

Opposition to employment policy: differences in attitudes
towards ethnic and income policy among Dutch majority
members

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Abstract.

Since the mid-nineties, the Dutch government has abandoned many of its ethnic policies in favour of new ‘integration’ policies that focus on the socio-economic dimension of integration and target a broader category of disadvantaged people. We examine to what extent the attitudes of Dutch majority members towards employment policy vary with the policy’s target-group. In a split-ballot design respondents were presented with the same policy issue, but the target-group, ‘*ethnic minorities*’ or ‘*people in poor neighbourhoods*’, varied randomly. The results indicate that opposition to employment policy is low and does not vary with the policy’s target-group. Explanations for opposition to employment policy however, do vary with the policy’s target-group. Perceived threat from ethnic minorities is more consequential for opposition to ethnic-targeted policy than for opposition to income-targeted policy.

Keywords: affirmative action, welfare policy, multiculturalism, ethnic threat, conservatism, self-interest

Introduction and research questions

Since the mid-nineties, the Dutch government has moved away from a policy towards ethnic minorities that is commonly associated with multiculturalism (Joppke 2004; Vasta 2007). A similar move has occurred in other traditional bearers of European multiculturalism, such as Britain and Sweden. Despite specific policies targeted at ethnic minorities, unemployment rates for ethnic minorities remain higher than those of native Dutch and ethnic minorities are still overrepresented among people who depend upon welfare benefits (Dagevos 2007). Similarly, levels of educational attainment for ethnic minorities remain low in comparison to native Dutch (Turkenburg and Gijsberts 2007). These previous policies have been substituted by new integration policies that focus on the socio-economic dimension of integration and target a broader category of disadvantaged people, including residents of socially deprived neighbourhoods (the Dutch “Big City Policy”). Unlike ethnic policies that specifically address inequality between Dutch majority members and ethnic minorities, these policies apply to the economically disadvantaged, regardless of ethnic background.

In this article, we examine to what extent the public opinion on government policies varies with the policy’s target-group. We compare the attitudes of Dutch majority members towards employment policies targeted at, specifically, ethnic minorities versus employment policies targeted at, more broadly, disadvantaged people (further abbreviated as ‘*ethnic policy*’ and ‘*income policy*’).¹ Results from American research showed that ethnic policies are more negatively evaluated than

income policies (Bobo and Kluegel 1993, see also Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Sidanius *et al.* 2000). Different explanations have been provided. One view contends that majority opposition to ethnic policies is based on negative perceptions of ethnic minorities (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sidanius, Pratto and Bobo 1996). Other scholars argue that opposition to ethnic or racial policies lies in seemingly ‘race-neutral’ political ideologies, such as conservatism (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997).

The theoretical and empirical contribution of the present research to this literature is three-fold. First, taking advantage of a ‘split-ballot design’, we examine to what extent ethnic attitudes rather than political ideology account for the Dutch majority’s opposition to ethnic and income policy. Second, we take on board the thesis of Sniderman and colleagues (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997) that the effects of ethnic attitudes and political ideology on policy preferences hinge upon the citizens’ level of education. In contrast to previous research, we examine these hypotheses for opposition to both ethnic *and* income policy.² Third, next to ethnic attitudes and political ideology, we examine to what extent different indicators of self-interest account for opposition to ethnic and income policy. We provide a more extensive test of the self-interest account by including subjective indicators of self-interest. Finally, we examine to what extent the determinants of opposition to employment policy vary with the policy’s target-group.

Following Gilens (1999), majority members, who hold a negative stance towards ethnic minorities, may also develop a dislike for income policies, when

ethnic minorities are overrepresented among the policies' beneficiaries (Gilens 1999). If income policies have come to be associated with ethnic minority recipients, differences in opposition to ethnic and income policy may in fact be small or non-existent.

Theories and hypotheses

We derive hypotheses from studies on ethnic exclusionism and more particularly studies on affirmative action (e.g. Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Sidanius, Pratto and Bobo 1996; Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Bobo 2000; Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002). Affirmative action refers to a variety of policy measures (from equal opportunity to preferential treatment) designed to promote equality for underrepresented groups such as women and ethnic minorities (Steeh and Krysan 1996). We will simultaneously consider effects of self-interest, ethnic group threat and political ideology.

Self-interest

Self-interest is often defined as tangible losses or gains to an individual or his immediate family (Sears and Funk 1991). From this account, the effects of objective personal or family characteristics (e.g. income) on ethnic policy attitudes have been taken to reflect the individual's private interests. Accordingly, ethnic policies are likely to increase opposition among members of a majority group because majority

members have no stake in them (Wilson 1987; Bobo and Kluegel 1993). But, it is possible to make a further differentiation between groups of majority members who are more or less likely to oppose to ethnic policies.

Individuals with a lower income, a lower educational degree, or those who are unemployed, are most likely to feel threatened by competition from members of ethnic minority groups (Bobo 1999; Kinder and Sanders 1996). Since ethnic minorities are generally overrepresented among lower educated and lower income groups, higher educated majority members and majority members with a higher income have little to gain or to lose from ethnic policies (Bobo and Kluegel 1993). But lower educated and lower income majority members have more to lose from ethnic policies, and for them the financial costs of these policies are more difficult to bear. Accordingly, opposition to ethnic policy is stronger among lower educated and lower income groups (hypothesis H_{1a}). In the same vein, unemployed majority members are more likely to oppose to ethnic policy than employed majority members (H_{2a}). Subjective indicators of self-interest could also be related to opposition to ethnic policy (Sears and Funk 1991; Kinder and Sanders 1996). In line with our argument for education and income, we expect opposition to ethnic policy to be stronger among people who experience higher levels of status anxiety (H_{3a}). The subjective indicator of self-interest that should be most likely related to opposition to ethnic policy is perceived personal threat from ethnic minorities. We hypothesize that majority members, who experience more personal threat from ethnic minorities, express more opposition to ethnic policy (H_{4a}).

In contrast to ethnic policies, lower educated and lower income groups may perceive general employment policies as an opportunity to enter (or stay) on the job market, rather than an additional source of competition. Therefore, we expect opposition to income policy to be weaker among lower educated and lower income groups (H_{1b}). In the same vein, unemployed majority members will show less opposition to income policy than employed majority members (H_{2b}). With respect to the subjective indicators of self-interest we hypothesize that majority members, who experience higher levels of status anxiety, show less opposition to income policy (H_{3b}). To the extent that income policies have come to be associated with ethnic minority recipients, perceived personal threat from ethnic minorities may also induce a dislike for income policies. However, the effect of personal ethnic threat on opposition to income policy should be weaker than the effect of personal ethnic threat on opposition to ethnic policy (H_{4b}).

Group threat from ethnic minorities

A considerable body of American research has found that whites' racial policy preferences are only weakly affected by self-interest (Kinder and Sanders 1996). Policy preferences are more strongly related to perceptions of how these policies affect their own group's interests (ibid.). Following the 'group conflict' approach, majority's opposition to ethnic policies reflects a perception of threat from ethnic minorities to the majority's claim over valued resources (Blumer 1958, Bobo 1999). These perceptions may follow from an increase in actual inter-ethnic competition,

e.g. in times of high levels of unemployment (Olzak 1992; Quillian 1995; Coenders and Scheepers 1998), but need not be entirely objective (Bobo 1999). In the European context, research has found a positive relation between perceived group threat from ethnic minorities and opposition to civil rights for legal migrants (Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders 2002). Building upon group conflict theory we hypothesize that majority members who perceive more threat from ethnic minorities show more opposition to ethnic policy (H_{5a}). In line with the account on personal ethnic threat, the association between group threat from ethnic minorities and opposition to income policy may depend upon the degree to which majority members have come to associate income policy with ethnic minority recipients. If this association exist, perceptions of ethnic group threat may also be positively related to opposition to income policy. But, the (positive) effect of ethnic group threat on opposition to income policy should be weaker than the effect of ethnic group threat on opposition to ethnic policy (H_{5b}).

Political ideology

In contrast to the previous account, Sniderman and colleagues (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997) argued that it is not the policy's target-group that determines ethnic policy preferences, but the political values and ideologies that citizens endorse. In their view, opposition to government policies is defined more by its unique politics; the goal and field of implementation. Following Sniderman and colleagues, especially economic conservatism should be a crucial

determinant of opposition to employment policy. Moreover, conservatives will uniformly oppose to such policies, regardless of the policy's beneficiaries, since their opposition is grounded in political principles, rather than in racial animus (Sniderman and Carmines 1997). American studies that do control for political determinants, show that these factors are significant, but rarely reduce the effects of ethnic attitudes (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears *et al.* 1997). Following the ideological account, we expect that majority members, holding a more conservative stance towards levelling, show more opposition to ethnic *and* income policy. More specifically, we expect that the (positive) effect of economic conservatism on employment policy does not vary with the policy's target-group (H₆).

Different explanations for lower and higher educated?

Although Sniderman and colleagues emphasize the importance of political ideology for ethnic policy attitudes, they do not suggest that opposition to ethnic policies is completely independent of ethnic attitudes. They argue that relationships of this sort are more likely to be found among the poorly educated (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). More specifically, they state that political ideology accounts for the policy preferences of the citizens who are best equipped to understand abstract ideas and principles. In contrast, effects of ethnic attitudes should be restricted to the policy preferences of the lower educated (*ibid*). For lower educated, it is more difficult to grasp the meaning of abstract political principles. Thus, their opinions on ethnic policies are grounded in their attitudes towards the policies' beneficiaries. Higher

educated have a better understanding of politics and are more likely to base their opinion on political principles. At the same time they are more aware of tolerant norms and values.

However, in American research these hypotheses were rejected in multivariate tests (Sears *et al.* 1997; Bobo 2000). But, these studies did not include a parallel, non-racial policy. This is unfortunate because scholars have argued that the conservative stance of higher educated towards ethnic minority policy reflects a strong ethnic bias (Sidanius, Pratto and Bobo 1996; Sidanius *et al.* 2000; Federico and Sidanius 2002). They argue that the ethnic policy preferences of higher educated majority members are grounded in a desire to maintain relative in-group dominance. We formulate the following conditional hypotheses: economic conservatism has a stronger (positive) effect on opposition to ethnic and income policy among the higher educated (H₇). In contrast, perceived (personal and group) threat from ethnic minorities has a stronger (positive) effect on opposition to ethnic and income policy among the lower educated (H₈). Table 1 presents an overview of the hypotheses in our study.

-INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE-

Data and methods

Data

We applied data from a Dutch national representative survey ‘*Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands* (SOCON)’, conducted in 2005 (Eisinga et al., in press). The sample consists of 1199 native Dutch, 107 Western migrants, and 67 non-Western migrants. The dependent variables were only measured among native Dutch and Western migrants. Western migrants are those who themselves or their parents were born in another European country, Indonesia or North-America.³

The split-ballot design

To examine the extent to which attitudes towards employment policy vary with the policy’s target-group, we implemented a split-ballot design (Gaines *et al.* 2007) in this national survey. This research design combines the internal validity of the experiment with the external validity of survey research. The experiment begins with an introduction announcing that the next question concerns the proper way to handle unemployment. Next, the interviewer describes the characteristics of the unemployed and asks the respondent to what extent he or she would agree with compensatory training for this target group. The description of the target group is determined by computer generated random numbers. In one question version, the policy’s beneficiaries were ethnic minorities; in the other question version the policy’s beneficiaries were people in poor neighbourhoods (Table 2). When the level of opposition to employment policy varies with the question version presented, we can conclude that the difference follows from the variation in target-group.

-INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE-

Dependent variable: opposition to ethnic or income policy

Opposition to ethnic-targeted or income-targeted employment policy was indicated on a four-point scale, ranging from 'agree entirely' to 'do not agree at all'. The distributions of these ordinal scales were very skewed: nearly 90 per cent of the respondents answered 'agree' or 'agree entirely'. Due to this strong deviation from normality, we dichotomized opposition to ethnic/income policies in our analyses. The dependent variable was coded (0) if respondents supported ethnic/income policies and (1) if respondents opposed to ethnic/income policies. Table 3 shows the proportions of Dutch majority members who support or oppose to ethnic and income policy. The results show that opposition to employment policy is low. The percentage respondents opposing to ethnic policy (12 per cent) is somewhat higher than the percentage respondents opposing to income policy (9 per cent), but the difference is not significant: a Chi-square test shows that there is no association between opposition to employment policy and the policy's target-group ($\chi^2(1,1283) = 2.48; p = 0.12$). For a comparison, Bobo and Kluegel (1993) examined attitudes of white Americans towards race-targeted versus income-targeted opportunity enhancing policies. The specific policy issues were: tax breaks for business and industry locating in black/poor areas, spending money on schools in black/poor areas, scholarships for black/economically disadvantaged children. In their study,

opposition to income-targeted policies was on average 22 per cent lower than opposition to race-targeted policies.

-INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE-

Independent variables

As indicators of self-interest we included level of education, income, employment status, status anxiety and perceived personal threat from ethnic minorities. *Education* was measured as the highest level of education completed, ranging from (1) primary education to (7) university degree or higher. *Income* was measured as the gross monthly household income divided into several ordered categories. We constructed an interval variable based on the median values of these categories. In a next step these values were recoded using the OECD-modified scale (Hagenaars *et al.* 1994). This modified scale for household income assigns a weight of 1 to the household head, 0.5 to each additional adult member and 0.3 to each child. With regard to *employment status*, we distinguished those who currently work from the unemployed. In addition we differentiated citizens on long-term benefits, pensioners and disabled people, from housekeepers and students. Although the number of unemployed respondents was very small, we included them as a separate category to be able to discuss the direction of the effects.

Status anxiety, personal and group threat, and economic conservatism were measured with five-point Likert scale items ranging from ‘totally agree’ to ‘totally

disagree'. *Status anxiety* was measured by the mean score of three items (Cronbach's alpha = .74): 'I will be able to afford less over the next years'; 'I sometimes lie awake because of my financial situation' and 'I have to adjust my current lifestyle over the next years'. Higher scores indicate higher levels of status anxiety. *Personal ethnic threat* was measured by the mean score of two items (alpha = .67): 'I sometimes worry that my living environment declines due to the arrival of ethnic minorities'; 'I sometimes worry that my financial prospects will decline due to the presence of ethnic minorities'. A higher score indicates a higher level of personal ethnic threat.

As indicator of political ideology we included *economic conservatism*, i.e. a conservative attitude towards levelling of the stratification order (Middendorp 1991). Respondents were presented two five-point Likert scale items: '*Workers still have to struggle for equality*' and '*Class differences ought to be smaller*'. A third item read '*Do you prefer income differences to be bigger or smaller, or should they remain the same?*' The three answer categories 'should become larger / should remain the same / should become smaller' were assigned the values 1, 3 and 5 respectively, in order to compute the mean score of the three items (alpha = .67). A higher score reflects more resistance to income levelling.

Group threat from ethnic minorities was measured by the mean score of four items referring to different sources (cultural and material) of ethnic group threat: '*The arrival of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands is a threat to our own culture*'; '*In the allocation of houses, ethnic minorities get a turn before Dutch people*'; '*Dutch people will be fired because of ethnic minorities*'; '*Education for minorities*

comes at the expense of Dutch children' ($\alpha = .79$). Higher scores indicate higher levels of group threat. The distributions of the independent variables are reported in Appendix A.

Control variables

Following group conflict or ethnic competition theory, the percentage of minorities in the neighbourhood may increase opposition to ethnic policy among Dutch majority members (Tolsma, Lubbers and Coenders 2008). At the same time, residing in a lower income neighbourhood may increase support for income policy. To control for these neighbourhood effects we included the percentage of non-western minorities in the neighbourhood and the average gross monthly income of the neighbourhood. Neighbourhoods were operationalized by means of the five-digit postal code. Missing values on the five-digit postal code were replaced by the aggregate values on the four-digit postal code level. In the analyses, both neighbourhood characteristics were included as individual level variables, as the mean number of respondents clustered under the five-digit postal code was 1. Finally, gender and age were included as control variables.

Analyses

About 6 per cent of the respondents had missing values on one or more of the variables. We applied multiple imputations and estimated regression models in Stata

for each of the five imputed data sets and combined the results according to Rubin's (1987) rules. Following this procedure, 1,283 cases were included in our analyses.⁴ All but the dummy variables were mean-centred in the analyses.

Before we turn to the analyses, we must first establish that respondents randomly assigned to the two target-group conditions do not significantly differ on a number of standard demographic variables. We found no significant associations between the random conditions and level of education, age and gender.

We use logistic regression to test the hypotheses. We followed a hierarchical procedure. Effects of self-interest variables are estimated in the first model. Economic conservatism and ethnic group threat are added in the second and third model respectively.⁵ To test whether educational attainment moderated the effects of ethnic threat and conservatism, we included interaction terms in the fourth and final model.

To test whether the effects of self-interest, perceived ethnic threat and economic conservatism on employment policy, vary with the policy's target-group, we combined the responses to income and ethnic policy in one new scale and estimated interactions between target-group and each of these factors. We used a hierarchical backwards selection procedure with respect to the inclusion of interaction terms (Jaccard 2001). For each step in the model, we started with the estimation of the full model, excluding all interaction terms. Subsequently, we included all interactions between the variables of interest and target-group (i.e. ethnic versus income). For reasons of parsimony, we successively removed non-significant interaction parameters (one-tailed tests; $\alpha = .05$). Only the effects of

personal ethnic threat and ethnic group threat were contingent upon target-group. The results of these analyses are reported in Appendix B.⁶

Results

The results of the logistic regression analyses for opposition to ethnic policy are presented in Table 4.

-INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE-

As reported in Table 4, the effect of educational attainment is significantly negative: the higher the level of education, all other things equal, the lower the opposition to ethnic policy. This finding supports hypothesis 1a. Contrary to hypothesis 1a, household income is not related to opposition to ethnic policy. We also hypothesized (H_{2a}) that the unemployed would show more opposition to ethnic policy than those who are employed. Although the difference in opposition to ethnic policy between unemployed and employed respondents is in the expected direction, it is not significant. This may be due to the small number of unemployed respondents.

Next, we turn to the results for the subjective indicators of self-interest. In contrast to hypothesis 3a, we find that status anxiety is not related to opposition to ethnic policy. In line with hypothesis 4a, we do find a significant positive effect of personal ethnic threat on opposition to ethnic policy: the higher the level of

perceived personal threat from ethnic minorities, the stronger the opposition to ethnic policy.

The second and third model of Table 4 present the parameter estimates for the effects of economic conservatism and perceived ethnic group threat respectively. In support of hypothesis 6, we find a positive effect of economic conservatism on opposition to ethnic policy: the more conservative respondents are towards levelling, the more opposition they show towards ethnic policy. The results also confirm our hypothesis on the effect of perceived ethnic group threat (H_{5a}). Those who perceive more group threat from ethnic minorities show more opposition to ethnic policy. Perceived personal threat from ethnic minorities is not related to opposition to ethnic policy once we control for perceived group threat from ethnic minorities. The latter supports the ‘group-conflict’ argument that opposition to ethnic policy stems from a sense of group interest, rather than self-interest.

-INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE-

The results of our logistic regression analysis for opposition to income policy are presented in Table 5. Contrary to hypothesis 1b, educational attainment is not related to income policy. Similarly, we find no effect of household income on opposition to income policy. As in the models for ethnic policy, we do not find differences in opposition to income policy between employed and unemployed people. Moreover the parameter estimate for the effect of unemployment is positive

rather than negative. We also find no effect of status anxiety on opposition to income policy. These findings therefore reject hypothesis 2b and hypothesis 3b respectively.

A difference between the models for ethnic and income policy is found in the effect of personal ethnic threat. In contrast to hypothesis 4b, people who perceive more personal threat from ethnic minorities, do not show more opposition to income policy. The effect of personal ethnic threat on opposition to employment policy is contingent upon target-group; $b = 0.45$ (s.e.= 0.19); $p = 0.01$ (one-tailed; see 'Self-interest Model', Appendix B).

The second model in Table 5 reports the parameter estimate for the effect of economic conservatism on opposition to income policy. In support of hypothesis 6, opposition to income policy is more widespread among people with a more conservative stance towards levelling. As expected, the effect of economic conservatism on opposition to employment policy is not contingent upon target-group; the interaction between conservatism and target-group was not significant.

A difference between the models for ethnic and income policy is also found in the effect of ethnic group threat. In support of hypothesis H_{5b}, we find a positive effect of perceived ethnic group threat on opposition to income policy. As expected, the effect of ethnic group threat on opposition to ethnic policy is stronger than the effect of ethnic group threat on opposition to income policy. The interaction between ethnic group threat and target group was significant: $b = 0.46$ (s.e.= 0.23); $p = 0.02$ (one-tailed; see 'Group threat Model', Appendix B).

Finally, we discuss the results of our conditional hypotheses with regard to the interactions with education. We expected economic conservatism to have a stronger (positive) effect on opposition to ethnic and income policy among the higher educated (H₇). In addition, we stated that perceived threat from ethnic minorities – personal threat as well as group threat – has a stronger (positive) effect on opposition to ethnic and income policy among the lower educated (H₈). The results in the last columns of Table 4 and Table 5 refute these interaction hypotheses. Table 6 provides a summary of our findings.

-INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE-

Conclusions

Since the mid-1990s, the Dutch government has moved away from the ‘ethnic minorities’ policy’. New ‘integration policies’ have been issued that focus on the socio-economic dimension of integration and that target a broader category of disadvantaged people. In this article, we aimed to provide insight in the extent to which ethnic-targeting, as opposed to income-targeting, increases opposition to employment policy. Following American research, we expected Dutch majority members to oppose to ethnic policy more than to income policy.

We also examined to what extent the *explanations* for opposition to employment policy vary with the policy’s target-group. We specifically questioned to what extent ethnic attitudes, rather than political ideology, account for opposition

to ethnic and income policy. The results indicate that opposition to employment policy is low and does not vary with the policy's target-group. Irrespective of the target-group, merely about ten per cent of the Dutch majority members opposes to employment policy. Apparently, the negative discourse on specific policies toward ethnic minorities is not reflected in attitudes towards ethnic-targeted employment policy.

Irrespective of the target-group, opposition to ethnic and income policy is more widespread among people with a more conservative stance towards levelling. The stronger opposition to employment policies among conservatives is likely to be rooted in their political principle, since they oppose to such policies regardless of the policy's beneficiaries.

Interestingly, Dutch majority members, who perceive ethnic minorities as a threat to collective resources, express more opposition to *both* ethnic and income policy. This finding suggests that, to some extent, income policies are indeed associated with ethnic minority recipients. But majority members who experience threat from ethnic minorities (on a personal or group level), are more likely to oppose to ethnic policy than to income policy. Especially group interest, i.e. perceived group threat from ethnic minorities, is a strong determinant of opposition to ethnic policy. These findings confirm previous research showing that ethnic group threat is a more important determinant for opposition to affirmative action than personal ethnic threat (Kinder and Sanders 1996).

Following Sniderman and colleagues (e.g. Sniderman and Piazza 1993), we also examined whether the policy preferences of the higher educated, compared to

the lower educated, exhibit less dependence on ethnic threat and a greater influence of ideological reasoning. We have to reject these hypotheses. The effect of economic conservatism on opposition to employment policy is not restricted to the higher educated, nor is the effect of ethnic threat restricted to the lower educated.

Other scholars (Jackman and Muha 1984; Federico and Sidanius 2002) have argued that the ethnic policy preferences of the higher educated majority members exhibit more dependence on group interest. They argue that higher educated are not intrinsically more tolerant towards affirmative action. Research shows, for instance, that higher educated do endorse general principles of equality, but not the concrete policy implementations of these principles (Schuman *et al.* 1997). Presumably, intellectual sophistication could account for this. Higher educated members of the dominant group should best understand how ethnic policies impinge on the material and symbolic interests of the dominant group. In addition, they should better comprehend how ideologies of in-group superiority – such as racism – help to maintain their dominant position (Sidanius, Pratto and Bobo 1996; Federico and Sidanius 2002). Thus, following this account, opposition to ethnic policy among higher educated majority members is *more* likely to be grounded in perceived group threat from ethnic minorities. We have to reject this reverse interaction hypothesis also.

Unfortunately, our data did not contain beliefs about the causes of economic success (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Gilens 1999; Hughes and Tuch 2000). Scholars studying stratification beliefs, argue that people who attribute economic success to personal causes (ability or effort), should be less likely to support affirmative action.

In contrast, people who attribute economic success to structural causes (i.e., whether one sees limited opportunities as causing inequality), should be more likely to support affirmative action. Bobo and Kluegel (1993) argue that these beliefs may show stronger associations with opposition to race-targeted policy than with opposition to income-targeted policy: if people, who deny structural causes of poverty, or endorse individual causes, do not support income policies, they are even less likely to support ethnic policies, since not all ethnic minorities are poor. They find however that those stratification beliefs do not account for greater opposition to race-targeted policy compared to income-targeted policy. Moreover, structural attributes seem more important for opinions on race-targeted affirmative action than personal attributes (Hughes and Tuch 2000).

A further limitation of our study is that we were restricted in the number of policy goals that were incorporated in the survey. A different policy issue, or a policy with a different goal (equal outcome as opposed to equal opportunity), might have yielded a higher level of opposition to ethnic policy. American research has shown that equal outcome policies, such as quota systems, are more negatively evaluated than equal opportunity policies (Bobo and Kluegel 1993). Quota policies are also contested in the Netherlands. Politicians fear that these policies will stigmatize ethnic minorities (Commissie Blok 2004). In future research, we need to examine possible interactions between target-group, policy domain and policy goal, to better understand the effect of the policy's target-group on policy preferences.

Finally, we know from studies in the field of issue framing that the public opinion on policy issues depends upon the messenger as well as the way the message

is presented. Not only are policy proposals more likely supported when they come from a legitimate and credible source (Druckman 2001), people are also susceptible to the *way* policies are framed (e.g. Nelson and Kinder 1996; Brewer and Gross 2005; Van Londen, Coenders and Scheepers in press). Confronted with different opposing frames or counter-argumentation, people are likely to change their initial position on ethnic policy issues (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). The pivotal question is whether susceptibility to counter argumentation depends upon the policy's target-group. Confronted with counterarguments, are Dutch majority members as likely to change their position on ethnic policy, as they are to change their position on income policy?

In this article, we have shown that the explanations for opposition to employment policy vary with the policy's target group. Perceived threat from ethnic minorities is stronger related to opposition to ethnic-targeted policy than to opposition to income-targeted policy. Yet, also with regard to policies aimed at lower income groups, we found more opposition among those majority members who feel that the dominant position of their in-group is threatened by ethnic minorities. If over time, ethnic minorities and immigrants are more and more perceived as the beneficiaries of welfare state policies in multi-ethnic societies, public support for the welfare state may crumble due to anti-immigrant attitudes and perceived ethnic threat among the majority population.

Notes

1. To our knowledge, only Sidanius *et al.* (2000) examined the interaction between educational attainment and conservatism for opposition to affirmative action targeted at blacks and poor. But, apart from education and conservatism, they did not include any other variables in their analyses.
2. The label ethnic policies in this article refers to labour market policies that are explicitly designed to redress inequalities in labour market participation and occupational status between native Dutch and ethnic minorities. The Dutch government has abandoned ethnic-targeted policies across various domains, including the domain of employment (Dagevos and Turkenburg 2003). For instance, in 2004 the Dutch government abandoned the Stimulating Labour Participation of Ethnic Minorities Law (in Dutch abbreviated as the law ‘SAMEN’ (in English: ‘together’)). This law proscribed employers to keep track of the number and employment position of ethnic minorities in their company.
3. Analyses showed that ethnic background (i.e. native Dutch or western migrants) did not affect opposition to ethnic or income policies, nor did the inclusion of ethnic background alter the effects of other variables included in the models.
4. To take the randomization into account, separate imputed data files were generated for the two experimental conditions. We used the modified strategy proposed by Von Hippel (2007) referred to as ‘multiple imputation than deleted’. Under *MID*, all cases are used for imputation but, following imputation, cases with imputed Y values are excluded from the analysis.

5. Although personal ethnic threat highly correlated with ethnic group threat (Pearson correlation = 0.67), inspection of the variance inflation factors (VIF) showed no serious problems of collinearity (Menard 2002).

6. In the final model ('Group threat Model', Appendix B), we did not include the interaction term between personal ethnic threat and experimental condition because, controlling for ethnic group threat, personal ethnic threat did not have a significant effect on opposition to ethnic policy nor on opposition to income policy. The interaction term between economic conservatism and target-group was insignificant in all models and therefore removed.

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Tables

Table 1. *Overview of hypotheses: expected relation with opposition to ethnic and income policy*

	Hypotheses	
	Ethnic policy	Income policy
<i>Self-interest</i>		
Education	-	+
Income	-	+
Unemployed	+	-
Status anxiety	+	-
Personal ethnic threat	++	+
<i>Group position</i>		
Ethnic group threat	++	+
<i>Political ideology</i>		
Conservatism	+	+
<i>Interactions</i>		
Conservatism X education	+	+
Personal ethnic threat X education	-	-
Ethnic group threat X education	-	-

Note: + positive relationship, ++ stronger positive relationship, - negative relationship

Table 2. *Split-ballot design of the ‘target-group’ experiment*

Opposition to employment policy

Ethnic question version	Income question version
The next question is about the proper way to handle unemployment among <i>ethnic minorities</i> .	The next question is about the proper way to handle unemployment.
<i>Ethnic minorities in the Netherlands are more often unemployed than members of the ethnic Dutch majority.</i> A possible policy solution would be to offer compensatory training to <i>ethnic minorities</i> .	<i>People in poor neighbourhoods are more often unemployed than other people.</i> A possible policy solution would be to offer compensatory training to <i>people in poor neighbourhoods</i> .
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this policy solution?	To what extent do you agree or disagree with this policy solution?

Source: SOCON (2005)

Table 3. *Proportions of respondents opposing or supporting ethnic and income policies*

Opposition or support to	employment policy	Ethnic policy	Income policy
Per cent opposition		12.1	9.4
Per cent support		87.9	90.6
N		644	639

Source: SOCON (2005), authors' calculations

Note: $\chi^2 (1,1283) = 2.48; p = 0.12$

Table 4. *Opposition to ethnic policy: Unstandardized logistic regression parameter estimates with standard error between brackets (n=644)*

	Self-interest Model b (s.e.)	Ideology Model b (s.e.)	Group threat Model b (s.e.)	Conditional Model b (s.e.)
Gender (woman)	0.02 (0.27)	0.10 (0.28)	0.06 (0.28)	0.06 (0.28)
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Mean income in the neighbourhood	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
% minorities in the neighbourhood	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)
<i>Self-interest</i>				
Education	-0.17 (0.08)*	-0.22 (0.08)**	-0.18 (0.09)*	-0.23 (0.10)*
<i>Employment status</i>				
Unemployed	0.96 (0.64)	0.98 (0.64)	0.91 (0.64)	0.87 (0.64)
Long term benefit	0.13 (0.42)	0.12 (0.43)	-0.07 (0.44)	-0.05 (0.43)
Housekeeper	0.49 (0.43)	0.39 (0.44)	0.25 (0.44)	0.25 (0.44)
Student	0.09 (0.59)	-0.17 (0.62)	-0.09 (0.62)	-0.12 (0.63)
Employed (reference)	-	-	-	-
Income	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Status anxiety	-0.10 (0.14)	-0.02 (0.15)	-0.02 (0.15)	-0.02 (0.15)
Personal ethnic threat	0.63 (0.14)***	0.60 (0.15)***	0.29 (0.18)	0.29 (0.20)
<i>Ideology</i>				
Conservatism		0.56 (0.18)***	0.52 (0.18)**	0.53 (0.18)**
<i>Group position</i>				
Ethnic group threat			0.58 (0.22)**	0.60 (0.23)**
<i>Interactions</i>				
Conservatism X education				0.06 (0.10)
Personal ethnic threat X education				0.03 (0.10)
Ethnic group threat X education				0.05 (0.12)
<i>Intercept</i>	-2.28 (0.24)***	-2.37 (0.25)***	-2.36 (0.25)***	-2.38 (0.25)***
<i>Nagelkerke R²</i>	0.10	0.13	0.15	0.16
<i>Model χ^2</i>	35.29***	46.03***	53.82***	54.93***

Source: SOCON 2005, authors' calculations

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed tests)

Table 5. *Opposition to income policy: Unstandardized logistic regression parameter estimates with standard errors between brackets (n=639)*

	Self-interest Model b (s.e.)	Ideology Model b (s.e.)	Group threat Model b (s.e.)	Conditional Model b (s.e.)
Gender (woman)	-0.48 (0.30)	-0.40 (0.30)	-0.43 (0.30)	-0.41 (0.30)
Age	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)
Mean income in the neighbourhood	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
% minorities in the neighbourhood	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
<i>Self-interest</i>				
Education	-0.08 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.10 (0.09)	-0.10 (0.10)
<i>Employment status</i>				
Unemployed	0.63 (0.88)	0.69 (0.92)	0.74 (0.910)	0.72 (0.92)
Long term benefit	0.43 (0.45)	0.47 (0.45)	0.47 (0.45)	0.48 (0.45)
Housekeeper	-0.23 (0.69)	-0.17 (0.67)	-0.20 (0.67)	-0.20 (0.67)
Student	0.45 (0.53)	0.39 (0.54)	0.32 (0.54)	0.30 (0.54)
Employed (reference)	-	-	-	-
Income	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Status anxiety	0.01 (0.16)	0.06 (0.17)	0.07 (0.17)	0.07 (0.17)
Personal ethnic threat	0.19 (0.16)	0.18 (0.17)	-0.09 (0.22)	-0.10 (0.24)
<i>Ideology</i>				
Conservatism		0.41 (0.18)*	0.43 (0.19)**	0.43 (0.19)*
<i>Group position</i>				
Ethnic group threat			0.45 (0.24)*	0.46 (0.24)*
<i>Interactions</i>				
Conservatism X education				0.01 (0.11)
Personal ethnic threat X education				-0.05 (0.13)
Ethnic group threat X education				0.06 (0.14)
<i>Intercept</i>	-2.26 (0.23)***	-2.34 (0.24)***	-2.35 (0.24)***	-2.36 (0.25)***
<i>Nagelkerke R²</i>	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.09
<i>Model χ^2</i>	18.32	23.33*	27.16*	27.44*

Source: SOCON 2005, authors' calculations

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed tests)

Table 6. *Overview of hypotheses and findings*

	<i>Hypotheses</i>		<i>Supported?</i>	
	<i>Ethnic policy</i>	<i>Income policy</i>	<i>Ethnic policy</i>	<i>Income policy</i>
<i>Self-interest</i>				
Education	-	+	V	0
Income	-	+	0	0
Unemployed	+	-	0	0
Status anxiety	+	-	0	0
Personal ethnic threat	++	+	V	0
<i>Group position</i>				
Ethnic group threat	++	+	V	V
<i>Political ideology</i>				
Conservatism	+	+	V	V
<i>Interactions</i>				
Conservatism X education	+	+	0	0
Personal ethnic threat X education	-	-	0	0
Ethnic group threat X education	-	-	0	0

Note: + positive relationship, ++ stronger positive relationship, - negative relationship, V hypotheses supported, 0 hypotheses rejected.

Appendix A. Range, mean values and standard deviation or percentage of the independent variables

	Range	Mean (st.deviation)
Woman (%)	0-1	52.6
Age	18-70	46.15 (14.80)
Mean income in neighbourhood	1060.61-5420.00	2035.62 (448.23)
% ethnic minorities in neighbourhood	1-41	7.28 (7.84)
<i>Self-interest</i>		
Education	1-7	4.17 (1.75)
Unemployed (%)	0-1	2.0
Long-term benefit (%)	0-1	21.0
Housekeeper (%)	0-1	10.2
Student (%)	0-1	5.4
Employed (%)	0-1	61.3
Income	28.33-8500	1731.34 (1067.41)
Status anxiety	1-5	2.70 (0.97)
Personal ethnic threat	1-5	2.45 (0.94)
<i>Ideology</i>		
Economic conservatism	1-5	2.18 (0.77)
<i>Group position</i>		
Ethnic group threat	1-5	2.78 (0.85)

Source: SOCON 2005; authors' calculations.

Appendix B. Opposition to employment policy: Unstandardized logistic regression parameter estimates with standard errors between brackets (N = 1,283)

	Self-interest Model b (s.e.)	Ideology Model b (s.e.)	Group threat Model b (s.e.)
<i>Policy target group</i>			
Low income group (reference)	-	-	-
Ethnic minorities	0.19 (0.19)	0.18 (0.20)	0.11 (0.20)
Gender (women)	-0.18 (0.20)	-0.09 (0.20)	-0.14 (0.20)
Age	-0.02 (0.01)*	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Mean income in the neighbourhood	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
% minorities in the neighbourhood	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
<i>Self-interest</i>			
Education	-0.13 (0.06)*	-0.17 (0.06)**	-0.13 (0.06)*
<i>Employment status</i>			
Unemployed	0.86 (0.50)*	0.90 (0.52)*	0.86 (0.51)*
Long term benefit	0.27 (0.30)	0.29 (0.31)	0.17 (0.31)
Housekeeper	0.26 (0.35)	0.24 (0.35)	0.12 (0.35)
Student	0.27 (0.40)	0.13 (0.40)	0.15 (0.40)
Employed (reference)	-	-	-
Income	0.00 (0.00)	0.02 (0.11)	0.00 (0.00)
Status anxiety	-0.06 (0.11)	0.07 (0.17)	0.02 (0.11)
Personal ethnic threat	0.16 (0.16)	0.14 (0.15)	0.09 (0.14)
<i>Ideology</i>			
Conservatism		0.50 (0.13)***	0.48 (0.12)***
<i>Group position</i>			
Ethnic group threat			0.26 (0.20)
<i>Interactions</i>			
Personal ethnic threat X target	0.45 (0.19)*	0.42 (0.20)*	
Ethnic group threat X target			0.46 (0.23)*
<i>Intercept</i>			
Intercept	-2.34 (0.24)***	-2.35 (0.24)***	-2.39 (0.20)
<i>Nagelkerke R²</i>			
Nagelkerke R ²	0.07	0.09	0.11
<i>Model χ^2</i>			
Model χ^2	45.48***	61.56***	72.32***

Source: SOCON 2005, authors' calculations

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed tests)