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Welfare State, Unemployment, and Social Justice: Judgments on the Rights and Obligations of the Unemployed

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This article reports judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed in The Netherlands. A large majority of the Dutch population is shown to support (i) the unemployed's right to social security as well as their obligation to work, (ii) the principle that declining a job offering should be punished, and (iii) harsh sanctions in some specific cases of job refusal. An emphasis on the obligation to work results from conservative attitudes regarding both distributive justice (economic conservatism) and retributive justice (cultural conservatism). Furthermore, conservative attitudes regarding distributive justice derive from a privileged economic position (especially high income and infrequent experience of unemployment), whereas conservative attitudes regarding retributive justice result from a restricted cultural position (low level of education, technical rather than cultural type of education, and limited involvement in arts and culture).

KEY WORDS: welfare state; unemployment; political attitudes; distributive justice; retributive justice.

The laws and institutions that constitute the welfare state represent a 'social contract.' Social security regulations concerning the unemployed illustrate that this social contract stipulates the mutual rights and obligations of the individual citizen and the societal community. As a consequence, the protection of unemployed citizens from the harsh regime of the labor market

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is not infinite. Although they do not have to accept any job which happens to be available, they are also not allowed to reject any job that does not appeal to them. So, the social contract lays down their *right to social security* as well as their *obligation to work.* This circumstance is expressed by the awkward notion of *suitable employment,* the application of which requires weighing those two moral principles against each other in the process of assessing whether a certain job suits a certain unemployed person.

From the end of the 1980s onwards, the customary Dutch social contract has been criticized extensively. The critics claim that, traditionally, the rights of individual citizens have been overemphasized, which has resulted in a neglect of civic obligations (e.g., Adriaansens, 1994). Especially, but certainly not exclusively, in the case of unemployment a heated societal and political debate developed. Not surprisingly, the desirable balance between the right to social security and the obligation to work of the unemployed is at the center of the debate about the revision of the social contract in The Netherlands.

Against the background of this social and political turmoil, I address three research questions. First, I examine the degree to which the twin principles of the unemployed's right to social security and of their obligation to work are accepted as legitimate by the Dutch population. Second, I inspect their judgments concerning situations in which those two principles clash: To what extent do the Dutch consider it just to cut someone's unemployment benefit, after a job offering has been declined? Third, of course, I address the way those judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed can be explained theoretically.

I start with a review of the relevant research literature, followed by a theoretical discussion, to derive hypotheses relating to the last mentioned research question. Next, after a discussion of the data collection and measurement procedures, the three research questions are answered. Finally, I discuss the implications of my findings for the ongoing social and political debate about the revision of the social contract in The Netherlands.

HYPOTHESES

To derive testable hypotheses, I first connect a well-known distinction between two types of social justice to two different types of political attitudes. Next, I critically review the most important research literature regarding the social bases of those types of political attitudes, i.e., of judgments on both types of social justice.

Retributive and Distributive Justice

In the social-psychological, sociological, and philosophical literature on justice, a distinction is usually being made between retributive justice on the one hand and distributive on the other. Whereas the former refers to the just sanctioning of those who deviate from group norms, the latter refers to the just distribution of scarce and highly valued goods (e.g., Buchanan and Mathieu, 1986, pp. 13-14; Cook and Hegtvedt, 1983, p. 220; Benn and Peters, 1977, p. 173).

Qualitative research by Bernts (1988) suggests that judgments on the rights and obligations of citizens stem from attitudes concerning the just distribution of scarce and highly valued goods (distributive justice) as well as attitudes concerning the just sanctioning of deviant behavior (retributive justice). So, it is likely that these same attitudes also apply to the justice of sanctioning the unwilling-to-work unemployed by cutting their social security benefits. If this matter is assessed as an issue of retributive justice, it is constructed as a problem of social order: (To what extent) should this type of deviance be punished? If it is considered an issue of distributive justice, it is judged from a perspective of social inequality: (To what extent) can a violation of the right to the prevailing minimum subsistence level be justified?

The distinction between both types of justice coincides with the classical distinction between 'cultural conservatism' and 'economic conservatism' in political sociology (Lipset, 1960). The former refers to the degree to which either the liberty of individuals to make moral and life-style choices themselves (cultural progressiveness) or the necessity of conformity to the norms imposed by community (cultural conservatism) is emphasized. The latter refers to the degree to which either the necessity of income redistribution from the rich to the poor (economic progressiveness) or the necessity to rely on free market competition (economic conservation) is emphasized. Since the 1960s, several Dutch and American researchers have shown that both types of conservatism or progressiveness are completely independent. So, it is impossible to predict one's economic conservatism from one's cultural conservatism (e.g., Mitchell, 1966; Kelly and Chambliss, 1966; O'Kane, 1970; Felling and Peters, 1984; Fleishman, 1988; De Witte, 1990; Middendorp, 1991; Scheepers *et al.*, 1992; Olson and Carroll, 1992; Molnár *et al.*, 1994).

Assuming that judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed are, indeed, at the same time judgments on retributive and distributive justice, two hypotheses can be formulated. Hypothesis A1: It is expected that cultural conservatism leads to an emphasis on the obligations rather than the rights of the unemployed. Hypothesis A2: economic pro-

gressiveness is expected to lead to an emphasis on the rights rather than the obligations of the unemployed. In the former case, judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed are derived from a perspective of social order, i.e., they are judgments on retributive justice. In the latter case, those judgments are derived from a perspective of social inequality, i.e., they are judgments on distributive justice. Now, of course, an important question remains: How can people's attitudes concerning social order (cultural conservatism or progressiveness) and social inequality (economic conservatism or progressiveness) be explained theoretically?

The Social Bases of Political Attitudes

The aforementioned article by Lipset (1960) provides a suitable point of departure for a discussion of the social bases of political values. Lipset claims that the working class, as compared to the middle class, is characterized by economic progressiveness and cultural conservatism.

Some participants in what has by now come to be known as the *Death of Class Debate* argue that the significance of social class for the understanding of politics has declined during the last few decades (e.g., Clark and Lipset, 1991; Clark *et al.,* 1993; Pakulski, 1993; Pakulski and Waters, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). Even though this claim has been supported for a small number of Western countries, it remains true for even those countries that the working class is still more inclined today to support economically progressive political parties than society's other classes (e.g., Nieuwbeerta, 1995, 1996, who also reviews the extensive research literature on this topic). Moreover, it has also been demonstrated that the low income of members of the working class accounts for a significant part of their economic progressiveness (e.g., Wright, 1985, p. 259-278; De Witte, 1990, pp. 207-209; Kraaykamp *et al.,* 1989; Steijn and De Witte, 1992; cf. Felling and Peters, 1984, p. 359; Marshall *et al.,* 1988, pp. 179-183). So, it is safe to conclude that Lipset's (1960) thesis concerning the economic progressiveness of the working class has been supported by subsequent research.

But how about his claim concerning working class cultural conservatism? Research has pointed out that those with little education, rather than the poor, are characterized by culturally conservative political values. This has been demonstrated by research into tolerance for nonconformity (e.g., Stouffer, 1955; Nunn *et al.,* 1978; Grabb, 1979, 1980; Bobo and Licari, 1989), research into authoritarianism (e.g., Dekker and Ester, 1987; Molnár *et al.,* 1994; Eisinga and Scheepers, 1989), and by research that shows level of education to be an important predictor of racial prejudice (e.g., Case *et al.,* 1989; Pedersen, 1996) as well as other indicators of cultural conserva-

tism (Woodrum, 1988a, 1988b; Eisinga and Scheepers, 1989; Davis and Robinson, 1996).

A critical inspection of Kohn's research findings contradicts his own conclusion that working Americans' "self-direction/conformity as parental values" and "authoritarian conservatism" can be explained from differences with respect to "social class" (Kohn, 1977; Kohn and Schooler, 1983; Kohn and Slomczynski, 1990). As it happens, Kohn's "class effects" prove to be essentially "educational effects" as well. It is especially important to note that Kohn's research, like the other aforementioned studies, indicates that income differences are not consequential for cultural conservatism.[3] Furthermore, the decisive importance of level of education *in its own right,* i.e., independent of associated economic factors like income or occupational conditions, has been underlined by research in which the cultural conservatism of (not yet employed) students from different educational levels has been compared (Feldman and Newcomb, 1973, pp. 71-105; Schulz and Weiss, 1993). So, Lipset's "working class authoritarianism" is an authoritarianism of the poorly educated instead of an authoritarianism of the poor.

Summing up, the economic progressiveness of the working class and the economic conservatism of society's most privileged classes seem to stem from the different economic interests that are at stake. This can, of course, be interpreted theoretically by means of a conventional class framework, which predicts that "the lower-income groups will support (the leftist parties) in order to become better off, whereas the higher-income groups will oppose them in order to maintain the economic advantages" (Lipset *et al.,* 1965, p. 1136; cf. D'Anjou *et al.,* 1995; Svallfors, 1991, p. 619). But how can a theory of class and economic interests account for the circumstance that the highly educated are society's most culturally progressive stratum?

The circumstance that the highly educated rather than either the rich or the poor most strongly adhere to the value of individual liberty, seems to require a "sociology of knowledge" type of theoretical interpretation, which acknowledges the autonomous significance of culture. So, the sociological orthodoxy of conceiving of education and income as simply two in-

[3]Kohn considers the two orientations as "personality characteristics" or "psychological functioning," which suggests that they should be distinguished from "cultural conservatism proper," and claims they are primarily explained by "occupational self direction." Both claims, however, are questionable. First, factor analyzing a large number of scales, measuring aspects of both types of conservatism/progressiveness, shows that parental values and authoritarianism are the two highest loading scales on the factor representing cultural conservatism (Middendorp, 1991, p. 111). Second, analyses in which Kohn himself uses level of education as a separate independent variable reveal that it is a far more important predictor of both types of orientation than "occupational self direction" (see Kohn, 1977, p. 185; Kohn and Schooler, 1983, pp. 158-161, 164-170; Kohn and Slomczynski, 1990, pp. 100-101, 140).

dicators for the same thing—be it class, stratification, or inequality—is problematic. Instead, it seems necessary to consider education as a key indicator for a cultural rather than an economic or class position (cf. Bourdieu, 1984; Kalmijn, 1994). From a cultural perspective, education is not—along with income—an indicator for an economic or "class" position, but is instead an indicator for a cultural position—along with religious orthodoxy. After all, religious orthodoxy is also associated with cultural conservatism (e.g., Woodrum, 1988a, 1988b; Eisinga *et al.,* 1992a; Olson and Carroll, 1992; Davis and Robinson, 1996), but not with economic conservatism (Olson and Carroll, 1992; Davison and Robinson, 1996).

Following a logic similar to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of reification, Eisinga *et al.* (1992b) demonstrate that the relationship between religious orthodoxy and cultural conservatism stems from their common belief in the existence of transcendent authorities and the reification of social reality which goes along with this. Judged from the absolute point of view which is taken for granted in cultural conservatism and religious orthodoxy, and to which a low level of education seems to give rise, lifestyles that differ from one's own are not seen as different, but as "deviant": conflicting with a norm, which is regarded as absolute (cf. Woodrum, 1988a, 1988b). Gabennesch (1972), also drawing on Berger and Luckmann's analysis, has pointed out that this logic can be applied to the relationship between education and cultural conservatism as well.

Moreover, this theoretical logic is also able to account for the relative cultural conservatism of those with a technical as compared with a cultural type of education (Feldman and Newcomb, 1973, p. 167; Houtman, 1996d). After all, a technical training transfers knowledge with a natural scientific character: knowledge about an objective reality, which can (in principle) be applied in a technical fashion. A cultural training, however, is directed at the expression or understanding of ideas, values, and experiences. Compared to a cultural training, therefore, a technical one can also be expected to lead to cultural conservatism, as they share a common tendency to reify reality.

The foregoing discussion indicates that it makes sense to depart from the sociological orthodoxy of conceiving of education and income as two indicators for the same thing. It seems fruitful to consider income as a key indicator for an economic or class position, which defines one's economic interests and consequently influences economic conservatism/progressiveness. Level and type of education can instead be considered as key indicators for a cultural position, which through a process of (de)reification influence cultural conservatism (cf. Kalmijn, 1994; Houtman, 1996c). If this theoretical logic is valid, it is important to consider whether additional indicators of an economic and a cultural position can be found. It is likely

that the degree to which one has been hit by unemployment constitutes a second indicator for an economic position (cf. Svallfors, 1991, p. 619; Tanner and Cockerill, 1986; Zeitlin, 1966). Apart from level and type of education, cultural participation is a likely additional indicator for a cultural position, as involvement in arts and high culture may also be expected to erode the degree to which customary frames of reference are held as self-evident (Pedersen, 1996; Elchardus *et al.*, 1996; Houtman, 1996d).

The foregoing gives rise to two additional clusters of hypotheses.[4] The first concerns the relationship between cultural position and cultural conservatism (Cluster B), and the second that between economic position and economic progressiveness (Cluster C). Four hypotheses concerning the explanation of cultural conservatism can be formulated. First, stronger cultural conservatism is expected in the case of those with a low rather than a high level of education (Hypothesis B1), in the case of those with a technical rather than a cultural training (Hypothesis B2) and for those who are less active culturally (Hypothesis B3). Second, the economic position (income and experienced unemployment) is expected to have no explanatory power after the cultural position (level of education, type of education, and cultural participation) has been controlled for (Hypothesis B4).

Concerning the explanation of economic progressiveness, three hypotheses can be derived. First, it is expected that those who have been hit by unemployment more often (Hypothesis C1), like those who have lower incomes (Hypothesis C2), are characterized by stronger economic progressiveness. Second, the cultural position (level of education, type of education, and cultural participation) is expected to have no explanatory power for economic progressiveness, after the economic position (income and experienced unemployment) has been controlled for (Hypothesis C3). All hypotheses are tested after the data collection, measurement procedures, and judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed of the Dutch population have been discussed.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

Data Collection

The three research questions are answered by means of different sets of data, all of which were collected in the beginning of the 1990s. The first two research questions, i.e., those into the judgments on the rights and

[4]As religious orthodoxy had not been included in the questionnaire, hypotheses concerning its relationship with both types of conservatism cannot be tested.

obligations of the unemployed among the Dutch population, are answered by means of data collected in June 1990 (N = 806), December 1991 (N = *1680),* and July 1992 (N = 1520). I have made use of the service of the *Stichting Telepanel* (University of Amsterdam), which has a representative panel of Dutch households at its disposal. Respondents have answered questions on the rights and obligations of the unemployed by means of personal computers which have been made available to them by this foundation. In all three instances this procedure yielded response rates over 80%.

The question looking into the *explanation* of judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed is answered by means of data collected in the spring of 1993 in the city of Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Because (i) the relationship between social class and political attitudes constituted one of the key questions of the present research project (Houtman, 1995, 1996b), and because (ii) an "occupational class position" can only be attributed meaningfully to those who are employed (e.g., Erikson, 1984), 430 employed persons were interviewed (see for details: Houtman, 1994, pp. 108-112).[5]

Measurement

Among the Rotterdam sample *judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed* were measured by means of three different types of indicators: (i) the acceptance or rejection of the two principles, which are conveyed in social security legislation: the *right to social security and the obligation to work,*[6] (ii) the acceptance or rejection of two different proposals to introduce an alternative system of social security, in which either the right to social security or the obligation to work is emphasized at the

[5]Determining the exact response rate and representativeness of the sample is very difficult, if not unfeasible, using this procedure. However, I agree with Zetterberg (1965, pp. 128-130) that given the objective of the data collection, i.e., the testing of theoretically derived hypotheses rather than the estimation of descriptive statistics like means, percentages, etc., this is not a very serious drawback.

[6]Acceptance or rejection of both principles has been assessed by the agreement or disagreement with two forced-choice statements, offering *mainly agree* and *mainly disagree* as response categories: "People receiving an unemployment benefit ought to be burning with shame for that" and "People receiving an unemployment benefit should have the right to choose freely whether they want to live on this benefit or on paid work." Agreement with the first statement is interpreted as rejection of the right to social security. After all, it is a defining characteristic of a right that one does not need to feel any shame when one makes use of it. Disagreement with the second statement implies an acceptance of the obligation to work. Responses to both statements were not associated (Cramer's V = 0.09; $p > 0.05$).

expense of the other: A *guaranteed basic income* (e.g., Van Parijs, 1992) and a system of *workfare* (e.g., Mead, 1986),[7] and (iii) the *judged justice of cutting an unemployment benefit* in some specified cases of refusal to accept an offered job by an unemployed person (see Fig. 1 for two examples).[8] For each of the cases used, it was asked if, in case the job offering was declined, cutting the benefit of the described unemployed person for a period of 3 months was considered just and, if so, how high this sanction should be. As has been mentioned previously, the examination of the judgments of the Dutch population at large are restricted to the first and third types of indicators.

For the Rotterdam sample, the answers to the three types of questions have been combined to yield a measurement for the degree to which one emphasizes the rights or the obligations of the unemployed. As noted before, the acceptance or rejection of the obligation to work is not associated

Case 1	*Occupation:*	carpenter
	Age:	53 years
	Unemployed since:	1985
	Household composition:	married, 2 children (unemployment benefit *f* 1,640 monthly (excl. family allowance))
	Job offered:	parking lot attendant in a parking garage
	Net monthly income:	*f* 1,800
Case 2	*Education:*	only primary school completed
	Age:	25 years
	Unemployed since:	age 18
	Household composition:	single (unemployment benefit *f* 1,150 monthly)
	Job offered:	doorkeeper in a hospital
	Net monthly income:	*f* 1,900

Fig. 1. Two specific cases in which an unemployed person declines a job offering.

[7]Both systems were introduced to the respondents by first stating that "some people in The Netherlands are proposing to change the prevailing system of social security." Next, in both questions, a brief description of changes proposed by "those people" followed. It was made clear that the level of the benefits themselves would remain unchanged. Respondents were asked whether they considered each of both proposals as either *good* or *bad* (a *don't know* category was included as well). Responses to both questions were not associated (Cramer's $V = 0.05$; $p > 0.30$).

[8]The sample from the Dutch population at large judged five specific cases, the Rotterdam sample only four. In all cases, work which requires only a minimum of training was chosen, to ensure that anyone could plausibly perform it. The mentioned levels of the social security benefits are derived from the levels which applied at the time of interviewing ("RWW"). Respondents were asked to assume that in none of the cases special justifications for declining the job offering, such as health problems or necessary long distance travel to and from work, applied.

with the acceptance or rejection of the right to social security. The same applies to the two alternative systems of social security. So, both types of answers have been combined to yield two new nominal variables ("acceptance/rejection of the two social security principles" and "acceptance/rejection of the two alternative systems of social security," respectively), each consisting of four categories: (i) rejecting both, (ii) accepting both, (iii) accepting the first, rejecting the second, and (iv) rejecting the first, accepting the second.[9] Those two nominal categories have first been quantified by means of HOMALS (Homogeneity Analysis by Means of Alternating Least Squares, Gifi, 1981).[10] Subsequently, the two quantified nominal variables have been factor analyzed with the judgments on the justice of cutting an unemployment benefit in four specific cases.

This procedure yielded a valid and reliable measure. Highest scores are assigned to those who reject the unemployed's right to social security and accept their obligation to work, reject a guaranteed basic income and accept a system of workfare, and feel that large cuts as sanctions in case of job refusal are justified. So, highest scores on this scale indicate the strongest emphasis on the unemployed's obligation to work and lowest scores the strongest emphasis on their right to social security. The measure is reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .83) and is used as the dependent variable in the subsequent analysis.

Economic progressiveness and *cultural conservatism* have been measured by means of 12 Likert-type items. The 6 items measuring economic progressiveness relate to the belief that it is desirable to distribute incomes more equally. The 6 items measuring cultural conservatism are taken from the short version of the F scale, measuring authoritarianism (Adorno *et al.*, 1950).[11] As it happens, research findings justify the conclusion that it does not make sense to regard authoritarianism as "something completely different" from cultural conservatism, i.e., as a mere "personality characteristic" (see Footnote 3). It can even be plausibly argued that authoritarianism is in fact the best single indicator for the extensive ideological domain of cultural conservatism (Houtman, 1994, pp. 43-47; 80-82).

[9]In case of the two principles of social security legislation, only two respondents rejected both of them, which yielded an almost empty category. For that reason, it has been defined as missing.

[10]Including them in an HOMALS analysis with the judgments on the four specific cases of work refusal yields a well-interpretable solution with a first dimension with an eigenvalue of 0.55 and highest quantifications for the answers which most strongly emphasize the obligations of the unemployed.

[11]It has been argued that the F scale is susceptible to the problem of response set (e.g., Hamilton, 1972, p. 455-456). However, as early as the 1965, Rorer, reviewing the relevant literature, has convincingly shown that there is no supporting evidence for this claim (see also Weil, 1985, pp. 458-459).

Table I. Results of Factor Analyzing Indicators for Cultural Conservatism and Economic Progressiveness[a]

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Cultural conservatism		
Young people sometimes get rebellious ideas, but when they grow older, they should grow over it and adapt to reality.	0.64	
There are two sorts of people: weak and strong.	0.65	
Our social problems would largely be solved, if we could one way or another remove criminal and antisocial people from society.	0.66	
Most people prove disappointing, once one gets to know them better.	0.58	
What we need is less laws and institutions and more courageous, tireless and dedicated leaders, whom the people can trust.	0.61	
Sexual crimes, such as rape and assault of children deserve more than just imprisonment; actually such criminals should be given corporal punishment in public.	0.69	
Economic progressiveness		
The government should take measures to reduce existing income differences.		0.73
The government should raise social security benefits.		0.72
In The Netherlands, poverty does still exist.		0.45
For people with a low level of education, it is very difficult to find a job.		0.52
Large income differences are unjust, because people are equal in principle.		0.69
As a consequence of technological development, there will be employment for a decreasing number of people in The Netherlands.	0.29	0.53
Eigenvalue	2.61	2.28
Variance explained (%)	21.7	19.0

[a]Varimax rotation; only loadings >0.15 shown. $N = 430$.

Factor analysis confirms that cultural conservatism (Factor 1) and economic progressiveness (Factor 2) are entirely independent (Table I).[12] The reliability of the factors (Cronbach's alpha) is .72 and .66, respectively. In the subsequent analysis, the factor scores derived from the varimax-rotated solution are used. Higher scores refer to stronger cultural conservatism and economic progressiveness, respectively.

[12]When Oblimin rotation rather than Varimax rotation is used, the results are identical and both factors prove to be uncorrelated ($r = -.03$). Constructing two scales by adding up the scores of the items loading on either of both factors, yields the same result ($r = -.03$, $p > 0.50$, two-tailed significance).

Level of education has been reduced to three categories. Those who have completed higher vocational education or university are assigned a high level of education (35.1%), whereas those who have not completed any education at all and those who have completed primary education, lower vocational education, or lower general secondary education are assigned a low level of education (30.0%). Remaining educational levels (intermediate vocational education, higher general secondary education, preuniversity education) constitute the intermediate category (33.2%). In multiple regression analysis, this trichotomy is represented by two dummy variables, i.e., *low level of education* and *high level of education,* thus excluding the intermediate category.

Cultural participation has been measured by means of four types of questions: (i) frequency of visiting cultural manifestations (i.e., theater, classical concert, museum), (ii) interest in literature (i.e., number of books read during the 3 months preceding the interview, number of books owned), (iii) cultural activities during vacation (i.e., amount of time spent on visiting cities and monuments, visiting museums, and getting to know local customs), (iv) degree to which one thinks of oneself as an art lover. Factor analysis yields one reliable factor (Cronbach's alpha = .78) (see for details: Houtman, 1994, pp. 154-155). In the subsequent analysis, factor scores are used (with higher scores indicating a stronger cultural participation).

Type of education consists of three categories. As not every training can be classified as either technical or cultural, I distinguish a third category, in which "mixed" and "general" trainings are classified. In multiple regression analysis, this trichotomy is represented by two dummy variables, i.e., *technical education* and *cultural education,* thus excluding the mixed/general category.[13]

For the measurement of *income* the net income of one's household is used. I herewith follow Erikson (1984) who suggests that with respect to one's market situation (as opposed to one's work situation, e.g., job autonomy), the household is the most important unit of analysis.

Finally, *unemployment experience* is measured as the number of times one has been hit by unemployment for a period of at least 3 months: 0

[13]The coding of the type of education is based on the Standard Educational Classification of the Central Bureau of Statistics (1978). CBS codes 20 (agriculture), 30/31 (mathematics and physical science), 35 (technical), 40 (transport, communication, and traffic), and 80 (personal/social care) were coded as technical (32.6%). CBS codes 10/11 (humanities), 65/66 (law and administration), 70/71 (social and cultural) and 85/86 (arts) were coded as cultural (13.0%). CBS codes 00/0 (general), 05/06 (education), 60 (economic, administrative and commercial), and 91 (public order and security) were coded as mixed/general (50.7%). CBS code 50 has been split into 50 (a), (para)medical, which has been coded as technical and 50 (b), nursing, which has been coded as mixed/general.

(never: 76.1%), 1 (one time: 17.2%), 2 (two times: 3.9%), 3 (three times or more: 2.7%).

RESULTS

Judgments on the Rights and Obligations of the Unemployed

Right to Social Security and Obligation to Work

Judgments on the acceptability of the twin principles which constitute the cornerstones of the Dutch system of social security for the unemployed are summarized in Table II. The right to social security is accepted by almost everyone (93%) and the obligation to work is accepted by a large (although somewhat smaller) majority as well (86%). As much as 79% of the Dutch population wants to hold on to both the principle that unemployed people have a right to social security and the principle that this does not release them from the obligation to work.

A rejection of both principles is a rarity (less than 1%). Of those accepting only one of both principles, most reject the obligation to work (13%). An acceptance of this obligation coupled with a rejection of the right to social security is rarer (only 6%). So, it can be concluded that both basic principles within the prevailing system are taken for granted by a very large majority. This finding raises another question: At what point, according to the Dutch population, does one's right to a full unemployment benefit finish and the obligation to work begin? This leads us directly to our second research question, that is, the judgments on the justice of cutting unemployment benefits in cases of refusal to accept an offered job.

Table II. Percentage Acceptance and Rejection of the Right to Social Security and the Obligation to Work for the Unemployed (July 1992; $N = 1520$)[a]

	Right to social security	No right to social security	Total
Obligation to work	79.4	6.3	85.7
No obligation to work	13.4	0.9	14.3
Total	92.8	7.2	100.0

[a]Cramer's V = 0.01 ($p > 0.60$).

Sanctioning Those Unwilling to Work

The strong support for both the right to social security and the obligation to work suggests that the Dutch are of the opinion that an instrument for sanctioning the "unwilling-to-work" should be available. To find out whether this is true, they have been asked if they could conceive of cases in which they consider it just to cut an unemployed person's benefit as a sanction for work refusal.

About 86% of the Dutch population are of the opinion that such an instrument should exist (Table III). This widespread acceptance of the principle that it should be possible to sanction those who refuse to accept work raises two new questions. First, do the Dutch want to inflict such a punishment in very extreme and rare cases only or do they take up a strict attitude towards the unemployed across the board? Second, how heavy are the sanctions they consider justified? To answer those two questions, it suffices to examine the judgments on the two specific cases presented in Fig. 1. (All three additional cases which have been judged by the sample from the Dutch population at large are judged more leniently than the second one and less strictly than the first one.) As mentioned previously, for each of those two cases it was asked whether, in case the job offering was declined, they considered it justified to cut the benefit of the described unemployed person for a period of 3 months and, if so, how high this sanction should be (see Table IV).

The second case, that of an unemployed youth, who completed primary education only, is judged more strictly than the first case, which describes a much older carpenter. In case of the youth, only 6% deem cutting his benefit unjust. Almost half of the Dutch population are of the opinion that in such a case a sanction of more than 200 Dutch guilders monthly during a period of 3 months is justified. The older carpenter is judged more leniently. In this case, about 30% of the Dutch population considers a sanc-

Table III. Judgment on the Acceptability of the Possibility to Sanction the Unwilling-to-Work Unemployed by Cutting Their Benefits (June 1990; $N = 806$)

Judgment on acceptability of cuts	Frequency (%)
Acceptable in certain cases	86.2
Never acceptable	6.7
Don't know	7.1

Table IV. Judgments on the Justice of Inflicting a Sanction in Two Specific Cases of Job Refusal (December 1991; $N = 1680$)

	Case 1	Case 2
Is the infliction of a sanction considered just?		
Yes	60.0	91.1
No	31.7	5.6
Don't know	8.3	3.3
If justified: How many guilders monthly during 3 months?		
f 50 or less	13.6	4.7
f 51–*f* 100	25.5	15.6
f 101–*f* 200	35.5	28.3
f 201–*f* 300	12.7	23.0
f 301–*f* 400	2.8	7.6
f 401–*f* 500	3.3	8.4
More than *f* 500	6.5	12.1
Don't know	1.3	0.3
Average sanction	*f* 228	*f* 328
All respondents: judgment on the justice of inflicting a sanction		
No sanction	31.7	5.6
f 50 or less	8.2	4.3
f 51–*f* 100	15.3	14.2
f 101–*f* 200	21.3	25.8
f 201–*f* 300	7.6	21.0
f 301–*f* 400	1.7	6.9
f 401–*f* 500	2.0	7.6
More than *f* 500	3.2	11.1
Don't know	9.0	3.5
Average sanction[a]	*f* 148	*f* 309

[a]1 For those who consider a sanction unjust, a sanction of *f* 0 has been assumed.

tion unjust and only 15% feel that a sanction of more than 200 Dutch guilders monthly is justified.

We can draw two conclusions from those judgments. First, across the board, the Dutch take up quite a strict attitude towards the unemployed. After all, in both cases a *majority* favors the infliction of a punishment by means of violating the right to the minimum income level which prevails in The Netherlands. This implies that sanctioning the unwilling-to-work unemployed is not considered just in very extreme cases of work refusal only. Second, quite heavy punishments are judged fair. For instance, in the case of the unemployed youngster, the average sanction proposed (almost 330 Dutch guilders) is quite high if compared to the level of the unemployment benefit itself (1150 Dutch guilders). Summing up, the prevailing social climate in The Netherlands is characterized by a strict attitude towards the unemployed.

Judgments on the Rights and Obligations of the Unemployed Explained

The hypotheses derived previously were tested by means of three regression equations; the results of which are presented in Table V. The first shows the extent to which conservative or progressive attitudes concerning retributive justice (cultural conservatism) can be explained from the different indicators for one's economic and cultural position. The second shows the same for conservative or progressive attitudes concerning distributive justice (economic progressiveness). The last indicates the degree to which judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed can be explained from both types of position and both types of conservatism or progressiveness combined.

The first regression analysis confirms all hypotheses relating to the explanation of cultural conservatism (Cluster B). Those who are highly (culturally) educated are less conservative culturally than those with an intermediate (mixed/general) education. The latter are themselves less conservative culturally than those who are lowly (technically) educated. Furthermore, cultural participation has the expected negative effect on cultural conservatism. Those results bear out Hypotheses B1, B2, and B3. Moreover, as expected, income and unemployment experience do not have

Table V. Cultural Conservatism, Economic Progressiveness, and Judgment on the Rights and Obligations of the Unemployed Explained[a]

Independent variables	Cultural conservatism	Economic progressiveness	Judgment on rights and obligations
Economic position			
Unemployment experience	ns	.23	−.11
Family income	ns	−.17	ns
Cultural position			
Low level of education	.25	.15	ns
High level of education	−.19	ns	ns
Technical education	.14	ns	ns
Cultural education	−.10	.13	ns
Cultural participation	−.19	ns	ns
Political attitudes			
Economic progressiveness	na	na	−.36
Cultural conservatism	na	na	.32
Variance explained (%)	33.2	14.4	28.4

[a]ns: not significant ($p > 0.05$). na: not applicable (excluded from regression equation). (Betas; $N = 385$.)

any influence whatsoever on cultural conservatism, which means that Hypothesis B4 is confirmed, too.

The explanation of economic progressiveness yields a somewhat less clear picture. As expected, those who are struck more often by unemployment and those with a lower income are more progressive economically. So, Hypotheses C1 and C2 are borne out. Hypothesis C3 is rejected, however. Both the lowly educated and those with a cultural training display more economically progressive political attitudes—net of their income and unemployment experience. This means that education is *not only* a key indicator for a cultural position but also is—along with income and unemployment experience—an indicator for an economic position. This finding does not affect the relevance of the analytical distinction between both types of position, however. After all, income and unemployment experience do not affect cultural conservatism at all. Therefore, they are unambiguously indicators for an economic rather than a cultural position. Moreover, given the present state of the labor market, which is characterized by organizational downsizing and large unemployment, it makes sense that one's economic position is not fully covered by income and unemployment experience alone.[14]

Finally, the explanation of the judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed needs to be addressed. Hypotheses A1 and A2 are borne out by the analysis. Those who more strongly emphasize the necessity of citizens to conform to society's moral standards (cultural conservatism) are, as expected, more inclined to emphasize the obligation to work at the expense of the right to social security. Those who more strongly emphasize the need of more egalitarian distribution (economic progressiveness) are, also in accordance with theoretical expectations, more inclined to emphasize the right to social security rather than the obligation to work. The effects of both types of conservatism or progressiveness are almost equal in strength (.32 and –.36, respectively). This means that judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed are judgments on distributive and judgments on retributive justice to about the same extent.

A direct effect for unemployment experience remains: Those who have been unemployed themselves emphasize the right to social security

[14]After all, it is likely that those with little education experience a threat of being ousted out of the labor market by those who are higher educated. It is also likely that the threat of unemployment or a significant deterioration of one's economic position is stronger for those with a cultural rather than a technical training. As a consequence, the labor market position of those with a low level of education, as well as of those with a cultural training, is weaker than that of those with a high level of education and/or a technical training—*net of their income and unemployment experience.* So, both educational effects, like those of income and unemployment experience, can be interpreted as consequences of economic interests: A weaker labor market position leads to economic progressiveness.

of the unemployed more strongly—net of their economic progressiveness and cultural conservatism. It is likely that this phenomenon must be attributed to a psychological mechanism: Those who know from their own experience what it means to be dependent on social security, emphasize the right to social security more strongly—independent of their general political outlook.

CONCLUSIONS

I have examined the positions taken in the debate concerning the revision of the social contract in The Netherlands. More specifically, judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed have been studied. It has been shown, first, that among the Dutch population great support exists for emphasizing the obligations of the unemployed more strongly than has been common practice during the 1970s and 1980s.[15] Second, no consensus concerning the desirable strictness towards the unemployed proves to exist. Although the general climate of opinion supports a firm approach, it is clear that some are willing to go much further than others.

Those differences of opinion stem from different positions in society and the general political outlook these give rise to. Privileged economic positions (e.g., high income) reduce people's economic progressiveness, which—from a perspective of distributive justice—leads them to emphasize the obligations of the unemployed. Privileged cultural positions[16] (e.g., high level of education) reduce people's cultural conservatism, which—from a perspective of retributive justice—leads them to emphasize the rights of the unemployed.

Regarding popular support for the process which is usually referred to as the "restructuring of the Dutch welfare state," two general conclusions can be drawn. First, this political ambition seems to be supported by a majority of the Dutch population, which makes large-scale opposition unlikely. Second, however, if any resistance to this process arises at all, it is likely to be carried out especially by those with a high level of education,

[15]Of course, lacking comparative data from the 1970s and 1980s, there is no way to be certain that judgments on the rights and obligations of the unemployed are more strict today than they used to be in the past. Nevertheless, it is clear that recent attempts by the Dutch government to emphasize the obligations of the unemployed more strongly receive wide support among the population.

[16]By speaking of more or less "privileged" cultural positions, I join (for the sake of brevity) common practice in contemporary sociology (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Kalmijn, 1994). Note, however, that it does not make sense to speak of cultural positions as more or less privileged in the same sense this can be done with economic positions. More or less "restricted" or "open" cultural positions would seem a preferable designation to me (cf. Houtman, 1996c).

who nevertheless occupy a weak economic position. This somewhat contradictory combination tends to result in a combination of cultural and economic progressiveness, which has been shown to lead to support for state guaranteed social rights. Consequently, this specific category is more likely than any other to conceive of the restructuring of the Dutch welfare state as a euphemism for its unacceptable demolition.

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