3
THEORY, CONCEPTS AND RESEARCH DESIGN IN THE STUDY OF EUROSCERPTICISM

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Introduction

In the wake of the Eurozone and migration crises, Euroscepticism has become a buzzword in both media outlets and policy circles. The phenomenon, however, has had a long-standing history. Being first traced in British journalistic articles during the 1980s, its use became widespread in the post-Maastricht era, which marked the beginning of the politicisation of European integration with both European publics and parties expressing their opposition to increased political and economic integration. Since then, scholarly literature on the topic flourished and is now abundant, with hundreds of publications in prominent journals and academic presses.

Understanding the multi-faceted nature of Euroscepticism has far-reaching implications for the development of European integration and national European politics. Eurosceptics can exert influence on European Union (EU) decision making and constrain the evolution of EU governance; but can also change the electoral and party system dynamics within EU member states. Ultimately, opposition to the EU has normative implications for the legitimacy of the EU project, its institutions, policies and decisions. The aim of this contribution is to provide an overview of the literature on Euroscepticism in order to consolidate existing knowledge, identify research gaps and make recommendations for future study.

This chapter commences with an examination of issues related to conceptualisation and measurement of Euroscepticism. The discussion illustrates that Euroscepticism is a contested concept. Its multidimensional nature entails that it can be directed to the system as a whole, its institutional design, specific policies or the perceived general direction of the EU regulatory system. Scholars are faced with a trade-off between specificity and wider applicability and, to some extent, the application and operationalisation of the concept is constrained by data availability. The second section conducts a meta-analysis of fifty-four articles on the topic, categorised into two groups: the top-cited articles and those that have been published in 2014. The analysis is based on a number of indicators that relate to thematic focus, i.e. unit of analysis and country, and the specificities of research design, namely rationale, approach and time. Findings indicate that there is a general tendency to focus more on public-based Euroscepticism rather than party-based Euroscepticism. Most studies tend to treat Euroscepticism as a dependent variable, i.e. they try to understand or explain this phenomenon. There are, however, some
articles that view Euroscepticism as a potential independent variable and employ it in order to understand other political phenomena in Europe, such as national and European Parliament (EP) elections, and EU and national politics. This suggests that the study of Euroscepticism is becoming integrated into the study of European integration and national European politics. Comparative research designs with a quantitative methodological focus tend to be most prevalent in the study of Euroscepticism. The chapter concludes by making recommendations for future research. These relate to the question of definition, new thematic approaches and research design.

**Conceptualising and measuring Euroscepticism**

As discussed in the Introduction to this Handbook (Chapter 1), Euroscepticism is a widely used term that describes opposition to the process of EU integration and/or various aspects of it. Despite the fact that instances of Eurosceptic behaviour have been present since the outset of European integration (Vasilopoulou 2013), the term first appeared in the British press in 1985. Its use was initially embedded within the British political context (Milner 2000), where the term Eurosceptic was employed interchangeably with the term ‘anti-Marketeer’, i.e. those ‘who had altogether rejected continued EEC membership during the 1975 referendum’ (Spiering 2004: 128–129). As European integration deepened over the years, Eurosceptic attitudes became progressively prevalent in other EU member states.

This rise of anti-EU sentiment among European publics and political actors has been accompanied by an increased academic interest in the study of Euroscepticism. With the exception of Featherstone’s (1988) account of socialist parties’ positions on European integration, initial publications on the topic appeared in the mid-1990s. Two key publications, which dealt with British Euroscepticism, put together a variety of speeches, essays and articles of self-proclaimed Eurosceptics (Holmes 1996, 2001). Gaffney’s (1996) edited volume addressed the relationship between national political parties and the EU from a comparative perspective. Benoit (1998) analysed Eurosceptic discourse in France. The question of how to define Euroscepticism, however, was first addressed by Taggart (1998: 366), who employed a differentiation between European integration and defined Euroscepticism as the ‘idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration’. He argued that party-based Euroscepticism tends to be associated with protest politics.

Taggart’s definition is broad in the sense that it includes all those who are sceptical vis-à-vis the EU institutional reality. In further publications, Taggart and Szczerbiak (e.g. 2001, 2004) refine this definition and differentiate between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ Euroscepticism. Kopecký and Mudde (2002) criticised Taggart and Szczerbiak’s hard–soft distinction on the grounds that it is broad, it lacks specific criteria of categorisation, and that every disagreement with any aspect of the EU may be categorised as soft Euroscepticism. The term Euroscepticism according to these authors should not be employed to refer to parties that have specific disagreements with EU policies. To address this, the authors draw upon Easton (1965) and put forward a two-dimensional conceptualisation of Euroscepticism, which distinguishes between diffuse and specific support for European integration. Based on this distinction, the authors identify four types of party positions on Europe: Euroenthusiasts, Europragmatists, Eurosceptics and Eurorejects.

Moving the debate forward, Flood (2002) reflected upon the utility of the Eurosceptic label and put forward a set of six categories seeking to capture the full continuum of possible positions on the EU. These include from left to right, rejectionist, revisionist, minimalist, gradualist, reformist and maximalist. The proposed categories can relate to position on either the entire
EU project and its structures, or specific policy areas. Flood has been clear not to link this
typology to issues of ideology and/or strategy, and the labels are intended to be value-neutral.
The aim is to provide a tighter specification of possible positions on the EU that allows the
categorisation of party shifts, over time, from one position to another. In this sense, Flood’s
typology intends to have a dynamic rather than a static character.

Vasilopoulou (2011) contributed to the debate over the definition of Euroscepticism by
providing specific indicators on the basis of which to classify party positions. She identified four
different aspects related to European integration and the EU, namely ‘a common cultural
definition of Europe, the principle of cooperation at a European multilateral level, the EU
policy practice and the desire to build a future European polity’ (Vasilopoulou 2011: 224).
These indicators have enabled the classification of radical right parties into three patterns of
Euroscepticism: rejecting, conditional and compromising. The definition of a Euroscepticism
indicator is specific to the party family; radical right parties tend to have a common cultural
understanding of Europe, i.e. a continent bound by cultural, historical and religious ties; other
party families may define Europe in geographical or in economic terms.

Issues of conceptualisation and definition have dominated the study of Euroscepticism and,
thus far, there is no common definition used by all scholars in the field. These debates tend to
be more prominent among scholars who work on political parties from a primarily qualitative
perspective than among those who employ large-N quantitative research designs. To some
extent, this reflects the nature of analysis and the type of measurement. Many scholars have
relied on expert surveys, which are intended to provide cross-national data on party positions
on European integration. Ray (1999) relied on expert judgements in order to define the
European orientations of political parties. A set of country experts were selected and were
requested to score parties on a number of general questions on European integration, ideological
questions and specific EU policies. This type of methodology has been applied in Benoit and
expert survey of party positioning on European integration.

The Chapel Hill expert survey is one of the most widely used sources of party positions on the
EU (Bakker et al. 2015). Experts are invited to evaluate party positions not only on the general
dimension of European integration, but also on specific EU policies, such as the EU’s internal
market, the EU’s cohesion and regional policies, and the EU’s foreign and security policy. They
also report the relative salience of these EU issues within each party. This type of design yields
systematic and comparable data on position and salience irrespective of whether the party issued a
manifesto. Reliability is assessed through an examination of the standard deviations of expert
scores, i.e. the extent to which experts agree on the placement of parties on the EU scales. Validity
of estimates is evaluated through a comparison of the expert survey data and alternative sources of
party positioning. These may include the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) dataset that
infers party policy positions from a content analysis of electoral manifestos (e.g. Budge et al. 2001;
Klingemann et al. 2006) and the European Election Study (EES) that asks respondents to place
political parties on a set of dimensions and policy issues. These studies tend to conceptualise
Euroscepticism as a continuum, which includes the full spectrum of possible positions on the EU,
i.e. positive, neutral and negative. For example, the Chapel Hill questionnaire asks country
specialists to rate the ‘overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration’ on
a scale that ranges from 1 that denotes ‘strongly opposed’ to 7 which indicates ‘strongly in favour’.
In addition to its longitudinal and cross-national design, the advantage of such an approach is that
negative positions on the EU are not analysed in stand-alone terms, but in the context of all
possible positions that parties may take on the EU. However, expert surveys are limited by design
in that they are not able to qualitatively nuance the positions of different parties.
Discussions over the definition of Euroscepticism have been less prominent in the literature that examines individual-level attitudes on European integration. Scholars of political behaviour measure public Euroscepticism through the use of survey questions. The most widely used survey questions include first, a question from EES referring to the general EU project:

Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where ‘0’ means unification ‘has already gone too far’ and ‘10’ means it ‘should be pushed further’. What number on this scale best describes your position?

Second, the Eurobarometer question on EU membership:

Generally speaking, do you think that (our country’s) membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?

Third, the Eurobarometer question on identity:

In the near future, do you see yourself as (1) (nationality) only; (2) (nationality) and European; (3) European and (nationality); (4) European only?

More recently, the Eurobarometer question that elicit evaluations of the EU’s image:

In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative, or very negative image? (e.g. Eurobarometer 2014)

A few contributions on public Euroscepticism have addressed the question of definition in some detail, showing its multidimensionality. For example, Krowel and Abts (2007) argue that Euroscepticism may include sceptical, cynical or oppositional attitudes. They develop a two-dimensional conceptualisation of political discontent. The first axis differentiates between people’s attitudes towards the European authorities, the European regime and the European community, in what the authors describe as the ‘targets of discontent’. Citizens evaluate European authorities on the basis of the integrity and competence of political actors. They assess the European political system and its institutions on the basis of its responsiveness to citizen needs and its performance. European community refers to the extent to which they feel attachment to European integration as a project that secures peace and prosperity for European peoples. The second axis differentiates attitudes according to their degree of reflexivity. This includes ‘three elements: (a) the level of monitoring of the political environment, (b) the degree of openness to evaluating relevant information and (c) the extent of differentiation between the targets’ (Krowel and Abts 2007: 254). These two dimensions allow for the construction of a typology of political attitudes, ranging from Euro-confidence, Euro-scepticism, Euro-distrust and Euro-cynicism to Euro-alienation. Crucially, populist parties can tap into these political orientations and influence both the levels of negative attitudes on European integration and the degree of people’s reflexivity.

Similarly, Wessels (2007) differentiates between public orientations towards the authorities, the regime and the community. He goes on to suggest that these orientations must be conceptualised in a hierarchical manner. Political community comes first: in fact, identification with the European community may act as a buffer against Euroscepticism and political discontent. Sørensen (2008) goes beyond the classification of targets of opposition and instead identifies four
types of public Euroscepticism that focus on the form of opposition. These include the utilitarian, sovereignty-based, democratic and social Euroscepticism types. The utilitarian variant relates to the economic sphere, measured by people’s evaluation of the EU’s negative impact on indicators such as exports, industry, standard of living and agriculture. Sovereignty-based Euroscepticism refers to opposition to supranational structures of EU governance. Democratic Euroscepticism captures the view that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit, measured through European citizens’ levels of dissatisfaction with EU democracy. Lastly, social Euroscepticism summarises the criticism that the EU is too liberal and not social enough.

Perhaps the most comprehensive definition of public attitudes towards the EU derives from Boomgaarden et al. (2011), who identify five dimensions: performance, identity, affection, utilitarianism and strengthening. The performance dimension relates to evaluations of the functioning of European institutions. The identity dimension refers to identification with the EU, European history and EU symbols. The affective component denotes feelings of fear or anger towards the EU. The utilitarian approach to European integration captures the perception that a given EU member state has benefited from being a member of the EU and the opinion that the EU fosters peace and stability. The strengthening dimension relates to support for the future of European integration and policy transfer to the EU. The authors argue that given the complexity of the EU project, it is essential to study the multiple dimensions of EU attitudes. While this argument is convincing, studies are constrained by the design of existing public opinion surveys. To study the multi-faceted nature of mass Euroscepticism is a costly exercise, as scholars may need to conduct their own surveys with questions that capture these various attitudes.

This brief discussion has shown that Euroscepticism is a contested concept. It describes a multidimensional political phenomenon that may vary depending on actor and citizen preferences. Some scholars conceptualise Euroscepticism as a continuum, and others in categorical terms. It may be defined in terms of modes of opposition (diffuse, specific), targets of opposition (authorities, regime, community), intensity of opposition (hard, soft), indicators of opposition (principle, practice, future of integration) and type of opposition (utilitarian, sovereignty-based, democratic, social). Scholars are faced with a trade-off between specificity and wider applicability. Some of the definitions have been criticised as too inclusive, others as too exclusive. Most scholars would perhaps agree on the distinction between, on the one hand, the general principle of support for integration and, on the other hand, the specific policy and institutional practice of the EU.

Research design in Euroscepticism research

Having provided an overview of the scholarly debate on the definitions of Euroscepticism, this section proceeds with a more in-depth discussion of the state of the art to understand how – if at all – Euroscepticism may have changed over time, asking a series of questions.

- What types of research design do scholars use in order to evaluate the nature of Euroscepticism?
- What is the major entity being analysed in each study?
- Is Euroscepticism treated as a dependent or an independent variable?

Are the methodological and design approaches mostly case study or large-N oriented?

- Is Euroscepticism studied at one point in time or from a longitudinal perspective?
- Which are the most prominent theories in the field and to what extent are new theoretical approaches arising?
In order to answer these questions, this section carries out a meta-analysis of journal articles on the topic of Euroscepticism (for a similar approach on Europeanization studies, see Exadaktylos and Radaelli 2009). A selection of journal articles based on the Social Science Citation Index was first compiled (search word: Euroscept*, time span: all years). A sample of frequently cited articles was extracted based on the H-index. The H-index for this group of articles is $20^i$ i.e. there are twenty journal articles on Euroscepticism that have at least twenty citations. To increase the number of observations, ten articles were added to the initial twenty. These articles were published between 1998 and 2013 (see Table 3.1). This sample of most cited articles was compared to the total number of articles published in 2014 in order to gauge information on recent trends in the study of Euroscepticism (see Table 3.2). Reviews, introductions to special issues and articles with no clear relevance to the topic have been removed. Overall this process produced twenty-eight top-cited articles and twenty-six published in 2014. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 also indicate the journals where these articles have been published. The meta-analysis was carried out on the following articles:

**Table 3.1 Top-cited articles in the study of Euroscepticism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year of publication</th>
<th>Journal*</th>
<th>Times cited</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hooghe, Marks &amp; Wilson</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>EJPR</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Marks, Hooghe, Nelson &amp; Edwards</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>121</td>
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<td>Mattila</td>
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</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Steenbergen, Edwards &amp; De Vries</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>EUP</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hix &amp; Marsh</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>JoP</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Taggart &amp; Szczerbiak</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>De Vries</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>EUP</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>De Vries &amp; Edwards</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kriesi</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>EUP</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Evans</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>BJPS</td>
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<td>Tillman</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>McLaren</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Hobolt, Spoon &amp; Tilley</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>BJPS</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bilgin</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>EJPR</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>De Vreese, Boomgaarden &amp; Semetko</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Szczerbiak</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>JCMS</td>
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<td>Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas &amp; de Vreese</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Garry &amp; Tilley</td>
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<td>De Vries</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Kuhn</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>EJPR</td>
<td>15</td>
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Notes: * Acta Politica (AP); British Journal of Political Science (BJPS); Comparative Political Studies (CPS); European Journal of Political Research (EJPR); European Union Politics (EUP); Journal of Common Market Studies (JCMS); Journal of Politics (JoP); Party Politics (PP); West European Politics (WEP). These articles are sorted based on the number of times they have been cited. The research was conducted in April 2015.
Table 3.2 Articles on Euroscepticism published in 2014

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ID</th>
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<th>Year of publication</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Braun &amp; Tausendpfund</td>
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<td>Closa &amp; Maatsch</td>
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<td>De Wilde, Michailidou &amp; Trenz</td>
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Notes: * Journal of European Public Policy (JEPP); Journal of European Integration (JoEI); European Union Politics (EUP); Government & Opposition (G&O); South European Society and Politics (SESP). These articles are presented in alphabetical order.

conducted based on a number of indicators (see Tables 3.3 and 3.4) in order to provide aggregate and comparative information related to thematic focus and research design. Note that there are cases of unclassified articles under certain indicators.

Two indicators are employed in order to assess thematic ‘focus’ in the two article groups (see Table 3.3). The first is unit of analysis, which examines the major entity of study in each article. It broadly groups articles in three categories, i.e. those articles that focus on citizen attitudes, those that examine political party positions on the EU, and ‘other’. The second indicator is country. The distinction here is between articles that focus on a comparative analysis of Western European countries in a block (EU-15), Central and Eastern European Countries in a block (CEE), the two groups of countries together (EU-15 and CEE), comparative analysis of countries that are too few to be classified in the previous three categories, and single country case studies.

The meta-analysis reveals that there has been comparatively more emphasis on public-based rather than party-based Euroscepticism among the top-cited articles group. This changes for the group of articles published in 2014, where we observe that the focus on citizens has decreased and that there are a few more studies on parties/elites. There are four articles in 2014 as opposed to only one (Mattila 2004) in the top-cited category where the unit of analysis is neither parties
nor the public. The unit of analysis of these four articles published in 2014 also varies; Schimmelfennig and Winzen (2014) focus on differentiation in EU treaty law; Jensen (2014) examines co-ordination mechanisms in the EU; Breeze (2014) studies the financial crisis in Spain seen through a media analysis of two major British newspapers; and Vollard (2014) evaluates the prospect of European disintegration from a theoretical perspective. It is noteworthy that there are four top-cited articles that integrate both parties and citizens in their analyses – Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004); Steenbergen et al. (2007); de Vries and Edwards (2009); and de Vries (2010) – but two in the 2014 group – de Wilde et al. (2014) and Freire et al. (2014).

The country focus varies greatly across the two groups. Given that the top-cited articles cover quite a few years, spanning from 1998 to 2013, there have been few articles focusing exclusively on the EU-15. Only one article published in 2014 examines exclusively Western Europe (Van de Wardt et al. 2014). Ten articles published in 2014 study all EU member states (EU-15 and CEE), in comparison to eight in the top-cited articles category. In both groups of publications, a similar number of articles focus on small or medium-N country comparisons. Articles in the top-cited group tend to include Western European countries, such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Germany and the UK in various combinations. In 2014, the small/medium-N comparative country focus is less on Northern European member states and more on Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria (e.g. Pirro 2014), and Southern European countries, namely Greece and Portugal (e.g. Freire et al. 2014). The selection of country case studies also varies between the two groups. Within the top-cited publications, two case study articles focus on the Netherlands, two on Turkey, one on the UK and one on Poland. The UK features prominently in case study articles published in 2014: five articles examine the UK, and two group Greece and Cyprus respectively.

The ‘research design’ of these articles is evaluated on the basis of three indicators (see Table 3.4). The first indicator addresses the rationale of research design. It assesses whether Euroscepticism is treated as a dependent variable – i.e. a variable to be explained – or if it is treated as an independent variable, namely the explanation of another phenomenon. The second indicator refers to the methodological and design approach of the study. This differentiates between case study narratives, comparative studies using qualitative methods, comparative studies employing quantitative methods, and case studies that are approached from a quantitative perspective. The third indicator is time, which differentiates between cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Cross-sectional research focuses on a single point in time, taking a ‘slice’ or ‘cross-section’ of what is to be observed. Longitudinal studies analyse repeated observations of the phenomenon over time.

Table 3.3 Thematic focus in the study of Euroscepticism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of analysis</th>
<th>Top-cited</th>
<th>2014 publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parties/elites</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both public and parties</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEE only</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-15 &amp; CEE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small/medium-N comparative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis indicates that Euroscepticism tends to be mostly treated as a dependent variable in the literature. The majority of studies both in the top-cited articles and those published in 2014 seek to understand and/or explain this phenomenon. Research questions in top-cited articles relate to a number of topics, including the relationship between party competition and Euroscepticism (e.g. Marks et al. 2006); the extent to which party ideology provides the structure for party positions on European integration (e.g. Hooghe et al. 2002); the effect of party strategies on party Eurosceptic positions (e.g. Taggart 1998; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004; Szczerbiak 2001); the extent to which the EU features in national campaigns (Kriesi 2007); the role of identity, interests and party cues in explaining mass Euroscepticism (e.g. McLaren 2007; Wessels 2007; De Vreese et al. 2008; Garry and Tilley 2009; Lubbers and Scheepers 2010; Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Serricchio et al. 2013); the specific dimensions of citizens’ EU attitudes (Boomgaarden et al. 2011); and the effect of transnational interaction on support for EU membership (Kuhn 2011).

A few articles published in 2014 also examine the role of identity and utilitarianism in predicting public attitudes towards various aspects of EU integration (e.g. Braun and Tausendpfund 2014; Clements et al. 2014; Freire et al. 2014; Hobolt 2014; Kuhn and Stoeckel 2014; Verhaegen et al. 2014). The difference between these articles and the top-cited group is that most articles published in 2014 take the financial crisis as a starting point. Additional perspectives include attitudinal ambivalence towards Turkey’s EU membership (Erisen and Erisen 2014); the effect of news media coverage on Eurosceptic voting (van Spanje and de Vreese 2014); the ways in which Eurosceptic EP groups form and develop (Whitaker and Lynch 2014); public contestation over European integration in online media spheres (de Wilde et al. 2014); the role of the EU issue in populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe (Pirro 2014); and the development of the UK Blair government’s policy towards the single currency (Buller 2014).

Scholars also examine Euroscepticism as an independent variable in both groups of publications. Top-cited articles employ Euroscepticism to understand other phenomena, such as electoral outcomes in EP elections (Hix and Marsh 2007; Hobolt et al. 2008), national elections (Tillman 2004; de Vries 2007, 2010) and referendums (Lubbers 2008), or electoral support for specific parties (e.g. Evans 1998). Euroscepticism is employed to explain different kinds of phenomena in 2014, e.g. differentiation in European Union treaty law (Schimmelfennig...
and Winzen 2014); national parliamentarians’ approval of the European Financial Stability Facility (Closa and Maatsch 2014); member states’ co-ordination mechanisms (Jensen 2014); gendered patterns of candidate recruitment (Chiva 2014); party strategies in the House of Commons (Tzelgov 2014); and national and imperial consciousness in Britain (Wellings 2014).

Scholars are increasingly employing Euroscepticism in order to understand a number of other phenomena, which suggests that the study of Euroscepticism is increasingly becoming integrated into the study of European integration and national European politics.

The most prevalent methodological approach in both groups of articles is comparative quantitative, i.e. studies of multiple countries employing quantitative methods. This indicates that the majority of the studies on Euroscepticism seek to uncover empirical patterns in a large number of cases and are concerned with the external validity of their arguments and theories. Breadth seems to be prioritised over depth and detailed analysis. The relative number of articles with a comparative quantitative design in 2014 is lower than in the top-cited group. In 2014, there are five articles with a case study narrative approach, as opposed to one in the top-cited group. This, of course, could be an artefact of the H-index, as articles that focus on one case study tend to be more narrow in scope and less likely to be widely referenced. The ‘other’ category consists of Krowel and Abts (2007) and Vollard (2014), which have a purely theoretical focus.

In terms of time, the analysis indicates that scholars have analysed the phenomenon of Euroscepticism both from a longitudinal perspective and focusing on a specific point in time. Time is very important as it involves trade-offs. On the one hand, cross-sectional studies can evaluate the phenomenon in more detail but are less strong in terms of breadth. On the other hand, longitudinal designs provide a more integrated analysis identifying the changes that have occurred over time, but lack in specificity. There are no significant differences in terms of number of articles published between the two types of study, which indicates that Euroscepticism has been covered both in terms of breadth and depth.

**What next in the study of Euroscepticism?**

If we accept that the first study of Euroscepticism that was particularly influential may be located towards the end of the 1990s (Taggart 1998), then this academic field is almost twenty years old. During these years, a variety of scholars from different backgrounds have sought to conceptualise, measure, understand and explain Euroscepticism. This has produced a wealth of articles in highly reputed journals and academic presses. Due to research limitations, this contribution has only considered journal articles for the meta-analysis. Given that these articles cover both top-cited articles in the field and a second group focusing on articles published in 2014, the sample is taken to be representative for the purposes of this research. The analysis points to three avenues for further research that relate to different dimensions of Euroscepticism, new thematic approaches to its study, and novel research designs.

First, when conceptualising Euroscepticism, scholars need to also take into consideration political developments, especially when these have the potential to alter domestic government–opposition dynamics and the nature of the EU project itself. Since the end of the 2000s, the EU is under ‘serious stress’ (Cramme and Hobolt 2015), facing severe economic and political crisis. However, despite the fact that we have entered a new era in the history of the EU, we lack research that would unpack whether the dimensions of Euroscepticism have changed as a result of the crisis or whether they have remained the same. Developments such as the Spitzenkandidaten process for the election of the President of the European Commission, the debates over Greece’s place in the Eurozone and the Brexit referendum outcome have increased political contestation in and about the EU. Have the dynamics of opposition to the EU post-crisis remained the same
compared to the pre-crisis period? Can we discern specific patterns of dimensions of opposition depending on whether a country is a non-Eurozone member, a creditor or a debtor? New tools and frameworks are needed in order to define Euroscepticism in conditions of crisis and in times of major transformations. Public opinion and expert surveys need to address these questions by design. New and more specific questions need to be asked that would allow us to better map different attitudes so that we have a fuller understanding of this phenomenon, and assess the ways in which it has changed since the eruption of the crisis. For example, opposition to EU freedom of movement may be thought of as a new dimension of Euroscepticism. This is partly a consequence of increased labour mobility as a result of the crisis, and was prominent during the Brexit referendum campaign (see also Vasilopoulou 2016).

Second, two key thematic approaches are identified. In terms of antecedents of Euroscepticism, scholars need to go beyond identity, utilitarian and cue-taking approaches. The effect of emotions and affective considerations on the various stages of EU opinion formation should be examined in both observational and experimental settings (see Vasilopoulou and Wagner 2016). Findings deriving from such analyses would have major implications not only on better understanding the causes of Eurosceptic attitudes but also predicting the effectiveness of political campaigns. In addition, Euroscepticism should be analysed in terms of its consequences on domestic politics. The salience of the EU issue in member states has increased dramatically as a result of the crisis. It would be useful to focus on the ways in which the EU issue is portrayed in national election campaigns post-crisis compared to pre-crisis. Experimental settings that would examine the relationship between, on the one hand, citizen exposure to stimuli related to different aspects of European integration and, on the other, political attitudes and behaviour at the domestic level are particularly welcome. The conceptualisation of the topic of European integration as a ‘wedge’ issue, i.e. an issue that is not integrated into the dominant left–right dimension of politics and is becoming increasingly divisive both between and within parties, is relatively new. How can divisions over the EU help us understand various issues in contemporary politics both at the EU and national levels, such as party competition, political campaigns, electoral behaviour and coalition formation?

Third, the literature has predominantly taken a ‘causes of effects’ rationale in examining Euroscepticism. Scholars tend to start from the outcome, namely Euroscepticism, and then ask what caused it. To advance the study of Euroscepticism, scholars should be open to changing the logic of causality to forward causal inference, i.e. taking Euroscepticism as a putative cause and investigating its effects. This type of research has to some extent commenced with those studies that view Euroscepticism as an independent variable. These articles tend to rely on observational studies and their results are based on robust association between variables. To progresses beyond the state of the art, scholars should explore Euroscepticism through an ‘effects of causes’ rationale through the employment of experimental designs. Such designs are thus far in limited use (except de Vreese 2007 in the sample) but have the potential to demonstrate the causal effect of Euroscepticism as a key independent variable in the study of EU and European politics.

Notes

1 The H-index is based on the number of citations per year and changes as more articles on Euroscepticism are cited over time. Empirical research for this contribution was conducted in April 2015. I ran the same search on 24 October 2016, which pointed to a similar citation trend: 22 out of the 28 top–cited articles examined here remained in the top–cited category in 2016.

2 Quantitative designs here may include either the use of multivariate statistical analysis and/or quantitative content analysis.
References


Theory, concepts and research design