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**The gendering of Euro-skepticism:
Public discourses and support to the EU in a
cross-national comparison**

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Introduction

With their campaigns against the entry of their country into the European Union in 1994, Norwegian women could not be blamed for a lack of humor: “Blondes never say no”, their posters joked, “except on the 28th of November”. A female leader of the Socialist Leftist Party explained why they turned the EU down: “We have studied the men from the EU-Commission in Brussels. They are neither sexy nor do they have money. No reason to vote yes.”² The no’s won - and Norway stayed out of the EU. 1994 apparently was the year of the gender gap in Europe: it saw women not only in Norway, Sweden and Finland, but also in the twelve older member states outweigh men in skepticism on European unification. In the Swedish, Finnish and Austrian referenda campaigns that same year, women’s organizations and female leaders broadly engaged in popular mobilizations against their country’s entry into the EU. Danish women voting against the Maastricht-treaty and those abstaining (44% respectively 21%) in the first Danish referendum, on June 2, 1992, were enough to make the treaty fail and to force their government and the Community to re-open negotiations³. Discrepancies between women’s and men’s support for European unification became manifest at an extremely high level (with a gap larger than 10%) not only in the new EU-member Sweden, or in Norway, but also for instance in Greece and France. In most of the other EU-countries the gender disparities ranged between 7 and 10% (Luxemburg, Ireland, UK, Portugal, Germany, Finland, Belgium, Italy). Only in Spain and the Netherlands, women and

¹ The idea for this study was conceived for my commentary to the conference “Varieties of Europe”, at the NYU/Deutsches Haus, New York, in January 1996; I articulated it first in my paper “A gender gap in the European Union? Exploring patterns of female support to European integration”, for the interdisciplinary conference “A World in Transition: Feminist Perspectives on International Relations”, University of Lund, Sweden, June 1996; I further revised this paper for a presentation under the title “What the European Union means to Women” at the Institute for European Studies, Cornell University, in November 1996. I am grateful to Hermann Schmitt (ZEUS, Mannheim) for providing me, despite and because of his doubts, with the stimulus to start this research as well as with Eurobarometer data analyses; Manfred Küchler helped me with some of the inevitable trials and errors of any quantitative data analysis, as well as with criticism in the early stages; and I benefited from Karlheinz Reif’s and Ana Melich’s helpfulness in providing me with surveys, conducted by the DG10 of the EU-Commission. I felt encouraged to pursue my argument by Philippe C. Schmitter’s comments, and I want to thank Minna Gillberg, Celia Valiente, Chiara Saraceno, Herbert Doering, Jonas Pontusson, Mary Katzenstein and Peter Katzenstein for many stimulating suggestions, more than I was able to incorporate into my research at its current stage that this working paper reflects.

² Reinhard Wolff: “Blondinen sagen fast niemals nein”, in “TAZ”, Nov. 26, 1994: 11

³ The overall outcome of the first Danish referendum on the Maastricht treaty were 40% yes, 42% no, and 18% abstentions; women voted with 35% yes (men 47%), with 44% no (men 38%), and 21% of the women abstained (men 15%); cf. Drude Dahlerup: *Demokratiets fremtid I et europæisk kvindeperspektiv*; in KVINFO, *Kvindeoffentlighed I Europa*, Copenhagen 1996: 53

men in their EU-support appeared to differ hardly (cf. Table 1: Gender disparities in public EU-support 1994).

Table 1: Gender disparities in public EU-support, 1994 (%)⁴

		wome n	Men	differenc e
high (> 10%)	Denmark	22.2	38.9	16.7
	Greece	35.1	46.4	11.3
	Norway	13.1	24.1	11.0
	Sweden	16.3	26.7	10.4
	France	21.2	31.4	10.2
Medium(5-10%)	Luxemburg	50.7	60.5	9.8
	Ireland	45.3	54.7	9.4
	UK	15.2	24.1	8.9
	Portugal	20.4	28.9	8.5
	Germany West	30.9	38.6	7.7
	Finland	21.8	29.2	7.4
	Austria	20.5	27.7	7.2
	Germany East	20	27.1	7.1
	Belgium	21	27.6	6.6
	Italy	35.7	42.3	6.6
low (< 5%)	Spain	16.4	20.3	3.9
	Netherlands	31.9	35.3	3.4
Source: EBFall/1994				

⁴ Since 1981, Eurobarometer measures public support to the EC/EU by asking four questions: “In general, are you for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe?”; “Would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the EU?”; “Do you think that (your country’s) membership of the EU is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?”; “If you were told tomorrow that the EU had been scraped, would you be very sorry about it?” The %-values in Table 1 indicate the proportion of respondents that answered all four questions positively.

Do these data indicate the emergence of a “gender gap” in European politics? How could such a gap be accounted for?⁵

The development of mass popular opposition against the EU and, more particularly, the apparent gendering of Euro-skepticism, challenge a number of hypotheses and expectations commonly held by analysts of European integration and of the dynamics of public support for Europe:

1. The strengthening of public skepticism and opposition against the European Union contradicts any earlier assumption of a vast public “permissive consensus” in favor of European unification serving to facilitate conditions for the building of the Community (Lindberg/Scheingold 1970). As a consequence of the transformation of “nation states” into “member states” that has characterized the evolution of the European Community, the controversies around the Maastricht treaty have provoked a politicization of European mass publics that appears irreversible (Sbragia 1994)⁶. The politicization of citizens in Europe has not only been conducive to “bringing public opinion back in” to the research agenda on European integration (Sinnott 1995); but has also brought to light questions of gender and their impact on public opinion relevant to EU-politics.

2. The emergence of a gendered mass public opinion on issues of European integration appears particularly at odds with those views that consider gender differences in “analyzing attitudes, opinions and values in Western industrialized countries in the year 2000” as “a topic without a future”.⁷ The most prominent explanations for the dynamics of public support for Europe draw on structural variables such as domestic economic conditions, the EC’s economic record and national benefits deriving from membership (Anderson/Kaltenthaler 1996; Anderson/Reichert 1996); individual characteristics such as occupation, income, age group,

⁵ A gender gap was first discovered in U.S. politics during the 1980 presidential elections that brought Ronald Reagan to power, and since then has given rise to an ever expanding literature, see Carol M. Mueller (ed.) 1988.

⁶ Before Maastricht, national and supranational political, administrative, judicial and business elites were conceived as the crucial players in negotiating the coordination and communitarization of national public policies and in promoting their “spill-overs” to always new domains; see: Alberta Sbragia: “From ‘Nation-State’ to ‘Member State’: the Evolution of the European Community”; in P.M.Luetzeler, *Europe after Maastricht. American and European Perspectives*, Providence/Oxford 1994: 69-88; id. (ed.), *Euro-Politics. Institutions and Policymaking in the “New” European Community*; Washington 1992

⁷ Although Marita Rosch Inglehart concludes with the optimistic expectation that “in so far as structural variables and individual factors change towards equality for men and women, the less interesting research on gender differences will be”, she makes some useful suggestions for improving survey research questions on that topic; see M.R.Inglehart: “Gender Differences

values and voting intention (Inglehart/Rabier/Reif 1987), or, in a process-perspective, the length of membership in the EC and demographic replacement (Wessels 1995). If, however, gender differences should prove to be a significant determinant for EU-support among European mass publics, it follows among others that - in contrast, for instance, to Dalton's and Eichenberg's (1993) earlier prediction - the successful fighting of economic recession -- be it by implementing the Single European market or by introducing the "Euro" -- could no longer be expected to figure as the principle rationale for citizens maintaining or even increasing their support for the EU.

3. Finally, the discovery of a gender gap in EU-support contrasts with the expectation that women should develop more positive attitudes towards the EU, given the range of women friendly policies adopted by the EC since the mid-seventies. In her assessments of EC-social policies, Beverly Springer for instance concluded that EC has been "instrumental in advancing the interests of working women" (Springer 1992: 65). While admitting that the social dimension of the EU has remained rudimentary compared to the initiatives taken for reinforcing market integration in Europe, Stephan Leibfried and Paul Pierson similarly argued that "the Union has established important social regulations - including protections and benefits for women workers that are sometimes far more extensive than those offered in the United States" (Pierson/Leibfried 1995:3), with the European Court of Justice playing a particularly activist role (Leibfried/ Pierson 1995: 47). Catherine Hoskyns, too, has argued that the European Community's policy on women's rights since the 1970s "has provided a rare example of a European policy which grants social rights and engages at least to some extent with a mobilised political community", namely women's organizations⁸. If women were aware of these achievements, wouldn't they rather welcome further integration?

The literature on gender and public opinion suggests three possible explanations for resolving this puzzle of the unexpected gender discrepancies in public EU-support, and, more specifically, for accounting for women's more skeptical and negative orientations: From a traditional standpoint, European women's support for the EU might be seen to lag behind

in *Sex-Role Attitudes: A Topic Without a Future?* In K.Reif/ R. Inglehart: "Eurobarometer. The Dynamics of European Public Opinion"; St. Martin's Press 1991: 187-200

⁸ See: Catherine Hoskyns: "Integrating Gender. Women, Law and Politics in the European Union"; London, New York, Verso 1996

that of men because women either continue to be less interested in politics in general, and in European politics in particular, or they tend to endorse more strongly conservative, nationalist and hence anti-European positions. A second argument would see the “EU-gender gap” as an ephemeral artifact resulting from the unstable and ambiguous “nature and origins of mass opinion” (Zaller 1992) and from individual preference statements that respondents to survey questionnaires typically construct “on the fly”. In the first two sections, I will discuss these two views, point out some of the empirical contradictions of the “female deficit hypothesis”, and outline why the EU-gender gap appears to be more than an ephemeral artifact. In the last three sections, I will develop an alternative account of the motivations and meanings underlying the gender disparities in public orientations toward European integration. With my argument I will draw on the theory of “relative deprivation”, interpreting feminist critiques of the EU as “relative deprivation discourses” and women’s comparatively stronger Euro-skepticism correspondingly motivated by the perception that the project of European unification will entail backlashes with regard to their current position and opportunities at the national and local level.

The gender gap in EU-support - women’s “deficit”?

Since the appearance of Maurice Duverger’s “The Political Role of Women” (1955) and Seymour M. Lipset’s “The Political Man” (1960)⁹, there has been a broad acceptance of the “female deficit”- thesis in the comparative literature on political behavior. Its underlying assumptions are twofold: that women are either more apolitical, or, if they become politicized, more conservative than men¹⁰. Does this conventional wisdom still apply to the majority of women in the Europe of the nineties, i.e., does the emerging gender gap in public opinion on the European Union have its origin either in a deficit of political interest and information, or in a conservative bias on the part of European women? In public opinion research on Western Europe, the pioneers of the “Civic Culture Study” (1959), Almond and Verba, have laid the

⁹ Maurice Duverger found that in Norway, France and Germany women and men usually voted on the same lines, but where there was divergence, women voted more strongly for right-wing parties; similar patterns were found for Greece, Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland, Britain and Italy; see Pippa Norris 1988: 218f.. Seymour M. Lipset reported that women were an important source of political and moral conservatism and for rightist political parties; see Jelen/Thomas/Wilcox 1994: 171.

ground for the dichotomous image of “public man, private woman”. In their exploration of the forms of political participation in the fifties, the authors reported large differences in political activism between men and women (Almond/Verba 1959: 70). Two decades later, the “Political Action Study” -- analyzing wider forms of political action in the seventies -- still concluded that conventional political participation was “most heavily influenced by sex” (Marsh/Kaase 1979: 106). Russell Dalton agreed with them insofar as he found that “men are more politically active than women in virtually all Western democracies” (Dalton 1988: 49). Confirming the same position, Jan Van Deth observed in his study “Continuities in Political Action” that women showed less interest in politics because of persisting traditional gender roles that define women as unpolitical (Van Deth 1989). Assuming that “men always show more interest in public affairs than women do”, Van Deth conceived sex – in addition to education and age – as a relevant predictor of political interest in Western Europe (Van Deth 1991: 208). An underlying assumption in all major studies, from the analysis of “Civic Culture” (1959) and the “Political Action Study” (1973-6) to the “European Values Survey” (1981) and the “Continuities in Political Action” (1989), is the notion that European women have remained less interested in and also more apathetic toward politics.¹¹ From this “traditional gender gap” perspective, the disparities in public EU-support appear as just manifestation more of the general pattern of diverging interests between the sexes. The Eurobarometer special opinion poll on “Women and men in Europe and equal opportunities” (1997) can be cited for most recent evidence: it demonstrates that more women than men admittedly suffered from a lack of political information, even on those specific national and EC-policies that should be in their proper interest¹².

¹⁰ M.Goot/E.Reid: “Women if not apolitical, then conservative”, in J. Siltanen/M. Stanworth (eds.), “Women and the Public Sphere”, Hutchinson 1984

¹¹ Kaase and Barnes in their distinction of four modes of political involvement define “political apathy” as “no interest and no action”, and “political detachment” as “interest but no action”; cf. Kaase/Barnes 1979; taking issue with the “traditional gender gap”-thesis, Marita Rosch Inglehart argued that gender was rather “a topic without a future” (M.R.Inglehart, in Reif/Inglehart eds., 1991).

¹² This EB-report about a survey conducted in 1996 demonstrated that although nearly half of the respondents were in favor of equal opportunities, only a minority appeared to be informed about existing national laws and European measures for promoting them. Especially women were found unaware of the existence of this type of legislation in greater numbers than men: “This ignorance of Community activities and of national legislation has, regrettably, increased over recent years and the number of Europeans who think that the Union is dealing with equality issues is hardly greater than it was in 1983” (EB 44.3, Brussels 1997: 15/6).

Since the mid-1980s, feminist scholars have challenged the “female deficit” thesis of women’s political behavior on conceptual as well as empirical grounds¹³. For a number of arguments that draw on structural analyses of European “post-industrial” politics, on large scale European public opinion research, and on gender and women’s studies, this traditional view appears particularly questionable if applied to the EU-gender gap: 1. socio-economic and political “gender advancement” has been identified as the most prominent feature of modernization in European post-industrial societies in the past two decades; 2. in this process, women have become undeniably politicized, with gender disparities rapidly narrowing and disappearing in all major dimensions of political attitudes and areas of political behavior; 3. In a number of European countries, the traditional gender gap has even been reversed, with more women than men shifting progressively towards liberal and leftist positions, on the political spectrum as well as on policy-issues:

Structural gender advancement in European post-industrial societies

In their comparative analysis of social structural convergence processes in Europe, Jan-Erik Lane and Svante O. Ersson argued that “gender-related developments” represented the most characteristic aspects of the post-industrial societies emerging in Europe, although with some cross-national variations¹⁴. Assuming that “gender advancement” represented the most prominent measure for modernization, they proceeded to use the UN- “gender empowerment-index” to demonstrate that the Northern European countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden) were the most “modern” ones, and core EC countries such as France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries more advanced compared to the other EC countries such as the UK, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain (cf.: Table 2: “Gender related development”)¹⁵.

¹³ For an earlier critical discussion of this traditional image of the apolitical woman see Joni Lovenduski: “Patterns of Women’s Political Behavior”, 1986: 117ff.; for an overview on the feminist critiques of “mainstream political science approaches” developed since the 1970s in the U.S., see Susan J. Carroll and Linda M.G. Zerilli: *Feminist Challenges to Political Science*; in Ada W. Finifter (ed.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*; APSA 1993: 55-76

¹⁴ Jan-Erik Lane and Svante O. Ersson: *European Politics. An Introduction*; Sage 1996: 61-63

¹⁵ See Lane/ Ersson 1996: 61. However, their indicators appear conceptually and normatively rather questionable: defining “gender advancement” as “pressures upon traditional family values”, they use indicators such as “divorce rates”, “children born outside of marriage” and “suicide rates”(!) for measuring it. For alternative conceptions and measures of “family friendly” welfare systems and gender regimes, see: Diane Sainsbury ed. 1994; Sainsbury 1996.

Table 2: Gender-related development and empowerment¹⁶

	GDI	GEM
	1990/2	1992/4
Sweden	0.919	0.757
Finland	0.918	0.722
Norway	0.911	0.752
Denmark	0.904	0.683
France	0.898	0.433
Austria	0.882	0.610
UK	0.862	0.483
Italy	0.861	0.585
Belgium	0.852	0.479
Netherlands	0.851	0.625
Portugal	0.832	0.435
Greece	0.825	-
Ireland	0.813	0.469
Spain	0.795	0.452
Luxemburg	0.790	0.542

Source: UN Human Development Report 1995: 76, 84

Although their claim that the modernization of gender relations correlated “neatly” with the advancement of political gender equality measured by women’s share in parliament seats and of ministers (Lane/Ersson 1996: 62) may be questioned in the light of striking anomalies, such as France, the U.S. or the UK, it is more important that their general argument throws into question the validity of the “female deficit” hypothesis: it is counterintuitive to assume that the Nordic and core European countries would have brought about high standards of “gender advancement” in terms of socio-economic as well as in

¹⁶ “GDI”, the “gender-related development index”, includes measures of women’s “share of earned income”, “life expectancy”, “adult literacy rate” and “combined school enrollment rate”; “GEM”, the “gender empowerment measure” includes women’s share of seats held in parliament, “administrative and management personnel”; “professional and technical workers”; and “earned income share” (by 1990-94); see: Human Development Report 1995, New York/ Oxford 1995

political equality, with women remaining politically more apathetic and detached than men. Still, Lane's and Ersson's gender modernization thesis would suggest to reconduce the large disparities in Euro-skepticism found among women and men in Greece, Portugal, Italy or Ireland to the relatively low level of "gender advancement" found in these countries, by this confirming partially the traditional hypothesis. As I shall demonstrate below, there is evidence enough to question the validity of this explanation regarding the Southern and Western European periphery.

The disappearing gender gap in political participation

The comprehensive study of the changing relationships between "Citizens and the State" in European societies (Klingemann/Fuchs eds. 1995) provides findings that put the traditional wisdom about a gender gap in political behavior not only in the "gender advanced" areas, but also in Southern Europe into question. In his comparative empirical analysis of electoral participation, Richard Topf finds a "counter-intuitive" and "clear trend towards equal electoral participation, and sometimes even higher participation among women than among men"¹⁷. Regarding other forms of political involvement beyond electoral participation, for instance levels of political discussion, Topf reports gender differences to be narrowing in all EC countries, at an "increasing rate", leading "possibly even towards the elimination of gender differences altogether by the mid-1990s" (Topf 1995b: 63). While he finds Ireland, Belgium and Germany to have achieved some progress between 1973 and 1991 with regard to leveling gender differences in political behavior, and Denmark, France and Italy to have achieved more progress, Greece has demonstrated by far the highest levels of female and male involvement in political discussion (Topf 1995: 64): Although in Greece structural gender equality appears to be lagging behind other European countries, in the relatively short time span of Greek's transition to and consolidation of a new democratic regime, behavioral gender patterns have changed here more quickly than in any of the other countries of Central and Northern Europe.

¹⁷ Richard Topf finds in the late 1980s a "slightly greater likelihood of men voting in Germany, but a modestly higher proportion of women stated they had voted in Britain, Spain, and Portugal". Pointing to the "modest demographic gender ratio in favor of women", he argues that "the absence of a gender skew in electoral participation means that, in absolute

Questioning the received wisdom on women's deficit of political interest further, Carina Lundmark, in her analysis of EB-data from 1975 - 1983, demonstrated that while differences between men's and women's political interests continued to exist, at the same time it was true that "high political interest is much more often found among feminist women than among men of masculine orientation and easily matches that among traditionalist men. Moreover a feminist orientation goes along with higher levels of political interest among both men and women". Increases of political interest among feminist women urged her to expect in the future the influence of the women's movement to spread, "bringing more women into the political arena"¹⁸.

Researchers challenged not only the traditional "apolitical women" view, but the "female conservatism"-hypothesis as well: Ronald Inglehart (1977) found that a greater female conservatism among women by no means was characteristic of all western democracies, but that it was more pronounced only in countries such as France, Belgium and Italy. For the UK, Pippa Norris questioned the relationship between women and conservatism with her striking discovery of the "reversed gender gap", namely the liberal-leftist turn of women in the 1983 British general elections (Norris 1986). In a comparative analysis of 1983 Eurobarometer data, she found that women and men in the ten EC-member states in general were very similar in their voting behavior but differed significantly in some of their issue-preferences. In contrast to the developments in the U.S. during the 1980s, women in Europe -- with the exception of Danish and younger women -- appeared neither more conservative nor more supportive of Communist and Socialist parties. In their policy preferences, however, Norris discovered a "potential gender gap", "with European women being more left wing than men on a range of issues"¹⁹. Compared to their more progressive positions in concrete policy questions, however, women continued to maintain a more conservative stance in their ideological

numerical terms, somewhat more women than men may be expected to vote in national elections"; see R. Topf : Electoral Participation; in Klingemann/Fuchs (eds.), *Citizens and the State*; Oxford University Press 1995: 47.

¹⁸ Carina Lundmark: *Feminist Political Orientations*; in Jan W. Van Deth and Elinor Scarbrough (eds.), *The Impact of Values*; Oxford University Press 1995: 271/2

self-identification. This was the paradoxical result of David De Vaus' and Ian McAllister's (1989) analysis of the changing patterns of women's political alignment in eleven nations: Women in all countries -- with the exception of Australia -- at the beginning of the 1980s identified themselves as more conservative than men²⁰. This traditional gender gap disappeared, however, if workforce participation, religiosity and other situational and structural factors were controlled for and the gender gap accordingly "decomposed" . Under the same structural and situational conditions, the gender gap reversed in Denmark and the Netherlands, where women turned out to be more leftist oriented. Concluding, the authors predicted a conditional reversal of the gender gap, depending on changes of "those positional and structural factors with the potential to fundamentally alter the politics of women in advanced industrial society"²¹.

Ted Jelen, Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox (1994) have addressed the apparent paradox posed by Pippa Norris' findings on women being more progressive on policy issues on the one hand, and by DeVaus/Allister's evidence that women still remained more conservative in their political alignment, on the other. In their "synthesis" Jelen et al. argue that the left-right continuum appears to have a different meaning for men and for women: Women seem much more likely to regard the left-right space as referring to 'preservationist' values of religion and cultural homogeneity, and men conceptualize the left-right space in economic and 'New Politics' terms. These differences in women's and men's values were independent of economic factors, hence did not appear to be a product of women's socio-economic disadvantages²².

¹⁹ Pippa Norris concludes "that European women and men have different values concerning certain issues such as nuclear power, unemployment, defense and concern for environment" (id. 228), and she interprets these differences as "a potential for a women's vote in future European elections" (Norris 1988: 222).

²⁰ De Vaus and McAllister use data from the European, Australian and American Values Studies of the early 1980s on political self-placement along the left-right continuum and across 11 advanced industrial societies; see DeVaus/McAllister: The changing politics of women: gender and political alignment in 11 nations; in: European Journal of Political Research 1989: 241-262

²¹ It can be concluded from their study that since the structural conditions of women in all European countries have changed considerably during the 1980s and 1990s, including also catholic societies with a strong female conservatism in the past, Pippa Norris' hypothesis on the "reversed gender gap" with women becoming more liberal and leftist increasingly gains plausibility. But a broader comparative assessment based on more recent data is lacking.

²² Ted G. Jelen, Sue Thomas, Clyde Wilcox: The gender gap in comparative perspective. Gender differences in abstract ideology and concrete issues in Western Europe; in European Journal of Political Research 25/1994: 183.

Summarizing these various analyses of the impact of gender on political behavior, it is clear that the disagreements among scholars about the significance, varieties, and causes of the “gender gap” in European political behavior are far from being resolved. Cumulative comparative, conceptual and empirical research shows severe gaps regarding more recent developments during the 1990s. What becomes clear by scrutinizing the discussion on developments during the 1980s, however, is that the traditional gender gap hypothesis in Europe - although not belonging wholly to the past - is challenged by a number of empirical findings and more sophisticated methods of data analyses: the gender gap hypothesis has been decomposed, allowing one to identify the structural trends that increasingly undermine it; feminist research has presented evidence for a reversal of the gender gap with feminists becoming more politicized than traditional men, and women turning progressively more liberal than men; and a third stream of research denies the significance of gender for predicting political attitudes and behavior altogether or, at least, provides evidence for its rapid decline. While all three competing views can claim legitimacy within the terms of their different perspectives and conceptualizations and on the basis of the limited data they use, they severely revise but ultimately do not replace the traditional “female deficit” and “female conservatism” hypotheses for explaining gender discrepancies in public attitudes towards the European Union. The more complex and paradoxical the pattern of gender discrepancies in political orientations becomes, the more puzzling appears the EU-gender gap.

The gender gap in EU-public support - an ephemeral “artifact”?

In his study “The nature and origins of mass opinion” John R. Zaller (1992) rejected the “fixed position” assumption common to most opinion analysts according to which survey researchers observe the final results of some process of opinion formation that occurred before they came on the scene. Referring to the multitude of empirical response anomalies, Zaller draws on findings of cognitive psychology for arguing that individuals rarely have fixed attitudes on specific issues; rather, “they construct variable ‘preference statements’ on the fly as they confront each issue raised” (Zaller 1992: 76ff.) In constructing their responses to survey questionnaires, people draw on rather ambivalent attitudes deriving from their conflicting

considerations, with a large range of values and priorities that potentially could become relevant, while he/she consults only one or a few. In this “constructivist” perspective, citizen’s preference statements are intrinsically unstable, with the dynamics of mass opinion on any given issue over time depending on the “role of the political elites in establishing the terms of political discourse in the mass media and the powerful effect of this framing of issues” (id. 310ff.).

A consequence of this methodological critique for the hypothesis of the EU-gender gap is that the analysis should not be restricted to quantitative survey data of one source alone, because these could indicate gender discrepancies of only a limited, unstable and inconsistent nature. If examined across a broader range of issues and behaviors, over time and by using qualitative sources on women’s perspectives on Europe, these differences might well show little consistency. Without being able to demonstrate the persistence of gender differences on EU-issues over time and their consistency with attitudes on related issues within the national and cross-national contexts of political discourses, an “EU-gender gap” would be no more than an artifact produced by the techniques of EB-opinion pollsters.

In addressing these concerns, I will make three arguments: First, I have already pointed to the growing evidence that gender disparities in European public opinion are not limited to the issue of EU-support - they are but one manifestation of a broader range of gender differences including policy issues and, to a minor degree, also voting behavior in European referenda and elections as well as party-political orientations. Second, regarding the context of the old and new gender discrepancies in political attitudes and behavior, feminist values appear to be changing increasingly larger shares of European gender cultures. Third, the gender gap on the issue of European integration can be shown to have persisted at least since the beginning of the 1980s. While I have already discussed some manifestations of the gender gap in the section above, in the following I will develop the argument about the feminist subculture and on the continuity of the EU-gender gap over time.

Feminist values and changes of masculine and traditional gender cultures

Since the mid-1970s, masculine and traditional gender cultures have undergone manifest changes and given rise to “an identifiable feminist political culture” throughout Europe²³. When in 1983 respondents were asked whether they thought the position of women in society was a problem, and whether they rejected the belief that politics should be left to men, sizable minorities of up to 22% agreed with these feminist positions. When asked again in 1990-1 by the World Value Survey, already more than a third of respondents supported “feminist values”, now defined as preferences for “non-preferential employment practices for men”, for jobs “as the best way for a women to be independent” and for supporting “the women’s movement”. Although it can be argued that feminists are notably more likely to hold postmaterialist values, and that this is true for feminist men as much as for feminist women²⁴, on the other hand women and men by no means support feminist values in equal proportions: the gap between the proportion of feminist men and the larger proportion of feminist women, initially existing in 1975, has not diminished over the following years but appears to have grown larger²⁵.

²³ Feminist orientations have been defined as implying not only a perception of women as an underprivileged group, but also a desire to see present society transformed, although including different strategies toward this goal; see: Carina Lundmark, 1995: 269

²⁴ B.C.Hayes, I.McAllister, D.T.Studlar, “Gender, Feminism and Postmaterialist Attitudes: A Cross-National Analysis”; Paper prepared for APSA, San Francisco, August 29-Sept.1, 1996: 15

²⁵ For an analysis of gender and national variations in support for gender equality, see Clyde Wilcox: Support for gender equality in West Europe; in *European Journal of Political Research* 20, 1991: 144

Table 3: Feminist values in Western Europe²⁶

		a) 1975	b) 1983	c) 1990/1	n 1990/1
High > 35%	Sweden	-	-	42.2	874
	Norway	-	-	41.9	1.175
	Denmark	15	14	37.5	885
Medium > 25% < 35%	Ireland	25	12	33.9	976
	Spain	-	-	32.2	3.768
	W-Germany	9	8	34.5	1.841
	Great Britian	14	8	34.3	1.402
	France	24	15	30.9	935
	Netherlands	6	7	30.6	965
	Finland			29.3	587
	Portugal			24.8	1.185
Low < 25%	Belgium	9	4	24.6	2.521
	Italy	24	22	21.9	1.928
	Austria			21.8	1463
	Greece		22	n.v.	

Sources:

a),b): Eurobarometer, Nos. 3, 19 (Lundmark 1995: 267);

c) World Values Survey, 1990-1991(3 questions, see FN; own calculation)

n.v.: no values

The impact of changes in gender cultures on mass political attitudes are still underresearched. Different varieties of feminist political orientation will have a differing impact on women's and men's "beliefs in government" - including national as well as supranational state institutions - as we might expect, depending among others on the strength and type of "state

²⁶ Indicators for "feminist values" were positive answers to the following questions: "The position of women in society is a problem"; "politics should not be left to men" (1975, 1983); "non-preferential employment practices for men"; "job as the best way for a women to be independent"; and "support of the women's movement" (1990-1).

feminism”²⁷. Until these research lacunae are addressed, my argument here has to limit itself to pointing out the dynamic impact of feminist political values that since the mid-seventies have transformed traditional gender cultures in Europe and politicized traditional political cultures.

The persisting gender disparities in public EU-support (1983-1995)

Gender disparities in public EU-support in all EC-countries – according to EB-survey data -- have varied, but on the whole persisted at least since 1983. Over time they have diminished - in spite of the integration of new member states with larger differences among women’s and men’s attitudes towards the EU, such as Sweden and Austria in 1995²⁸. Within this generally convergent trend, however, gender gaps have not declined in that time period in all EU-countries: on the contrary, in a number of them, the distances between men’s and women’s preferences regarding the topic of European integration seems to have grown larger (see table 4: The EU-gender gap 1983, 1990, 1995 by member state):

Among the twelve member states where EB has conducted surveys since 1983, national gender gaps in EU-support appear to have declined more than the average in Greece, Italy, Germany, France, the UK (from 1990-1995) and Ireland. Minor decreases have occurred in Luxemburg and Spain as well as in Denmark, but here only until 1990. Widening gender disparities have accompanied the erosion of mass public consensus for European integration after 1991²⁹, especially in five countries: Between 1983 and 1995, the gender gaps have grown larger above all in the Netherlands and in Belgium and to a minor degree in Portugal. And bringing the processes of convergence to a halt, in 1990, the discrepancies between men’s and women’s political stances have increased in the UK and in Denmark.

²⁷ For a comparative assessment on the types of state feminism, see: Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy G.Mazur, eds.: *Comparative State Feminism*; Sage 1995

²⁸ From the four EFTA-countries where referenda for EU-membership were held in 1994, EB-surveys show that in three of them (Norway, Austria, Sweden), the gender gap in public EU-support in 1994 was larger, while in Finland it was at about the average of the older memberstates.

²⁹ Still in 1989, the ratio between supporters of European integration who believed that their country benefited from membership and opponents who denied this, was 60%:25%. In 1993, both groups with around 45% of EB-respondents had become equally strong; see EB 43, Autumn 1995: VIII).

These developments do not only show that gender disparities in EU-support are hardly a new and even less an ephemeral phenomenon. Their variations over time and across the European societies also raise the question as to why women in relation to men in some countries rather than in others have developed more negative or skeptical attitudes toward the question of European integration over the course of the last fifteen years. In the countries where the gender gaps have narrowed, and women's and men's political behavior and attitudes generally have converged, the structural advancement of gender equality might account for one part of this process, and women's politicization and better information on particular EC-policies for promoting gender equality for another. But what about those societies where gender gaps during the eighties and nineties have not declined but have grown larger?

Table 4: Variations of the EU-gender gap 1983- 1995

	Country	GG 1983	GG 1990	GG 1995	differ.
Growth	Netherlands	0.30	0.39	0.50	0.20
	Belgium	0.27	0.18	0.38	0.11
	Denmark	0.53	0.46	0.59	0.06
persistence	Portugal		0.25	0.29	0.04
	UK	0.31	0.49	0.29	-0.02
	Luxembourg	0.26		0.22	-0.04
	Spain		0.25	0.21	-0.04
decline	Ireland	0.41		0.22	-0.19
	France	0.40	0.19	0.11	-0.29
	Germany W	0.34	0.16	0.04	-0.30
	Greece	0.66	0.33	0.33	-0.33
	Italy	0.45	0.40	0.12	-0.33

Source: EB19, EB33, EB43.1; analyses provided by ZEUS, Mannheim

Note: the values represent the difference between male and female support indices (0-4)

Denmark and the UK after 1990, and the Netherlands and Belgium since 1983 are anomalous cases that contradict the “gender convergence” thesis. For constructing a general explanation of the EU-gender gap that would account also for these “anomalous” cases, we need to address more subtle questions on the dynamics of mass public opinion. In an argument limited primarily to quantitative survey data, these “interpretive” dimensions remain excluded.

The EU-gender gap in the theoretical framework of “relative deprivation”

My argument developed so far has been that discrepancies between female and male political attitudes toward European integration can neither be reduced to the traditional “female deficit” or “conservatism” hypotheses, nor can they be considered as a transitory phenomenon or mere “artifact”. I have demonstrated that, with variations, they have persisted over time and thus are part of a more complex and changing pattern of gender disparities regarding policy preferences, political behavior and political values. I will now continue to explore an alternative approach for explaining the discrepancies of women’s and men’s orientations toward the EU - the theory of “relative deprivation”. Pippa Norris in her comparative analysis of the gender gap has suggested that this theory be used to explain the voting-gender gap³⁰. Developed in the 1960s by social psychologists, the relative deprivation theory has served to explain “why men rebel”, as much as the behavior of working men and working women³¹. Thus it would seem promising as a means to explore some of the complex motivations underlying the gender gap in EU- politics, too.

In this section, I will first outline briefly the basic concepts and assumptions of this theory as a framework for developing more specific propositions on the EU-gender gap. Then, second, I will articulate this explanatory perspective with current feminist critiques of the EU and their role in framing women’s relative deprivation within the context of European integration.

³⁰ My proposal to apply the theory of relative deprivation to the analysis of the gender gap in EU-public support draws on Pippa Norris’ comparative analysis of the voting gender gap in the U.S. and in Europe; see: Pippa Norris, “The Gender Gap: A Cross-National Trend?” in Carol M. Mueller, ed., “The Politics of the Gender Gap. The Social Construction of Influence”, Sage 1988: 217ff.

³¹ See: Ted R.Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton 1970; W.G.Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, London 1966; F.Crosby, *Relative Deprivation and Working Women*, New York 1982

Basic concepts of a “relative deprivation” theory of the EU-gender gap

“Relative deprivation” (RD) -- as distinct from conditions of absolute deprivation -- is generally defined as a psychological state in which there is a perceived negative discrepancy between a current position and that which is expected³². “Relative deprivation” is not reduced to perceptions of individual’s deprivation and their corresponding feelings and awareness of it, but can develop a collective form of group level deprivation that consists in a negative gap between the group’s current position and attainments and where it is expected to be.

Several theoretical assumptions underlie my discussion of the gender gap in public EU-support within the theoretical framework of the RD-theory: First, women’s and men’s attitudes toward the EU primarily depend on how elites and the media frame contentious issues of European integration in public discourses. Second, the gender gap in public attitudes toward the EU depends on the gender related categories that elites, media and, in particular, women’s movements and feminists use in framing their public discourses. Finally, feminist critiques of the European Union project provide such gender related frameworks; they represent forms of gendered Euro-skepticism that articulate women’s “relative deprivation”, projected and attributed on to the process of European unification.

Within the theoretical framework of “relative deprivation” and based on these assumptions, my account of the gender gap in public EU-support can be developed further. In this explanation, feminist “relative deprivation discourses” constitute the core. Certainly, citizens may expect European unification to have a variety of positive or negative impacts on them individually or collectively. Which of these possible consequences will dominate their perceptions, how they will evaluate these impacts, and whether they come to feel them as collective or individual “relative deprivation” (RD), depends on a variety of factors. The proposition developed here is that women’s negative or skeptical evaluations of the EU at least in part and implicitly rest on such conceptual frameworks that enable them to identify women’s collective RD. Feminist scholars and activists in their critical discourses on European unification articulated these frameworks more explicitly in public. Thus feminist critiques of the EU contributed to making women either aware of current impacts of EU-policies that provide backlashes to the advancement of women at the national level, or they anticipate

future threats to their attained status in so far as they compare it to that of other EU-memberstates, lagging behind in gender equality. The anticipated collective deprivation may become manifest and translate into certain political behaviors and forms of collective action, as in the case of public referenda campaigns, but it may also largely remain latent and become manifest only in survey data responses of women constructing their EU-preferences and evaluating the EU-impacts for the purpose of Eurobarometer survey research.

Summarizing this theoretical account of the EU-gender gap, three propositions that can be formulated:

1. Feminist discourses and critiques of the EU articulate motivations for Euro-skepticism from the social perspectives of women and gender equality, and they provide frameworks for identifying negative gaps between their collective attainments at the national level and their future positions; gaps that are attributed as consequences to European unification.

2. These frameworks are in correspondence with women's assessments of the EU; however, given the gender-neutral approach of Eurobarometer questionnaires so far, this correspondence can be documented only partially by the available quantitative survey data³³;

3. My central prediction is that in a cross-national comparison, the gender gap in public EU-support will vary with the extent to which women expect European unification to deprive them relatively from what they already have attained at their national or local level. The term "relatively" here refers not only to objective status but also to achievements, and includes hopes and chances regarding future gains. Important are local and national standards that function subjectively as the predominant frames of reference for comparing and assessing impacts deriving from the EU. Feminist EU-critiques and frameworks for women's relative deprivation

³² A.S.R.Manstead/M. Hewstone (eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Psychology* 1995: 475-477

³³ The standard Eurobarometer reports on public opinion in the EC/EU, since 1973 produced by the European Commission twice a year, in general do not present their data broken down by gender. Specific "gender"-topics are however occasionally dealt with in special studies; see Commission of the EC: EB 19 "Women and Men of Europe in 1983; The Situation of Women, Women and Employment, Their Role in Society"; EB 32 "European Public Opinion on the Family and the Desire for Children" (August 1990); EB-Special "Family and Employment within the Twelve" (Dec. 1991); EB 39 "Europeans and the Family" (Dec.1993); EB 44.3 "Women and Men in Europe and Equal Opportunities. Results of an Opinion Poll" (March 1997).

Public discourses in Europe remain largely confined to national elites and mass media. Regarding European integration, they differ greatly across EU-memberstates in regard to which issues become controversial and which not and how these controversies are framed. In the nineties, heated political debates on Europe have developed primarily in those European democracies where popular referenda on fundamental questions of national European politics were held.³⁴ Among the countries without such direct-democratic institutions, the degree and patterns of mass public politicization depended primarily on how political parties articulate conflicting interests and frame different views on European integration. During the 1980s, public debates on the EC were largely framed by partisan conflict between the Left and the Right, such as in Denmark, Great Britain and Greece. Here, a “pronounced tendency for partisans of the Left to view the European Community less favorably than do partisans of the Right” has been noted (Inglehart/Rabier/Reif 1987: 155). During the mid-nineties, this Left-Right ideological dichotomy on European matters has become distinctly blurred: in France, the Left joined the extreme Right in endorsing Euro-skeptical positions, while in the UK, Labor - and especially New Labor - developed more EU-friendly positions, with the Conservatives increasingly more divided and skeptical vis-à-vis the European Union.

Within the national contexts of public discourses on Europe over the past decades, women’s views have become increasingly salient and more explicitly articulated. However, there has hardly emerged any universal, cross-national feminist EU-discourse. Despite the establishment of women’s networks and lobbies across the EU³⁵, women’s preferences and critiques continue to be articulated and framed largely at the national level. Feminist discourses use different terms and set different priorities in response to differing national and historical conditions: what “European Union” means for women, appears to vary greatly from one country to another. In articulating women’s concerns with and criticisms of European integration within national public discourses, female politicians and representatives as well as

³⁴ National referenda on the entry into the EU were held in 1994 in Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway, and referenda on the Treaty of the European Union in 1992/1993 in Denmark, Ireland and France. In Denmark, the June 1992 referendum failed with 50,7% of the votes cast against the EU-treaty, while the May 1993 referendum succeeded. The September 1992 referendum in France produced an only very slight majority in favor of the Treaty. In Ireland, in the June 1992 referendum, a clear majority of supporters of the EU-treaty (68,7%) emerged.

feminist scholars and publicists have acquired a quintessential role. With their assessments and critiques of the EU they have left the more restricted realms and exclusive circles of feminist groups and gone public, debating feminist issues and views in the mass media, in parliamentary arenas, at party congresses or in general election campaigns. Occasionally, such as during the popular referenda-campaigns in 1992-4, feminist views have even achieved a prominent impact on shaping the political agendas.

In the following I will restrict myself to some of the points feminist EU-critiques have made, without claiming in any way to exhaust the variety of concepts, frameworks and hypotheses such approaches have developed. What interests me here, are those arguments that feminist critiques of the EU have constructed from the point of view of women and that have become part of those competing public discourses on Europe in the context of which women's skeptical attitudes toward the EU are formed and have to be interpreted. My contention is that within a comparative perspective, the variability of what the EU means to women depends, on one hand, from how far feminist critiques of the EU have become "sunken cultural capital" in a given society and its public sphere with its competing political discourses; and, on the other hand, it depends on how feminist discourses frame their critiques of the EU in response to particular historical, political and cultural conditions. Within the controversies between alternative political discourses on the EU, feminist critiques provide particular repertoires on which women may draw in the processes of framing their interests or preferences regarding the issues of European integration. More importantly, however, feminist critiques, "in response to historically, politically, and culturally differentiated exigencies and the discursive traditions in which they are articulated", also offer conceptualizations for reinterpreting women's heterogeneous national identities and negotiating them with gender³⁶.

³⁵ Examples are among others: the "European women's lobby"; The "European Forum of Left Feminists"; and the "European Network of Women".

³⁶ This is an interdisciplinary insight I owe to Leslie A. Adelson's feminist analysis of how, in the case of West German culture of the 1970s and 1980s, the production of gender is "simultaneously and inextricably intertwined with configurations of race, nationality, class, ethnicity through which power is manifested"; see: L. Adelson: "Feminism and German Identity. Making Bodies, Making History", University of Nebraska Press 1993: XIVf.

I. Reinterpreting the process of European unification

Looked at through feminist lenses, the process of European integration appears in a different light from that depicted by the dominant theorists that have focused on state actors, interest groups and European institutions. Catherine Hoskyns, in her historical account of European integration from the point of view of gender, demonstrates that, for instance, the social policy initiatives of the EU cannot be explained without taking the activity of social movements as political actors into account. She argues that this is particularly true for the development of sex equality policy initiatives within the bureaucracy of Brussels which could not be accounted for without the impact of women's organizations and their interactions with the feminist branch of the Euro-bureaucracy (Hoskyns 1996). Beyond her approach of reconstructing the process of European integration from the perspective of women's movements, feminist scholars have focused their critiques of the EU around at least five more topics in European integration³⁷:

I. Re-assessing the effectiveness of EC-equal opportunity policies.

Community publications usually point to an impressive range of policies by which the EU has sought to enhance the position of women in member states. Based on the legal norm of equal treatment that the treaties of Rome instituted in 1957, since the mid-seventies the EC has adopted more than a dozen directives and regulations on equal treatment, as well as four medium term action plans for promoting gender equality since the beginning of the 1980s.³⁸ Feminist assessments of these advancements are not restricted to discussing deficits and delays in the implementation of EC-policies by member states and the lack of enforcement measures on the part of the EU. Critics rather develop frameworks based on the categories of inclusion and exclusion, focusing on the impact of European integration on groups of women who

³⁷ Instead of trying to differentiate here nationally or regionally between varieties of "Mediterranean", "Continental European", "German", "Anglo-Saxon" or "Scandinavian" feminist discourses on European integration, I will focus rather on the major topics which feminist discourses address, leaving the possibility of cross-regional communication and interaction open.

³⁸ In the self-portrayal of the Commission, the EC since the mid 1970s has become a protagonist in promoting women's equal rights and opportunities throughout Europe: "Important regulations binding for all member states" were adopted and women promoting initiatives in educational and professional training undertaken. Among others, EU-publications point out that the Maastricht treaty allows for national affirmative action programs (EC-document), not outruling them as an impediment to the internal market. Major measures for promoting equal opportunities by the EC/EU are the four "Action Programs" from

remain excluded from the EC's legal provisions, namely non-working women, women working in the informal economy, or women following as wives their migrant husbands, but finding themselves in the host country deprived of legal entitlements and securities they would have enjoyed in their home country³⁹. Feminist jurisprudence since the Maastricht treaty have started to scrutinize the concept of citizenship that this treaty has introduced as a supposedly core-element of European unification, but that – in a feminist perspective - is restricted to a notion of equality largely understood in terms of commodification, rather than based on legal and social entitlements⁴⁰.

III. Reevaluating the “other democratic deficit” of the EU

Compared to their political and administrative representation in many memberstates, women appear to fare better within the European parliament, but not in the Commission.⁴¹ Feminist evaluations of the decision making structures of the Euro-bureaucracy, of their democratic deficits⁴², their lack of public transparency and their fragmentation transcend principles such as “liberal representation” and “equal opportunities” as insufficient. They rather draw on more egalitarian norms and principles such as “distributional justice”⁴³,

1982, 1986, 1991 and 1996; and “NOW” (New Opportunities for Women) as a EC-program within the structural policies domain for promoting women education and employment in regional development.

³⁹ Imelda Higgins: Equal treatment and national procedural rules: one step forward, two steps back; in Irish journal of European law 1995/1: 18-29; European Women's Lobby: Confronting the Fortress - Black and Migrant Women in the European Community; Luxembourg, European Parliament 1995; Dina Vaiou: Women's work and everyday life in southern Europe in the context of European integration; and Paola Vinay: From Informal Flexibility to the New Organization of Time; both in M.D.Garcia-Ramon and Janice Monk (eds.), Women of the European Union. The politics of work and daily life; Routledge 1996; Sue Nott, Fiona Beveridge: “Law-making in the European Union: Making Women Count”; paper presented at “Feminist Perspectives on International Relations”, Lund University, Sweden, 14-16 June 1996.

⁴⁰ See: Elizabeth Meehan, “Citizenship and the European Community”; London, Sage 1993, and id., “Women's rights in the European Community”, in Lewis 1993.

⁴¹ The European Parliament has established a “Standing Committee on Women's Rights”; and the EC-Commission is dealing with women's affairs within two of its departments/offices: the “Office for Equal Opportunities” within General Direction V (Employment, Labour Relations and Social Affairs), and the “Women Information Service” within General Direction X (Audiovisual Media, Information, Communication and Culture). But feminist critiques point to the low representation of women in higher positions in the central Euro-bureaucracy: in the 3871 top administrative and management positions in the Commission, in 1994 only 13.5% women were found; and among the 52 top positions (A1), only one women; see Hoskyns 1996: 224/5.

⁴² Joyce Marie Mushaben: The Other “Democratic Deficit”. Women in the European Community before and after Maastricht; in P. M. Luetzeler: Europe after Maastricht. American and European Perspectives; Oxford 1994: 251-277.

⁴³ Though they see women's interests in Europe as heterogeneous and pluralistic, German feminist scholars count the following losses for women as consequences of European integration: increase of female unemployment, transformation of the labor market with increase of unsecured poorly paid jobs and retrenchment of social securities, and the decline of living conditions for women from other cultures, continents and races; see Biester, Holland-Kunz, Jansen, Maleck-Lewy, Ruf, Sauer (ed.): Das unsichtbare Geschlecht der Europa. Der europäische Einigungsprozess aus feministischer Sicht; Frankfurt/M. 1994: 11ff

“descriptive representation” or “parity democracy”⁴⁴. At the first European Summit “Women in Power” in Athens on November 3, 1992 at the invitation of the Commission of the European Communities, Leonor Beleza, vice-president of the Portuguese Parliament, articulated such a feminist conception of democracy: “Democracy must not only be pluralist but also egalitarian in the sense that the existence of two different, in fact very different, types of human beings have to be taken into account. Mankind is made up of people who are either men or women, not neutral or asexual beings, and this is a vital component of their personality”⁴⁵.

IV. Recasting the EU’s social dimension and the future of national welfare states

Critics have blamed the prevailing neo-liberal strategy of European unification for aiming at one single European market for goods, services, labor and capital and at an economic and monetary union of Europe, but at the costs of leaving a highly fragmented “social space” behind⁴⁶. On the other hand, the “Social Protocol” that was added to the Maastricht Treaty after the failure of the first Danish referendum, is referred to as a significant case in favor of the EU’s consideration for gender equality. Namely its third paragraph is seen as being of particular interest to women, stipulating that policy harmonization should not go so far as to prevent member states from maintaining or adopting “affirmative action” measures⁴⁷. Feminist sociologists and welfare regime comparativists, however, pointed out the contradictions and shortcomings of this construction of the “Social Europe” as an Illusion or Alibi⁴⁸. They have provided more comprehensive frameworks for reassessing the impacts of the Single European Market and of the Maastricht-project from the point of view of women

⁴⁴ Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy*; University Park 1991; id., Eliane Vogel-Polsky: *La démocratie paritaire: vers un nouveau contrat social*; Actas do Seminario Construir a Igualdade, Lisboa, Portugal, 28-30 May 1992: 53-76;

⁴⁵ *Women in Decision-Making. Facts and Figures on Women in Political and Public Decision-Making in Europe*; ed. by European Network of Experts, Brussels 1994(2ed.)

⁴⁶ As major analysts of the EU’s “social dimension” argue, social policy for the Union has a “far lower priority than initiatives for an integrated market”, and the “social space” remains fragmented, “heavy on symbolism and light on substance”; see Stephan Leibfried and Paul Pierson (eds.): *European Social Policy. Between Fragmentation and Integration*; Washington 1995: 47ff.; Loukas Tsoukalis, *The New European Economy. The Politics and Economics of Integration*; Oxford University Press 1993: 157-174;

⁴⁷ Included were those measures which would make it easier for women to pursue a vocational activity or prevent or compensate them for disadvantages in their professional careers, - reasons for the British government to veto the “Social Protocol” as an integral part of the Treaty. With the protocol reduced to only an Appendix of the Treaty, the conservative government was allowed to sign the treaty, and to “opt out” of the EU’s “social dimension”.

⁴⁸ Eliane Vogel-Polsky/Jean Vogel: *L’Europe Sociale 1993: Illusion, Alibi ou Realite?* Brussels, 1991

and gender. Their analyses of types, developments and retrenchments of social welfare regimes in Europe⁴⁹ develop frameworks based on the notion of “family” or “woman-friendly” welfare regimes⁵⁰ and classifications of national “gender regimes”⁵¹; they study the impact of these regimes on particularly weak groups of women⁵², and they are critically aware of controversial case laws of the European Court of Justice on the equal treatment of women and men that constrain the Social Protocol provision and put national or local measures for promoting women into question⁵³.

V. Reconsidering the impacts of the single market and of the economic union in the context of globalization and spatial differentiation

Feminist analyses critically examine the gender implications of the free movement provisions, of the Single European Market, as well as the “convergence criteria” -- required for the project of an economic and monetary Union -- by focusing on their impact for women⁵⁴. Among them, feminist geographers challenge the predominantly economist and legalistic frameworks that the major discourses on European integration and global economic restructuring entail, as well as the macroeconomic policies of unification, for typically ignoring the impact of these processes and policies on family, gender and community

⁴⁹ For a systematic comparisons of the different impacts that welfare state variations have for women and men and their relationships in the U.S., UK, Sweden and the Netherlands, see Diane Sainsbury: *Gender, equality, and welfare states*; Cambridge University Press 1996; for theoretical analyses and other cases in Europe, see the two volumes by D. Sainsbury (ed.), *Gendering Welfare States*, 1994; and by Jane Lewis (ed.) *Women and Social Policies in Europe* 1993; Ilona Ostner and Jane Lewis: *Gender and the Evolution of European Social Policies*; in S. Leibfried and P. Pierson (eds.), *European Social Policy. Between Fragmentation and Integration*; Washington DC, The Brookings Institution 1995:159-193.

⁵⁰ See Mary Daly: *Comparing Welfare States: Towards a gender friendly approach*; in Sainsbury (ed.) 1994; Arnaug Leira: “The ‘women friendly’ welfare state? The case of Norway and Sweden”, in Jane Lewis, ed., “*Women and Social Policies in Europe. Work, Family and the State*”, Edward Elgar 1993. For a critical assessment of “Europatriarchy”, see: Susanne Schunter-Kleemann, “*Herrenhaus Europa*” 1993.

⁵¹ “Gender regimes” are defined as constructs at the level of the state, resulting from political struggles and compromises between a variety of political actors; they give rise to the specific national patterns of gender relations and divisions, including, for instance, horizontal and vertical segregations of the labor market and the pay gaps in the national wage structure; see Ostner/Lewis 1995: 161, note 7.

⁵² Mary Daly: *Europe’s poor women: Gender in research on poverty*; *European Sociological Review*, 1992/8: 1-12

⁵³ Karin Lundstrom: “*Women Caught in a Logical Trap in EC Law: An Analysis of the Use of Quotas in the Case of Kalanke*”; in “*A World in Transition. Feminist Perspectives in International Relations*”, *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift* Vol. 100/1997,1; and for a critical evaluation a report presented by the president of the Labor Law Court of Schleswig Holstein/Germany, Ninon Colneric, to the German women’s lobby: “*Europa - ein Europa der Frauen?*” in *Informationen fuer die Frau*, Informationsdienst des “*Deutschen Frauenrates-Lobby der Frauen-Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Frauenverbaende und Frauengruppen gemischter Verbaende e.V.*”, May 1994: 6-12

⁵⁴ See F. Beveridge and S. Nott: *Women, Wealth and the Single Market*; in D. Mayes (ed.), *The Evolution of Rules for a Single European Market*; Office for Official Publications of the EC 1995; Louise Ackers: *Women, citizenship and European*

relations. A particular focus of these studies includes the relationships between context and diversity among women. Women's diversity derive not only from class and ethnicity, but also from "geography" and "place in forming contexts and constructing the differing experiences of social life"⁵⁵ .

VI. Revealing the "Sexual Politics of the EU"⁵⁶

"Sex equality law" and the "body-politics" of EU-Law have provoked some more recent critiques of the EU. Their scope goes furthest beyond the political economy framework conventionally characteristic of EU public-policy discussions and they transcend the social welfare and political rights frameworks adopted by feminist critiques, too. Feminist and gay scholars developed critical assessments of a variety of "body politics" issues underlying the interplay of national policies with European Union policies, including sexual harassment, pornography and human rights, sexual trafficking of women in Europe, reproductive technologies, abortion rights or violence⁵⁷.

These feminist (and gay-) critiques of the strategies of European unification frame and articulate a variety of discourses on "relative deprivation" regarding the present and future chances and status of different groups of women in particular, and of gender and family relations more in general. They provide norms for evaluating the institutional practices of the EU other than the functional criteria used in the prevailing political economic analyses of European policy making. As theorists of relative deprivation have pointed out: not all discrepancies between expectations and attainments would generate feelings of deprivation - some sense of entitlement is required to create a perception of injustice about the size of the discrepancy. Some of the feminist discourses articulate and develop normative claims of

Community law: the gender implications of the free movement provisions; in *Journal of social welfare and family law* 1994/4: 391-406

⁵⁵ See Garcia-Ramon and Monk, eds. 1996; this volume includes studies on the geography of gender and welfare in Europe, a number of them focusing on southern Europe, in the context of European integration.

⁵⁶ see R. Amy Elman (ed.), *Sexual Politics and the European Union. The New Feminist Challenge*; Berghahn Books 1996, including feminist studies by scholars from Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the UK and the U.S.

⁵⁷ T.K. Hervey and D.O'Keeffe (eds.), *Sex Equality Law in the European Union*; John Wiley, Chichester 1996; Leo Flynn: *Marketing the Union: Some Feminist Perspectives*; in: "A World in Transition. Feminist Perspectives on International Relations", *Stratvetenskaplig Tidskrift* vol.100, 1997,1

entitlements related to women's rights and gender equality, thus providing a framework based on distinctions of "just" and "unjust" institutional practices and distributional consequences⁵⁸.

Women's "relative deprivation" in the EU: a classification of memberstates

In the following, my ambition will remain constrained to less than testing the propositions outlined above systematically by means of analyzing quantitative empirical survey data. Instead, I will limit myself to providing some more interpretive illustrations for my "relative deprivation" account of the EU-gender gap by analyzing a few cases more in depth. In doing so, I will try to render my theoretical argument more concrete by illuminating some of the specific meanings and motivations underlying women's Euro-skepticism. For selecting those cases that appear most interesting for such case studies, I will develop first a classification of all EU-memberstates, based on the theoretical framework developed above.

The "relative deprivation" framework suggests to classify EU-memberstates according to two variables: the present structural position of women at the national level, measured by the gender development index (high, medium, low level); and the degree to which feminist discourses on the EU shape women's expectations regarding the future impact of EU politics, measured by the diffusion of feminist values at the national level. Both variables produce a matrix with different categories, the most extreme ones being the following:

I. Memberstates where a "critical mass" of women expects European unification to deprive them relatively from what they have achieved at the national or local level, with objectively advanced standards of gender equality, and publicly developed feminist discourses critical of the EU with a significant impact on public opinion;

II. Memberstates where a sizable proportion of women perceive the EU to "relatively deprive" them from attainments at the national level, and where, although the level of gender equality is still relatively low, feminist critiques of the EU succeed in shaping public discourses to some extent.

III. Memberstates where women are not aware of any significant "relative deprivation" deriving from the EU, where gender equality has reached objectively high standards or is

⁵⁸ W. G. Runciman argued that only those discrepancies between expectations and attainments would generate feelings of deprivation where some sense of entitlement is present to create a perception of injustice about the size of the discrepancy; see

significantly improving, and where feminist values are relatively diffused throughout public discourses. Here women obviously see their feminist expectations progressively fulfilled, either by national governments or as a result of EU-policies, without further European integration being perceived as a threat for gender advancement at the national level.

IV. Memberstates where women do not feeling any collective “relative deprivation”, under conditions of low levels of gender advancement, and in the context of persisting traditional and masculine values, which allow feminist critiques only to exercise a marginal impact on public discourses.

By using these four categories as well as the data included in table 2 and table 3 above, we obtain a four-fold matrix with a classification of the fifteen EU-memberstates (see table 5). Assuming the premises of the “relative deprivation” theory outlined above, we would expect the EU-gender gap to be largest in those countries subsumed under the I. category (Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Portugal and Greece); we would predict a medium range EU-gender gap for the countries included within the II. category (France, Austria, Germany, UK, Ireland, Spain); and we would expect the gap to be relatively smallest in the memberstates in the III. category (Belgium, Italy, Netherlands).

The comparison of these theoretical predictions with the actual cross-national variations of gender disparities in the EU in 1994 (see table 1), provides a preliminary and, within the boundaries of the available data here, limited test of the “relative deprivation” theory of the EU-gender gap⁵⁹: The predictions match with the available data in seven of our fifteen cases, namely in three of the five cases in which we expected a high gender gap (Sweden, Norway, Denmark); in four of the seven cases where we predicted gender disparities of a medium size (Finland, Germany, the UK, and Ireland); and in none of the four cases where we expected relatively smallest gender gaps. The predictions do not hold in seven cases, where either the actual gender gaps were smaller than expected (Spain and the Netherlands), or where the gender disparities were larger than predicted (France, Austria, Belgium, Italy,

W.G.Runciman: Relative deprivation and social justice, London 1966

⁵⁹ I am using here EB-data on gender disparities limited to one survey (Fall 94) only.

Portugal). For Greece, because of a gap in the World Values Survey, we were not able to test the theory.

Table 5:

Classification of EU-memberstates: women’s achieved status and feminist positions⁶⁰

E: feminist positions	I. high	II. medium	III. low
high	Sweden		
achieved national status		Finland	
	Norway		
	Denmark		
		France	
			Austria
		Germany	
		UK	
			Belgium
			Italy
		Ireland	
low		Netherlands	
	Greece		Portugal
		Spain	

Note: underlined cases confirm the gender gap-predictions.

In the remaining part of this paper, I will examine some cases more in depth, cases selected either because they confirm our theoretical expectations, or because they appear as “outliers” and we can hope to illuminate some of the reasons for their “deviance” by an in depth analysis.

“Relative deprivation” and the EU-gender gap: the cases of Denmark and Greece

⁶⁰ In this matrix, the vertical axis is constituted by “achieved national status” measured by the “gender development index”, with data from the UN 1995 (see table 2, above), and the horizontal axis by “feminist critiques” regarding the EU, measured by the diffusion of feminist values, with data from the 1990/11 World Value Survey (see table 3, above).

Denmark stands as a paradigmatic case among the Scandinavian countries with their high levels of gender disparities characteristic of public orientations toward the EU: although, through the lenses of the theory of relative deprivation, we would have expected a high gender gap within the Danish public anyhow, the available EB-data show a level of disparities (16,5% in Fall 1994) that make Denmark the most extreme case. Greece, on the other hand, with its low level of gender equality may appear as a paradigmatic example for the traditional gender gap hypotheses, with women being apolitical or more conservative. But in fact, during the past two decades, feminist values and a rapid politicization of mass publics, among others on the highly controversial issue of European politics, have changed the political culture and have mobilized critical masses of women in Greece, too.

The case of Denmark

Denmark became a member of the EC in 1973. It belongs to the small group of Nordic countries in which the advancement of economic and social gender equality worldwide has reached the top⁶¹: in 1994, 69% of Danish women were economically active and earned 40% of the national income; women held a third of the seats in the national parliament and 43% of the Danish representatives in the European parliament were women (Hoskyns 1996: 222). Along with Sweden, Norway and Finland, in Denmark social welfare entitlements of women, their political empowerment, feminist consciousness and leftist orientations toward the EU are most developed.

At the same time, Denmark shows the highest gender gap scores in EU-support: in the 1994-EB survey, only 22% of the women identified themselves as “hard core supporters” of the EU, as compared to nearly 40% of the men. In a Danish political culture that has been characterized as on the edge of “postmodernism”, gender equality has advanced to such a degree, that the “traditional” gender bias hypotheses for explaining female Euro-skepticism nowhere holds less than in the Danish case: In 1992 and in 1993, women as well as men, if not

⁶¹ The UN-Human Development Report for 1995 ranks Denmark, after Sweden, Finland and Norway worldwide fourth, both with regard to its socioeconomic “gender related development” and to its political-economic “gender empowerment measure”, defined by seats held by women in parliament, in administration and management, share of professional and technical workers and earned income share of women (UN 1995: 76; 84).

more, mobilized in the two referenda on the Maastricht-treaty, the first of which failed⁶². Thanks to the public controversies between supporters and opponents of the EU and the broad media coverage, Danes can be considered as belonging to the best informed citizens in matters regarding the EU. This allowed a compact block of EU-opponents to emerge that did not want to delegate to Brussels a part of their national sovereignty and identity. Indeed, an overproportionate group of 56% of the Danes reported in 1995 feeling a Danish national identity only - as compared to only 40% of all European citizens (EB1996: 36). In this opposition block, doubting women played the decisive role in tipping the balance.

Danish feminist scholars explained the female skepticism toward the EU as resulting from their concerns about the welfare state and democracy: The situation and future of the Nordic welfare states became central topics of public debates in Denmark as well as in the Scandinavian countries. In November 1995, the “Danish Center for Information on Women and Gender” (KVINFO) held a public conference under the title “Women’s perspectives on Europe, Visions and Skepticism”, with the aim “to establish a dialogue between European feminists...and an engaged Danish audience on the visions and the skepticisms for the future of Europe and the EU”⁶³. Central discussion themes were questions such as: “Does the model of the ‘Nordic Welfare State’ still exist, is it worthwhile exporting to other countries - and will it survive in the further development of the European Union?”⁶⁴

Regarding the issue of democracy in the EU, the Danish feminist researcher Drude Dahlerup pointed out “that the influence of women in the creation of today’s and tomorrow’s European and international relations is minimal, compared to what we are used to in the Nordic countries”; and Karen Siune summarized Danish women’s central demands: openness of all political EU-decisions, decisions to be taken primarily in Denmark; popular influence on decision making, among others by popular referenda⁶⁵. Another Danish feminist scholar

⁶² After the failure of the first Maastricht referendum in 1992, and in order to motivate the Danish electorate to vote positively in the second referendum, all Danish parties compromised to make the EC-Council introduce into the treaty a special opt-out clause for Denmark, specifically with regard to the Danish discontent with the monetary union, the defense union and the EU-citizenship.

⁶³ Anne-Marie Eriksen, Bettina Laursen (KVINFO): Women’s perspectives on Europe, Visions and Skepticism; Paper presented at the interdisciplinary Conference “A World in Transition. Feminist Perspectives on International Relations”, Lund University, Sweden, 14-16 June 1996: 1

⁶⁴ See: KVINFO: “Kvindeoffentlighed i Europa”, ed. by Elisabeth Moller Jensen, Henriette Rald, Anne-Marie Eriksen, Copenhagen 1996.

⁶⁵ Id., p. 50ff. And 20ff.

described the fear of Danish women of being deprived within the EU-institutions of the agenda-setting power that they enjoyed at the national level: Women would feel an “alienation” “in a male dominated political system in which male dominance increases the more centralized the structures are”⁶⁶. This interpretation is enhanced by the image that Danish women politicians convey in public about their political role: “We feel that the image we project is one of changing the political agenda such that issues of relevance to women are given higher priority. Also we wish to change the ways in which political work is organized, e.g. with meeting hours that are convenient for women.” (IPU 1992: 168).

Female representation in Denmark is not conceived as merely “symbolic” but as performing instrumental functions and having practical impacts. This image of the role of women in politics that political parties project for their electorates implies that women are needed as vote getters. As their attained status and power position in national politics constitutes Danish women’s predominant frame of reference, it enhances as well women’s generalized political expectations in regard to European politics. At the European level, however, these expectations meet with dissatisfaction to the degree to which the Danish electorate compares the EU’s performance on women’s and gender issues to the highly visible and participatory role that women have come to play and the impact they have achieved in Danish politics.

If there are, hence, gender specific differences in political behavior in Danish mass publics that account for women’s larger Euro-skepticism, these do not originate from women’s traditionally apolitical attitudes but rather from their feminist bias. The World Values Survey of 1990/91 reported that Danes ranked second after Swedes with regard to feminist attitudes: 44% of Danes identified themselves as feminists, and another 41% as “potential feminists”. What European Integration means to Danish women and men, hence, has to be interpreted clearly in the framework of a political culture that is strongly characterized by entrenched feminist values that furthermore have become firmly institutionalized, including an equal status body at the top national level⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Elisabeth Moeller-Jensen, in: R. Wolff: “Dann stehen wir in Europa ganz allein”; in TAZ, May 4, 1993: 133

The case of Greece

Although Greece and Denmark share a large gender gap in public support for the European Union, the two countries could hardly be located at more distant ends of the scale of gender inequalities within the European Union: Greek women have remained much more excluded from politics at the national as well as at the supranational level, with only a few local and institutional advancements: Structural gender relations in Greece largely conform to the traditional image. A member of the EC only since 1981, Greece in many respects still evidences the image of a patriarchal political culture with women being rather alienated from national and international politics: On the UN - gender equality index, Greece ranked on the bottom of the scale at 27, followed only by Spain and Portugal. Regarding the female share of earned income, adult literacy rate, life expectancy and level of education, Greece scores lowest in the EU, too (UN 1995: 76). Greece belongs to the group of the Mediterranean and mostly Catholic societies in Europe where family values and traditional gender roles remain strongest⁶⁸.

Despite the government's progressive public policies for women over the last decade, Greek women continue to suffer from the – in a EU-comparison – lowest level of parliamentary representation and administrative participation in political decision-making at the national as well as at the international level⁶⁹: “The reforms undertaken during the last decade for the promotion of gender equality in Greece have not sufficiently modified the values, customs and attitudes so as to transform gender role expectations and the belief that political affairs are a male responsibility” (UN 1991: 25)⁷⁰: Power relations within the parties - whether socialist or liberal-conservative - despite their official ideologies and because of their patronage structures do not favor the election of women to European, national, regional or

⁶⁷ For an account of “State feminism” in Denmark, see Anette Borchorst: A Political Niche: Denmark's Equal Status Council, in D. McBride Stetson and A. Mazur (eds.), *Comparative State Feminism*, Sage 1995: 59-75

⁶⁸ In Greece by 1990, the literacy rate for women was with 76% much lower than that for men (93%) and women represented only 25% of the economically active population (Cacoullou 1994: 312).

⁶⁹ Political representation of women in the Greek Parliament is the lowest in EU memberstates (5.3% in 1994); for the European Parliament only one woman (4.6%) in 1989 and four (16%) in 1994 got elected - only Italy (10%) and Portugal (8%) showed lower rates of female representation (Hoskyns 1996: 222).

⁷⁰ Reforms of women's rights and policies were largely a result of Greece's application for membership in the EC which required that Greece ratify the international conventions on women's rights (Cacoullou 1994: 314). The reforms included the introduction of the principle of equality of the sexes and of the right to equal pay for work of equal value irrespective of sex into the new constitution of 1975; the 1983 reform of the archaic family law, the 1984 reform of the penal code regarding sexual violence and rape and the 1986 liberalization of the abortion law (id.: 315ff.).

local bodies. The UN-report “Women in decision-making in Greece” (1991) concluded that “a traditional sexual division of labor” on public issues persists: “Local and community concerns are culturally considered more appropriate for women’s skills and experience Issues relating to the national economy, banking and finance, agriculture, foreign affairs, defense and diplomacy are the exclusive domain of men” (id.: 26). These findings apparently support the view that Greek women are considerably less supportive of the EU (35.1%) than Greek men (46.4%) because a female lack of interest in national and international politics.

The Greek women’s movement and national opinion studies provide evidence that puts the traditional gender gap hypothesis strongly into doubt. Although the women’s movement that emerged in the late seventies never grew as strong as in other European countries, feminist activists - through party patronage - have been able to join public institutions and have become state feminists or even activists in European institutions⁷¹. Apart from this group of highly visible elite feminists, also middle and lower class women -- especially those actively participating in the labor market -- have indicated in a nation wide survey of 1988 their high levels of interest in politics and they have demonstrated a wide range of efforts to become politically informed (Cacoullou 1994: 321). However, in 1994 only 25% of Greek women above the age of 15 were economically active, and feminist activists have thus been reduced to highly educated women in the two cities of Saloniki and Athens. Hence, in purely quantitative terms, the number of women interested in politics in general and in European integration in particular appears rather limited.

Why was it then that 10% of Greek women less than men firmly supported the European Union in 1994? In the perspective of the “relative deprivation” theory, a response to this question has to point out what -- in the eyes of critical masses of women -- Greek governments since Greece’s transition to democracy (1974), and especially the Socialist PASOK-governments (1981-1989; 1993-95) have achieved for them. Studies on the Greek retarded Social Welfare State development show that more than in other West European states, public expenditures for social policies in Greece have increased during the 1980s and in the mid-1990s again, reaching 27,7% (1995) of the state budget, hence two points more than on

⁷¹ Sissy Vovou: “Selana” fuer Frauen und Kommunikation”, in “TAZ”, March 8, 1994: 14

EU-average⁷². While in other EU-memberstates welfare state policies stagnated or suffered reductions, the PASOK-governments with large efforts continued to boost national welfare and social security expenditures, with programs including national health care reform, increases of the minimum wage, the improvement of poor relief measures, the creation of public services for the elderly and sick; and the institutionalization of child care facilities. Many if not most of these national public policies have benefited especially non-working women, poor, old or sick women or mothers of small children. With regard to the impact of European integration on the EU, Athina-Sofia Kasimatis in her study of the development of Greek social policy argues that the “pressure to fulfill ...the conditions for joining the Economic and Monetary Union, do not permit a great optimism” or even a “positive prediction for the Greek system of social security” (id.: 66). This evaluation suggests to assume also for the case of Greece that women’s relatively higher Euro-skepticism is related to negative expectations and fears to be deprived by the EU of some of their attainments and improvements that they have come to enjoy at the national level only recently⁷³.

Deviating from the “relative deprivation” model? Spain, Finland, France, Belgium and Italy

While Denmark and Greece in 1994 showed the largest gender gaps in EU-support among all memberstates, Spain belonged with the Netherlands to the two cases with most marginal gender disparities between supporters of the EU. However, bearing the relatively sizable diffusion of feminist values, the development of gender equality policies and of “women’s policy machineries” in Spain in mind⁷⁴, we would expect a gender gap of at least medium proportions -- with between 5-10, instead of only 3.9 points -- to develop in Spain. Given the strong socioeconomic and cultural gender inequalities characteristic of Iberian societies, and taking the diffusion of feminist values into account, it appears a puzzle that women in Spain, unlike Greek women, are not more Euro-skeptic than their male

⁷² A.S.Kasimatis: Die Entwicklung der griechischen Sozialpolitik seit 1967; MA-thesis, Institut fuer Politische Wissenschaft, Universitaet Heidelberg, Januar 1997: 37

⁷³ With 53% of Greeks identifying exclusively with their Greek nationality and only 3% considering themselves as European only or as both, European and Greek (EB44 1996: 36), it could be assumed that women because of their traditionally stronger national identity do not support European integration.

⁷⁴ In the 1990/1 World Value Survey, 36% of all interviewed Spaniards showed feminist orientations; for the “Women’s Policy Machinery” in the case of Spain see: Celia Valiente, Paper presented at the APSA Meeting, San Francisco, Aug. 29-Sept.1, 1996.

compatriots. If these “deviations” are not the result of measurement error or of singular, situational factors, how could they be explained theoretically?

An explanation of the Spanish case should consider that the overall public support for European integration in Spain is not even half as strong as in Greece. The extremely low level of EU-support found in Spain in the mid-1990s⁷⁵ could be interpreted as a persistent manifestation of the generally low political interest prevailing in Spain as a result of its late democratization and its late entry into the EC. In this view, not only women but also men have remained weakly interested in politics and less active in political participation. The empirical evidence for this argument of a generalized political de-alignment in Spain is based on at least three findings: 1. Without any compulsory electoral participation - as in Greece -, electoral turnouts in Spain with 50%- 60% are considerably lower than in other European states; 2. The share of those Spaniards engaging in forms of political participation other than in voting is with one third much smaller than in any other West European country (Topf, in Klingemann/Fuchs (eds.) 1995: 69); 3. While more than 60% of Greeks identified weakly and around 30% strongly with political parties, in Spain the shares were only around 40% and 15% respectively (Klingemann/Fuchs (eds.) 1995: 105); three quarters of Spaniards felt not integrated or did not identify with or did not maintain pragmatic relations with any party, and could thus be classified as de-aligned (Klingemann/Fuchs 1995: 213).

These findings⁷⁶ have some implications for explaining the Spanish “deviance”: within a context of general de-alignment, it can be assumed that gender differences will not be as highly pronounced as in a highly party-politicized context, like in Greece. However, this assumption cannot explain the puzzle of why the issue of the EU - at least by 1994 - has not entailed a gendered debate or a gendering of public orientations toward the EU in Spain. Pilar del Castillo in her analysis of elections for the European Parliament in Spain makes an argument that helps to better understand why Spain is different from Greece and Denmark:

⁷⁵ This low EU-support is striking because the general wisdom holds that the Spanish attitude toward Europe is more positive than that expressed by the other memberstates; see Marisa Muga: *La Opinion de los Espanoles sobre la Union Europea*; European Commission, DGX, July 1996: p. 4. But here, only the “hard core” supporters are considered that respond to all four support-questions positively: While in 1994 nearly 80% of Spanish men and 75% of women responded to be in favor of the EU, only 36%/30% believed Spain had benefited from the EU, and only 50%/46% felt, integration was a good thing.

⁷⁶ An exception from the pattern described for Spain are the “autonomous communities” of Catalonia and the Basque Country where anti-centralist attitudes since the beginning of the democratic transition in 1976 were linked to pro-Europeanism, where gender relations are more advanced and politicization and party political alignment more developed.

Membership of the EC in Spain has acquired an aura, she argues, “suggesting benefits in political, economic and social terms that were not questioned”; this explains why “neither Spanish membership of the EC nor EC policies have been a matter of inter-party conflict”⁷⁷.

Can we generalize these findings from Spain and apply them to the other deviant cases? The Netherlands is a second test case where we could test the hypothesis that an absence of inter-party conflict on EU-issues has contributed to keeping the gender gap in public EU-support moderate, although - from the “relative deprivation” perspective - we had expected it to be relatively larger. Also the reversal of this explanation should be tested in the cases of Austria, Belgium, France, Italy and Portugal: was it here the relatively more intense inter-party conflict on EU-issues that enhanced and furthered a gender gap that - from our theoretical deprivation perspective - we would have expected to be less pronounced? The plausibility of these hypotheses in the four cases notwithstanding - an empirical test remains beyond the scope of this paper.

Conclusions

As I have argued, we cannot reduce the gender gap in public support for the EU across memberstates to a “typically female” deficit in political interest and information, or to women’s stronger conservative political orientations. As comparative analyses of gender and mass public attitudes/behavior demonstrate, neither have Marita Rosch Inglehart’s (1991) and other’s expectations come true: although socio-economic and political inequalities between men and women are decreasing, the impact of gender as an independent variable did not decrease but continues to correlate with differences in individuals’ political attitudes and behaviors. None of the approaches for explaining the dynamics of European public opinion has explicitly referred so far to gender - although the mounting feminist critiques of European integration and the persisting or even growing gender disparities in European mass public orientation strongly suggest to do so. Public opinion analysts such as Karlheinz Reif, Richard Sinnott, Oskar Niedermayer, Russell J. Dalton, Richard Eichenberg, Ronald Inglehart and others have conceived changes in European public orientations within a gender neutral

⁷⁷ Pilar del Castillo: Spain, A Dress Rehearsal for the National Elections; in Cees van der Eijk and Mark N. Franklin (eds.), *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*; Ann Arbor 1996: 253

framework. By exploring the novel and paradoxical findings regarding the EU-gender gap in this study, I have attempted to show how the gender variable could be more systematically incorporated into a framework for analyzing comparatively European public opinion.

Summarizing my interpretation of the origins of the EU-gender gap, I will conclude with the hypothesis that the “relative deprivation” that feminist EU-critiques articulate and for which they charge the particular forms and strategies of European integration, necessarily adopts a variety of meanings in various EU-memberstates and for different groups of women. Although the data on public attitudes toward the EU that I have presented here demonstrate that gender specific differences are significant in almost all member countries, the “EU-gender gap” by no means indicates an integrated, monolithic female block or a coherently “different voice” of women: First of all, national differences, and variable resources continue to impede “the construction of a common interest for European women”⁷⁸; second: for those women who are skeptical or opposed against European unification, feminist EU-critiques represent only part of a spectrum of public discourses that compete in framing citizen’s orientations toward the EU; and, finally, the proportion of men who support feminist, gender-equality and family-friendly values, is so substantial that also critical masses of men could be assumed to frame their Euro-skepticism, at least partially, in the feminist terms of “relative deprivation”. Given that the EU assumes such a variety of meanings, the gendering of European public opinion should not be misinterpreted as a Europe-wide new gender cleavage structuring European politics and policy-making. But neither do my findings support the “Janus-Face”-image of gender politics and policies in the EU, implying that what for a majority of women in some traditional countries may appear as a progress, for women in the most gender advanced memberstates must mean a step backwards. My scrutiny of the correlation between gendered skepticism toward the EU, national attainments of gender equality and feminist expectations toward the EU has rather confirmed that the “fault-line” between more advanced and more backward gender regimes is not the decisive variable for explaining the dynamics of the EU-gender gap. What counts more in shaping public gender

disparities is how feminist discourses are able to articulate their critiques of the EU within the context of inter-party conflict and public controversies on issues of European integration: (1) then a large EU-gender gap will emerge in countries where the EU is perceived as depriving women of their social and political achievements (Denmark and Greece); (2) by contrast, the gender-gap in public orientations toward the EU will be smallest in societies where the impact of feminist discourses on public opinion remains limited because of a lack of public inter-party controversies on issues regarding European politics (Spain).

Despite its heterogenous meanings, the EU-gender gap -- in the perspective of the theory of relative deprivation -- appears simple and unified with regard to its underlying motivation structure: women's widespread perceptions or fears of being "relatively deprived" of what they have, or at least believe to have achieved at the national level through European integration. But at the same time the gender gap in EU-support remains complex and heterogeneous as long as women frame and assess their "relative" deprivation by different frameworks and standards of critique. The EU-gender gap appears uniform and fragmented at once.

The ongoing debates about the "social dimension" of the EU, the conflictive question of how to democratize the Euro-Polity, and the quest for "deepening" the EU by strengthening supranational prerogatives can be expected to continue to provide fertile ground also for feminist critiques of the EU and for their framing of women's "relative deprivation". If these conditions persist, the gender gap in public support for European integration can be expected to deepen further in the future. On the other hand, feminist critiques are but one of many competing discourses within the national and European public spheres. Divided among themselves and relying on different paradigms, they do not necessarily agree on the importance of political or social citizenship, equality or difference; paritarian democracy or political representation for the development of the Euro-polity. But all have in common that, on differing normative grounds, they provide alternatives to the "liberal", "functional", "political economic", formal-legal logics underlying most analyses of European integration and that, so far, share "gender neutral" premises.

⁷⁸ Chiara Saraceno: Gender and Europe: National differences, resources and impediments for the construction of a common interest for European women; paper presented at the conference "Markets, States, and Social Citizenship: European Economic

The analysis offered here has identified some of the gendered manifestations of Euro-skepticism during the 1990s, and it has taken not more than a step in sketching out its motivations. There remain considerable gaps in our knowledge to fill and for qualitative and quantitative research to develop. Apart from comparative analyses of gender specific survey data other than those used here, also qualitative case studies of how critical discourses on the EU become articulated with mass public opinion, and comparisons of how feminist norms and values have contributed to change the political orientations and attitudes of women and men toward the nation state and the EU newly appear on the research agenda. Compared to conventional mass public opinion studies, the discourse approach toward public opinion analysis proposed here operates on different premises. Transcending the gender neutral assumptions of the former and incorporating controversial normative issues related to gender, it yields different perspectives and innovative insights into the meanings and dynamics of Euro-skepticism.