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Welfare Chauvinism in the Face of Ethnic Diversity: A Vignette Experiment across Diverse and Homogenous Neighbourhoods on the Perceived Deservingness of Native and Foreign-Born Welfare Claimants

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Abstract

The tenuous relationship between ethnic diversity and welfare solidarity has become a central focus in sociological and political inquiry. Yet, the question whether ethnic composition of the residential environment affects welfare chauvinism (favouring an encompassing welfare state that is preserved for ingroup members) has remained fundamentally unanswered. This article integrates extensive experimental data on welfare solidarity with hypothetical, unemployed persons from domestic and foreign origin among 23,015 native participants (to isolate welfare chauvinism), and detailed registry data (on the residential neighbourhood of these participants) from the Netherlands. This combination of contextual and experimental data allows us to test rivaling theoretical arguments on the relationship between ethnic diversity and welfare chauvinism, namely conflict, contact, and constrict theory. The outcomes of this enriched vignette survey experiment show that ethnic diversity has a specific and sizeable effect on welfare chauvinism under a range of model specifications. Diverse neighbourhoods drive down natives' support for welfare distribution with migrants but not with natives. Ethnic diversity thereby stimulates the deservingness gap between natives and migrants, i.e., welfare chauvinism. We discuss the implications of these findings for conflict, contact, and constrict theory.

Introduction

The proposition that it is difficult to gain public legitimacy for the welfare state in the face of ethnic and cultural diversity has come under increased scrutiny (Freeman, 2009; Stichnoth and Van der Straeten, 2013; Schaeffer, 2013). The 'progressive dilemma' holds that an

unrestricted immigrant influx conflicts with support for generous welfare programmes (Goodhart, 2004; Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2012). Concurrently, migration and diversity are argued to stimulate welfare chauvinism, i.e. support for welfare redistribution but exclusively with the native ingroup (Kitschelt, 1997). Yet,

despite popular appeal, three distinct lines of literature have not provided conclusive empirical evidence that ethnic and racial diversity inhibits social solidarity.

First, vignette experiments established a consistent and pervasive deservingness gap: welfare recipients belonging to the ethnic ingroup are more likely to be considered deserving of welfare support than the ethnic outgroup (e.g. Van der Waal *et al.*, 2010; Harrell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016; Kootstra, 2017; Reeskens and Van der Meer, 2019). However, these vignette experiments did not study the extent to which residential diversity affects this deservingness gap. Second, gaming experiments investigated inter-ethnic reciprocity in highly controlled settings (e.g. Fershtman and Gneezy, 2001; Bouckaert and Dhaene, 2004; Enos and Gidron, 2018), showing that ingroup biases are stronger in more segregated environments and—among ethnic majority groups—in environments with larger outgroups (Enos and Gidron, 2018). Yet, it is not evident that these findings can be extrapolated to more abstract attitudes such as welfare chauvinism. Third, observational, survey-based research related residential diversity to respondents' self-reported support for the welfare state in general (e.g., Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote, 2001; Brady and Finnigan, 2014; Eger and Breznau, 2017; Nekby and Pettersson-Lidbom, 2017), with decidedly inconclusive results (Steele, 2016). Moreover, these observational studies have been unable to assess to what extent support for welfare benefits varies with the ethnicity or migration background of the potential recipients of these benefits.

None of these research lines has been able to isolate the relationship between migration-based diversity and welfare chauvinism. Welfare chauvinism consists of two components—(i) support for extensive welfare state arrangements but (ii) primarily for the (ethnic or cultural) ingroup—summarized as ‘solidarity without inclusion’ (Kymlicka, 2015). As ‘people care about who they redistribute towards’ (Finseraas, 2008: p. 407), it is crucial to break down the general concept of welfare state support into support for redistribution with the ingroup and support for redistribution with the outgroup. To the extent that residential diversity has differential effects on solidarity with the ingroup and the outgroup, it affects residents' welfare chauvinism.

Various theories propose how the ethnic composition of the residential environment affects the prevalence of welfare chauvinism among native majority groups. Conflict theory states that welfare chauvinism is more outspoken in ethnically diverse environments, as diversity raises solidarity with the ingroup and harms solidarity with the outgroup (Quillian, 1995) due to increased

competition and vulnerability to income loss (Finseraas, 2008). Constrict theory states that diversity undermines not only outgroup solidarity but also ingroup solidarity (Putnam, 2007: p. 144). The mechanisms behind constrict theory are not very well defined, though later studies suggest that diversity induces uncertainty about the prevalent norms, stimulates preference diversity, and/or increases coordination problems (Dinesen, Schaeffer and Sonderskov, 2020). Finally, contact theory (Allport, 1954) suggests that welfare chauvinism is less outspoken in ethnically diverse environments due to increased contact opportunities: when residents from different ethnic groups engage in casual daily contact more frequently, inter-ethnic solidarity goes up (Van Oorschot and Uunk, 2007).

This article aims to integrate distinct methodological angles to test whether and how the ethnic composition of the residential environment affects welfare chauvinism. We combine the experimental vignette survey design with observational data on the neighbourhood of those participating in the experiment. An extensive full-factorial, between-subjects vignette survey experiment among 23,015 native participants allows us to isolate the prevalence of welfare chauvinism, by distinguishing between hypothetical welfare recipients with either native or migration backgrounds. We enrich these experimental data with registry data on the residential environment of the participant to test the association of ethnic diversity and welfare chauvinism.

Theory

Marshall (2009 [1950]) was among the first to establish the link between ethnocultural homogeneity and welfare state generosity, arguing that the expansion of social rights requires a national community bound together by citizens' reciprocal obligations. Various empirical studies confirm that welfare state arrangements across the globe are under pressure because of increased diversity (e.g. Alesina and Glaeser, 2004). The review study by Stichtoth and Van der Straeten (2013: p. 366) summarizes: ‘if the probability that two people drawn at random from the population will belong to two different racial groups increases by one percentage point, the share of social spending over GDP is estimated to be lower by 7.5 percentage points’. Employing more recent trend data, Soroka and colleagues (2016) specify that lower welfare expenditures occur particularly on programmes that affect immigrants such as unemployment protection (but see Gaston and Rajaguru, 2013; Burgoon, 2014, who contest this unconditional effect).

The micro-level reasoning behind this macro-level effect reads that increased ethnic heterogeneity of society reduces natives' solidarity with immigrants (Alesina and Glaeser, 2004; Brooks and Manza, 2007; Finseraas, 2008; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010; Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2012; Brady and Finnigan, 2014). Diversity increases 'difference' more than 'sameness'; in contexts where a plurality of beneficiaries is an outsider, it might be difficult to grasp popular support (Banting, 2000; Wright and Reeskens, 2013). Yet, concurrently, diversity increases economic vulnerability, such as competition on the labour market (Finseraas, 2008; Ervasti and Hjerm, 2012), raising expectations on the state to address these vulnerabilities (Brady and Finnigan, 2014).

Empirical findings are mixed. Some studies find that ethnic diversity and/or immigration undermine support for welfare state arrangements (e.g., Mau and Burkhardt, 2009; Eger, 2010; Dahlberg, Edmark and Lundqvist, 2012; Eger and Breznau, 2017), others that it does not (e.g., Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote, 2001; Nekby and Pettersson-Lidbom, 2017) or at least not unconditionally (e.g., Senik, Stichnoth and Van der Straeten, 2009; Brady and Finnigan, 2014). While most studies relied on cross-national analyses, studies that touch upon lower levels of aggregation such as the municipality (Dahlberg, Edmark and Lundqvist, 2012), the county (Eger, 2010), and the region (Spies and Schmidt-Catran, 2016; Eger and Breznau, 2017) untangled a negative relationship between exposure to diversity and support for welfare redistribution. Departing from the established negative relationship of diversity at the sub-national level with support for the welfare state, we propose the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The more diverse communities are, the less residents support welfare benefits.

Yet, welfare solidarity is less than universal. Welfare solidarity declines as the cultural distance towards the recipients increases (Ford, 2011; Hainmueller and Hangartner, 2013; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015; Harrell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016; Kootstra, 2017), irrespective of recipients' pro-social behaviour (Reeskens and Van der Meer, 2019). This implies that the potential recipient of welfare benefits should be taken into account in order to understand the relationship between diversity and support for welfare. Conflict, constrict, and contact theory offer rivalling claims on the effect that ethnic diversity is likely to have on outgroup and ingroup solidarity.

Regarding outgroup solidarity, conflict theory (e.g. Blalock, 1967; Quillian, 1995) argues that residing in an environment with a large (ethnic) outgroup increases

actual or perceived competition with that outgroup for material (economic) and immaterial (cultural) resources. The resulting feelings of inter-group threat would undermine solidarity. Constrict theory, too, argues that diversity reduces outgroup solidarity (Putnam, 2007) but is less precise about the underlying mechanisms. Review studies have suggested that diversity induces anomie, i.e. uncertainty about social norms and consequently heightened coordination problems (cf. Van der Meer and Tolsma, 2014; Dinesen, Schaeffer and Sonderskov, 2020). This should inhibit solidarity with outgroups as well as ingroups.

By contrast, according to contact theory, repeated non-negative contact with dissimilar others increases inter-group solidarity and decreases perceptions of inter-ethnic threat (Allport, 1954), even if these contacts are casual (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). As contact opportunities between members of different ethnic groups are more likely in ethnically diverse settings, inter-ethnic contact is higher in ethnically diverse environments (e.g. Schlueter and Scheepers, 2010).

Hypothesis 2a: The more diverse communities are, the less residents consider the outgroup deserving of welfare benefits. (conflict and constrict)

Hypothesis 2b: The more diverse communities are, the more residents consider the outgroup deserving of welfare benefits. (contact)

Conflict theory and constrict theory diverge when we focus on support for redistribution with the ingroup. Conflict theory argues that perceived inter-group competition might reinforce ingroup identities (Riek, Mania and Gaertner, 2006), leading to ingroup favouritism (Savelkoul *et al.*, 2011). By contrast, constrict theory argues that *most* aspects of social life are undermined by ethnic diversity; ingroup ties as well as outgroup ties: 'Diversity does not produce "bad race relations" or ethnically-defined group hostility, our findings suggest. Rather, inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin (...). Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us' (Putnam, 2007: pp. 150–151). If diversity induces uncertainty about social norms, coordination problems, and social disorganization (cf. Dinesen, Schaeffer and Sonderskov, 2020), it will also undermine ingroup solidarity. Recent studies on trust in similar and dissimilar others tend to support this claim (Tolsma and Van der Meer, 2017; Dinesen, Schaeffer and Sonderskov, 2020).

Hypothesis 2c: The more diverse communities are, the more residents consider the ingroup deserving of welfare benefits. (conflict)

Hypothesis 2d: The more diverse communities are, the less residents consider the ingroup deserving of welfare benefits. (constrict)

These hypothesized marginal effects (on the way diversity is likely to affect distinct sub-groups of recipients) are inherently related to the conditionality of the relationship (the way diversity affects the deservingness gap between natives and migrants, i.e. welfare chauvinism) (cf. Brambor, Clark and Golder, 2006). Various scholars have attempted to assess the relationship between country-level diversity and welfare chauvinism as the extent to which newcomers should be entitled to welfare provisions equal to natives (Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2012; Van der Waal, De Koster and Van Oorschot, 2013). Yet, the survey item in the European Social Survey that supposedly indicates welfare chauvinism¹ only taps into otherness, not into the level of welfare state support. Hence, it cannot isolate the two crucial components of welfare chauvinism.

Conflict, constrict, and contact theory invokes distinct expectations on the relationship between contextual diversity and welfare chauvinism. Welfare chauvinism is founded on cultural otherness rather than on economic burden (Kymlicka, 2015), triggered by perceptions of cultural rather than economic threat (Koning, 2013). In line with conflict theory, feelings of threat increase the solidarity gap of natives with their ingroup compared to their outgroup. In line with contact theory, increased informal ties across group boundaries would decrease such a solidarity gap. In this respect, constrict theory is least defined: Putnam (2007: p. 144) proposes the ‘logical possibility’ that residential diversity negatively affects ingroup as well as outgroup solidarity but does not specify the relative size of these effects.

Hypothesis 3a: The more diverse communities are, the more prevalent welfare chauvinism is. (conflict)

Hypothesis 3b: The more diverse communities are, the less prevalent welfare chauvinism is. (contact)

Hypothesis 3c: The diversity of the residential environment has no association with welfare chauvinism. (constrict)

Up to this point, we discussed the relationship between ethnic composition and support for welfare benefits as a linear relationship. Studies in highly diverse settings suggest that we should consider the possibility that the effects of ethnic diversity might be curvilinear instead (Blalock, 1967; Taylor, 1998). In highly diverse settings, residents may become comfortable with diversity (Schneider, 2008) or, alternatively, disproportionately

strongly affected by it (Savelkoul, Laméris and Tolsma, 2017). Among minority groups, an increase of the outgroup size induces higher levels of inter-ethnic cohesion, whereas among majority groups an increase in outgroup size induces lower levels of inter-ethnic cohesion (Enos and Gidron, 2018). In most western democracies—with a single, dominant ethnic group and few residential environments where this group forms a minority—the marginal effect of diversity is thus most negative in the least diverse contexts.

Hypothesis 4: The association of ethnic diversity with welfare chauvinism is strongest in the least diverse environments (non-linear conflict)

Data and Methods

Data

A stringent test of these hypotheses requires experimental data on support for welfare benefits to ethnic ingroups and outgroup that can be connected to registry data on the residential environments of the participants in that experiment. Moreover, participants should make up a broad cross-section of the native majority group for internal validity (variance in residential environment) and external validity (generalization beyond a specific subsample).

These demands are best met by a conjoint survey experiment that took place between 10 March and 13 March 2014 (Reeskens and Van der Meer, 2019). The experiment was embedded in the Dutch *EenVandaag Opinion Panel*, an online panel organized by the Dutch public daily news show *EenVandaag*. While panel members self-register to the panel and are invited to participate in each poll, they form a broad cross-section of the Dutch electorate. The sample is cleaned regularly to prevent double registrations. Despite biases towards men, the higher educated, the old, and the socio-politically interested, this broad cross-section of Dutch respondents boosts external validity compared to student samples. The approximately biweekly polls cover a wide range of societal topics; respondents are not used to participating in a survey experiment.

To obtain a strict measure of welfare chauvinism, we aimed for a strong distinction between the ethnic ingroup versus outgroups. Therefore, we excluded non-native Dutch and Dutch respondents living abroad from the sample. Yet, lacking detailed information, our sample includes respondents whose parents were born abroad. This implies a slightly conservative bias to our test (underestimating the degree of welfare chauvinism

as well as its relationship with ethnic diversity). The net sample of the experiment consists of 23,015 respondents.

The hybrid Dutch welfare state combines characteristics of social-democratic, conservative, and (increasingly) liberal ideal types (Arts and Gelissen, 2002: p. 151). To the extent that diversity effects differ across types of welfare state (cf. Finseraas, 2008; Van der Waal, De Koster and Van Oorschot, 2013), the focus on the Netherlands is likely to be a relatively conservative test of our hypotheses. Socio-politically, although economic and cultural themes dominated Dutch politics since 2002, welfare chauvinism is not typically associated with a single party that combines preferences for income redistribution with scepticism on immigration and multiculturalism (Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). In 2014, the medium-sized radical-right Freedom Party came closest by irregularly appealing to left-wing, migration-sceptic voters in speech. Yet, its economic position in parliament remains ambivalent (cf. Otjes and Louwse, 2015), as are its voters, who are non-distinct in their overall support for income redistribution (De Koster, Achterberg and Van der Waal, 2013).

Experimental Design: Welfare Chauvinism

The conjoint survey experiment allows us to isolate the dependent variable, perceptions of deservingness and welfare chauvinism. It consists of a single vignette about a potential welfare recipient (randomly built up around a combination of nine attributes with two to five conditions each, adding up to 3,672 unique possible combinations in a full-factorial design). The central analytical comparison is the extent to which different respondents offer similar or different answers to their randomized vignette. This between-persons design minimizes problems of social desirability, benchmarking, and rationalizing. Respondents were not able to change their answer to the vignette after continuing the questionnaire.

To assess perceptions of deservingness, we focus on respondents' preferred level of unemployment provision to the potential unemployed recipient in the vignette. Labour market policies such as unemployment benefits are conducive to chauvinist responses, as they are perceived to benefit immigrants disproportionately (Fox, 2012; Brady and Finnigan, 2014: p. 23; Soroka *et al.*, 2016). In the Netherlands, public unemployment benefits are granted under specific conditions: the recipient must reside in the Netherlands, must not be culpable for the current bout of unemployment, and must have worked at least 26 weeks in the Netherlands. Moreover, any recipient of unemployment benefits is obliged to

send out job applications. Under these conditions, the unemployed receive 70 per cent of their latest income.² We benefit from this nature of unemployment benefits to isolate the effects of ethnicity from those of culpability and reciprocity (see below).

The dependent variable regards whether the unemployed resident described in the vignette should according to the respondent (i) receive more than 70 per cent of one's latest income, (ii) receive 70 per cent of one's latest income, (iii) receive less than 70 per cent of one's latest income, or (iv) not be entitled to unemployment provisions. Deservingness along these four categories is estimated linearly in our regression models. Yet, we also perform multinomial regression analyses to test the robustness of our conclusions (see [Supplementary Appendix SA](#)).

Each vignette was introduced by: 'In the Netherlands, the unemployed receive 70 percent of the latest income after having been laid off. The government wants to reform the unemployment provisions. We want to know in which situation you think the unemployed should be granted unemployment benefits'. Each vignette ended with the question: 'To what extent should this person ACCORDING TO YOU be entitled to unemployment benefits?'

The experimental design ensures that we can isolate various characteristics of the potential recipient.³ Three characteristics are central to this article. First, the experiment distinguishes between potential recipients by country of origin. The potential recipients are *Daan* from the Netherlands (native), *Riza* from Kosovo (a recent European immigration country), *Aron* from Surinam (former Dutch colony with predominantly Dutch-speaking citizens), *Mohammed* from Morocco (a common country of origin since the 1970s), and *Mullah* from Afghanistan. Kosovo, Surinam, Morocco, and Afghanistan are relevant migrant countries to Dutch society and lie outside the European Union (to avoid complex law-induced responses). Because earlier studies found rather small differences in welfare deservingness between groups of migrants from countries (e.g. Kootstra, 2017; Reeskens and Van der Meer, 2019), we dichotomized this measure to native versus migrant recipients.⁴ Second, we distinguish between recipients with a migrant background by their length of residence in the Netherlands (5 vs. 12 years), a criterion on which Dutch law does not distinguish. Third, we isolate the motivation to migrate, framing the migrant recipient as either a political refugee or a migrant worker (cf. Bansak *et al.*, 2016).

We combined these three measures to create a single variable identifying natives (as the reference group),

political refugees who arrived 12 years ago, political refugees who arrived 5 years ago, economic migrants who arrived 12 years ago, and economic migrants who arrived 5 years ago.

All potential recipients had some fixed characteristics: they are male, unemployed, and used to work as a tiller in a medium-sized company. The gender of the unemployed is fixed to male in order to reduce gender biases.⁵ Moreover, the experiment controls for a range of other recipient characteristics: The unemployed's latest net salary (1,100 or 1,800 euro), family size (childless, two children, or four children), age (31, 43, or 56 years old), labour market trajectory (earlier bout of unemployment or continuous employment to this date), reason for unemployment (lack of professionalism or company reorganization), and labour market reintegration strategies (not looking for a job, active looking for a job, looking for a job while engaging in voluntary work). By controlling for these other factors, we are able to isolate our measure of welfare chauvinism from reciprocal altruism, i.e. an anti-migrant bias in welfare deservingness induced by the perception that outgroup members do not pay into and take advantage from the system of welfare support (Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote, 2001; Freeman, 2009).

Registry Data: Residential Context of the Subject

The experimental design isolates deservingness perceptions and welfare chauvinism. We can connect these experimental data to observational registry data on the neighbourhood where the participants in our experiment reside, via the four-digit zip code of their residence.⁶ Because the experimental treatments were successfully randomized over respondents, randomization also applied to their residential neighbourhoods.

While this literature focuses often on diversity at the regional or national level (cf. Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2012; Eger and Breznau, 2017), the neighbourhood may be a more relevant social context in which diversity effects take place (Dinesen, Schaeffer and Sonderskov, 2020). Four-digit zip codes identify residential environments at a lower level of analysis than the municipality: on average approximately 4,200 residents share the same four-digit zip code. While they are administrative systems, Dutch four-digit zip codes reflect natural or social boundaries, such as villages or hamlets within a larger municipality or districts in a city. Earlier studies on social trust suggest that these zip codes constitute socially relevant neighbourhoods, with effect sizes that are similar to personalized egohoods (Tolsma and Van der Meer, 2017). We tested the

robustness of our direct and conditional findings at the municipal rather than the neighbourhood level, reaching identical verdicts on all hypotheses save one (see [Supplementary Appendix SB](#)).

Using these four-digit zip codes, we enrich our survey data with registry data from 2014 offered by Statistics Netherlands (CBS). First, to assess the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood, we measure the percentage of non-western non-natives in the neighbourhood (residents with a migration background in the first or second generation). This measure predominantly categorizes Dutch residents with a Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese, and Antillean background,⁷ the most visible minority groups and social outgroups in Dutch analyses and societal debates on multiculturalism (Janssens, 2015). In the Dutch context, this measure is statistically indistinguishable from a more refined diversity indicator such as the Herfindahl index based on a multitude of ethnic categories (Gijssberts, Van der Meer and Dagevos, 2012). More generally, support for the various theories does not hinge systematically on the use of one measure over the other (Van der Meer and Tolsma, 2014).

We control for two other neighbourhood characteristics. Average income is measured as the average disposable income per household (in 1,000 euros), corrected for family composition. The share of unemployment benefit recipients is calculated as the number of recipients of unemployment, disablement, and welfare benefits as a share of the adult working force in the neighbourhood.⁸ These economic factors tend to explain trust and contacts within and between ethnic groups (e.g. Tolsma and Van der Meer, 2017). Both poverty and benefits tend to be high in ethnically heterogeneous environments, thereby making them potential confounders.

When we discuss the outcomes of the regression models below, we employ causal terminology (such as marginal effects, conditional effects) that reflect the assumptions of these models. Yet, the employment of observational data on neighbourhoods makes it more difficult to isolate the causal direction of the effects. Methodologically, we cannot rule out that some of the parameters may be driven by self-selection. The literature on neighbourhood effects is particularly concerned with the risk of selective residential mobility such as white flight, the possibility that people select their neighbourhood in part due to preferences regarding its ethnic composition. To the extent that this effect exists, the bias it induces is likely to be rather small (Van der Meer and Tolsma, 2014) and likely to stimulate a positive (non-negative) parameter of diversity on solidarity with the ethnic outgroup (Putnam, 2007; Laurence and Bentley, 2016). Indeed, a robustness check on

respondents with relatively few resources to actively select into a specific residence—low education, low-income residents—leads to highly similar conclusions (see [Supplementary Appendix SC](#)).

Methods

The between-person comparison requires the randomization of attributes over vignettes and vignettes over respondents. The proportional monivariate distribution of respondents over treatments and the proportional demographic composition of these respondents across treatments confirm that randomization was successful. To exclude potential influences of respondent attributes on the parameter estimations, we control our models for a range of other determinants of welfare preferences (cf. van Oorschot *et al.*, 2012): gender, age, level of education, daily activity, religious denomination. The inclusion of these controls does not affect our findings; a full overview of descriptive statistics is provided in [Supplementary Appendix SD](#).

Our final data set contains three sources of variance: the vignette, the respondent, and the residential environment of the respondents. The latter two are hierarchically related: the 23,015 respondents are clustered in 3,172 unique neighbourhoods, an average of 7.3 respondents per neighbourhood (range: 1–47). To deal with this clustering, we employ multi-level regression models. Our main analyses are linear multi-level models in MLwiN 3.00 via the IGLS estimator. We carefully build up our analyses, focusing on the direct, marginal, and conditional effects of neighbourhoods' ethnic composition. Subsequently, we expand our model by introducing rivaling explanations that allow us to evaluate our model specification. Finally, we perform some methodological robustness checks (see [Supplementary Appendix SA–SC](#)). We find that our model specification is robust to rivaling theoretical explanations and methodological choices.

The explanatory models show average treatment effects, given the distribution of the vignettes across all other treatments. The distribution of these conditions is not in line with its distribution across the population of potential unemployment benefits recipients in the Netherlands. Hence, while we succeed in our aim to isolate the theoretically relevant treatment effects, these are not weighted over the real-life distribution of treatments.

Results

The marginal and conditional effects of neighborhoods' ethnic composition

First, we look at the overall, unconditional coefficient of respondents' neighbourhood characteristics on recipients' welfare deservingness, regardless of the recipients' characteristics. Model 1 in [Table 1](#) shows that people are significantly less likely to consider the recipient deserving of welfare when they reside in a neighbourhood with a larger share of non-western co-residents ($b = -0.27$; $se = 0.02$). Yet, Model 2 shows that this association is not linear: the marginal effect is most pronounced in the most native neighbourhoods, and rather absent in the most mixed neighbourhoods. All in all, we find support for Hypothesis 1. Additionally, Models 1 and 2 show that residents in high-income neighbourhoods are less likely to consider recipients deserving than those in low-income neighbourhoods ($b = -7.86$; $se = 1.81$), and those in neighbourhoods with a large share of households on social benefits are more likely to do so ($b = 0.32$; $se = 0.15$).

While the coefficients of the contextual determinants in Models 1 and 2 control for various respondent and vignette characteristics, they are modelled to be identical regardless of the migration background and socioeconomic status of the recipient. As we argue in Hypotheses 2–4, a uniform, unconditional effect is not likely. Hence, we now focus on the moderating effects of neighbourhood composition (see [Table 2](#)).

Model 3 shows that the marginal effect of the share of non-western migrants in the neighbourhood is non-significant if the welfare recipient is native ($b = -0.05$, n.s.). In other words, the ethnic composition of their neighbourhood is unrelated to natives' consideration of unemployed natives as more or less deserving of welfare benefits. Neither Hypothesis 2c nor Hypothesis 2d finds support.⁹

By contrast, we find significant marginal effects of neighbourhoods' ethnic composition on perceptions of migrants' welfare deservingness (as displayed in [Figure 1](#)). These marginal effects are significantly negative for three out of four groups of migrants. For political migrants who arrived 5 years ago, the marginal effect is ($-0.05 - 0.24 =$) -0.29 . For economic migrants who arrived 12 years ago the marginal effect is ($-0.05 - 0.45 =$) -0.50 . For economic migrants who arrived 5 years ago the marginal effect is ($-0.05 - 0.37 =$) -0.42 . We thus find support for Hypothesis 2a and reject Hypothesis 2b.

Although three of the five marginal effects significantly differ from 0, merely two of the four interaction effects reveal significant differences in the deservingness gap between natives and migrants increases as the share of migrants in the neighbourhood increases. In both cases, these interaction effects concern economic

Table 1. Linear, multi-level random intercept models of welfare deservingness by vignette, respondent, and neighbourhood characteristics

	Model 1	Model 2
L1 (respondent/vignette)		
Migration background (ref: native Dutch)		
•Migrant, political asylum, 12 years	−0.27 (0.02) ***	−0.27 (0.02) ***
•Migrant, political asylum, 5 years	−0.36 (0.02) ***	−0.36 (0.02) ***
•Migrant, economic motivation, 12 years	−0.34 (0.02) ***	−0.34 (0.02) ***
•Migrant, economic motivation, 5 years	−0.48 (0.02) ***	−0.48 (0.02) ***
Reason for unemployment (ref: reorganization)		
•Lack of professionalism	−0.45 (0.01) ***	−0.45 (0.01) ***
Labour market reintegration (ref: actively looking)		
•Actively looking + voluntary work	−0.04 (0.01) ***	−0.04 (0.01) ***
•Not actively looking	−0.68 (0.01) ***	−0.68 (0.01) ***
L2 (neighbourhood)		
Share non-western	−0.27 (0.06) ***	−0.53 (0.14) ***
Share non-western (squared)		0.55 (0.26) *
Average income (in 1,000 euros)	−7.86 (1.81) ***	−7.89 (1.80) ***
Share of households on social benefits	0.32 (0.15) *	0.34 (0.15) **
-2LL	55107.328	55102.681
Level 2 variance	0.00 (0.00) *	0.00 (0.00)
Level 1 variance	0.65 (0.01) ***	0.65 (0.01) ***

Models control for: Respondent: gender, age, level of education, daily activity, religious denomination. Vignette (recipient): age, level of income, household size, labour market trajectory.

* $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$; *** $P < .001$ (one-sided tests).

migrants. The gap increases with $b = -0.45$ for economic migrants who arrived 12 years ago, and with $b = -0.37$ for economic migrants who arrived 5 years ago. Figure 2 shows the predicted means for native recipients and the two groups of economic migrants by neighbourhood composition. All in all, we find support for Hypothesis 3a and reject the rivaling Hypotheses 3b and 3c.

Next, Model 4 of Table 2 tests to what extent there is a non-linear relationship with neighbourhoods' ethnic composition. The squared terms are non-significant and the model fit does not improve significantly. We thus reject hypothesis 4.

Rivaling Explanations

When we add other potential conditional effects of neighbourhood composition and migration background in Model 5, the coefficients do not change substantially. Rather, none of the added interaction effects (with average disposable income, and the share of welfare beneficiaries) is significant—not even if we include these separately. This stresses that the moderating effect of neighbourhoods' ethnic composition on recipients'

migration background is well isolated: the outcomes are not due to spuriousness.

Table 3 provides further evidence that the specification of Model 3 is meaningful. Table 3 extends Model 5 with nine additional cross-level interaction effects, i.e. of the three neighbourhood characteristics with three economic behavioural characteristics of the recipient (reason for unemployment, labour market trajectory, employment strategy). The ethnic composition of the neighbourhood (that robustly moderates the coefficient of recipient's migration background, see Table 2) does *not* moderate the coefficients of other attributes of the recipient on his deservingness. By contrast, the two economic neighbourhood control variables (that do not moderate the coefficient of recipient's migration background, see Table 2) *do* moderate the coefficients of these other attributes.

For instance, the penalty for being unemployed due to a lack of professionalism is larger in high income than in low-income neighbourhoods. An equivalent interpretation of this interaction effect states that the negative coefficient of neighbourhood affluence on perceptions of welfare deservingness is stronger when the recipient

Table 2. Linear, multi-level random slope models of welfare deservingness by vignette, respondent, and neighbourhood characteristics

	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
L1 (respondent/vignette)			
Migration background (ref: native Dutch)			
• Migrant, political asylum, 12 years	−0.27 (0.02)***	−0.26 (0.03)***	−0.22 (0.19)
• Migrant, political asylum, 5 years	−0.33 (0.02)***	−0.31 (0.03)***	−0.29 (0.19)
• Migrant, economic motivation, 12 years	−0.29 (0.02)***	−0.28 (0.03)***	−0.44 (0.18)**
• Migrant, economic motivation, 5 years	−0.44 (0.02)***	−0.44 (0.03)***	−0.59 (0.19)***
Reason for unemployment (ref: reorganization)			
• Lack of professionalism	−0.45 (0.01)***	−0.45 (0.01)***	−0.45 (0.01)***
Labour market reintegration (ref: actively looking)			
• Actively looking + voluntary work	−0.04 (0.01)***	−0.04 (0.01)***	−0.04 (0.01)***
• Not actively looking	−0.68 (0.01)***	−0.64 (0.01)***	−0.68 (0.01)***
L2 (neighbourhood)			
Share non-western	−0.05 (0.12)	−0.16 (0.29)	−0.03 (0.13)
Share non-western (squared)		0.23 (0.58)	
Average income (in 1,000 euros)	−7.90 (1.76)***	−7.94 (1.76)***	−8.93 (3.86)**
Share of households on social benefits	0.32 (0.14)***	0.35 (0.14)***	0.21 (0.31)
Cross-level interaction			
Share NW *			
Migration background (ref: native Dutch)			
• Migrant, political asylum, 12 years	−0.07 (0.16)	−0.27 (0.40)	−0.12 (0.19)
• Migrant, political asylum, 5 years	−0.24 (0.16)	−0.56 (0.40)	−0.24 (0.19)
• Migrant, economic motivation, 12 years	−0.45 (0.16)**	−0.62 (0.39)	−0.46 (0.19)**
• Migrant, economic motivation, 5 years	−0.37 (0.16)**	−0.48 (0.39)	−0.40 (0.19)*
Share NW (squared) *			
Migration background (ref: native Dutch)			
• Migrant, political asylum, 12 years		0.44 (0.82)	
• Migrant, political asylum, 5 years		0.71 (0.81)	
• Migrant, economic motivation, 12 years		0.37 (0.80)	
• Migrant, economic motivation, 5 years		0.23 (0.78)	
Average income (in 1,000 euros) *			
Migration background (ref: native Dutch)			
• Migrant, political asylum, 12 years			−2.08 (5.50)
• Migrant, political asylum, 5 years			−1.26 (5.55)
• Migrant, economic motivation, 12 years			4.30 (5.39)
• Migrant, economic motivation, 5 years			3.84 (5.53)
Share households on social benefits *			
Migration background (ref: native Dutch)			
• Migrant, political asylum, 12 years			0.06 (0.45)
• Migrant, political asylum, 5 years			−0.06 (0.45)
• Migrant, economic motivation, 12 years			0.32 (0.44)
• Migrant, economic motivation, 5 years			0.32 (0.44)
−2LL	55073.714	55070.644	55063.705
Level 2 variance	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Level 1 variance	0.64 (0.01)***	0.64 (0.01)***	0.62 (0.01)***

Models control for: Respondent: gender, age, level of education, daily activity, religious denomination Vignette (recipient): age, level of income, household size, labour market trajectory.

* $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$; *** $P < .001$ (one-sided tests).

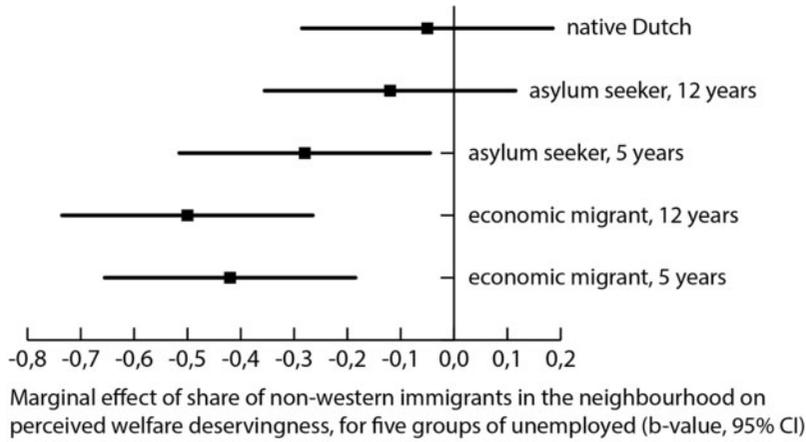


Figure 1. Marginal effects of neighbourhood share of non-western migrants on perceptions of deservingness

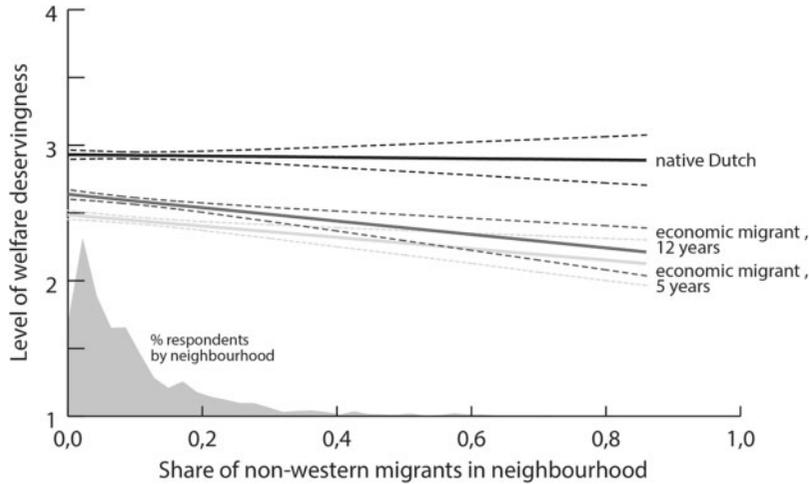


Figure 2. Conditional effect of neighbourhood share of non-western migrants by recipients' migration background

Table 3. Cross-level interaction effects

	L2 (neighbourhood)		
	% Non-western	Average income (in 1,000 euros)	Share hh on social benefits
L1 (respondent/vignette)			
Reason for unemployment (ref: reorganization)			
•Lack of professionalism	ns	-7.71 (3.36)*	-0.76 (0.29)**
Labour market reintegration (ref: actively looking/voluntary work)			
•Not actively looking	ns	ns	ns
Labour market trajectory			
•Earlier unemployment	ns	ns	-0.47 (0.28)*

Models control for: Respondent: gender, age, level of education, daily activity, religious denomination.
 Vignette (recipient): age, level of income, household size, migration background.
 Respondent* Vignette (recipient): All three NB characteristics * Migration background.
 *P < .05; **P < .01; ***P < .001 (one-sided tests).

was fired due to lack of professionalism. The penalty for lack of professionalism is also stronger in neighbourhoods with a large share of benefit recipients; vice versa, the positive coefficient of the share of benefit recipients on deservingness perceptions is smaller when the recipient was culpable for unemployment. Finally, we find a similar interaction effect between the neighbourhood's share of benefit recipients and labour market trajectory, although it would not have been significant at the 5 per cent level in a two-tailed test.

All in all, the cross-level interaction effects in our multi-level survey experiment are specific, robust, and substantive. They are specific, as the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood solely affects the treatment effect of the recipient's migration background, whereas the economic composition of the neighbourhood only affects the economic treatments. They are robust, as different model specifications do not affect our substantive conclusions. And they are substantive, as additional analyses show that in homogenous native neighbourhoods, the probability that natives propose to offer less than 70 per cent of the last earned wage is 40 per cent for the vignettes with an economic migrant as recipient, and 29 per cent for the vignettes with a native Dutch as recipient; an 11 percentage point gap. In rather diverse neighbourhoods (25 per cent non-natives), this gap rises with 8 percentage points to 19 percentage points (46 per cent vs 27 per cent, respectively) (see [Supplementary Appendix SA](#), Figure SA4).

Conclusion

Different research traditions have not been able to draw firm conclusions on the relationship between ethnic diversity of the residential environment and welfare chauvinism. In this article, we integrated the experimental design with observational registry data on participants. A between-person, multi-level vignette survey experiment allowed us to isolate residents' attitudes towards welfare redistribution for natives and migrants. Registry data allowed us to connect these attitudes to the ethnic composition of neighbourhoods.

The outcomes of this vignette survey experiment suggest that ethnic diversity has a specific, robust, and substantive effect on welfare chauvinism. First, in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, natives' support for welfare distribution with economic migrants is lower, but solidarity with the ethnic ingroup (natives) and political refugees is not. While we found evidence that ethnic diversity has a weak, non-linear association with welfare solidarity in general, there is no non-linearity in its association with welfare chauvinism (i.e. no difference

among native and migrant recipients). One may consider why. Levels of diversity are relatively low in the Netherlands, so that there are few highly diverse environments. Rather than a gradual non-linearity, we may consider that the relevance of ethnic diversity accelerates only after a certain threshold (cf. [Savelkoul, Laméris and Tolsma, 2017](#)). A repetition of this survey experiment in other, more diverse, settings seems valuable. Finding that diversity matters in an egalitarian society with a tradition of social mixing such as the Netherlands implies that this relationship might be more outspoken in more diverse and more segregated societies.

Second, the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood does *not* affect residents' solidarity with groups defined by other salient criteria such as their unemployment history and economic reciprocity. Vice versa, the economic composition of the neighbourhood only affects residents' solidarity with potential welfare recipients defined by their economic background but not their solidarity with migrants. Viewed in isolation, these findings imply that the effect of diversity on solidarity is primarily triggered by the status of the non-native recipient as an outsider ([Banting, 2000](#); [Wright and Reeskens, 2013](#)) rather than by the fear of economic vulnerability of the native resident due to this outsider ([Finseraas, 2008](#); [Ervasti and Hjerm, 2012](#)). Yet, the story is more complex: in diverse neighbourhoods, natives harbour less solidarity with economic migrants but not with political refugees. Ultimately, this may make natives in the ethnically most diverse settings more receptive to populist frames, such as those raised in Europe during the Syrian refugee crisis, of political refugees as economic migrants (cf. [Savelkoul, Laméris and Tolsma, 2017](#)).

These specific, robust, and substantive findings lend credence to the integration of experimental data (to isolate welfare chauvinism) and registry data (on the participants' neighbourhoods). Evidently, the use of observational data risks endogeneity and spuriousness. The non-experimental elements in our design ensure uncertainty whether the findings are driven by the neighbourhood context or instead by residents' self-selection. We employ theoretically driven control variables, conditional effects, and subgroup analyses to assess the robustness of our conclusions. Particularly, selective residential mobility suggests that people's preferences on the composition of their neighbourhood factors into their choice of residence: Those who are adverse to ethnic diversity would be more likely to move into a homogenous neighbourhood. Yet, if anything, this selection mechanism would lead us to *underestimate* the causal effect of diversity on welfare chauvinism (cf. [Putnam, 2007](#): pp. 153–154; [Laurence and Bentley 2016](#)).

Additional analyses on those who are least likely to self-select (low-income, low-educated residents) support this idea.

All in all, our findings suggest that that residential ethnic diversity does not undermine welfare state solidarity unconditionally but rather stimulates welfare chauvinism. Neither of the three dominant theories—contact, constrict, and conflict theory—fits the full set of findings. Yet, the latter is best suited to explain these differential effects among types of migrants. Natives display lower levels of solidarity with economic migrants than with political refugees (e.g. Bansak *et al.*, 2016; Reeskens and Van der Meer, 2019); likely because political refugees lacked control in their decision to migrate, whereas economic migrants are ascribed a larger personal responsibility. This study shows not merely differential *levels* of solidarity between economically and politically motivated migrants but also differential *relationships* of residential diversity on solidarity with these groups. Contact theory fails to explain the negative marginal diversity effects altogether. Constrict theory does not offer mechanisms that can explain the differential marginal effects between migrant and native recipients, nor those between economic migrants and political refugees. Conflict theory cannot explain why the marginal effect on native recipient is not positive. Yet, conflict theory offers potential mechanisms that allow us to understand these differential marginal effects. Specifically, the vignettes of an unemployed, economic migrant might trigger economic (rather than identity-based) threat.

Yet, other outcomes complicate this seemingly straightforward narrative. The differential marginal effects on particularly economic migrants are neither mirrored nor strengthened by detrimental economic conditions in the neighbourhood. This implies that the findings are not exclusively driven by considerations of personal/egotropic economic threat or of identity. Instead, the framing of the fictitious unemployed recipient as an economic migrant makes him more responsible for his position as well as more instrumentally motivated to join society (Bansak *et al.*, 2016). In the neighbourhoods with a large share of visible outgroup members, this factor of control is more likely to trigger feelings of sociotropic threat, i.e. a threat to the ingroup as a whole, even when the respondent him or herself does not feel personally threatened (cf. Tajfel, 1982). Control might also be the factor that links welfare chauvinism not merely to cultural otherness (cf. Koning, 2013; Kymlicka, 2015) but also to economic group threat.

Ultimately, the emphasis on economic resources and the implication of scarcity of these resources might

explain why the factor of control and the resulting feelings of group threat offer a better explanation for the level of welfare chauvinism in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods than for the level of inter-ethnic contact (cf. Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006) and for social trust (Dinesen, Schaeffer and Sonderskov, 2020).

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are available at *ESR* online.

Disclaimer

No financial interest or benefit has arisen from this application of our research.

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Notes

- 1 The item reads: ‘Thinking of people coming to live in [country] from other countries, when do you think they should obtain the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens already living here?’
- 2 This occurs after a two-month transition period in which they receive 75 percent. The absolute ceiling to unemployment benefits is irrelevant to the income levels studied in this experiment.
- 3 The experiment measured ethnic origins in greater detail than necessary for this paper to meet the purpose of a different paper on the relative importance

of identity as a deservingness criterion (Reeskens and Van der Meer, 2019).

- 4 We do not split our categorization, as the expanded model is exponentially more difficult to interpret and occasionally fails to converge due to the disproportional number of co-variances.
- 5 Men are expected to be the main breadwinners in Dutch society (Statistics Netherlands, 2016); women are less likely to be economically independent and more likely to work part-time (Netherlands Institute for Social Research 2018). This gender gap is more pronounced among first and second-generation migrants than among natives.
- 6 This information is requested when respondents register and updated every few years.
- 7 The measure does not cover residents with a background from other European countries, North America, or Japan (so-called 'western non-natives').
- 8 Young and pensioned residents are excluded from this measure.
- 9 Two robustness checks (Appendix B, C) show negative marginal effects of diversity on ingroup solidarity. It thus does not provide evidence for or against constrict theory. Why only this marginal effect is not robust is unclear. Selective residential mobility is an unlikely explanation.

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