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## Regarding the Dutch 'Nee' to the European Constitution

### A Test of the Identity, Utilitarian and Political Approaches to Voting 'No'

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#### ABSTRACT

In June 2005, 61.5% of the Dutch voted 'nee' in the referendum on the European constitution. In the present contribution I test hypotheses from the national identity, utilitarian and political approaches to explain this voting behaviour. I collected data in the Netherlands to test whether one of those approaches has been decisive in explaining the referendum outcome. I also provide information about whether specific EU evaluations from these approaches explain the voting behaviour, thus bringing in the discussion on the importance of domestic political evaluations (second-order election effects). I also test hypotheses on which theoretical approach explains differences between social categories in rejecting the constitution. My results show that specifically EU evaluations in particular accounted for the 'no' vote, although in conjunction with a strong effect from domestic political evaluations. I also find evidence for 'party-following behaviour' irrespective of people's attitudes. Utilitarian explanations determine the 'no' vote less well than political or national identity explanations. The strongest impact on voting 'no' came from a perceived threat from the EU to Dutch culture.

#### KEY WORDS

- European constitution
- Euroscepticism
- national identity
- referendum
- The Netherlands

## Introduction

In June 2005, the Netherlands said 'no' to the European constitution. With 61.5% of the vote, the Dutch rejection of the constitution was even more resounding than the French. It was also more of a surprise, despite the fact that polls had predicted a 'no' vote. From Eurobarometer research the Dutch public is known for its positive attitude toward EU membership (Norris, 1999). Though increasing scepticism is reported since the early 1990s, even in the month prior to the referendum 64% agreed that EU membership is a good thing, which made the Dutch among the most positive in Europe (European Commission, 2007). It is hence of interest to test which specific national or EU concerns motivated the Dutch 'no'.

Many of the explanations given for the referendum results refer to the campaign (Aarts and Van der Kolk, 2005; Lucardie, 2005; De Vreese, 2006), but there were specific content-related explanations as well. A popular interpretation of the vote among left-wing political parties is the claim that 'people really want a different Europe, one that is more social and less bureaucratic' (GreenLeft, 2006). Another explanation relates to the sovereignty and identity of the Netherlands. In an expanding Union, so the explanation goes, the Netherlands would disappear from the map. This fear was captured on a campaign poster produced by the Dutch Socialist Party, in which the Netherlands had disappeared into the North sea (Socialist Party, 2006). Finally, people were said to have turned their backs on the EU because of the prospective membership of Turkey, an issue with which Dutch politician Wilders and his anti-Islam Party for Freedom allied themselves through the 'No to Turkey' campaign (PVV, 2006). Many of these single elucidations are related to the discussion on the importance of three overarching explanations for Euroscepticism and voting in referendums on EU topics: people are assumed to be driven by either economic, political or threatened-identity motives (Anderson and Reichert, 1996; Gabel, 1998; Ehin, 2001; Christin and Trechsel, 2002; Díez Medrano, 2003; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Luedtke, 2005; McLaren, 2006; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2007). Attention to such EU evaluations do arouse suspicion that referendum results are determined by issue voting, as has been shown in studies on referendums in Denmark and Ireland (Svensson, 2002; Garry et al., 2005), and that 'second-order election' explanations, i.e. evaluations of national politics being decisive in referendum voting, are of less importance (Franklin et al., 1994; Franklin, 2002; Garry et al., 2005). Moreover, it makes apparent that a general EU evaluation explanation will not suffice. It is hence of importance to separate effects from EU attitudes according to the domains of the economy, politics and threatened identity.

For the Netherlands, it has become clear that those parties with a 'no' campaign – all on the fringes of the political spectrum: Wilders' Party for

Freedom and the List Pim Fortuyn, the small Christian parties and the Socialist Party – represented a larger proportion of Dutch voters in the referendum than they did after the parliamentary elections in 2002 and 2003 (Crum, 2007). The question remains of whether it was dissatisfaction with Dutch politics that drove the majority to the 'no' vote (a second-order election effect), or whether it can be explained by specific attitudes and specific EU evaluations. The role of identity and cultural explanations, as well as economic and political explanations, will be more thoroughly addressed than has been done previously. Prior contributions have corroborated a relation between anti-immigrant attitudes and Euroscepticism (McLaren, 2001, 2006; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Luedtke, 2005; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005). Few of these studies included both dimensions of ethnocentrism: a positive in-group attitude *and* a negative out-group attitude. Moreover, I include the relationship with the perceived threat from Muslims as an aspect of the identity approach.

I propose disentangling the degree to which the voting in the EU referendum was affected by general attitudes on national identity, economics and politics or by attitudes specifically related to an evaluation of the EU on these three aspects. To summarize, I first study the extent to which differences exist between social groups in the degree to which they voted against the European constitution. Second, I show how much the political, utilitarian and identity approaches explain with regard to both the differences between social groups and the voting behaviour itself.

## Theories and hypotheses

Turning to theories to explain the voting in the referendum, I propose following both research on earlier EU referendums and the literature on Euroscepticism (Gabel, 1998; Hooghe and Marks, 2005). In general, the theories can be divided into three overarching approaches. Two of them have been dominant, making a distinction between utilitarian or economic accounts and political explanations (Gabel, 1998; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). Where the former explanations emphasize the outcome of a cost–benefit evaluation as crucial for people's attitudes towards the EU, the latter focus on the importance of political knowledge and trust. A third tradition that has recently received wide attention can be designated as the national identity approach. Here the importance attached to the nation-state is at the centre of the explanation (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995; Deflem and Pampel, 1996; De Master and Le Roy, 2000; Carey, 2002; Christin and Trechsel, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Luedtke, 2005; McLaren, 2006).

### Threatened identity approach

The body of literature on nationalist sentiments related to 'keeping the EU out' has only recently been growing. De Master and Le Roy (2000: 419) were among the first to emphasize motivations of Euroscepticism related to 'preservation of national integrity or fear of foreign influences'. The body of literature expanded rapidly, showing strong relationships between in-group favouritism, anti-immigrant attitudes and Euroscepticism (McLaren, 2002, 2006; Luedtke, 2005; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2007). De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005) have shown that anti-immigrant attitudes are also very important in explaining the 'no' vote in a hypothetical referendum on EU enlargement. The question remains of whether anti-immigrant attitudes and Eurosceptic attitudes are the outcome of the same process or whether they influence each other. From identification theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), the expectation is that people differentiate between an in-group and out-groups to categorize and simplify the world and to derive a positive social identity. Hence a positive in-group identification based on nationality could be threatened by further EU integration as well as by immigration.

I follow McLaren (2006) in distinguishing between a perceived threat to the national culture and a perceived threat to the national economy, where the former refers to the identity approach and the latter to the economic approach. Though previous research has shown that both dimensions of threat are strongly correlated (Sniderman et al., 2004; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Lubbers and Güveli, 2007), it also revealed that these dimensions have different effects. The cultural ethnic threat turned out to be even stronger than the economic ethnic threat in terms of voting for populist parties and of prejudice. McLaren (2006) comes to a similar conclusion in her study on Euroscepticism. Using the identity approach, I then test to what extent specific EU evaluations regarding cultural threat or general attitudes of in-group favouritism and cultural ethnic threat are decisive in explaining the 'no' vote in the referendum on the EU constitution.

Next to the general attitude of cultural ethnic threat, I propose focusing on attitudes towards Muslims. Turkey's membership of the EU was referred to explicitly by the 'no' camp in its campaign. This was often motivated by the argument that Europe has a Christian tradition and should not welcome Islamic Turkey. The question, again, is to what extent – if at all – it was a general attitude towards Muslims that made people vote 'no' in the referendum, or a more specific attitude towards Turkey's membership.

### Utilitarian approach

According to Gabel (1998), the utilitarian approach has been most successful in explaining whether people believe that EU membership is good or bad.

This is indicated by a strong effect of individual perceptions of whether the country benefits from membership. People experience different costs and benefits from membership and are therefore expected to differ in their attitudes towards the European Union (Gabel and Palmer, 1995) and consequently in voting in the referendum. Following Anderson (1998) and De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005), a negative economic evaluation should induce Euroscepticism and, as a result, would increase the likelihood of voting 'no' as well. Moreover, as touched upon in the identity approach, a perceived economic threat from immigrants is expected to induce a 'no' vote too. Even though the referendum on the constitution was not about Europe's enlargement, the opening of borders could be perceived as threatening to economic perspectives, thus increasing the likelihood of people turning their back on the EU and voting 'no' to the European constitution.

Another point of criticism that was often heard in the referendum campaigns relates to Europe's money-sucking bureaucracy. It was especially on this point that earlier, in the 2004 European elections, Dutch politician Van Buitenen was able to attract many voters (his 'Transparent Europe' party won 7.4% of the vote). Remarkably, this aspect has hardly been accounted for in research into Euroscepticism and voting in referendums on EU issues. Economic perspectives are often included (with respondents asked whether they expect to lose out or whether they expect the country's economic condition to deteriorate – Anderson, 1998), but these aspects do not cover the often-heard criticism of the unwieldy and costly administrative apparatus in Brussels and Strasbourg. My expectation is that the more fervently people believe that the EU wastes too much money, the greater the chance that they voted against the constitution.

Criticism of the liberal market policies of the EU – especially from the perspective of the political parties on the left – boils down to the idea that the economically weak groups in society gain little from the EU and further integration (Socialist Party, 2006; GreenLeft, 2006). The key message from this perspective is that the EU must first become a social EU before setting its sights on further integration. The Socialist Party campaigned that a 'yes' vote would lead the EU to develop into a neo-liberal super-state, whereas GreenLeft stated that the EU should invest in its social agenda and reduce its trust in markets and economic liberalization, although still campaigning for a 'yes' vote. The most logical corollary – that the more ardently a person believes that the EU should pay greater attention to social issues, the greater the chances she will have voted against the constitution – deserves nuance owing to the different positions the left-wing parties took in the campaign. I shall test whether the evaluation that the EU should pay more attention to social issues was decisive in the voting outcome.

### Political approach

The general proposition that follows from the political approach is that people who are less politically informed will subscribe to Euroscepticism more strongly. This 'cognitive mobilization' explanation is derived from Inglehart's idea that well-developed skills are needed to understand what the European Union is about (Inglehart, 1970; Hobolt, 2005). Voters were asked say 'yes' or 'no' to a 341-page treaty for the establishment of a constitution for Europe, which for most people constituted a colossal tome of abstract text (Wessel, 2005). Voters in the referendum are therefore likely to have been influenced by the parties they identify with. Hobolt (2006) and Garry et al. (2005) showed that party endorsement indeed mattered for the results in the Danish referendum on the Maastricht Treaty: if the party they supported advocated a 'yes' vote, the likelihood of people voting 'yes' in the referendum increased, regardless of their attitudes.

Franklin et al. (1994) and De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006) point to the importance of domestic political evaluations. Because the national government is the institution involved in the treaty negotiations on the European constitution, trust in national politics will inevitably be part of the voting behaviour. If people distrust the government or the political establishment, it is unlikely that they will follow their advice for a 'yes'. Here the second-order election hypothesis comes to the fore (Garry et al., 2005): EU referendum outcomes are a product of evaluations of national politics and politicians, and not so much of evaluations of European-level institutions. Hence, people opposing the government or, more generally, people without trust in national politics would be more likely to have voted 'no' (Hug and Sciarini, 2000). In the Netherlands, in addition to the government parties, two opposition parties led a 'yes' campaign; I shall separate the effect from supporting the government parties and support for opposition parties running a 'yes' campaign.

Karp et al. (2003) showed nonetheless that evaluations of EU institutions also strongly contribute to explain satisfaction with the EU, even though evaluations of national democracy had a comparably strong effect. The hypothesis to be tested is that a 'no' vote in the Dutch referendum was motivated more strongly by distrust of the national parliament than by distrust of the European Parliament.

### Differences between social categories and interpretation

The first question I raised was to what extent differences between social categories exist, and to what extent they can be explained by the approaches outlined above. Previous research has provided evidence that differences in

Euroscepticism exist particularly between educational and income categories (Gabel, 1998). All three theoretical traditions provide explanations of why there is a relationship between education and income and voting 'no' in the referendum. From the identity approach it follows that disadvantaged social groups are more likely to perceive a threat from ethnic minorities, because they are more likely to be in direct competition over scarce resources (Gijssberts et al., 2004). In the Netherlands, higher-educated and richer people are much less likely to be confronted with minority members in their neighbourhoods and workplaces and in their children's schools, making endorsement of a tolerant attitude 'easier', so the explanation goes. From the utilitarian tradition, it is assumed that higher-educated and higher-income segments of society profit more from the free movement of people and goods (Ultee, 1989). Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) posited this as the 'human capital' and 'capitalist' hypotheses. Because these privileged strata have better opportunities for applying their talents in an international setting than the lower educated, they are expected to be more favourable towards European integration (Gabel and Palmer, 1995). Finally, lower-educated people are expected to have less political interest and therefore have less information about the Union, which would make them more sceptical and more likely to vote against a European constitution (Inglehart, 1970). Moreover, an explanation for the effect of education is likely to be found in the higher levels of political distrust among the lower educated.

Another factor I propose to be relevant but that has received hardly any attention from researchers is the experience people have had of other EU countries. Experience of other countries or of people from other countries of the European Union is expected to enlarge knowledge and diminish distance between European citizens. It is expected to reduce in-group preferences and out-group fears. I anticipate that, if a person has visited other EU countries, the chances of her having voted against the constitution will decline, because she will perceive less of an ethnic threat and less of a cultural threat from the EU. Finally, I consider denomination, in particular because religious political parties differed in their campaigning. The conservative Calvinist parties linked themselves to the 'no' camp, whereas the larger confessional party (the Christian Democrats – the governing party) campaigned for a 'yes' vote. I expect the differences between the denominations to be explained by differences in party preferences, and not so much by different attitudes or EU evaluations.

My model is presented in Figure 1. I expect the background characteristics to influence general attitudes in the domains of identity, economy or politics, and consequently specific EU evaluations in these domains, resulting in a greater likelihood to vote 'no' in the referendum on the EU constitution. In



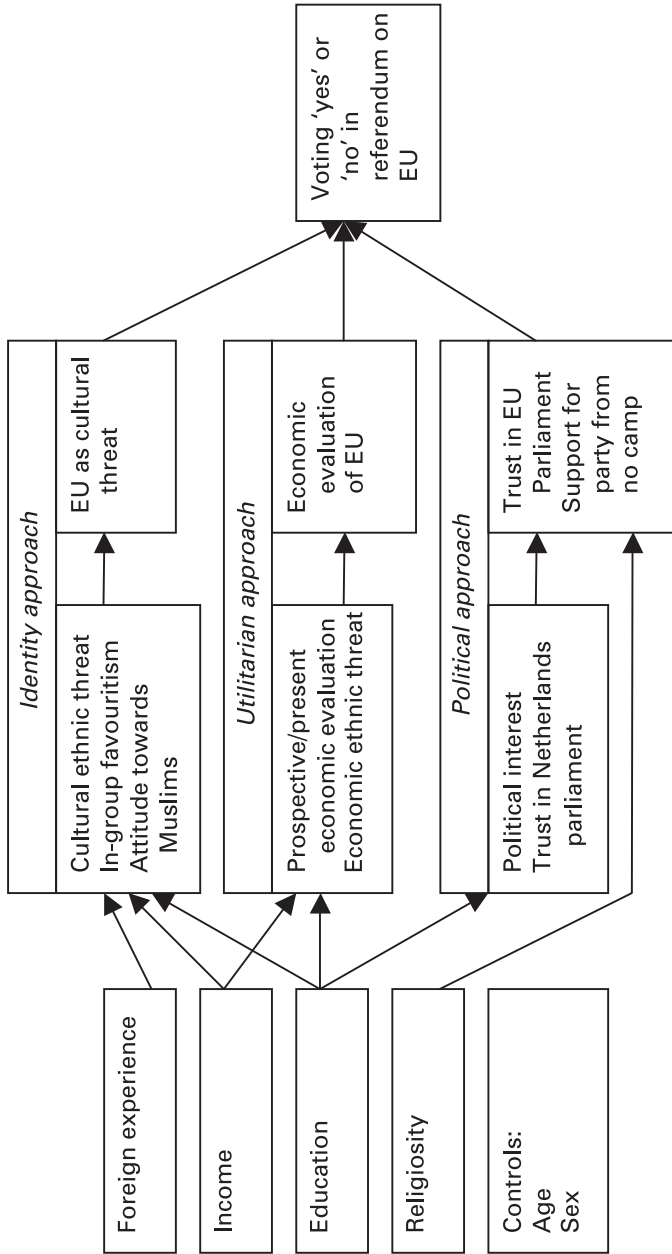


Figure 1 Conceptual model of voting in the referendum on the EU constitution.

previous studies of Euroscepticism, evaluation of EU membership has been regressed on the attitude toward the benefits of membership for one's country, but rarely on other diffuse measures of Euroscepticism. With the help of this model of voting behaviour, I can establish which EU evaluations have the strongest relation to the 'no' vote. The model also allows us to study (a) the contribution from the different approaches to explaining the voting behaviour; (b) the importance of specifically EU evaluations versus general attitudes (and second-order election effects); and (c) which attitudes explain the relationship between social background characteristics and voting behaviour.

## Data

The data used were collected in the fall of 2005 and early 2006 through Social and Cultural Trends in the Netherlands (SOCON), a research programme initiated in the 1970s (Eisinga et al., 2008). The final response rate achieved was 55.7%. The module on the referendum and the European Union was administered through a written questionnaire, which respondents were asked to complete after the oral part of the survey ( $n = 1164$ ). Although I did look at the differences between native Dutch respondents and respondents of foreign origin, I decided to conduct the study only among native Dutch. The reason is that only native Dutch respondents were asked the questions about an ethnic threat, attitude towards Muslims and attitude towards the Netherlands. It turned out that respondents of foreign origin were significantly more likely not to have voted in the referendum. Those who did vote did not differ from the native Dutch in their likelihood of having cast a 'yes' or 'no' vote. The 120 respondents of foreign origin, both Western and non-Western, are left out of consideration in this analysis. Of the remaining 1044 respondents, 816 reported having voted in the referendum. Although it would also be interesting to learn the reason why the non-voters did not participate, I omitted this group from the analyses.

## Measurement instruments

### Voting in the EU referendum

Respondents were presented with the question of whether they had voted for or against in the referendum on the European constitution. In the sample, 60.6% reported having voted against the constitution. This is close to the actual outcome (61.5% against).

### **Social structural characteristics**

The social structural characteristics were gathered in the oral survey. Educational level was measured by asking respondents about their highest level of education completed, with seven categories of responses ranging from 'no schooling or primary school only' to 'university education'. Income was measured by showing respondents a chart with an income scale. They could then name the letter that corresponded to their household income. The minimum (less than €150 net per month) and maximum (more than €8000 net per month) categories were rarely chosen. I therefore condensed the answers into five categories: (i) less than €1500 net per month; (ii) €1500–2000; (iii) €2000–3000; (iv) €3000–4000; and (v) more than €4000. Respondents who did not want to divulge information about their income were assigned the average income. I also included a 'no income reported' variable to determine whether this group differed in its voting behaviour from those people who did report an income. A two-step question was used to ascertain the religious denomination of the respondents. First, respondents were asked whether they considered themselves members of a church or religious community. If the answer was 'yes', they were then asked for the particular grouping. I distinguished people who considered themselves members of the Roman Catholic Church (20.1%) from those considering themselves members of the Dutch Protestant Church (10.0%) or a different Protestant church (10.0%). I omitted the four native Dutch believers who belonged to other churches. Age and sex were asked directly.

### **EU experience**

To determine the degree to which respondents had had experience of other EU countries, they were first asked whether they had ever lived in another EU country, and if so, for how long. I recoded the responses to this question as a dummy for having lived in another EU country or not: 9.4% had at some point lived in another EU country for a long or short period. Next, respondents were asked in how many of the other 24 EU countries had they spent at least two nights. To this end, respondents were presented with a map of Europe with the EU countries shaded and the Netherlands coloured black. Before their 16th birthday, 41.3% of the respondents had never been in any of the other countries of the EU. After their 16th birthday, this was true for just 3.1%. Specifically, 12.9% had been in 1 or 2 countries; 30.4% had been in 3–5 countries; 46.5% in 6–12 countries; and 6.6% had been in more than 12 countries.

### **Sociopolitical attitudes**

Sociopolitical attitudes, more than structural characteristics, were subject to change as a result of the referendum itself or of other events occurring between the referendum and the time the survey was conducted. Although attitudes are generally seen as fairly stable, opinions on political issues are particularly prone to change. Still, I expect many of the measurements presented below to have remained fairly stable after the referendum, if only because of the very limited time span that the 'Europe' subject still generated interest after the referendum. What I suggest here, however, is that we can establish associations and can demonstrate which current attitudes (four months after the referendum) are most strongly associated with a 'no' vote, but that we cannot prove causal relations. This procedure is followed in much voter research in which the votes in the most recent elections are chosen as the dependent variable.

Perceived ethnic threat, attitude towards the Netherlands and attitude towards Muslims in the Netherlands are measurement scales that were included in the previous instalments of the SOCON survey, and are discernible by means of factor analyses (see Table 1). Perceived ethnic threat is measured with six items that make up a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .85). Previous research has already shown that economic and cultural ethnic threats are not distinguishable by factor analyses (Sniderman et al., 2004; Lubbers and Güveli, 2007), but also that cultural ethnic threat and economic ethnic threat have different effects on stereotypes and populist voting, respectively. I therefore distinguish between economic ethnic threat (items 3 and 6) and cultural ethnic threat (item 4). Attitude towards Muslims is measured with seven statements that make up a strong scale (Cronbach's alpha = .88). Attitude towards the Netherlands was originally measured with four items. Because one of the items had a rather low communality, I decided to drop it from the factor analysis. Still, reliability analyses showed a rather weak scale using the three items as presented in the appendix,<sup>1</sup> so I chose to use only the item referring to Dutch pride as a measurement for national identification.

Economic evaluation was measured by six items. However, factor analysis revealed that they divide into prospective and current economic evaluations. Prospective economic evaluation was measured with the items: 'In the coming years, I expect to afford less', '... I will have to adjust my lifestyle' and '... I fear worsened economic prospects' (Cronbach's alpha = .85). Current economic evaluation was measured with: 'I have difficulties buying basic necessities', 'Sometimes I cannot sleep because of financial worries' and 'I am very dissatisfied with my present income' (Cronbach's alpha = .74). I shall separate these present and prospective economic

**Table 1** Factor analyses on items concerning ethnic threat, negative attitude towards Muslims and positive in-group attitude

	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>H<sup>2</sup></i>
I sometimes worry that my living environment is deteriorating because of the arrival of ethnic minorities	–	.60	–	.40
When it comes to housing allocation, ethnic minorities are provided for earlier than the native Dutch	–	.65	–	.48
It sometimes goes so far that Dutch people are fired so that ethnic minorities can be hired	–	.74	–	.50
The influx of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands is a menace to our own culture	.21	.52	–	.57
Education for the children of ethnic minorities comes at the cost of Dutch children	–	.63	–	.51
I sometimes fear that my financial prospects will deteriorate because of the presence of ethnic minorities	–	.83	–	.62
Muslims raise their children in an authoritative manner	.56	–	–	.30
Muslim men dominate their women	.79	–	–	.54
Muslims cut themselves off from Dutch society	.65	–	–	.54
Muslims readily resort to violence to solve their problems	.60	–	–	.57
Islamic parents have no control over their children outside the private sphere	.52	–	–	.38
Muslims misuse their religion for political purposes	.67	–	–	.56
Most Muslims have no respect for homosexuals	.68	–	–	.41
I am proud to be Dutch	–	–	.68	.43
We Dutch are always willing to pitch in to get a job done	–	–	.36	.20
Every citizen of the Netherlands should show proper respect for our national symbols, such as the flag and the national anthem	–	–	.68	.46

Notes: *F* = factor loadings from the pattern matrix; *H<sup>2</sup>* = communality. Only factor loadings > .10 are presented. *N* = 787.

Source: Socon, 2005 (Eisinga et al., 2008).

evaluations in the analyses, even though I do not have different hypotheses about their effects.

Concerning political measurements, respondents were asked straightforwardly about their trust in the Dutch parliament. They could give a report mark between 0 and 10 to indicate the extent of their confidence. The mark given the Dutch parliament was 5.14. In my research I assumed distrust of

the parliament. For the remainder of the study, I coded the measurement in such a way that a high score indicates strong distrust. Lack of political interest was asked in a direct fashion as well.

I presented the respondents with various evaluations of the European Union, expecting them to discriminate between the national identity, economic and political approaches. Factor analyses did not corroborate this expectation. In Table 2 below I present the results from the factor analyses. Three of the items that I included were not extracted by the factors at all. This concerns the statements: 'The European Union must pay more attention to social problems', 'It's fine for Turkey to become a member of the European Union', and 'I am proud to be European'. As a result, they are carried forward in the analysis as three loose items. Most of the other items are extracted by one factor. The first factor binds the items on cultural threat, benefits, wasting money and political distrust – I label this factor general Euroscepticism. The second factor relates to Europe as one country and exchanging Dutch citizenship for European citizenship. This factor has been labelled as opposition to an EU super-state. The two factors have a 0.35 correlation. I will, however, separate out the items from the general Euroscepticism scale to find out whether some of these motives are better predictors of the 'no' vote than others, differentiating the EU evaluations into the identity, utilitarian and political approaches. Correlating all items concerning EU evaluations with each other, the highest correlation is 0.40.

**Table 2** Factor analyses results on items on the European Union

	F1	F2	H <sup>2</sup>
The EU is a threat to Dutch culture	.59	–	.37
<i>I am proud to be a European</i>	.31	–	.11
I would like to exchange my Dutch citizenship for European citizenship	.15	.54	.39
Europe should become one country without borders	–	.72	.57
<i>It's fine for Turkey to become a member of the European Union</i>	.21	.26	.16
The Netherlands derives no benefits from EU membership	.57	–	.38
The EU wastes a lot of money	.55	–	.28
Distrust of the European Parliament	.77	–	.56
<i>The European Union must pay more attention to social problems</i>	–	–.14	.02

Notes: F = factor loadings from the pattern matrix; H<sub>2</sub> = communality. Only factor loadings > .10 are presented. All items are coded such that a high score indicates stronger Euroscepticism. Italicized items do not fit into the solution. N = 787.

Source: Socon, 2005 (Eisinga et al., 2008).

Finally, I included party preference, broken down into the government parties that led a 'yes' campaign (CDA – Christian-Democrats; D66 – Social-Liberal; and VVD – Liberals), the opposition parties in the 'yes' camp (GroenLinks – Green Left; and PvdA – Social Democrat) and the parties in the 'no' camp (CU – Conservative Christian; Wilders' party – Populist right; LPF – Populist right; SGP – Conservative Christian; and SP – Socialist). People who did not indicate a party preference were included as a separate category.

All attitudes were standardized to make comparison of effects in the logistic regression analyses possible. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics.

### **Differences between social categories**

I present the results from the logistic regression analyses in three models (see Table 4). In the first model, the differences between social groups are shown in their voting against the European constitution versus voting for it. In the second model the attitudes derived from the identity, utilitarian and political approaches that have no direct evaluation of the EU are added. In the third model I add the statements about the EU. In these consecutive models we can also examine the extent to which attitudes explain the differences found between the social groups in terms of the chances of their having voted against the European constitution. All models were controlled for multicollinearity but no violations of the model criteria could be found. To compare the presented results with a model in which I included only attitudes that were factorially distinguishable, I give those results in Appendix 2.

From the first model it turns out that education has a significant negative effect on voting against the European constitution, as was also found in the bivariate analyses of Van der Kolk and Aarts (2005). As educational level increases, the chances of having voted against the European constitution diminish. This effect conforms with my expectation, and it is the strongest effect in the first model. In this model, where the intercept represents the logit of the average on all variables and the reference categories with respect to the categorized data, it is estimated that people with higher education (+2 standard deviations (SD)) fell just short of the majority voting 'no' (41.0%), whereas for people with lower education (–2 SD) an estimated 82.8% voted against. For income, no influence was found in this model, which also controls for education. It is therefore not so much the level of one's income as the level of one's education that reduces the chances of a 'no' vote.

The age of the respondents does make a difference. As age increases, the chances of having voted against the constitution in the referendum decrease.

**Table 3** Descriptive statistics (before standardization)

		<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
<b>Social-structural characteristics</b>					
Education	z	1	7	4.34	1.71
Income	z	1	5	2.88	1.30
Income unknown		0	1	0.11	0.32
Age	z	18	70	46.86	14.22
Sex					
Male		0	1	0.48	0.50
Denomination					
Roman Catholic		0	1	0.19	0.39
Dutch Protestant Church		0	1	0.10	0.31
Other Protestant		0	1	0.10	0.30
Lived in another EU country		0	1	0.10	0.30
No. of EU countries visited < age 16	z	1	5	2.17	1.10
No. of EU countries visited > age 16	z	1	5	3.45	0.86
<b>Identity attitudes</b>					
Positive attitude towards Netherlands	z	1	5	3.91	0.93
Ethnic threat	z	1	5	2.64	0.81
Cultural ethnic threat	z	1	5	2.54	0.88
Negative attitude towards Muslims	z	1	5	3.48	0.72
EU is cultural threat	z	1	5	2.70	1.02
Against EU super-state	z	1	5	4.03	0.90
Turkey should not become EU member	z	1	5	3.41	1.13
Proud to be European	z	1	5	2.62	0.92
<b>Economic attitudes</b>					
Negative prospective economy evaluation	z	1	5	3.01	1.05
Negative current economy evaluation	z	1	5	2.19	0.91
Economic ethnic threat	z	1	5	3.07	1.11
Netherlands derives no benefits from EU membership	z	1	5	3.15	0.94
EU should become more social	z	1	5	3.84	0.77
EU wastes too much money	z	1	5	3.80	0.89
<b>Political attitudes</b>					
Lack of political interest	z	1	4	1.95	0.76
Distrust of Dutch parliament	z	1	10	4.67	1.91
Distrust of EU Parliament	z	1	10	5.52	1.92
General Euroscepticism	z	1	5	3.16	0.70
Party preference					
Opposition party with a 'yes' campaign		0	1	0.32	0.47
Party with a 'no' campaign		0	1	0.22	0.41
No preference		0	1	0.12	0.33

Notes: z = included in the analyses as standardized (z-scored) variable. *N* = 787.

Source: Socon, 2005 (Eisinga et al., 2008).



I found no significant differences between men and women. By contrast, membership of a church is important. The emphasis that was placed in the Dutch Bible belt on the widespread 'no' vote made it appear as if religious people had voted against the constitution in larger numbers than the general population. Based on my research, this view merits revision. In fact, it turns out that Roman Catholics and members of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands were much less likely to have voted 'no' than people who did not consider themselves members of any church. However, the group considering itself as belonging to another Protestant church was indeed more likely to vote 'no' (although the difference from respondents who did not consider themselves a member of any church is not significant, which could be attributable to the relatively small size of the group).

Whether someone had visited other EU countries before his 16th birthday reduces the chances of a 'no' vote – this result is in the expected direction, although the effect is rather small. Moreover, we cannot ascertain in these models whether this effect picked up socialization effects other than the foreign experience.

### **Battle of explanations: Identity, utilitarian and political attitudes**

In Model 2, I add the general attitudes that are derived from the identity approach (positive attitude towards the Netherlands, perceived cultural ethnic threat and negative attitude towards Muslims), from the utilitarian approach (prospective and current economic evaluations and perceived economic ethnic threat) and from the political approach (political interest and distrust of Dutch politics). In this model, I also included trips abroad later in life – because this may depend on attitudes – to find out whether these add to the attitudes in explaining the 'no' vote. Concerning this final aspect I can be brief: even though all 'experience characteristics' point in the direction of a more pro-European vote in the referendum, none of them reaches significance.

The three attitudes from the identity approach all make a significant contribution to voting 'no' in the referendum. People who are more proud to be Dutch are significantly more likely to have voted 'no' in the referendum. People who more strongly perceive a cultural ethnic threat are also more likely to have voted against in the referendum on the European constitution. The effect of cultural ethnic threat ( $B = 0.23$ ) is a little larger than the effect of being proud to be Dutch ( $B = 0.19$ ). The effect of the negative attitude towards Muslims is stronger ( $B = 0.37$ ), implying that people with more negative attitudes voted 'no' more often. The effect from distrust of the Dutch

parliament is conspicuously stronger ( $B = 0.96$ ), which could indicate the existence of a second-order election effect. Lack of political interest has no direct effect on voting behaviour. The same holds for the effects from the utilitarian perspective. Controlled for political and identity attitudes, whether people evaluate their current or prospective economic situation negatively or whether they perceive an economic ethnic threat is irrelevant for the vote in the referendum. I would like to remark here that a negative economic evaluation correlates with distrust of the Dutch parliament, cultural ethnic threat and a negative attitude towards Muslims, providing evidence for the existence of possible indirect effects. Nevertheless, the results show that the economic evaluations were not decisive in voting 'no' in the EU referendum.

I additionally calculated how much the different approaches contribute to explaining the vote, comparing the loss of model fit by excluding the relevant predictors. Dropping the economic evaluations does not lead to a decreased model fit. Excluding the three identity attitudes results in a  $-2$  log-likelihood increase (indicating a worse model fit) of 30.5 (3 degrees of freedom). Exclusion of the political attitudes increases the  $-2$  log-likelihood parameter by 77.5 (2 degrees of freedom), showing us that political attitudes have the largest influence on the voting decision.

### The influence of EU evaluations

In the third model, specific EU evaluations are added to the model. The question can now be answered of whether these specific EU evaluations predominantly explain the voting behaviour, or whether the general identity, utilitarian and political attitudes do so. From the attitudes discussed in Model 2, only Dutch pride and distrust of the Dutch parliament remain significant. The latter effect decreased to 0.65, but it is still one of the strongest predictors in the model. Based on this finding I support the idea that voting in the referendum on the European constitution was affected by domestic political evaluations, corroborating the notion of second-order election effects.

The total contribution of the specific EU evaluations is stronger. Except for European pride, all EU evaluations linked to the identity approach significantly contribute to explain the 'no' vote. First, people who perceive a threat to Dutch culture from the EU more strongly are much more likely to have voted 'no' ( $B = 0.66$ ). This effect is the strongest in the model. People who oppose the idea of a single European country – a European super-state – are also more likely to have voted against the European constitution. Finally, there is a separate effect from the evaluation of Turkey's EU membership. People opposing this membership voted 'no' more often in the

**Table 4** Logistic regression of votes against the European constitution versus votes for the European constitution in the referendum

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	s.e.	e <sup>β</sup>	B	s.e.	e <sup>β</sup>	B	s.e.	e <sup>β</sup>
Intercept	0.60			0.62			0.69		
<b>Social-structural characteristics</b>									
Education	-0.48**	.09	0.62	-0.11	.11	0.89	0.02	.13	1.02
Income	-0.12	.08	0.89	-0.06	.10	0.94	-0.05	.12	0.95
Income unknown	0.30	.25	1.35	0.33	.28	1.39	0.27	.33	1.30
Age	-0.31**	.09	0.73	-0.37**	.11	0.69	-0.32**	.13	0.72
Sex									
Male	-0.14	.15	0.87	-0.02	.18	0.98	0.05	.21	1.05
Female (reference)									
Denomination									
None (reference)									
Roman Catholic	-0.43*	.20	0.65	-0.21	.23	0.81	-0.19	.27	0.83
Dutch Protestant Church	-0.45~	.25	0.64	-0.03	.28	0.97	-0.48	.35	0.62
Other Protestant	0.16	.55	1.18	0.41	.30	1.51	0.10	.35	1.10
Lived in another EU country	-	-	-	-0.37	.28	0.69	-0.24	.35	0.79
No. of EU countries visited < age 16	-0.15~	.09	0.87	-0.06	.10	0.94	-0.05	.12	0.96
No. of EU countries visited > age 16	-	-	-	-0.06	.10	0.94	-0.11	.12	0.90
<b>Identity attitudes</b>									
Positive attitude towards Netherlands	-	-	-	0.19*	.09	1.21	0.26*	.12	1.29
Cultural ethnic threat	-	-	-	0.23*	.12	1.26	-0.06	.14	0.94
Negative attitude towards Muslims	-	-	-	0.37**	.11	1.45	0.17	.14	1.18
EU is cultural threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.66**	.14	1.94
Against EU super-state	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.26*	.11	1.30
Turkey should not become EU member	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.40**	.11	1.49
Proud to be European	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.20	.13	1.23

Table 4 Continued

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	s.e.	e <sup>β</sup>	B	s.e.	e <sup>β</sup>	B	s.e.	e <sup>β</sup>
<b>Economic attitudes</b>									
Negative prospective economy	-	-	-	0.17	.10	1.18	0.08	.12	1.08
Negative current economy	-	-	-	0.05	.11	1.05	0.06	.13	1.06
Economic ethnic threat	-	-	-	0.05	.12	1.05	0.07	.14	1.07
Netherlands derives no benefits from EU membership	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.33**	.12	1.39
EU should become more social	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.03	.11	1.03
EU wastes too much money	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.10	.12	1.10
<b>Political attitudes</b>									
Lack of political interest	-	-	-	0.08	.10	1.08	0.26*	.12	1.30
Distrust of Dutch parliament	-	-	-	0.96**	.12	2.60	0.65**	.15	1.91
Distrust of EU parliament	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.63**	.16	1.87
Party preference									
Government party, 'yes' campaign (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.05	.26	0.95
Opposition party with 'yes' campaign	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.91**	.32	2.49
Party with a 'no' campaign	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.16	.35	1.18
No preference	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.18
-2 log-likelihood	-	-	987.89	-	-	828.89	-	-	642.65
Chi-square change	-	-	69.12**	-	-	159.00**	-	-	186.24**
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	-	-	.11	-	-	.34	-	-	.55

Notes: N = 787.

Source: Socom, 2005 (Eisinga et al., 2008).

referendum. These specific EU evaluations turn out to be more decisive in the 'no' vote than the general identity attitudes, which have all turned insignificant in this third model. Only the positive attitude towards the Netherlands still has a significant effect.

There is no independent effect from the attitude that the EU wastes too much money, whereas people who think that the Netherlands does not benefit from EU membership are more likely to have voted against the EU constitution ( $B = 0.33$ ). Because the question was not framed in economic terms, I believe the contribution of the economic approach through this statement is somewhat overestimated. The widely held view by the respondents that the EU should be more social in its policies does not contribute to explaining the 'no' vote. We saw this outcome in the bivariate analyses too. People who think that the EU should devote more attention to social problems voted 'no' to the constitution as often as people who do not hold that view. Thus, of those people who strongly believe that the EU should become more social, 'only' 60% voted against the constitution.

Distrust of both the EU Parliament and the Dutch parliament did the 'yes' camp little good. Remarkably, distrust of The Hague had just as strong an effect on voting against the constitution as distrust of Brussels, showing us that both European and domestic political evaluations played an important role in the 'no' vote. The influence of preference for a political party in the 'yes' or 'no' camps is likewise strong. There is no government effect though, as supporters for the opposition parties with a 'yes' campaign did not differ from citizens who identify with the governing parties. Supporters of parties that led a 'no' campaign have greater chances of having voted against in the referendum on the European constitution, controlled for all the attitudes. Hence, irrespective of their EU evaluation positions, they were likely to vote as advocated by the party they support. In part, this could be the effect of a changed party preference after the referendum. However, Van der Kolk and Aarts (2005) demonstrated that the turnover of people who disagreed with the party they had voted for before the referendum was not very large. By the same token, had the EU question had a strong effect on voting preferences, that would also have meant that, as a result of the referendum, the parties that had opposed the constitution would emerge as strong winners afterwards. Even though this indeed happened one-and-a-half years later in the 2006 elections, in the regional elections and polls up to a year after the referendum (also the period in which the data were collected) it was particularly the opposition Labour Party that campaigned for a 'yes' vote that won the elections.

In this third model, it is the political approach that contributes most strongly to explain the 'no' vote. Dropping the attitudes listed under the

political approach decreases model fit by 79.8 (6 degrees of freedom). Excluding the identity variables decreases model fit by 60.9 (7 degrees of freedom). Exclusion of the economic variables does so by 33.2 (6 degrees of freedom).

## Explaining the effects of education and religion

The final step is to find out which attitudes chiefly explain the effects of education and religion. Because income turns out to have no direct significant effect in the first model, this question concerning income has become irrelevant. The rather strong effect from education in the first model ( $B = -0.48$ ) turns insignificant in the second model ( $B = -0.11$ ) when the general attitudes are included. In the final step, the effect of education is close to zero ( $B = 0.02$ ). This implies that attitudes explain the relation between education and a 'no' vote. With the advanced Sobel test – using the macro from Preacher and Hayes (2005) – multiple mediators can be accounted for to calculate indirect effects, as well as relevant covariates. The original direct effect from education is indeed statistically significantly mediated by the attitudes. Results indicate that 'EU is cultural threat' accounts for 24% of the indirect effect. Distrust of the Dutch parliament accounts for 15% of the indirect effect, whereas distrust of the European Parliament accounts for 14%. From the other mediators, the negative evaluation of Turkish membership, the evaluation that the Netherlands does not benefit from membership, lack of political interest and party preference from the 'no' campaign mediate the effect from education significantly too. The conclusion is that the effect of education is mediated in particular by the evaluation that the EU poses a cultural threat. When summing the total mediation from the different approaches, I have to conclude that the mediation is just slightly stronger from the political attitudes compared with the mediation from the identity attitudes.

Catholics and members of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN), it turns out, vote mainly for the governing Christian Democrats, and were therefore less likely to have voted against the constitution. Other Protestants did vote 'no' in larger numbers, partly because they had a greater tendency to align themselves with the more conservative Protestant parties, the Christian Union and the SGP – parties that campaigned for a 'no'. Of the Catholics and members of the Dutch Protestant Church, 75% voted for a party from the 'yes' camp. For the non-religious this percentage is 62%, and for people who considered themselves members of another Protestant congregation it is 31%. The Sobel test on the indirect effect of denomination indeed shows that the overrepresentation of other Protestants among the 'no' voters

is explained mostly by their support for a party from the 'no' camp and by their stronger endorsement of the statement that Turkey should not become a member of the EU. At the same time, these Christians have much stronger trust in the Dutch government, tempering the effect somewhat. The smaller likelihood of PKN members having voted 'no' in the referendum is explained largely by their lower levels of distrust of the Dutch parliament and support for a party from the 'yes' camp, as the Sobel tests indicate. The finding that the effect from PKN members is greater in Model 3 than in Model 2 can be attributed to more agreement from those Christians that Turkey should not become a member. Finally, the smaller likelihood of Roman Catholics having voted against the constitution is explained not only by their support for a party in the 'yes' camp and lower levels of distrust of the Dutch parliament, but also by their lower levels of distrust of the European Parliament.

I also analysed to what extent the general attitudes that had significant effects in Model 2 are mediated by the specific EU evaluations. The perception that the EU poses a cultural threat accounts for 40% of the indirect effect from cultural ethnic threat, followed by the evaluation that Turkey should not become a member of the EU (19%). The fear of an EU super-state, distrust of the European Parliament and the evaluation that there are no benefits for the Netherlands from EU membership each account for 13% of the indirect effect.

The attitude towards Muslims is mediated primarily by the evaluation of Turkey's membership (30% of the indirect effect). Remarkably though, distrust of the European Parliament accounts for an almost equally large mediation (29%). Moreover, its effect is mediated by the opposition to an EU super-state, the perceived cultural threat from the EU and the attitude that the country does not benefit from membership.

Distrust of the Dutch parliament is related rather strongly to distrust of the European Parliament, which takes up 48% of the indirect effect. Distrust of the Dutch parliament is also related to the perceptions that the EU poses a cultural threat and that the Netherlands does not benefit from membership and to voting for a party that led a 'no' campaign.

## Conclusions and discussion

I have shown that the threat to Dutch culture emanating from the European Union constitutes one of the primary explanations for the 'no' vote in the Dutch referendum on the treaty to establish a constitution for Europe. I showed, in addition to the importance of political explanations, that the identity approach is useful in explaining the referendum outcome – more so than the economic approach. I also found that a perceived EU cultural threat

is strongly associated with a perceived cultural threat from ethnic minorities. The present findings are consistent with recent studies by McLaren (2001, 2002, 2006), De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005), Hooghe and Marks (2005) and Luedtke (2005) that show that Euroscepticism is to a large extent related to attitudes towards immigrants. De Master and Le Roy (2000) use the term 'xenophobia' in their research. The term applies not only to immigrants and asylum seekers, but also to the European Union and its influence. Further research is needed to shed light on which specific elements of Dutch culture this relates to. Does the threat that people perceive from further European integration relate to Dutch peculiarities such as the soft-drugs policy or liberal policies concerning homosexuals, abortion and euthanasia? If one wants to create more goodwill towards the EU amongst the Dutch population, it must be made clear that Dutch individuality will be maintained and it must be explained how this will be achieved. Politicians – and not only Dutch politicians – face a difficulty in conveying this message. The groups that are most likely to perceive a stronger threat from ethnic minorities or a cultural threat from the EU also have the greatest distrust of The Hague and Brussels.

The evaluations of both the Dutch and European parliaments explain the voting in the referendum. The finding that distrust of The Hague and Brussels led to a 'no' vote in equal measure provides evidence for the existence of a second-order election effect in addition to the specific EU evaluation, as has been outlined by Garry et al. (2005).

My results furthermore support the hypothesis that political parties affect people's choices. Irrespective of the EU evaluations and general attitudes, support for a party with a 'no' campaign increased the likelihood of voting against the European constitution considerably. On the other hand, I found no support for an additional 'government' effect. It did not matter whether people supported a government party (all campaigning for a 'yes' vote) or an opposition party in the 'yes' camp. I can now interpret the effect of religious denomination. Religion played an important role in the vote for or against the constitution. Catholics and members of the Dutch Protestant Church more often followed the norm of the party they tend to support – the governing CDA, which campaigned for a 'yes'. Overrepresentation of other Protestants among 'no' voters can be explained by their support for the conservative confessional parties, which campaigned for a 'no'.

The analysis of the Dutch referendum outcome also sheds light on whether general attitudinal positions in the domains of identity, economics and politics or specific EU evaluations were decisive for the vote. Although these EU evaluations are affected by general attitudes – or at least associated with them – my results show that the specific EU evaluations predicted the 'no' vote better than the general attitudes. Opposition to Turkey's



membership and the idea that one's country does not benefit from membership are important examples of specific evaluations that affected people's voting.

Some of the new explanations for voting in the referendum did not have an additional effect. People's experience of other countries in the EU – either because they went there on vacation or lived there – did not affect their voting behaviour significantly, even though all effects were in the expected direction. Moreover, the battle-cry of the left – that the EU is not social enough – is broadly subscribed to amongst the Dutch population. Still, this view did not lead people to vote against the constitution to any significant extent. People who believe that the EU must become more social as well as those who indicated the opposite voted against the constitution in equal measure. The idea that the EU wastes too much money had no independent effect either. This latter aspect turned out to be strongly correlated with other EU evaluations. In general, it is hard to separate the EU evaluations. Even though I estimated the effects simultaneously – without multicollinearity problems – factor analyses showed that many of these issues form a single factor of general Euroscepticism. It would be wise for future research to include more items for each of the theoretical approaches (identity, economy and politics) and to test this dimensionality again, because I find different effects of these approaches. Other topics, such as fears of being swallowed by a polity that is perceived as too big by citizens – in particular when a country is small – and consequently opposition to ongoing expansion of the EU should be accounted for as well. It is also of relevance to discriminate better between specific policy evaluations and more general Eurosceptic attitudes, such as the question of whether the country benefits from membership – often used in research because of its presence in the Eurobarometer. This question – in this research added to the economic attitudes – could capture more than economic evaluations, even though its contribution in the voting model is overruled by more specific identity and political evaluations.

Education turned out to be one of the strongest demographic predictors. Its relation to the 'no' vote is interpreted best by the attitude that the EU poses a cultural threat. Still, the political explanations also account for much of the relation between education and voting 'no' in the referendum. Furthermore, it turned out that older people in particular were less likely to have cast their vote against the European constitution. This effect was hardly explained by the various attitudes included in the model. I suspect that the older generation was to a greater extent socialized with the original rationale for establishing the EU: to banish war from Europe forever. This is why I expect age to represent a cohort effect.

The (for many, unexpected) 'nee' from the Netherlands corresponds with other changes the country has experienced in the 21st century. As the immigration theme rose high on the social and political agenda and with it questions concerning national identity, the Dutch retreated behind the dykes. The related theoretical framework on national identity offers an explanation for the 'no' vote. In future research, questions need to be answered about which aspects of the national culture people fear to lose in the process of further European integration and to what extent this is related to different dimensions of Euroscepticism. In the past 15 years when the European citizen has been introduced and the Union has witnessed large expansion, politicians – and not just Dutch ones – face the challenge of clarifying not only what the benefits from possible further (political) integration are but also what the limits of this integration are.

## Notes

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- 1 This appendix is available at <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/eup/issues.htm>.

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