its anti-EU ideology in the way that UKIP is able to do so. As voter antipathy toward the EU passes an abstract threshold, eurosceptic parties must become even more public in their anti-EU legislative behavior to capture their supporters’ votes. At some point, if eurosceptic voters’ disdain for the EU becomes so ingrained that they do not even bother to vote in EP elections, then eurosceptic parties such as the FPO or FN will be forced to either accept a lower EP vote share than what would be predicted for them, or change their behavior and signal to their party loyalists that they will actively combat the EU from

within. These underperforming eurosceptics need to position themselves in political spaces to capture the anti-EU vote that the electorate is perceiving as being ignored by their country's mainstream parties (Adams et al. 2006; Hobolt et al. 2008; Maier et al. 2012). Similar to Green parties that maximize their vote share by emphasizing their bona fides to those voters who are weary of some of the environmental policies of the mainstream parties (Hix and Marsh 2007; Hobolt and Spoon 2012), Not-Attached eurosceptics must tap into what center-right mainstream parties are perceived to be ignoring. *Sincere voting* is not a phenomenon of solely the left. Accordingly, anti-EU parties could recognize this electoral opportunity to siphon off voters from mainstream parties, and they would do so via sending cues and signals to let voters know that their party elites strongly will oppose Brussels if elected (Hooghe 2007).

Conclusion

Subsequent chapters will expand upon the findings introduced in this chapter. One of the more problematic aspects for this chapter is the lack of total EP elections and the relatively short EP tenure for many Eastern European parties. Not much can be done to remedy this in the short-term, but in the years to come future studies will be able to revisit the issue of why some eurosceptics fail to perform as what would be predicted of them. For this reason, there are two general suggestions for future replication of this chapter's models.

First, with each new election cycle, both domestic elections and EP ones, there will be dozens of additional observations by which to analyze how certain parties perform both in their domestic first-order elections and in EP ones. It is not only more elections that will add to the data set, though, because a handful of parties are just now starting to contest elections independently of their former party from which they splintered due to policy differences.

Solidarna Polska, for instance, split from the mainstream anti-EU party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*

after the 2009 EP elections. It remains to be seen if they will continue to be a stand-alone party, and if so, how effective they will be in Polish and EP elections. With the luxury of future EP election results, we will be able more accurately to test this chapter's hypotheses with the additional data.

Second, as more research is conducted on euroscepticism the literature continuously grows. While macro data, like what are used in the this chapter, show the two ends of the party-election relationship, micro data can complement the research literature by uncovering how eurosceptic parties make internal decisions. If, for example, Marine Le Pen has explicitly recommended a new legislative approach to the EP, then we can say that the FN is consciously adopting new strategies. This type of research helps to overcome the ecological issues that arise when doing macro data research. But again, time is able to fix much of this as more and more researchers focus their attention on eurosceptic parties and the EP.

Still, this chapter's hypotheses are generally supported. In Table 3.4, I provide a summary of support for each of the hypotheses. In cases where there is only partial support for a hypothesis, I provide an explanation for the cases in which the hypothesis did not hold.

Hypothesis	Predicted Outcome	Actual Outcome	Explanation
H 3.1A: Parties within the eurosceptic Not-Attached EP group will not realize the second-order election boost.	+	Supported	Not Attached Eurosceptics under performed in 16 out of 22 EP elections.
H3.1B: The eurosceptic Freedom and Democracy EP group parties will realize a second order election boost.	+	Supported	These Eurosceptic parties over performed in 9 out of 11 EP elections.
H3.1C: Not-Attached parties will do less well than other niche-party dominated EP groups (Nordic Greens and Greens).	+	Supported	Both EP Party Groups, Nordic Greens and Greens, generally over perform in EP elections. Not-Attached Party Group does not.
H3.2: The eurosceptic Freedom and Democracy EP group will be more active in the EP than will the eurosceptic Not-Attached EP group.	+	Supported	Freedom and Democracy parties have, on average, a Legislative Exposure score that is 4 times greater than Not-Attached parties.
H3.3A: Eurosceptic parties <i>Legislative Exposure Score</i> will be positively correlated with electoral performance in EP elections.	+	Partially Supported	For some eurosceptic parties this was true (UKIP, FN), for others this was false (Dutch Freedom Party, True Finns).
H3.3 B: An elevated <i>Legislative Exposure Score</i> is a necessary condition for a eurosceptic party to over perform in EP elections.	+	Partially Supported	Did not hold for all parties. Dutch Freedom Party over-performed with low LE Score, Slovak National Party underperformed with higher LE Score.

Table 3.4: Hypothesis Summary

In Chapter 4, I attempt to address the ecological issues of this chapter as best I can. I posit that it is via the media that engaged eurosceptics are able to signal to their party loyalists that they are worth their vote. This includes all forms of media including print, television, and social media. Voters are not present in Brussels or Strasbourg to observe how their MEPs behave, but if MEPs are able to arouse enough media attention to broadcast what they are doing to combat the EU, or even simply being sufficiently obnoxious and disrespectful, their EP legislative behavior lives on

long past the couple of minutes they took to produce it. This chapter covered the *bookends* of this topic, but the next chapter will attempt to explain what transpires in between the two book covers.

Chapter IV

The Link between MEPs, the EP, Parties, and Voters

“Mr. Verhofstadt, I know that by heckling you increase your hits on Youtube because otherwise nobody in Europe wants to listen to you.”

-Nigel Farage, EP debate on 11 March 2015 in Strasbourg.

Abstract

There is an inherent ecological issue that arises out of Chapter 3’s findings. Non-strategic eurosceptic parties generally underperform in EP elections, but how are EP voters made aware of whether a hard eurosceptic party is engaged within the EP? In this chapter, I show that the media, both social and traditional, play the role of the link between parties and voters. There is a strong link between how active parties are within the EP and how many media hits they receive. There is also a strong link between the media and voters due to the very high levels of media consumption that the public has. When combined, the findings of this chapter explain the process that leads to the electoral findings in Chapter 3.

Introduction

When a eurosceptic Member of the European Parliament (MEP) decides to take the floor in Strasbourg and delivers a blistering critique of the EU and the European project as a whole, it is more than simply articulating a principled argument. In the modern political arena, public speeches can be instantaneously broadcast throughout Europe. Soon after these speeches appear on social media sites where they will be viewed millions of times. By engaging in public grandstanding, eurosceptic parties are able to reach EP voters in a low-cost, high-reward scenario to reinforce public notions that not only will these parties run campaigns opposing EU expansion and integration, but they will actively fight the beast from within its own institutions. By creating these signals to voters, eurosceptic parties establish an information link between their EP legislative behavior and the EP voting public.

A common issue that arises when researchers have macro-level electoral findings is whether there is evidence of the same phenomenon at the micro-level. The ecological fallacy issue is an important one to overcome, since EP voters will need to be *aware* that they are *aware* of what transpires within the EU and in particular the EP. Conversely, if survey data say that Europeans pay no attention to what occurs in Brussels or Strasbourg and that they do not know what goes on in EU, then eurosceptic public grandstanding would not be able to have any EP electoral effect. Even if macro-level findings suggest otherwise, there will always be concerns that the relationship is a spurious one if no corroborating micro-level data can be found.

While the general public can be routinely misled about the factual events within the EU and EP (Tilley and Hobolt 2011; Hobolt and Tilley 2014), public grandstanding within the EP provides clear evidence of whether a eurosceptic party is engaged. Moreover, since eurosceptic voters would prefer a weakening of the EU, they would not be likely to punish a eurosceptic party for being bellicose in its EP speeches or obnoxious when addressing high-ranking EU officials. There are ecological issues, however, that arise when explaining the link between EP legislative behavior and EP voters. While I cannot directly test the link between EP voters and parties' EP legislative behavior, I can demonstrate a very large amount of circumstantial evidence that supports the media's role as the central link between voters and parties. I do this by establishing the direct link between parties' EP legislative behavior and the amount of media coverage they receive, and by also establishing the direct link between media outlets and the amount of media consumption by individuals. In doing so, I address the inherent ecological fallacy issues that are products of my Chapter 3 findings.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, the ecological fallacy issue is discussed in more detail, and why it is important to provide empirical evidence that voters consider

themselves to be informed about EU and EP issues. Moreover, additional corroborating evidence that actively engaged eurosceptic parties believe that public grandstanding is an effective method to convey to voters their opposition to the EU is addressed. Second, the link between parties and the media, and the media and voters is presented. Eurosceptic parties are able to maximize their campaigning utility by making their EP speeches readily available for voters to watch, via both social and traditional media coverage of recent episodes of public grandstanding.

Third, I outline the importance of being legislatively engaged for parties within the EP. Additionally, I explain why I would predict hard eurosceptics to behave differently from mainstream parties, and I diagram how my theory places the media as the central link between parties and voters. I also introduce my hypotheses in this section. In the fourth section, I give a detailed explanation of my data and how they were collected.

I present my findings in the fifth section of this chapter. I argue that outspoken eurosceptic parties are rational and strategic in their behavior even if they do, at times, let their emotions take control of their legislative behavior. This is strategic because higher levels of EP legislative engagement leads to higher levels of media coverage. Higher levels in media coverage, in turn, provides for more media consumption by individuals. There is a clear electoral advantage to behaving in such a way, and based upon how some eurosceptics market and publicize themselves on social media accounts, they are making conscious efforts to portray to voters that they are a legislatively engaged party worth supporting in EP elections.

Lastly, I make some closing statements regarding both this chapter and how it concludes my overall argument in conjunction with chapters two and three. This chapter provides an explanation for the middle ground between parties and MEPs in the EP and the voters in their respective EU member states. Via media exposure, eurosceptic parties are enabled to signal

directly to their supporters that they are a party that will make good on their campaign promises rather than to abstain from EP legislative participation. This low-cost, high-reward practice can help to explain why eurosceptic parties have become more electorally powerful than ever before within the EP.

The Ecological Fallacy Issue

Ecological fallacy issues arise when inferences about micro-level behavior or motives are inferred from macro-level evidence. This gap between the macro and micro levels can lead to invalid conclusions that are not supported by empirical evidence. Research on elections, parties, and voters are confronted with this issue because they incorporate electoral results with inherently micro-level voting implications that may not be borne out by survey data. In other words, statistically significant findings can be had when aggregating all voters into variables such as electoral results or economic indicators, but when asked directly if certain issues played a role in deciding for whom to vote, individuals may give answers that do not corroborate the macro-level findings.

This is the case when attempting to present an explanation for eurosceptic parties' over or underperformance in EP elections. Voting is naturally a micro-level activity, but when aggregated these votes lead to macro-level political phenomena such as an electoral difference between over performing and underperforming eurosceptic parties in EP elections that should result in similar outcomes for all eurosceptic parties. I posit that an explanation for this occurrence can be traced to how legislatively engaged a eurosceptic party is within the EP, and this information is transmitted via media outlets to voters who, in turn, reward eurosceptic parties who participate and punish those parties that abstain.

Researchers on economic voting have had to address ecological fallacy issues repeatedly over the years. Traditionally, economic voting research has used *incumbent vote share* as its dependent variable and *economic indicators* as the causal variables (see Kramer 1983; Eulau and Lewis-Beck 1984; Stubager et al 2014). The argument is then supported using micro-level survey data in which voters indicate that their perception of the economic performance of their country has had an effect on whether to support the current regime or to throw their support behind the opposition. In a similar fashion, I adapt the economic voting approach to my research on eurosceptic parties' over or underperformance in order to explain the middle ground in between macro-level electoral findings and micro-level evidence that supports the notion that voters perceive themselves as aware of what takes place at the EU-level.

There are two advantages to turning to economic voting as a research *blueprint*. First, it is an established body of literature that has endured decades' worth of criticism and critique. Rather than to try to reinvent the wheel, it is much more efficient to mimic an established research agenda that is confronted by the same ecological fallacy issues. Second, my research is very closely aligned with the research design often used in economic voting literature. This dissertation's most important dependent variable is the *change in vote share* between national parliamentary elections and EP elections, and my independent variable of interest is *legislative behavior*. While economic voting uses economic indicators to explain a particular electoral outcome, I employ legislative-engagement indicators to explain a different particular electoral outcome. As such, economic voting literature provides an applicable approach in dealing with the problematic issues arising whenever macro and micro level data are used to explain a political phenomenon.

For this chapter, I attempt to mitigate ecological fallacy concerns regarding my main empirical findings from chapter 3 by presenting numerous examples of MEPs believing their legislative behavior helps them with public exposure and by voters claiming that they pay attention. Furthermore, by tracking media hits following outspoken legislative activities I demonstrate that the media-link is the most likely avenue by which EP legislative activity is conveyed to the general public. While using research approaches from economic voting literature as a general guide to addressing this problem, I go further than simply including survey data that support my claims. Using a multilayered approach, albeit circumstantial, my aim is remove most doubts about whether the findings I have at the macro-level are undermined by findings at the micro-level.

I contend that if voters claim themselves to be informed about EU and EP issues, and the macro-level findings also indicate that legislatively-engaged eurosceptic parties are rewarded by voters while those eurosceptic parties that abstain are not, then the ecological fallacy issue has been dealt with as best it can be. I complement this *leap of faith* by tracking media hits to demonstrate that the mechanism for voters to pay attention to EU and EP affairs exists. Moreover, via experimental research, there is additional support for this general argument in that EP voters appear to be willing to reward engaged political parties even in second-order elections (see Hix and Marsh 2011; Hobolt and Wittrock 2011; Hobolt and Spoon 2012). My goal is to provide enough circumstantial evidence that there is not likely to be any substantive issues with my main empirical findings that eurosceptic over or underperformance in EP elections can be explained by EP legislative behavior and that any ecological critique is minimized.

Establishing the Link between MEPs and Voters

There has been much research devoted to explaining why and how voters decide whether to cast a vote and for whom. I rely on these findings to help make my case that there are not any ecological fallacy problems that would undermine my macro-level findings that EP legislative behavior, indeed, has an electoral effect on eurosceptic parties contesting EP elections. This requires that various *act of voting* aspects are covered that include: media and campaigning, voter choice changes, party messaging, and research on extreme right parties and campaigns, among others.

At the micro-level, if voters can be shown to be flexible in which party they intend to support given new information, and that they pay attention to information about parliamentary behavior, then a eurosceptic's incentives for disseminating their parliamentary behavior in Brussels and Strasbourg becomes stronger. This conveyance of EP legislative behavior is new information that can affect a voter's decision to support a strongly eurosceptic party, particularly if the voter already has some degree of euroscepticism and decides that since the EP is a second-order election little is lost by abandoning the preferred mainstream party in preference of a niche eurosceptic one. For those voters who are already fully loyal to a niche eurosceptic party even in first-order parliamentary elections then the widespread dissemination of EP legislative behavior can act as a reinforcement mechanism that their support is not wasted on a niche eurosceptic party that will not fulfill campaign promises to fight the EU from within.

There is experimental evidence that voters can be swayed by new information in hypothetical EP elections. Hobolt and Wittrock (2011) observed that a number of factors influence an EP voter's decision to cast a vote for a particular party in EP elections. Using a spatial model framework and an experimental research design, they were able to test several

related hypotheses concerning what aspects affect an individual's decision to support one party over others. While dissatisfaction with the national governing party played a key role for voters to support oppositional parties, they found strong support for *informational* treatments that informed the voter of parties' positions concerning EU enlargement. This treatment had an effect by informing the voter more precisely of where a party is located ideologically, which they would then compare to their own policy preferences. It is entirely intuitive that the more voters know about party ideology and policy preferences the more likely they are to switch their loyalty to another party that more closely represents their own policy preferences. Were this not to be the case, eurosceptic niche parties such as UKIP or Danish People's Party would find the task of drawing voters away from center-right mainstream parties much more difficult. Furthermore, media and social media exposure of anti-EU legislative behavior allows smaller niche parties to spread their message and further inform eurosceptic voters that there is a viable alternative to mainstream parties that are only slightly eurosceptic.

That niche parties can appeal directly to EP voters has not been lost on the parties themselves. Moreover, this is particularly the case with when the public in many EU member states are becoming increasingly Eurosceptic and when they are seeking out whom to blame for financial meltdowns and other crises. Hobolt and Tilley (2014) find that the EU public is increasingly ready to blame the EU for negative developments in their home country. In essence, the EU has become a whipping boy for European crises whether it has played a hand in their creation or not. A likely consequence of national governing parties seeking to shift blame away from themselves is that EU citizens are now more comfortable than ever to blame the EU for their problems. This, in turn, results in higher levels of euroscepticism. Naturally, this phenomenon of blaming the EU both when it does, and when it does not, play a hand in a

European crisis aids eurosceptic niche parties that are all too willing cast the EU as a straw man. Political opportunism suggests that niche parties can successfully campaign and craft their messages to seize on this situation of increasing hostility towards the EU.

In other research on campaigning and political communication in EP elections, it has become clear that parties are seeking a more prominent online presence (see Rodriguez and Madariaga 2016). Anecdotally, the drive to run up online *hits* also appears to be a motivating factor in EP legislative behavior and speech as was alluded to in the quote that begins this chapter. Clearly, Nigel Farage was aware that the more combative an EP speech becomes, the higher the number of Youtube or Facebook views that speech will receive. He goes further by directly accusing Guy Verhofstadt, prominent member of the staunchly pro-EU Liberal group, of heckling him solely for the purposes of increasing the Belgian MEP's online views. Undoubtedly, both Farage and Verhofstadt were acting deliberately in a fashion that would lead to a more combative and vitriolic Youtube video that they could then broadcast to their supporters as evidence of their efforts in the EP to further their political goals and ideology.

Beyond EP elections, research into political *messaging* has been investigated by numerous scholars (see Vavreck 2009; Bullock 2011). Focusing on US presidential elections, Vavreck (2009) finds that even in the light of economic determinants of the vote, political communication and messaging also play a central role. While Vavreck was looking at US elections in which there are essentially only two parties competing, her thesis can be applied to multiparty PR elections. Furthermore, and particularly in the 21st century, social media messaging has become a very efficient way of campaigning and solidifying a party or politician's loyal following. By engaging in over-the-top EP legislative behavior, eurosceptic MEPs can seek to capture higher levels of media exposure simply via their political messaging. In fact, the more

hyperbolic the message, the better chance they have of producing low-cost information conveyance to their potential supporters as well as their party loyalists.

Data on Europeans' media exposure demonstrate that public grandstanding is in a eurosceptic party's best electoral interests. Europeans self-identify as rabid media consumers, both traditional (newspapers, television) and social (online newsources). According to Eurobarometer data, Europeans not only consume media, but they feel that the information they receive informs them about EU affairs. Should an EP voter already be partisan, which would likely be the case with most voters, then media exposure resulting directly from recent EP legislative grandstanding would be a quick and efficient way for a niche party to reach a broader audience while solidifying its base supporters.

Investigating why the polling during the run-up to the 2015 British General Election missed the mark, Melon and Prosser (2016) note that UKIP voter support dropped by just over 1 percentage point from those who stated their intentions to vote for a UKIP candidate and those who actually did vote for a UKIP candidate. While their research project was focused on weighting issues with online polling in the UK, they add to the evidence that hard eurosceptic voters can be a fickle bunch when it comes to casting actual votes. Arguably, the optimal way of addressing a voting bloc that is prone to abstention is regularly to remind them of the importance of casting a vote in EP elections. By increasing the number of social media hits or UKIP mentions in British media outlets can serve to motivate eurosceptic voters by reinforcing the perception that UKIP and its MEPs are actively promoting eurosceptic ideas within the EP.

Further research into the emergence of the extreme right is covered in Norris' *Radical Right* (2005). Using data from the European Social Survey and the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, she is able to test *New Social Cleavages* hypotheses. *New Social Cleavages*

(see Anderson and Bjorklund 1991; Betz 1994; Ignazi 2003) refers to the notion that particularly the center-left mainstream parties left many manual and semi-skilled laborers, as well as petit-bourgeoisie, feeling left abandoned during periods of deindustrialization. As such, this group of previously loyal Labour or Socialist party members began to reevaluate their political support in the face of economic downturn with concurrent waves of immigration. From a demand-side understanding of party emergence, a new social cleavage based on animosity to immigration and hostility towards deindustrialization provided the necessary voter numbers to allow extreme right parties to emerge electorally. Norris finds supporting evidence that certain socio-economic characteristics have a statistically significant effect on one's support for an extreme right party; in particular if one is either an unskilled or semi-skilled worker (Norris 2005, 138). It should come as no surprise, then, that eurosceptic parties would seek to capitalize on this newly-marginalized voting bloc. Moreover, this is a voting bloc that is used to following radio, print, and television media due to their previous union affiliations, type of industry¹⁶, and typically deep roots in the local community. If a eurosceptic party is able to achieve higher levels of media coverage due to its engaged EP legislative behavior, they will be in a prime position to mobilize this new social cleavage.

Research focused largely on the French FN, which includes micro-level interview and survey data, helps to further understand why eurosceptic MEPs and their parties can benefit electorally by engaging in outspoken EP legislative behavior. Stockemer (2014) found that FN activists come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, vary in levels of activist experience, but are united in certain far-right ideologies. Furthermore, Stockemer (2015) finds that FN popular support has only be augmented by the change in leadership that replaced Jean-

¹⁶ Shopkeepers interact with the local population on a daily basis, and therefore routine conversations will lead to a higher level of awareness and perceived injustices faced by the former center-left voting bloc.

Marie Le Pen with Marine Le Pen, who has ushered in a more media-savvy approach to politics and campaigning. Lastly, using European Social Survey Stockemer (2016) finds that it is the *perception* of high levels of immigration rather than the *actual* levels of immigration that drive much of the electoral support for extreme right-wing parties in Europe. Additional research has also found that perception is a stronger indicator of voter motivation than actual levels of socio-economic or demographical phenomena (see Hetherington 1996; Hester and Gibson 2003; Evans and Andersen 2006; Tilley et al 2008). If perception does trump reality, then an optimal way to affect the public's perception of the EU is to create direct sound bites, video, and media hits of eurosceptic MEPs bashing the EU from within the EP. By appealing directly to EP voters, a eurosceptic party can reinforce party loyalty and excitement. It does not matter that even with all the eurosceptic EP party groups combined there still is not nearly enough EP votes to pass any eurosceptic legislation. What matters is the popular perception that parties such as UKIP, the French FN, and others are able to create that leads eurosceptic EP voters to believe that more is being accomplished legislatively than is actually the case.

While there continues to be growth in the literature dealing with euroscepticism and global populism, this is a political phenomenon that is still disproportionately under-researched when compared to other subfields in the discipline. Particularly with the recent growth of right-wing populism and euroscepticism within the EU, this is a political development that shows no signs of slowing down in the foreseeable future.

The Importance of Strategic EP Legislative Engagement, The Media, and The Voters

Recalling back to Chapter 3, the question this dissertation seeks to answer is *why* some eurosceptic parties over perform in EP elections while others do not. The first step was to

demonstrate that underperforming eurosceptic parties actually existed in the first place. This was covered in Chapter 3, but to refresh what was established previously Not-Attached eurosceptic parties have generally underperformed in EP elections relative to their electoral performances in the previous national parliamentary elections as measured by vote share. Conversely, those eurosceptic parties that joined an EP party group such as Freedom and Democracy generally overperformed in EP elections. These contrasting electoral results require explanation because the literature would predict that eurosceptic niche parties would typically over perform in EP elections, and the existence of multiple parties of this type that are underperforming run counter to what the literature would predict. So, what explains the difference between the over performing and underperforming eurosceptic parties?

The most obvious difference between these two groups of eurosceptic parties is that while the over performers tend to be engaged legislatively in the EP, the underperformers generally are not. While this difference in EP legislative behavior can be observed on both ends of the electoral-legislative process, I have not yet fully explained and tested the mechanism that connects the electoral results and the amount of EP legislative engagement. At this point, I have sold the sausage and had it produced in the butchers, but I have not yet accounted for what goes into making the sausage; a rather vital part of the total equation. Chapter 4 seeks to accomplish this by demonstrating that via traditional and social media exposure eurosceptic parties and MEPs are able to connect to the eurosceptic voting bloc in their country.

I previously touched upon the myriad research that have demonstrated why EP legislative behavior could be used to strengthen a eurosceptic party's standing with its base core of supporters. Voters claim to be informed and open to information about what transpires in politics. That being the case, I posit that when eurosceptic MEPs engage in anti-EU rhetoric from

the EP's floor that it lends itself to widespread dissemination via social and traditional media outlets. This is how an outspoken MEP can essentially speak directly to EP voters. The issue then becomes how to measure EP legislative behavior and the subsequent link via the media to reach EP voters. The first step in solving this is to establish that individuals consume such a massive amount of media that it can be easily inferred that they will learn of political events occurring at the EU and EP level.

I rely on survey data that indicate whether EU citizens perceive themselves as being aware of what occurs within the EU and the EP. On a positive note, there exist numerous ways of capturing how people become informed. First, one can look at media consumption. The higher the level of media consumption, the higher a person likely perceives himself to be informed. Second, using Eurobarometer survey data I can observe directly how much of the EU population perceive themselves to be informed. Third, the number of times a Youtube video has been watched, or the number of *likes* a Facebook party page receives, is easily obtained. While these particular numbers do not indicate the geographic location of the viewer, and thus his or her eligibility to vote for that particular eurosceptic party, it does provide a general idea of how wide the breadth a particular party has in disseminating its own information directly to EP voters. The more informed a population perceives itself to be, the higher the number of hits a Youtube video has, and the higher the number of *likes* a party's Facebook page receives the better the chance that a eurosceptic party has of using its EP legislative behavior as a campaigning tool to reinforce party support amongst its loyalists. Thus, the more support there is that it is in a eurosceptic party's best interest to be fully engaged within the EP because what occurs in Brussels or Strasbourg can easily reach the very voters a eurosceptic party seeks to attract come EP election time.

H4.1: The public consumes sufficient levels of media outlets to be informed of political developments and issues related to the EU.

H4.2: Parties will prominently display their EP legislative behavior on Facebook and Youtube.

H4.3: Parties on the extreme left and right will have a disproportionate amount, relative to seat share, of social media presence as compared to mainstream parties.

In Chapter 3, I adopted a rather straight-forward operationalization of EP legislative engagement. By calculating how many EP questions a party's MEPs submitted and combining that with how often a party's MEPs were present during EP plenary session, I introduced an index score for each party in the EP. I call this index score an *LE Score* (Legislative Engagement Score). The next step, however, is to operationalize how to measure media exposure a party receives. I do this in two ways: Social Media (Youtube, Facebook, and Twitter), and Traditional Media (Newspapers and Television). These media hits are how I suggest that a party's media exposure, and the population's media consumption, can be measured.

When a eurosceptic party is more engaged in EP legislative behavior I predict that the media will pay more attention, which will directly lead to eurosceptic EP voters being reminded that it is worth their time and effort to cast an EP vote for an engaged eurosceptic party in their country if one exists. Conversely, if a eurosceptic party largely abstains from EP legislative engagement the media will not cover it as often as they would if the party were to be actively engaging the EP. This, in turn, has an effect on the eurosceptic voting bloc in that party's country by not reminding them that it is important to support their preferred party in EP elections.

I propose that total amounts of media hits is the best available option for measuring media consumption. Without access to Youtube or Facebook analytics, it is impossible to isolate media hits that occur only from within EU member states. Furthermore, geographically locating

eurosceptic party media hits solely from the EU member state in which it competes is not feasible.¹⁷ Still, the raw number of times a eurosceptic party's video of an impassioned anti-EU speech on the floor of the EP will indicate a general level of how widespread the dissemination of its EP legislative behavior is being viewed. By focusing on the data from the EP party group level, I am able to identify patterns of media exposure resulting from EP legislative behavior. As such, here is the first group of hypotheses:

H 4.4: Total amount of all EP questions posed is positively correlated with media hits at the EP party group level.

H4.5: Eurosceptic parties, as well as far left parties, will receive a disproportionate amount of media coverage and exposure.

Diagram 4.1 illustrates the predicted relationship between EP legislative engagement, media coverage, and EP voter support. This is also a visualization of how all five hypotheses are interconnected. Note that the entire relationship is also predicted to be self-reinforcing, in that the more a eurosceptic party is engaged the better they do electorally, which then creates momentum to continue to partake in EP activities and to continue to receive media attention for doing so. This, then, leads to higher levels of eurosceptic voter mobilization, and over time these anti-EU voters become used to casting votes in EP elections.

¹⁷ The process is quite complicated for obtaining data from Facebook or Youtube. In some cases, third parties offer some data services, but the pricing tends to be quite expensive and there are criticisms of the validity of the data.

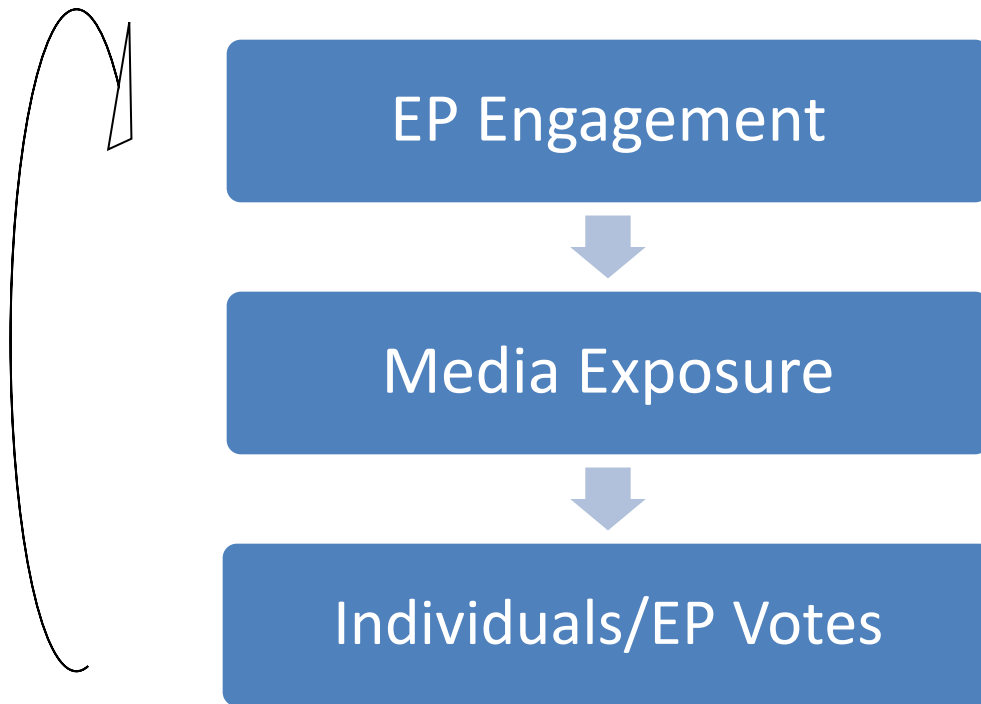


Diagram 4.1: Model of EP Engagement and Electoral Success

The notion that this process is self-reinforcing is because as parties and MEPs notice that they are receiving more social or traditional media hits when they attack the EU and/or the EP directly via questions, they will intuitively seek to continue to engage in such behavior. Over time, they will also notice that they do better electorally as a result of their increased levels of media exposure, which will reinforce the notion that they remain engaged within the EP, and that their party loyalists and core constituents will construct a pattern of casting votes in EP elections, which it is to be remembered are elections to the parliament of a polity that they do not generally think should exist in the first place.

Data and Methods

For the first group of hypotheses, I focus on the link between the media and individuals. In order for this relationship to function, there must be widespread dissemination of information from the media to the voters, but there must also be a population that consumes what the media are

producing. Furthermore, EP voters will also need to be sufficiently informed about the EU, its processes, and recent developments emanating from Brussels, Strasbourg, and even Luxembourg City. In other words, if nobody is paying attention, then it does not matter how much information is flowing from social and traditional media outlets covering what has been transpiring within the EU and EP.

In previous chapters, I argued that EP party groups can be used to identify typologies of eurosceptic parties (see Kreppel 2002; Hix et al 2003; McElroy and Benoit 2007). Moreover, with different types of eurosceptic parties came different electoral expectations that I attribute to parties within an EP group's general willingness to engage in EP legislative debate. This is an established way of grouping parties because they willingly choose to join or not join an EP party group. Furthermore, I assume that like-minded eurosceptics will choose to join together with other like-minded eurosceptics. I continue this approach with the second group of hypotheses.

Both groups of hypotheses complement each other. Because research into this type of research question involves a certain degree of circumstantial evidence, I try to be as thorough as possible in focusing on each particular aspect. When taken as a whole, these two groups of hypotheses ought to encapsulate the general relationship between parties' EP legislative behavior, the media, and voters by isolating each individual relationship partner.

I use data from a variety of sources. Because there does not exist an established dataset covering all the variables that are required for testing the various hypotheses, I create my own dataset by combining existing data with new data observations I collected myself. As such, I will be as thorough as possible in explaining where the data originate, what they are measuring, how they were collected, and how I use them in testing this chapter's hypotheses.

Data on social media hits come from Facebook and Youtube. For these data, which I operationalized to capture social media exposure, I use several different counts. For Facebook, I use the total number of *likes* the party's official Facebook page had on February 4th or 5th, 2017. These data are useful in providing a general notion of how widespread a party's social media exposure is. A better measurement would have been to track the number *likes* at various periods of time, but these data are not publicly available. Likewise, I collected several counts of social media exposure via Youtube. I collected data on the number of videos a party had on its official Youtube site, the number of Youtube site subscribers, the total number of times a video had been viewed on the official Youtube site, and the number of days each party has had an official Youtube site. The one exception to this is UKIP, which has an official site, but also has an unofficial Youtube site that is much more active than the party's official one. In this particular instance, I combined the totals of both Youtube sites into one grand total. These data are used to test all five hypotheses.

In addition to the Facebook and Youtube data, I also run a LexisNexis search in order to observe how many traditional media hits parties have received during the 7th EP session. I operationalize traditional media as *newspapers* and *magazines/journals*, and these are defined according to LexisNexis. I ran searches in the following languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish. All searches were in the national language of the party in question, for Belgian parties I ran searches in Dutch for Flemish parties and in French for Walloon parties. Furthermore, I searched by how parties are typically referred to in print media. For example, instead of searching for *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*, I searched for CDU; likewise, instead of searching for *Union pour un mouvement populaire*, I searched for UMP. Due to issues arising when searching for Green parties, I dropped all Green parties from

my LexisNexis searches.¹⁸ The dates I used for the search parameters were from 14 June 2009 to 25 May 2014; or one week after the 2009 EP election until one week before the 2014 EP election which I subjectively chose to do in hopes that I would not pick up too many references simply referring to the EP elections. These data are used primarily to test Hypothesis 4.4.

Data calculating the total amount of EP questions, both orally and in written form, originate from two sources: the official EU website's portal on each MEP and from the Votewatch (2016) dataset. I obtained EP question data by counting each MEP's total number of questions, which is available on the EU's official website: Europa.eu (2016). This was fairly straightforward in that there is an online portal where each MEP's information is available. Then I simply recorded the question totals per EP session for each MEP who served during that EP session. These data are used to test Hypothesis 4.4.

Micro-level survey data come from two sources: The Eurobarometer (2014) and interviews of French FN party members (Stockemer 2014). For Eurobarometer data, I use the Eurobarometer report of *Media Use in the European Union* (2014). These data were collected during November 2014, and released as an *Autumn* report. Data are from all 28 EU member states, and includes questions that include: Watch TV on a television set, Watch TV online, Use the internet, Listen to the radio, read traditional media, and Use social networks. Most importantly, Eurobarometer data are broken down into demographic groups including age, employment sector, educational attainment, gender, and social class. In addition, EU member state breakdowns are also available. Also included is a question concerning the *trust* one has in the media, which I believe helps to illustrate why eurosceptic voters may flock to social media sources for their political information. This would reinforce why it is important for this type of

¹⁸ A major issue that arose when searching for Green parties is that "green" also picked up the color adjective term. Moreover, because none of the Green parties are ever referred to in print by their official party names, conducting a LexisNexis search on this type of party become overly problematic.

party to make the most of their EP legislative opportunities in order to bolster their online media presence. These data are used to test Hypothesis 4.1.

For Stockemer's data (2014), which is a much more qualitative type of survey data, actual interview dialogue is available. These interviews were conducted between January and June 2013, and Stockemer interviewed 44 FN members. Of particular interest here, genuine perspectives of FN members are expressed individually, so that their own views on culture, the media, or other issues are directly available. In the course of these interviews, *trust in the media* are highlighted, and these observations become complementary to the Eurobarometer data taken from across the EU. These data are used to test Hypothesis 4.1.

The goal of this chapter is to seek to overcome the inherent ecological issues that arise when a research project takes electoral data (EP electoral over or under performance), and to explain this phenomenon by tracing EP legislative behavior to EP voters via the media. In other words, going from a macro-level analysis to a micro-level analysis while trying to keep constant the overall quantitative methodology of the project. As such, this chapter's methodology is a mixture of a basic correlation matrix and descriptive data. The goal is to compile a sufficiently high level of circumstantial evidence that EU citizens follow, and pay attention to, various media outlets at a high enough level that it can be assumed that if a political party is able to receive widespread media exposure that they will be reaching their targeted demographic.

Findings

Europeans consume a massive amount of media. Social media outlets have dramatically increased media exposure, and these media outlets have more than compensated for any decline in traditional media consumption. In fact, official party Youtube videos have been viewed just

under 200 million times as of February 2017. In this section, I provide the data that I collected in order to demonstrate that the EU public is consuming media, both social and traditional, in very high amounts. While these data are still circumstantial in nature for overcoming the ecological fallacy issue that is inherent in this dissertation, I believe that their overwhelming levels of calculable consumption will satisfy criticism that the link between EP legislative behavior and EP voters has been well addressed. Moreover, survey data will show that micro-level data exist that also support this notion. First, however, it is incumbent to show just how saturated the media market is within the EU.

Social Media

I illustrate much of my findings at the EP party group level. Even though the data are collected at the party-level, the findings are more easily understood by grouping the various parties by their EP group. Moreover, my central argument for this dissertation is that niche eurosceptic parties are fundamentally different from their mainstream counterparts, and one of the ways to demonstrate this is by using EP party groups as a means to group together likeminded parties. In Figure 4.1, I show the mean number of Youtube video hits by party, which is then illustrated by EP party group. Since each EP party group is readily identifiable by its general political ideology, this will provide a sense for how ideology interacts with social media consumption.

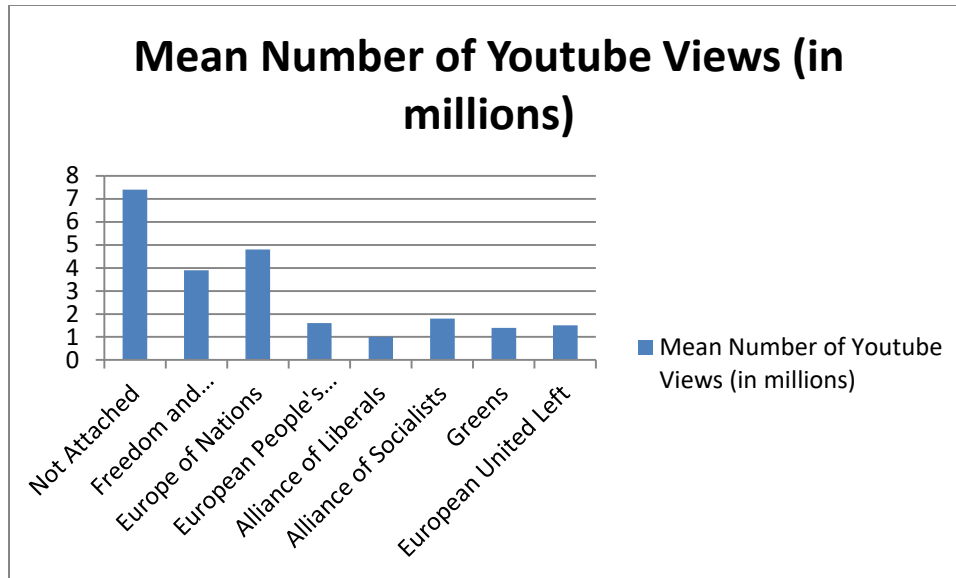


Figure 4.1: Mean Number of Youtube Views by EP Group Party

Clearly, eurosceptic parties enjoy a much higher social media consumption than do mainstream and left-leaning EP party groups. For Not-Attached parties, the mean number of times an official party Youtube video was viewed is over 7 million times. Freedom and Democracy parties' Youtube videos have been viewed nearly 4 million times on average, and the soft eurosceptic EP party group Europe of Nations, or previously the Conservative and Reformers, had their mean number of Youtube views nearly 5 million time. As a reminder, these figures reflect the mean number of times Youtube videos were viewed on a party's official Youtube channel, so these are indicative of how many times the typical party within each EP party group's Youtube videos were viewed. At a per-capita level, the right wing EP group parties dominate social media consumption, which reinforces the expected benefits of this type of party being able to use the media to reach EP voters. Furthermore, in the case, eurosceptic parties are able to reach directly their party loyalists via social media. These findings strongly support Hypotheses 4.1 and 4.5.

While Figure 4.1 shows the mean number of times Youtube videos were viewed, Figure 2 shows the mean number of subscribers the official party Youtube channel had as of February 2017. These two figures are used to support Hypothesis 4.1. While mean number of Youtube video views gives a glimpse at how often the typical party within an EP party group has had one of its videos watched, the mean

number of official party Youtube channel subscribers will tell how many party loyalists are likely to be strongly linked to a party’s social media platform. While these data are not specific enough to isolate only EP voters in a particular party’s country, I assume that the numbers are generally indicative of their loyalist base since these are Youtube Channels in the party’s native language showing videos that are also typically in the party’s native language. Therefore, I believe that only a small fraction of the numbers are attributable to those who are not eligible to vote for the party to which they are *Youtube subscribing*.

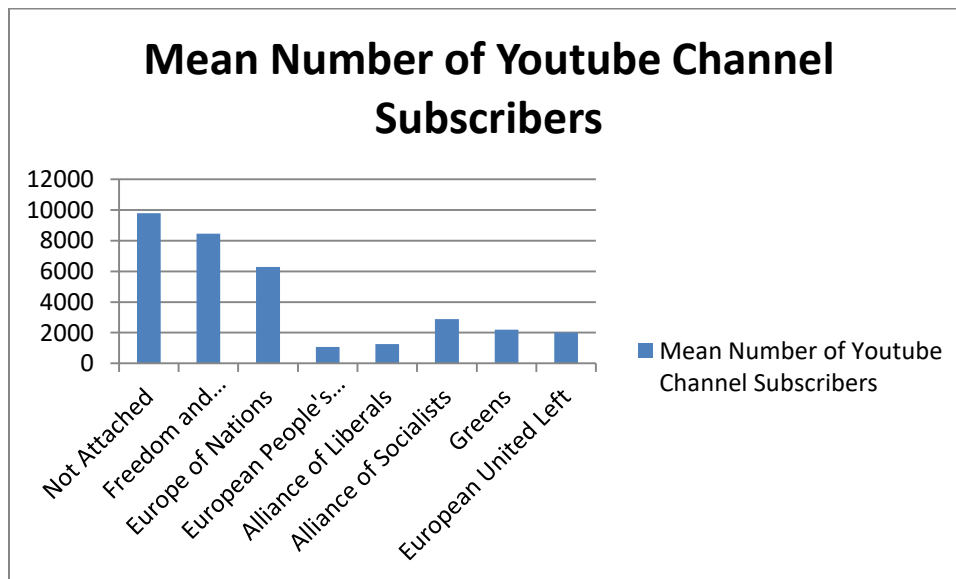


Figure 4.2: Mean Number of Youtube Subscribers by EP Group Party

Again, the average number of Youtube subscribers is much higher for parties in the three eurosceptic EP party groups. These parties are managing to dwarf much larger, mainstream parties in terms of their online presence, which is another indication that eurosceptic parties enjoy a direct link to their voters via which they can disseminate information. This way of directly linking their party to its loyalists is observably noted by these eurosceptic parties who have taken full advantage of their party’s Youtube channel to reach out to voters. Youtube media consumers, I would argue, represent active party loyalists because unlike Facebook, these

subscribers are typically only using Youtube for viewing videos. These findings support Hypothesis 4.1.

Facebook, however, is another social media platform that parties can exploit to reach their potential voters and party loyalists. In Figure 4.3, I show the mean number of Facebook *likes* the official party's Facebook page has as of February 2017. Just as is the case for Youtube social media presence, the eurosceptic EP party groups dominate in terms of Facebook social media exposure.

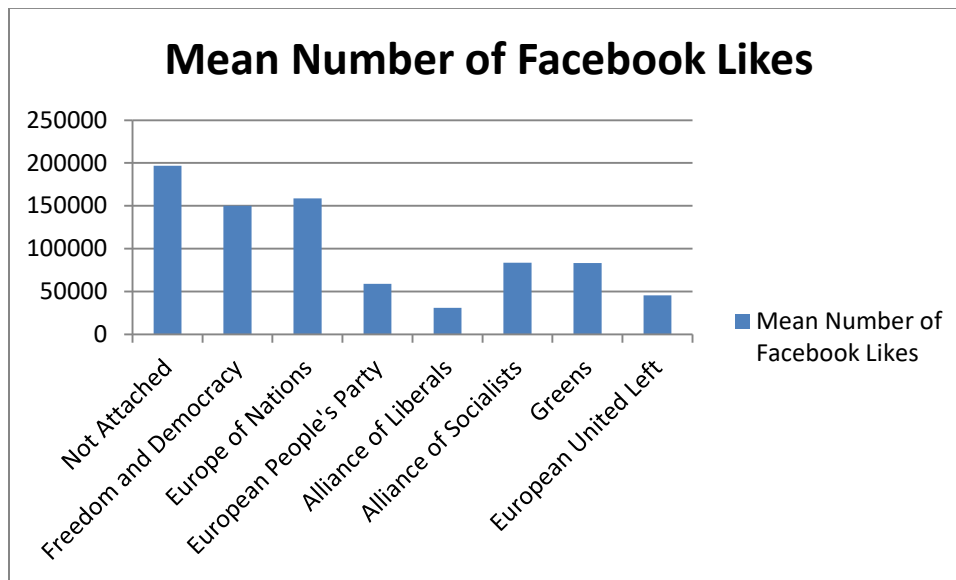


Figure 4.3: Mean Number of Facebook Likes by EP Group Party

Because Facebook *likes* typically get shared and publicized to Facebook users' friends, this measurement is a particularly useful one in capturing the level of social media consumers' support for a specific party. Youtube videos can be viewed anonymously, but *liking* a party's official Facebook page is a public pronouncement of a Facebook user's party loyalty. This also demonstrates that there is a clear and direct path that eurosceptic parties can use to relay their messages, and other information, to EP voters without passing through any type of traditional media filter. This also highlights the opportunities that many Not-Attached EP party group

members fail to take advantage of by abstaining from active EP legislative debate. These hard eurosceptic parties have the online audience already in place, but many of them are failing to use this to their advantage. Nonetheless, there is clear evidence that millions of Europeans are actively engaging their parties online. These findings support Hypotheses 4.1 and 4.3.

Comparing Youtube video views to Facebook *likes* is not a perfect comparison. Youtube video views can happen multiple times by the same social media consumer. For example, for a particularly anti-EU individual, he can watch Youtube videos of his eurosceptic party ranting about the injustices of an omnipotent EU dozens of times. He can only Facebook *like* his eurosceptic party one time. In effect, what I am capturing with these two measurements is an individual's social media consumption *intensity* on the one hand, and the individual's party *loyalty* on the other. In Figure 4.4, I illustrate the difference in volume of these two measurements.

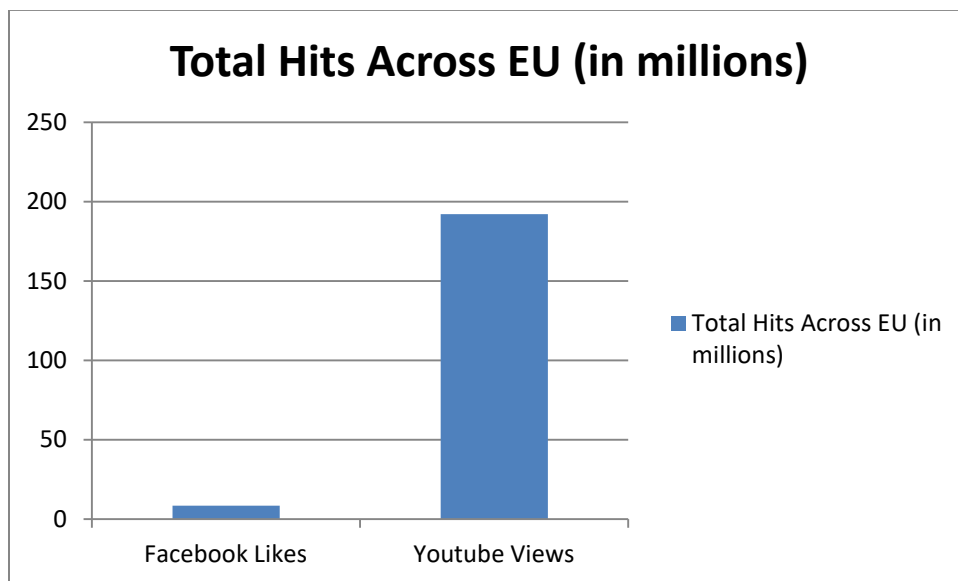


Figure 4.4: Total Social Media Hits for all Parties in EP

As is clearly noted in the figure above, social media truly plays into an individual's *intensity* to consume a party's information and messages. While Facebook *likes* provide us with a more accurate measurement of the number of individuals consuming social media and their demonstrated party loyalty, Youtube views shows us how social media is being consumed repeatedly by individuals. A party supporter can only *like* a Facebook page once, but a party loyalist can watch Youtube videos a number times. In other words, individuals are consuming massive amounts of social media concerning parties, and this realm is dominated by eurosceptic parties. Eurosceptic voters, or at least potential voters, are paying attention to their party's social media outlets; which helps to build the case that the relationship between EP legislative behavior and EP voters is becoming clearer when the perspective is changed and the relationship is viewed from the bottom up. These are further findings that strongly support Hypothesis 4.1.

On the party side of the social media consumption relationship, it is obvious that many parties have realized the potential benefits of directing their own media presence. In Figure 4.5, I show the mean number of official party Youtube videos broken down by EP party group. While the differences between the various ideological groups is less stark than on the consumer side, eurosceptic parties are still among the most active in posting their official Youtube videos online. Only the Alliance of Socialists EP party group competes with hard eurosceptic parties in terms of mean number of official Youtube videos.

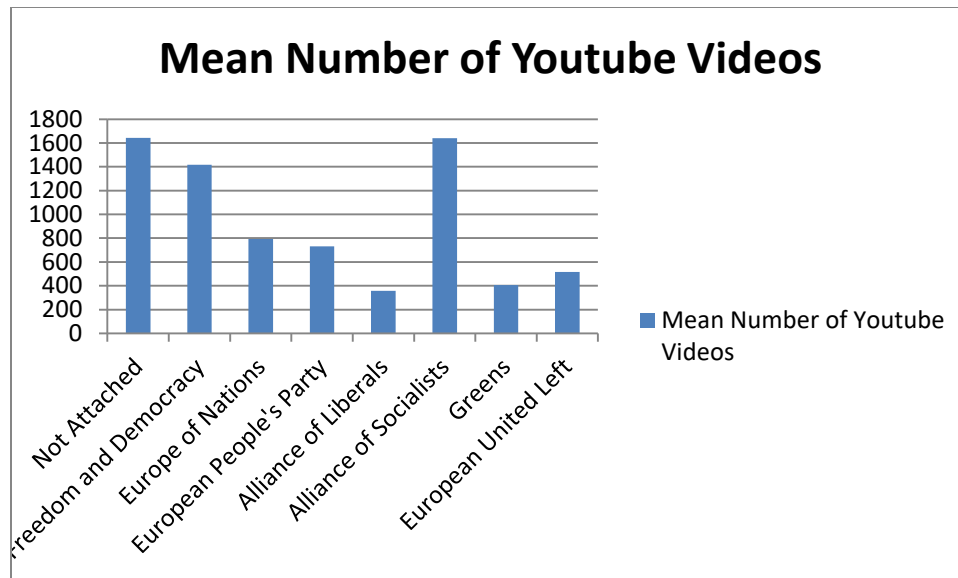


Figure 4.5: Mean Number of Youtube Videos by EP Group

What Figure 4.5 is able to capture is essentially how serious the various ideologies of parties take their social media exposure. These data help to establish support for Hypotheses 4.2 and 4.3. In order for party loyalists to view regularly a party's Youtube video, the party must do its part to post regularly new videos that it feels will reinforce its members loyalty and enthusiasm; as well as potentially attract new party voters. On the other hand, if a party abstains from its obligation to provide its members with direct social media content it is signaling that it is not taking itself as seriously as it should. This is particularly true for parties on the far right, which have an inherent advantage over other types of parties in that their party loyalists consume, on average, far more political social media than do the loyalists of other non-far right parties. Lastly, Figure 4.5 illustrates that many parties believe that there is an electoral benefit to having a strong online presence. While this belief may be unfounded, the accumulation of circumstantial evidence is building up to a point where logically it would be surprising if social media exposure is not reaching the general population in Europe. If most parties believe it is worth their time to post official party Youtube videos, and these videos are being viewed hundreds of millions of times,

the case is becoming quite strong that the optimal way to advertise what a party is doing within the EP is to use media to reach potential EP voters. These findings support Hypotheses 4.2 and 4.3.

Traditional Media

For traditional media exposure, I break down my findings into two categories: Newspapers and Magazines/Journals. I choose these two categories because these are the most readily visible forms of traditional print media. Of course, there are party press releases, pamphlets, or posters that can advertise a party's behavior or ideology, but these print media are more difficult to track accurately and are likely to be much more constrained in who is able to view them. Therefore, I track the two most widespread and easily obtained forms of traditional print media

Figure 6 shows that while eurosceptic parties still generally receive the highest mean number of hits, the difference between eurosceptics and non-eurosceptics is not as large as it is for social media outlets. Still, eurosceptic parties are receiving, in general, more newspaper attention than are other types of parties. Another aspect worth noting here is that these are mean number of newspaper hits in EU member states as large as Germany and as small as Belgium, so the overall number of newspapers a large country has is mitigated by the relatively smaller number of newspapers in smaller countries like Belgium.

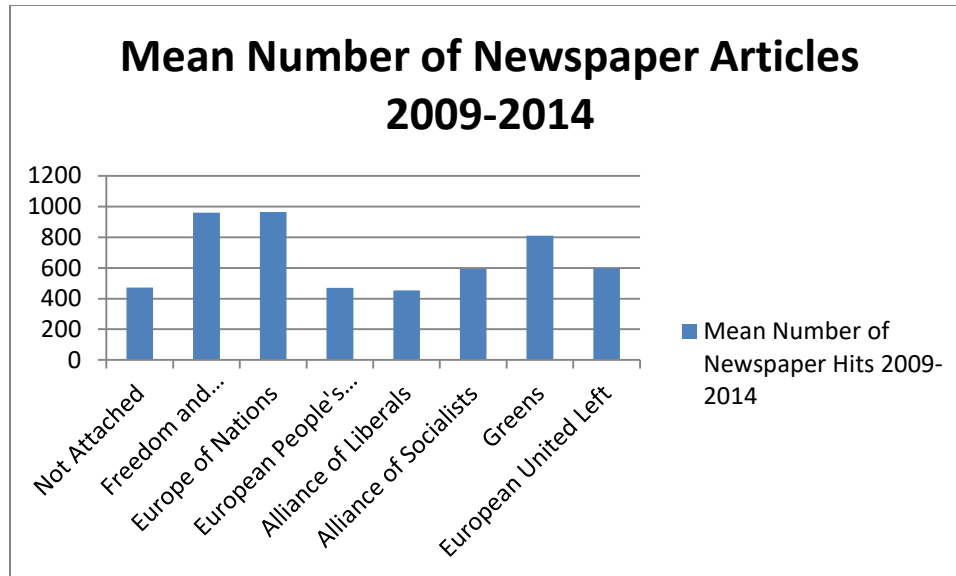


Figure 4.6: Mean Number of Newspaper Articles by EP Group Party

What is interesting in Figure 4.6 is that newspaper hits follow the general EP legislative behavior exhibited by the member-parties of the respective EP party groups. The Not-Attached parties engage within the EP far less often than do their niche party eurosceptic counterparts in the Freedom and Democracy. While social media sources do not follow this pattern, newspaper outlets do. Regardless, there still remains ample evidence that newspapers are still actively reporting on political news and information at a very high frequency. These findings support Hypotheses 4.3 and 4.5.

The second traditional print media source that I track is magazines and journals. Magazines and journals operate far less frequently than do newspapers, so it is expected that their nominal number of media hits will be far less than is the case with, for the most part, daily newspapers. In Figure 4.7, I show the mean number of magazine and journal hits parties within the various EP party groups received during the 2009-2014 EP session.

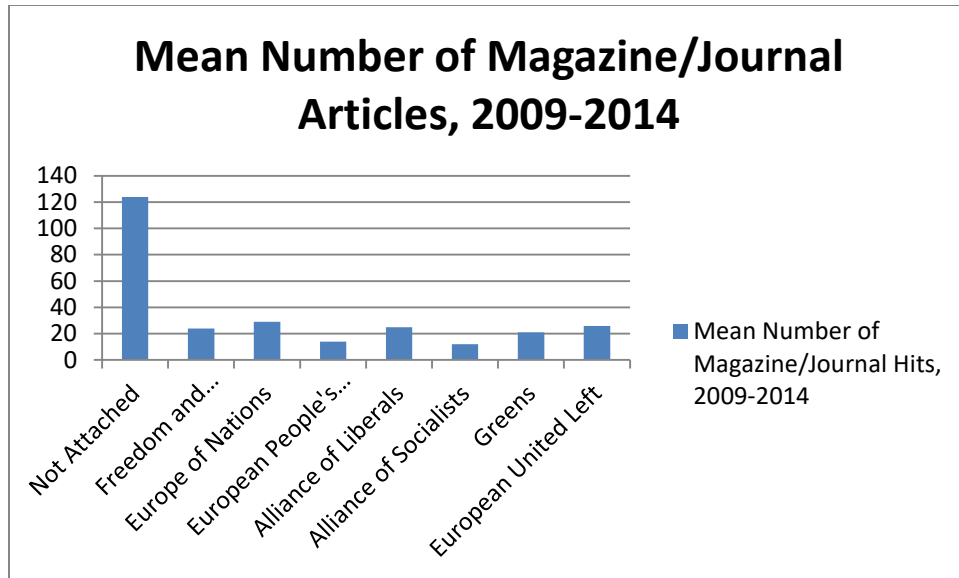


Figure 4.7: Mean Number of Other Print Media Articles by EP Group Party

In contrast to Figure 4.6, which tracked newspaper hits, the Not Attached EP party group received the lion’s share of mean number of magazine and journal hits in Figure 4.7. Moreover, and in stark contrast to all of the previous social and traditional media outlets, the eurosceptic EP groups did not dominate in media presence; save for the Not Attached eurosceptic EP group. Still, when taken in their totality, magazines and journals were responsible for thousands of articles on political parties. These print media sources complement other media sources in reaching potential EP voters, and when taken in conjunction with other social and traditional media sources, the total number of media products that are consumed reaches well into the hundreds of millions. These findings provide additional support for Hypotheses 4.3 and 4.5.

What is clear in tracking media hits concerning parties is that social media now dominates traditional media in terms of how parties can direct information and messages to party loyalists and potential EP voters alike. In Figure 4.8, I illustrate just how much more frequent social media hit occur than do traditional media hits. Of course, social media would be predicted to have a higher *hit* frequency than traditional print media sources, since we can track Youtube

video views, but there is no way of tracking whether a print media article is read multiple times outside of online views of print media articles of which the data are not readily available.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that for eurosceptic niche parties an online presence is clearly the optimal route for reaching their supporters.

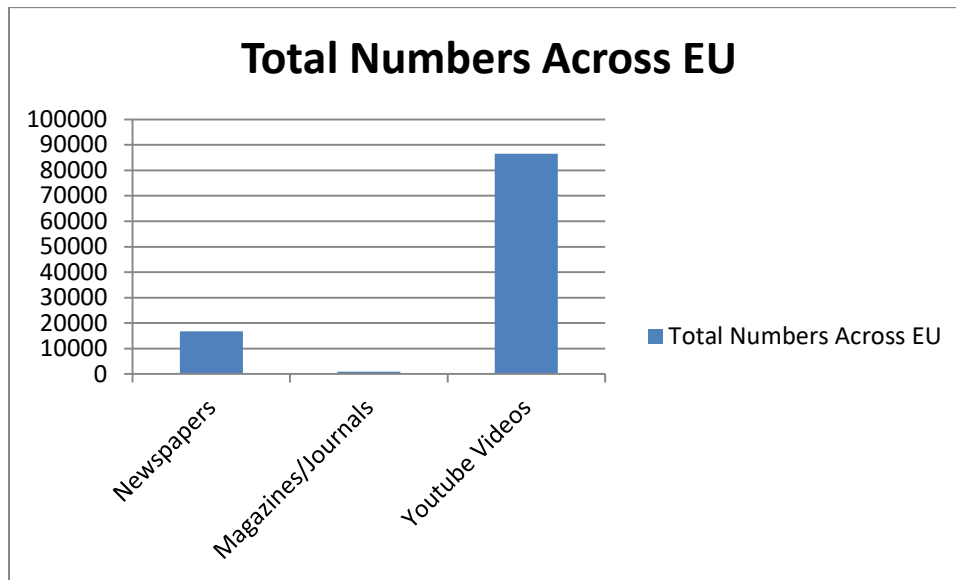


Figure 4.8: Descriptive Statistics for all Parties in EP

By counting the number of times a party's official Facebook page is *liked*, or the number of times a party's official Youtube video is streamed, can help to establish whether the media can be playing the critical role of disseminating what occurs within the EP. The sheer volume of media consumption can be accepted as a sufficient amount of circumstantial evidence that the hypotheses I proposed in Chapter 3 are supported throughout the relationship between EP legislative engagement and electoral outcomes, particularly for niche eurosceptic parties. What is made clear by the data in this chapter is that unengaged Not Attached parties are perhaps even more foolish not to become engaged within the EP given their social media exposure than what was previously thought. If a Not Attached party is choosing not to partake in EP legislative behavior, then they are wasting their natural advantage in disseminating their message to their

supporters and using that momentum to mobilize them to vote in EP elections. These findings strongly support Hypothesis 4.1.

Lastly, in Table 4.1, I show a correlation matrix between amount of EP Questions and the various social and traditional media exposure. There is correlation between the amount of EP questions and the amount of social and traditional media coverage. Furthermore, with strong correlation between the various types of social media outlets, it would indicate that once someone has started consuming one type of social media outlet they readily consume other social media outlets. In other words, if an individual engaged with a party on Facebook, he is more likely than not to engage with a party’s other online presence such as Youtube.

	EP Questions	Newspaper Hits	Facebook Likes	Youtube Subscribers	Youtube Video Views
EP Questions	1.00				
Newspaper Hits	.4888	1.00			
Facebook Likes	.5702	.5002	1.00		
Youtube Subscribers	.4308	.3806	.8009	1.00	
Youtube Video Views	.3003	.2642	.6219	.8849	1.00

Table 4.1: Correlation Matrix for EP Engagement and Media Exposure

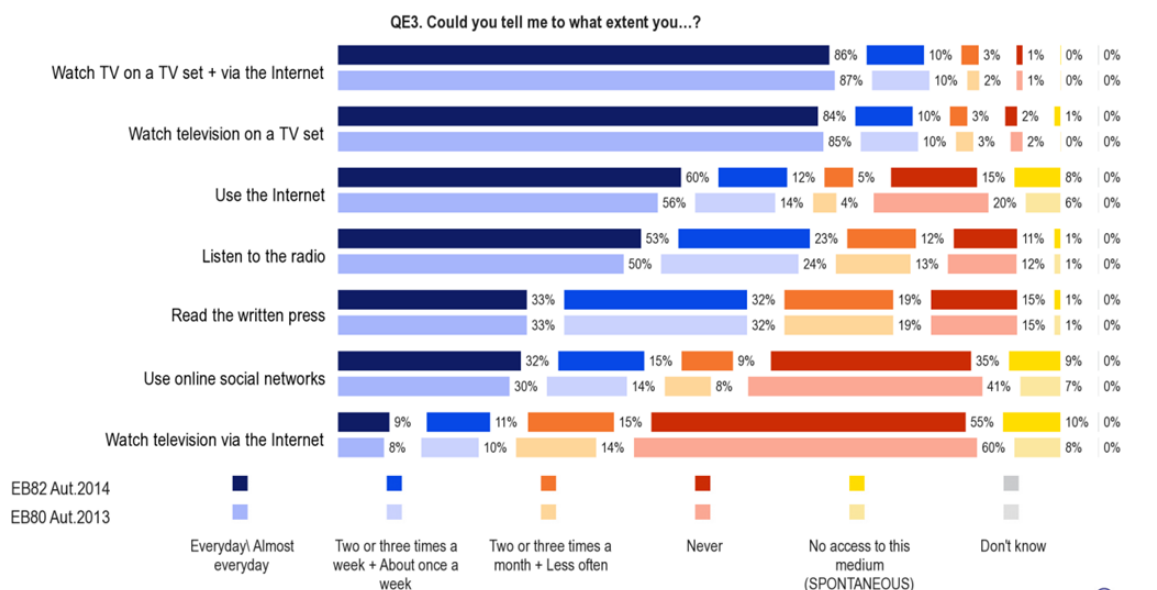
Table 4.1 helps to establish the link between EP legislative behavior and media coverage. This is the first half of the general relationship between EP legislative behavior, the media, and EP voters. While the previous figures can demonstrate that the second half of the relationship is likely occurring due to the overwhelming numbers of hits the various types of social and traditional media outlets are receiving, this correlation matrix is able to provide support for the notion that the media will pay attention to what transpires at the EP level. Moreover, because the

parties themselves can control their social media outlets, they can, in effect, control the entire relationship between themselves and their voters. This correlation finding provides support for Hypothesis 4.4.

Survey Data

Descriptively, there are ample amounts of circumstantial evidence that individuals are consuming media coverage of political news and information, and that most parties themselves believe that it is worthwhile to have a robust social media presence. There is more evidence, however, that the media, both social and traditional, create the link between parties' EP legislative behavior and EP voters. Eurobarometer survey data also support the notion that Europeans are incredibly connected to media consumption, and Stockemer's (2014) FN survey data can provide glimpses for why it is that hard eurosceptic parties are able to have such a large online media presence.

In Figure 4.9, Eurobarometer (2014) survey data is shown that indicates how often EU citizens consume the various types of social and traditional media. The dark blue represents those who answered *every day/almost every day* with regards to each media outlet.



Source: Reproduced from Eurobarometer 82, page 5 (2014)

Figure 4.9

EU28

As is confirmed by the Eurobarometer survey data, it is likely that almost every respondent has daily consumption of some type of media outlet. In this regard, it is highly unlikely that an eligible voter in EP elections could be entirely isolated from information about parties. Even if the sole account of recent EP legislative behavior is a sound clip advertising for that day's evening news, notions of what parties are doing while in Brussels or Strasbourg will be disseminating from the EP level down to EP voters via media outlets. Previously, the raw number of social and traditional media hits were given to demonstrate the enormity of media consumption, but these Eurobarometer findings are able to further support the notion that people are paying attention by providing evidence that people perceive themselves as being strongly connected to various media outlets. These findings provide micro-level support for Hypothesis 4.1.

Lastly, when French FN supporters were interviewed by Stockemer (2014), their responses corroborated all the previous notions about the media. There is one additional aspect,

though, that corresponds directly to why hard eurosceptic parties enjoy such social media dominance over other parties that are much larger in terms of popular support and party organization. The far right has a very strong distrust of traditional media outlets. Throughout his interviews, FN loyalists repeatedly talked about their lack of trust in traditional media. There was a common theme that traditional media were inherently biased against the FN, and that this bias was leading to false reporting and attributing negative aspects to the FN. In such a situation, it is intuitive that such FN loyalists would begin searching for political information from alternative media sources. Since the internet easily provides such alternatives to traditional media, a eurosceptic party's online presence can replace television or print media for those with extreme distrust of traditional media outlets. Stockemer's findings further corroborate previous support for Hypothesis 4.1.

All five hypotheses are largely supported. Those parties that routinely engage the EP legislative process by posing questions receive more frequent media coverage. This is particularly the case for eurosceptic parties, which receives a disproportionate amount of media coverage both online and in print. On the other hand, far left niche parties, which I predicted would receive a similarly disproportionate amount of media coverage as do eurosceptics was not supported by the data. Following these findings, one is confident in saying that being active within the EP will likely lead to higher levels of media coverage. Thus the first half of the EP legislative behavior, media, and voters relationship is supported by the data.

For the second half of the EP legislative behavior, media, and voters relationship, hypotheses H4.3 and H4.5 are partially supported. The public consumes an enormous amount of media. Upwards of 90% (Eurobarometer 2014) of Europeans watch television daily and a majority are routine users of social and print media. Should a political occurrence transpire in

Brussels or Strasbourg the vast majority of the European public will likely be aware of it. Not only are individuals highly engaged with the media, but parties are also aware of the benefits of having a strong online presence. While far left niche parties do not perform as well as eurosceptic niche parties in this realm, it is clear that parties recognize the value of having media exposure online via Facebook and Youtube. H4.1 tests whether the public pays attention, but H4.3 tests how engaged the non-mainstream public is with far right and far left niche parties. Both are generally supported, and thus the second half of the EP legislative behavior, media, and voters relationship is strongly supported, as well.

Table 4.2 provides a quick summary of the hypotheses and whether they were supported by the data.

Hypothesis	Predicted Outcome	Actual Outcome	Explanation
H4.1 The public consumes sufficient amounts of media to conclude that they are informed.	+	Supported	Media consumption is recorded in the hundreds of millions of articles, videos, and Facebook engagement.
H4.2 Parties will have a strong online presence	+	Supported	Parties do have a strong online presence.
H4.3 Eurosceptics and far left parties having a disproportionately large social media presence.	+	Partially Supported	True for eurosceptic niche parties, but not supported for far left niche parties.
H4.4 EP questions positively correlated with media hits.	+	Supported	There is a correlation between amount of EP questions and media coverage
H4.5 Extremist niche parties will receive disproportionate amount of media coverage.	+	Partially Supported	True for eurosceptic niche parties, but not supported for far left niche parties

Table 4.2: Hypothesis Results

Conclusion

In closing, this chapter's primary goal is to establish the link between parties' EP legislative behavior and the public. Chapter 3 demonstrated statistical support for the notion that EP legislative engagement had an electoral effect on a party's vote share in EP elections. But, those findings only addressed the two ends of the EP legislative behavior, media, and voters relationship. While this evidence is important in identifying underperforming eurosceptic parties and proposing an explanation, it is necessary to document how media outlets act as the conduit between what is happening in Brussels or Strasbourg and how the public will gain this information. If the data show that the public pays attention to what is happening politically and that it is fully consuming both social and traditional media, then explaining the *in-between* becomes much easier. I proposed that the media operate as the *in-between* mechanism, and the evidence I collected for this chapter largely supports this notion.

All five hypotheses are either supported or partially supported. I tested the link in both directions of the media's relationship with parties at the EP level and with the public. On both accounts there are large amounts of circumstantial evidence that support the notion that the media rewards actively engaged parties, and that the public consumes such a high level of both social and traditional media that it is beyond a reasonable doubt that EP voters will be informed about political phenomena emanating from the EU and EP. This dissertation's most important findings are in Chapter 3, but this chapter provides complementary support for those previous findings that there are two types of eurosceptic niche parties: those that over perform and those that underperform. The literature suggests that niche parties receive an electoral boost in EP elections, and I identified a number of eurosceptic niche parties that do not. But, for my explanation to hold water it is incumbent that the media play the *in-between* role in informing the

public of what is transpiring. The data included in this chapter achieve that goal and fill in the last blanks of the EP legislative behavior, media, and voter relationship.

From the party's perspective, traditional media is free and social media is extremely low-cost. The only real costs a party incurs for its social media presence is paying the staff that post Youtube videos and oversee Facebook pages. Yet, the public relations outreach of social media is very high. This low-cost high-rewards scenario promotes the continued expansion of official party outlets on social media, and lends logical support that both social and traditional media act as the conduit between parties and voters.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Engaged eurosceptic parties generally over perform in European Parliamentary (EP) elections relative to their vote share in national parliamentary elections. Non-engaged eurosceptic parties generally underperform in EP elections relative to their voteshare in national parliamentary elections, and the clearest difference between these two types of eurosceptics is that the over performers are more engaged in EP legislative behavior. The underperformers largely abstain from becoming involved in EP plenary session debate. Those that engage do better in EP elections than those that do not. The full situation explaining hard eurosceptic parties EP electoral performances, however, is more complex than simply showing up to the EP and actively participating. There are other components that play a critical role for this phenomenon to occur.

As was noted earlier in this dissertation, EP elections are considered to be *second-order* elections. Voter turnout is generally lower in EP elections than in national parliamentary elections, and niche and opposition parties routinely outperform mainstream governing parties. Because hard eurosceptic parties are rarely in governing coalitions and are typically niche parties with little ideology beyond immigration and their opposition to the European Union (EU), both types of eurosceptics would be predicted to do well in EP elections. Because the non-engaged eurosceptic parties do not generally do well in EP elections, this requires an explanation. I propose that this occurs because unengaged eurosceptic parties do not create the material that media outlets can easily disseminate to the voting public. In posing EP questions and taking to the floor of the EP to deliver an anti-EU speech creates easily packaged products that the media

will subsequently publicize. If a eurosceptic party does not engage the EP legislative process, then these materials are not created. The media, in turn, then do not have any EP activities to cover and broadcast. This leads to less media coverage, and the public is not as well informed about what the eurosceptic party is doing in its elected capacity. This leads to less voter enthusiasm to vote in EP elections, which is troublesome for eurosceptic parties because they must mobilize a voting demographic that does not believe that the EU ought to exist in the first place. For eurosceptic voters, having a constant reminder via media outlets that their party is fighting the EU day in and day out will help to drive this type of voter to the EP polls. Crucial, however, is that the eurosceptic party create the materials and products from within the EP for the media outlets to carry on to the voting public. If these materials are not produced in the first instance, then the rest of the process will play out differently from those hard eurosceptic parties that do produce memorable EP speeches and large amounts of EP questions.

After explaining my theory in detail in Chapter 2, I tested hypotheses that addressed EP electoral outcome and EP group, which I used as a heuristic for grouping together like-minded parties that shared similar EP legislative behavior. First, however, it was necessary that I demonstrate that underperforming hard eurosceptic parties exist. In Table 3.1 in Chapter 3, I showed that for Not-Attached parties the mean underperformance in EP elections was almost 1 percentage point. Or, in other words, Not-Attached parties' vote shares in EP elections are on average 1 percentage point less than what they achieve in their national parliamentary elections. While that may not seem like a large difference, when contrasted with Freedom and Democracy parties that gain an average of almost 3.5 percentage points in EP elections, it becomes clear that there are several eurosceptic niche parties that are over performing in EP elections.

Descriptively, there was evidence that this type of underperforming hard eurosceptic party existed.

Next, I tested EP electoral over or underperformance by using a model that incorporated EP group as the causal variable on a dependent variable of change in vote share between EP election and the previous national parliamentary election. The findings showed that in all three models Not-Attached parties had statistically significant underperformance finding for EP elections. While Not-Attached parties were submitting high levels of written EP questions, they attended EP plenary sessions at very low rates and posed few if any oral EP questions, which allowed for the engaged eurosceptic parties in Freedom and Democracy to establish much higher Legislative Exposure (LE) scores. Non-engaged eurosceptic parties were not engaged within the EP, and these parties routinely contradicted what the literature would predict. Engaged eurosceptic parties were engaged within the EP, and these parties conformed to what the literature would predict, which is that they would over perform in EP elections. Chapter 3 is able to explain the two ends of the EP Legislative Behavior-the Media-the Voters relationship that was illustrated in Diagram 4.1 of Chapter 4.

While the two ends of the relationship were examined in Chapter 3, the process of informational dissemination was established in Chapter 4. The challenge to this type of research question is that macro-level findings that state that an electoral phenomenon is occurring are rife with ecological fallacy issues. When taken in isolation, EP legislative behavior's effect on EP over or underperformance tells us that something is happening, but it cannot tell us how it is happening. I suggest that it is via media outlets that EP engagement is able to be transmitted from the party to the voter. Chapter 4's evidence is in support of this notion. First, I established the link between the media, both social and traditional, and the public. I did this by compiling as

much circumstantial evidence as possible that the public consumes such a large amount of media that the link is bound to be there. Moreover, Eurobarometer and Stockemer's (2014) evidence support the circumstantial evidence that the public consumes sufficient amounts of media to be informed. Second, by correlating party participation via posing questions in the EP and media hits I show that the link between parties and the media is well supported. Using Lexus-Nexus media search findings, there is a decently strong correlation between how many times parties pose EP questions and the amount of media hits they receive in return. When both of these links are taken in conjunction with one another, the full diagram of the process comes into picture. Higher levels of EP legislative engagement leads to higher levels of media exposure, and the public consumes such a large amount of social and traditional media that come EP election time those engaged eurosceptic parties will over perform while the non-engaged eurosceptic parties will generally manage to do worse in EP elections than they did in their previous national parliamentary elections.

The process of being actively engaged within the EP, receiving more media attention, and eurosceptic voters rewarding an engaged eurosceptic party in EP elections is more than a onetime occurrence. Engaged eurosceptics have taken notice of this self-reinforcing relationship. In doing so, they prime their party loyalists to become routine EP voters. UKIP epitomizes this type of successful eurosceptic. Rather than to abstain from EP legislative participation, UKIP became a regular hard eurosceptic participant. This led UKIP supporters to become more enthusiastic to vote in EP elections, and thus the natural contradiction of voting in an election that they do not believe ought to exist in the first place is overcome.

2019 EP Elections

The next EP elections will be held during the summer of 2019. Several events have already taken place since the 2014 EP elections, and it appears that hard eurosceptic parties are beginning to take notice of the importance of becoming engaged within the EP. The first step that formerly non-engaged eurosceptics are taking as they transform into engaged eurosceptics is to decide to join an EP group. If past EP electoral performances by engaged eurosceptic parties is any indication, these newly engaged eurosceptic parties will be predicted to over perform in 2019.

The hard eurosceptic party that epitomizes this newly engaged eurosceptic is the French FN. Marine Le Pen has done many things in transforming the FN into a less extreme, more mainstream party both within France and the EP. She has softened the FN's stance on many social issues, and notably has refrained from the types of anti-Semitic remarks that characterized her father's reign as head of the FN. Most importantly from this dissertation's perspective, however, is that after the 2014 EP elections she quickly moved forward and established an EP group, the Europe of Nations and Freedom EP group. Recalling Chapter 3's findings, this political evolution would suggest that this is the first step in the process of becoming engaged at the EP, which the media will reward with increased levels of coverage, and which will lead to more routine reinforcement of party supporters to cast votes in an EP election.

The French FN is not the only formerly Not-Attached party that has decided join the Europe of Nations and Freedom EP group. In Table1, I show the hard eurosceptic parties that previously were Not-Attached, but have since chosen to join an EP group.

Party	Joined an EP Group	2019 Predicted Over/Underperformance
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (AT)	Nations and Freedom	Over Performance
Vlaams Belang (BE)	Nations and Freedom	Over Performance
Front National (FR)	Nations and Freedom	Over Performance
Lega Nord (IT)	Nations and Freedom	Over Performance
Partij voor de Vrijheid (NL)	Nations and Freedom	Over Performance
Party	Remained Not-Attached	2019 Predicted Over/Underperformance
Jobbik (HU)	Not-Attached	Under Performance

Table 5.1: Changes since 2014 EP Election

As is noted in Table 5.11, only the Jobbik party has chosen to remain Not-Attached during the 8th EP session. Anecdotally, it appears that a handful of formerly non-engaged eurosceptics have changed course and decided that they would become engaged during the 2014-2019 EP session. Several formerly Not-Attached parties failed to win any EP seats during the 2014 elections, so these parties are not included in the table. The British National Party, The Greater Romania Party, and The Attack Party (Bulgaria) failed to win even a single EP seat in 2014. This is consistent with my theory on engaged and non-engaged eurosceptics. It just happened that for these three parties their non-engaged EP legislative behavior eventually cost them their last EP seat, and they now only exist as former Not-Attached parties.

Future Research Directions

There are several new research projects that can be taken from this dissertation. First, for the engaged eurosceptic, political communication is key to achieving electoral success. Moreover, social media have become the optimal conduit for eurosceptic parties to communicate directly with party loyalists as well as potential new party supporters. In this line of thinking, a fertile area of future research is to complement the existing literature on party communications. More specifically, the communication employed by eurosceptic parties. Fortunately, there is a growing

literature that focuses on the social media presence by political parties, and the social media consumption habits by voters.

Over the past decade, scholars have begun to take social media seriously as form of political communication (see Gibson and Ward 2000; Lupia and Philpot 2005; Druckman et al 2009; Gulati and Williams 2013; Rodriguez and Madariaga 2016). Of particular interest to scholars of extremism and populism is the role that social media can assume for parties on the ideological fringes. Hard euroscepticism requires emotional arguments against a more globalized society in which local and national customs and traditions are being eroded in favor of a new cosmopolitanism that explicitly rejects national identity. Facebook and Youtube are perfectly suited for conveying eurosceptic parties' counterarguments against the EU and globalization. As such, further research into the particular methods and approaches that eurosceptic parties in Europe, and extremist parties worldwide, adopt in order to mobilize their supporters is both timely and relevant.

An additional direction for future research on eurosceptic parties will be to observe how well many of the formerly Not-Attached parties do in the 2019 EP elections. If the handful of newly engaged eurosceptic parties listed in Table 1 start to receive the electoral bump that the other engaged eurosceptic parties have had, then further examination of that transformation from unengaged eurosceptic to engaged eurosceptic will be warranted. Did these eurosceptic parties learn from more successful ones such as UKIP or the Danish People's Party? Or was it a more random transformation in that the FN and FPO simply found the numbers required to form an EP group, but they behave just as they had before? This opens new lines of research into eurosceptic party elites, legislative and electoral *learning*, and the case of eurosceptic parties existing in a state of limbo until a charismatic and entrepreneurial leader emerges. Because euroscepticism,

and global populism widely defined, appears to show no signs of slowing, these new research directions can complement the existing literature.

Closing Remarks

This dissertation began when I noticed that several eurosceptic niche parties were not behaving as the literature predicted they would. Instead of over performing in EP elections, these parties were doing worse in EP elections than they were doing in national parliamentary elections. Since these parties were both niche and in the opposition nationally, not only should they not have been underperforming, they ought to have had a double electoral benefit in EP elections. Yet, they were still generally underperforming in EP elections. Further investigation showed that these underperforming eurosceptics disproportionately belonged to the Not-Attached EP group. Freedom and Democracy EP group parties were over performing in EP elections, so the first step in explaining this phenomenon of underperforming eurosceptic parties was to focus on what differentiated these two groups of eurosceptic niche parties.

Quickly it became clear that the Not-Attached parties were not as engaged within the EP as were parties of the Freedom and Democracy group. This led to questioning how and why EP legislative engagement was having a statistically significant electoral effect during EP elections. The logical answer to this was that the media were assuming an intermediary role between parties and their EP legislative behavior and voters. The next step was to see if whether a link could be established between EP legislative behavior and the amount of media coverage parties receive. Concomitantly, there also needed to be evidence to support the link between media outlets and the public. In both cases, large amounts of evidence supported the notion that what parties do at the EP level is picked up by media outlets. Furthermore, the public consumed such a large amount of social and traditional media that it would be illogical for the public not to be

informed of what is transpiring in Brussels and Strasbourg. In addition, eurosceptic parties took control of their own media outlets via Facebook and Youtube to disseminate their own videos directly to the public. While this messaging is admittedly biased in favor of the eurosceptic party that produced it, it still served as information that conveyed to the eurosceptic parties' loyalists that they were worth casting a vote for in EP elections.

The parties that capitalized on this relationship were rewarded with electoral over performances in EP elections. Those parties that failed to capitalize on this relationship were generally punished. Whether or not a hard eurosceptic party realized their electoral advantages in EP elections is what made them either an engaged eurosceptic or a non-engaged eurosceptic. Engaged eurosceptics take advantage of the low-cost high-reward afforded to them by social and traditional media and EP elections. The non-engaged eurosceptic does not take advantage of these benefits, and as a result tends to do poorly in EP elections. When taken to the extreme, this type of non-engaged eurosceptic party will eventually be electorally punished to the point where it will not be able to win any EP seat, as has been the case of the British National Party, The Greater Romania Party, and the Bulgarian Attack Party.

Appendix

Determinants of Δ Vote Share	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Not Attached	-5.00*** (1.7)	-4.58** (2.04)	-3.79** (1.61)
Freedom/Democracy	.98 (1.95)		
Conservatives/Reform	-.38 (1.62)		
Nordic Greens	3.16** (1.43)		
Group Greens	3.53*** (1.13)		
Liberal Dems	-2.07** (.86)	-3.15*** (1.22)	
Social Dems		-3.16**** (.89)	
Christian Dems		-.05 (1.22)	
<i>Controls</i>			
Unemployment	-.05 (.09)	-.06 (.09)	-.02 (.09)
Opposition Status	7.90**** (.81)	8.00**** (.80)	8.62**** (.78)
Minor Coalition Partner	7.04**** (.95)	6.99**** (.94)	6.95**** (.95)
Left-Right Ideology Scale	.83**** (.21)	.24 (.23)	.35** (.15)
<i>constant</i>	-10.95**** (1.43)	-6.22**** (1.41)	-8.80**** (1.27)
N	414	414	414
Adjusted R ²	.25	.26	.22
P>F	.0000	.0000	.0000
	*(p<0.10), **(p<0.05), ***(p<0.01), ****(p<0.001)		

Appendix Table 1: Pooled Cross Sectional Model

Acronym	Full Name	Acronym	Full Name
BNP	British National Party	MEP	Member of European Parliament
EP	European Parliament	Tories	British Conservative Party
EU	European Union	UK	United Kingdom
FN	French National Front Party	UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
FPO	Freedom Party of Austria	US	United States
LE score	Legislative Exposure Score		

Appendix Table 2: Acronyms

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Eurosceptic political parties are predicted to over perform in second-order elections such as the European Parliamentary (EP) elections. Yet, not all eurosceptic parties have been successful in taking electoral advantage of their second-order election benefits. I posit that there is a vital link between legislative behavior and voters by examining how parties engage while in Brussels and Strasbourg, and via the amount of public exposure they receive in doing so. I argue that voters respond to EP legislative behavior and reward eurosceptic parties that actively oppose the EU by posing questions and attending plenary sessions, while eurosceptics who do not actively participate in the EP are not rewarded. There is an electoral benefit to public grandstanding, and eurosceptics who behave strategically are able to tap into EP voter malaise in ways that extend beyond mere anti-EU ideology.

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