1. Introduction

This paper concerns a study, undertaken in 1987, of long-term unemployed people from a low income neighbourhood in Rotterdam called ‘Het Nieuwe Westen’ (the New West). The study is in part a sequel to an earlier one Moderne Armoede (Modern Poverty, Engbersen and Van der Veen 1987), which describes contemporary poverty in the Dutch welfare state. Here, poverty among people living on the national poverty-line (‘de echte minima’) is expressed in strict financial regimes, dependence on several governmental institutions, little benefit from State provisions, sharp limitations of the social and geographical environment and a large measure of mutual disagreement and envy. These were the characteristics of modern poverty found during our first study in Rotterdam, in which older households were over-represented. The follow-up study concentrates on a younger population of long-term unemployed. The aim of this second study was to assess how the long-term unemployed deal with that problematical triad of chronic unemployment: labour, time and money. As research activities in the New West progressed, it became clear that the image offered in ‘Moderne Armoede’ needed some adjustment. Restrictions on the social and geographical environment, for instance, did not seem to apply to all the unemployed. Some possessed considerable social networks. Another group was capable of manipulating dependence on governmental institutions to their own advantage. Some managed to get extra income through such expedient arrangements as co-habiting and receiving double welfare and studying while receiving welfare. Others, though officially registered as unemployed, were in fact active within the informal economy. A large group of unemployed did, however, turn out to live in circumstances comparable to those described in Moderne Armoede (Engbersen en Van der Veen 1987).

In this article a sociological typology of the different categories of unemployed will be presented. The typology is based on some of Merton’s ideas. Secondly, we will attempt to argue that the various types of adaptation, are partly a consequence of the social environment of the unemployed. Anthropologist Douglas’ grid/group model, as operationalised by Wildavsky and Thompson, serves as a source of inspiration and provides guidelines for this undertaking. The model also offers a means of examining how far long-term unemployment leads to the rise of a culture of modern poverty.
This paper is organised as follows. First, there is a short description of the neighbourhood together with a characterisation of the long-term unemployed who were interviewed. Six types of unemployed are then distinguished on the basis of Merton’s theory about individual types of adaptation to anomie situations. Following on from this, Douglas’ grid/group model will be elucidated and applied. This model offers several possibilities for tracing the relationship between the social environment of different types of unemployed persons and their strategies with regard to job-search, time expenditure and income, as well as their justification for using such strategies. Finally, the issue of long-term unemployment will be set in a developmental perspective: this means an analysis of the extent to which certain types of long-term unemployed persons succeed one another through time.

2. The New West

There are substantial concentrations of long-term unemployed people in the inner-city districts of the Randstad. The New West, a district in Rotterdam, is such a neighbourhood: 34% of the male and 25% of the female labour force are registered as unemployed; 3860 households receive welfare or unemployment benefit from the Social Security Office. The New West is situated on the left bank of the Maas; it is the largest area of re-development in Rotterdam, with a population of more than 19,000 people. Those living in the neighbourhood have to deal with a number of social problems: bad housing, unattractive surroundings, petty criminality and a considerable concentration of drug-addicts and prostitutes. The New West is called a problem-cumulation area (probleem-cumulatie gebied).

Until the end of the ’sixties, the New West was a relatively homogeneous neighbourhood with two types of resident: labourers and lower middle-class people. The social structure used to be very solid and family relationships were important. Since the ’seventies, however, the New West demographic structure has radically altered. There is a growing population of immigrants and young people. Family life, once predominant here, has relinquished its important position. Dutch families, people over 35 years of age and those with relatively high incomes are leaving the neighbourhood. By contrast immigrants, single people, women and children (partly because of the reunification of immigrant families), people under the age of 35 and low-income groups are moving in. More than 20 different nationalities can be found in the New West, amongst which Turks, Moroccans and Surinamese represent the largest groups. In 1987, 55% of the long-term unemployed were immigrants.

Our research concerned a group of 510 unemployed persons between the ages of 23 and 50, of which some 90 individuals were more extensively interviewed. Of these more extensively interviewed persons, half are of Dutch origin, 31% Surinamese/Antillean and 12% of Turkish/Moroccan origin. Only 24% of the households contain more than two individuals.
The educational level of most respondents is low: 46% only completed primary school, and 20% had no further vocational or technical training. However, 10% have a university or comparable degree in higher education.

The average period of unemployment is six years; 25% have been unemployed for more than seven years, and 37% between five and seven years. The latest occupational level of most respondents is low: 66% worked in unskilled jobs and 17% worked as a lower grade employee; 17% have never yet had work in the Netherlands. All the long-term unemployed individuals interviewed for this study were registered at the Employment Exchange as being ‘difficult to mediate for’. The same respondents were known to the municipal Social Security Office as ‘de echte minima’ (people who have been living on the poverty-line for more than two years). The majority have in fact been living on the poverty-line of the Dutch welfare state (welfare level) for some considerable time. A closer look at these unemployed people will, however, bring out considerable dissimilarities amongst them.

3. A typology of long-term unemployed people

In his classical essay ‘Social Structure and Anomie’, Merton distinguishes five types of individual adaptation to anomic situations: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. These types of adaptation are set out in connection with the discrepancies between cultural goals, rooted in society, and the institutionalised means available for their achievement. Merton describes success as a desirable cultural goal with considerable influence in American society, although it is not available to everybody. Merton distinguishes types of individual adaptation to the tension that exists between cultural goals and the (im)possibility for specific groups to attain them.

Work and consumption can be considered the most important cultural goals in western societies. The long-term unemployed face the problem of finding new ways of realising work and consumption. Merton’s theory can be used to classify the several types of adaptation and alternatives which exist for the long-term unemployed. On the basis of Merton’s types of adaptation one can detect six types of unemployed individuals. The nomenclature for these types often corresponds with Merton’s concepts (conformity, ritualism, retreatism). The enterprising and calculating types are both part of Merton’s innovative type. The autonomous type of adaptation does, however, only partly coincide with Merton’s rebellious type. The latter category has been slightly stretched to accommodate that group of unemployed people who are able to relativise the common goals of labour and consumption, and who get by reasonably well on welfare.

Six types

The six types of long-term unemployed which were found in the New West can be characterised as follows:
The conformists keep pursuing the goals of work and a high level of consumption through institutionalised means. This group applies for jobs, visits the Employment Exchange and sometimes undergoes occupational rehabilitation. The conformists are not active within the informal economy and do not abuse or make improper use of the social security system. This group mainly comprises male respondents of less than forty, with a low or medium educational level. Some of them are in part-time jobs and almost all have working experience. Most conformists have been unemployed for less than four years, and the majority are part of a family. Twenty-one percent of our respondents are grouped in this category.

The ritualists have given up hope of a job and higher consumption level; they nevertheless continue to abide by institutionalised rules and procedures. This characteristic is most strikingly expressed in continued job applications and regular visits to the Employment Exchange Office, even though real hope of getting work has been abandoned. Ritualists do not participate in the informal economy nor do they abuse or make improper use of the social security system. This group consists especially of older, male long-term unemployed respondents. Most of them have a low level of education, and some have working experience: some are disabled. Ritualists usually have a family life, and they count among their numbers a relatively high proportion of immigrants. This group constitutes thirteen percent of our respondents.

The retreatists have given up hope of a job and a high level of consumption. But they have also stopped using the institutional means and channels available to realise those goals such as the Employment Exchange, applications, training for occupational rehabilitation and labour projects. Retreatists see no prospects on the labour market and resign themselves to it. This group manifests strongly marked withdrawal behaviour. As with conformists and ritualists, retreatists do not have recourse to (illegal) informal strategies as a means of gaining extra income. The group mainly comprises older, male respondents who have been unemployed for some considerable time. They usually have a low level of education and some working experience. Some of them are disabled. A retreatist is usually married and forms a household with his or her partner. There are many immigrants in this group, especially Turks and Moroccans. Twenty two percent of our respondents are grouped in this category.

The enterprising unemployed strive for the cultural goals of work and high level consumption but, contrary to the conformists, they try to attain these goals through illegal, informal channels. Some of them, however, also keep looking for regular jobs. The enterprising distinguish themselves from the conformists and ritualists by having a more instrumental perception of labour. (Informal) work mainly serves as a means of reaching a higher income level. Young, male and long-term unemployed respondents are the main components of this group. They have an average to high educational level and have working experience. A
significant proportion of them is single, and there are very few immigrants among them. Seventeen percent of our respondents belongs to this group.

The calculating unemployed scarcely make use of formal channels and means of getting a job and/or a higher level of consumption. They are not looking for a job, at least in the short-term. They obtain extra income by abuse or improper use of the social security system: for instance, co-habiting while receiving double welfare. Students who belong to this group retain work as a future goal in life. In the meantime, however, welfare is far more lucrative than a student grant. For the rest of this group it is much more important to reach a certain (higher) level of consumption than to have a job. Contrary to the enterprising, the calculating are not structurally active within the informal economy. This group is mainly composed of young, highly educated respondents. There are as many women as men among them and the majority has been out of work for less than six years. Some of them have no working-experience whatsoever. There are few immigrants among the calculating. Seventeen percent of our respondents belongs to the calculating unemployed.

The autonomous strongly relativise the goals of work and consumption; some, indeed, have come to reject them. They are the 'cultural rebels' who want neither a formal job nor the institutional means of getting one. They hardly ever apply for jobs, partly because they do not feel the need to have one. They want to do what they feel like, for instance: club-work, study or a hobby. The autonomous succeed in adjusting their needs to their limited means. They are not active within the informal economy and do not abuse or make improper use of the social security system. The welfare level provides a sufficient income. The autonomous comprise mainly older respondents, amongst whom are many women. Most have been unemployed for between two and five years. They have a low or average educational level and they usually have working experience, although this does not apply to some young people within this group. A substantial proportion is single, and there are few immigrants in the group. Eleven percent of our respondents belongs in this category.

The respondents' specific characteristics partly account for the differences between long-term unemployed people. Highly educated singles, for instance, have more opportunities to engage in the informal economy. Similarly they are more able to deal with the social security system in a calculating way. Enterprising and calculating behaviour therefore occurs more frequently among this kind of unemployed people. Older, poorly educated and often immigrant people have far fewer chances whether on the informal or formal labour markets. From this perspective retreatism is an intelligible form of adaptation to the situation. Other types of adaptation can be understood in a similar way by examining the specific characteristics of the long-term unemployed. These characteristics do not, however, provide an adequate explanation for the enormous dissimilarities between the various types of unemployed people. Their different ways of
adaptation cannot be understood independently of another question: Which social environments give rise to the development of which types of adaptation?

Douglas' theory offers a way of contextualising Merton's typology. Merton's model permits the classification of several types of adaptation, but cannot provide an adequate response to the question: Why do some individuals react innovatively and others in a ritualistic or conformist way? A better understanding of the different types of adaption can be obtained by analysing the social context of the long-term unemployed.

4. Mary Douglas' group/grid model

Until now only a global view of the different types of long-term unemployed has been presented. This does not, however, provide an indication of the significance of the social environment and its impact on the behaviour of long-term unemployed people. Drawing upon Douglas' model, we shall attempt to establish a connection between the social environment of the various types of long-term unemployed and the strategies they develop. The justifications as well as the motivations for the strategies they develop will also be discussed.

Douglas' model distinguishes two dimensions: group and grid (cf. Douglas 1978 and 1982). The group dimension represents the extent to which someone's life is dominated by a group membership; this can vary from weak to strong. Among strong groups there is a sharp demarcation line between 'us' (the insiders) and 'them' (the outsiders). Strong groups have strict boundaries. There is vigorous social control and group members are expected to associate mainly with each other. Membership of a strong group implies loss of personal autonomy. In weak groups, the demarcation between 'us' and 'them' is much more diffuse and vague: social boundaries are less clearly defined. Coalitions can change, according to other contingencies. Weak groups do not have a distinctive identity and social control is less prevalent.

The grid dimension represents the extent to which someone's life is dominated by regulations. This dimension can also vary from maximum regulation to maximum freedom. Douglas writes: "As a dimension, it shows a progressive charge in the mode of control. At the strong end there are visible rules about space and time related to social roles: at the other end near zero, the formal classifications fade, and finally vanish" (Douglas 1978, p.8). A strong grid dimension implies a refined system of rules and ranks. The individual's freedom to act is limited by the formal classification system that regulates and curtails social intercourse between people. The Indian caste system is a good example of a strong grid dimension. Less extreme examples include the military regiment and the closely-knit social security system, which can dictate and influence people's actions. Such systems of social scaling can determine the nature of social relations between people or even occlude those relations. In a social environment with a strong grid dimension people are expected to behave according to their social classification. A weak grid dimension does not imply such classifications: instead, the assessment of rights, duties, roles and status is open to continual negotiation.
The distinction between group and grid has been summarised by Douglas as follows, "Group means the outside boundary that people have erected between themselves and the outside world. Grid means all the other social distinctions and delegations that they use to limit how people behave to one another" (Douglas 1982, p. 138). The group dimension materialises in face-to-face interaction and can be deduced from the degree of social coercion, which people exert upon one other in direct confrontations. With regard to grid, the matter is much more complicated. The rules and regulations which influence people's behavior can also come from outside the individual's social environment. In modern society these rules usually come from several 'distant', anonymous governmental institutions. In this paper a distinction will be made with regard to grid dimension between external rules and regulations, especially those formally prescribed by governmental institutions, and people's informal self-made rules, which originate in everyday life. A distinction, analogous to that made by the legal anthropologist Falk Moore, will be made between external rules and internal rules.\(^5\) It can be ascertained that all long-term unemployed people are equally subject to the external rules of the governmental institutions, but that differences exist with regard to the extent to which such rules dominate their social life. In the case of retreatists, external, governmental rules (especially the Social Security Office's rules) are strongly predominant; this is not the case for the enterprising or the calculating. These types of unemployed have a relatively autonomous internal regulation system with respect to governmental institutional regulations, on which they have come to depend.

When group and grid dimensions are combined, four combinations arise.

- a) weak group, weak grid
- b) weak group, strong grid
- c) strong group, weak grid
- d) strong group, strong grid

These four combinations generate four ideal types. The continuity of both dimensions, however, renders possible a large scale of intermediate forms.

**Cosmologies**

It is possible to classify the individual's social environment on the basis of group and grid dimensions. Each social environment corresponds with one specific cosmology.\(^6\) Douglas has adopted the concept of cosmology to describe the way in which people justify their behaviour to themselves and to others.\(^7\) Square A corresponds with a pragmatic cosmology. The indefinite group boundary and the low grid offer the possibility to develop individualistic and competitive behaviour. In such a social environment an opportunistic, pragmatic attitude predominates and enterprising people flourish. Peterse writes: "One can hardly speak of group commitment; in principle, the individual is responsible only for him or herself. There are few rules and only one of them is sacred: *pacta sunt servanda* agreements must be kept. The individual is his own
employer. When some kind of regulation is necessary, this has to be self-made” (Peterse 1988, p. 798).

In square B we come upon a large and complicated structure of rules and roles. This complex structure is in no way supported by some kind of group consciousness. The group/grid combination in square B presents an atomised social context. Individuals are imprisoned in a closely-knit rule system and are by definition excluded from any dominant institution. They do not belong to any group and as such have no group identity. The social order is accepted as the state of things beyond their control. Square B corresponds with a fatalistic cosmology.

Square C corresponds with a cosmology where group boundaries dominate (factionalism). It is a sectarian or dichotomous cosmology which a strong demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The individual’s freedom of action and speech is subordinate to group interest. There are well-developed mutual aid relations, and the individual’s social life is public. Such a high degree of publicity and social control can lead to tension and enmity. Conflicts are solved by the exclusion of individuals and by scapegoating (Douglas 1978, p. 23). Few rules prescribe action within the group: members should be equal and there is no room for differences in status or function in this group. The most important rule is that there should be no discriminating or hierarchical distinctions. Religious sects and secluded working class communities can be located in this square.

Square D is distinguished by its clear external group boundaries and refined social stratifications. Such an environment can absorb inconsistencies and conflicts as principles of redistributive justice vindicating people’s hierarchical ordering. The dichotomous cosmology is replaced by a ritualist one in which right application and strict observance of the rules is of central importance for the group’s existence. Governmental bureaucracies can be located in square D.

**Models of cultures**

Douglas’ four squares have been reinterpreted by Wildavsky into four models of culture: individualistic, fatalistic, egalitarian culture and hierarchical (cf. Diagram 1). Wildavsky’s terminology differs somewhat from Douglas’s (Wildavsky 1987). The concepts of group and grid, respectively, are referred to as ‘group boundaries’ and ‘prescriptions’: the concept of cosmology is replaced by the more current concept of ‘culture’.

The diagram shows four models of cultures. A fifth model which has also been described, though less extensively, by Douglas can be added to these four; *autonomous culture*. Some individuals are known to be capable of shaping their lives in a relatively autonomous fashion. They are subject to only slight group coercion, and similarly to standardising regulations imposed by other people or institutions. The social environment of the autonomous individual corresponds with a cosmology which is characterised by withdrawal from mainstream society. Autonomous culture can be located in square A.
5. Four cultures of unemployment

The New West does not coincide with any of the above squares. It is an administrative delimitation in which several cultures can be found, offering different possibilities and limitations for individual behaviour. Four cultures of unemployment will be described in this section: an individualistic, a fatalistic, a conformist and an autonomous culture of unemployment. This nomenclature refers to four of the five cultures described by Douglas and Wildavsky. It will be demonstrated that the six types of unemployed can be located within one of the four squares of the group/grid diagram.

The conformists and the ritualists live in a social environment which is characterised by strong group commitment and low grid (square C). The enterprising, the calculating and the autonomous act within a social environment with weak group commitment and low grid (square A), and the retreatists are bound to a social environment with weak group commitment and high grid (square B). The social environment of the autonomous as described in this paper is very similar to Douglas' description of the autonomous' social environment. Unemployed people of this type succeeded in building up a relatively autonomous existence for themselves.

In analysing the arguments used by people out of work to justify their behaviour, attention will be paid to five elements decisive for the cosmology of long-term unemployed individuals: work ethic, time perception, risk perception, the experience of governmental dependence and the imputation of responsibility. Risk perception refers to the extent to which the risk involved in participation in the informal/illegal economy is taken into account. Imputation of responsibility refers to who or what is considered by the unemployed as being responsible for their present situation.
5.1 An individualistic culture of unemployment

The enterprising and the calculating type can be located in square A. This square is characterised by a high group dimension and a low grid dimension. The enterprising and the calculating act within changing social spheres. They possess a relatively wide network of friends. The geographical width of their social environment extends far beyond the boundaries of their neighbourhood. The group relations of the enterprising and calculating can be characterised as an 'open network'. Open networks tend to be quite strong, socially as well as geographically. People who possess such networks have access to several social spheres, although they tend to lead fairly individualistic lives (cf. Oosterbaan and Zeldenrust 1985).10

The grid dimension is also weak. The lives of the enterprising and the calculating are not dominated by strict social stratifications. They have developed their own space for action where they enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy. They are able to manipulate the external state regulations.

Work ethic and job-search behaviour

The enterprising and the calculating usually hold a utilitarian labour ethic. Work is not considered to be intrinsically valuable, but rather the means of reaching a certain level of consumption, or a way of life which allows for maximum self realisation. Most of the enterprising and calculating do not look for a job and seem to prefer the advantages of their present situation to formal employment. The freedom and the spare time are especially prized. This category is much less subject to social pressures to look for a regular job than are conformists and ritualists. Social repercussions for accepting unemployment are all but absent in the open networks within which they operate.

Income strategies and risk perception

The enterprising and the calculating manipulate external governmental regulations in order to gain extra income. The enterprising get extra income by illegal work, the calculating by abuse or improper use of the social security system.11 They benefit from the atomised structure of some parts of the New West where no one knows each other and social control has ceased. The perception of risk among the enterprising and the calculating is considerably lower than among the conformists and ritualists. They are not afraid of being reported to the Social Security Office by one of their neighbours. Apart from the anonymity of the immediate surroundings, they also enjoy the anonymity and privacy characteristic of the open networks within which they act. Access to and success in the informal economy requires, apart from specific skills, knowledge of other people. Those with a wide network that ensures, on the one hand a certain degree of anonymity but leads to social contacts on the other, stand a better chance of successfully operating in the informal economy, than those who are socially wrapped up in a strong group.12
Perceiving and dealing with time

The enterprising and the calculating have little trouble in finding ways to spend their time. They have developed alternative activities in place of a formal job. These alternative activities (informal work, study, going out) have more or less taken over the functions which are usually ascribed to having a job (income, the structuring of time, status, social contacts and self-respect). With the extra income they obtain on top of welfare, they can easily afford to join clubs or associations. A high degree of social participation is necessary to the enterprising and calculating in order to maintain their position in the open networks. Going out, especially for a drink, is a form of social investment.

Douglas writes that an individual located in square A “treats time as an individual resource always in short supply...” (Douglas 1978, p. 25). This perception of time can be understood in connection with the amount of meaningful activities in which the enterprising and calculating are engaged. Whereas many unemployed people have to cope with a lack of meaningful activities due to the transformation of their social rhythm and less strict demarcations of time, the enterprising and calculating experience the opposite during unemployment.

Dependence and responsibility

The enterprising and the calculating have very few scruples with regard to abuse or improper use of the social security system. They make their own rules and are not inhibited in this by coercing group standards. They try to benefit as much as possible from the social security system and are not in the least bothered by their dependence on the Social Security Office. Indeed, their bureaucratic competence means that they are able to use this dependence to their own advantage. The near absence of any sense of shame is a good indication of their opportunistic attitude. Their internal rule system is in conflict with the social security system.

This pragmatic and opportunistic attitude is characteristic of the enterprising and the calculating. Scapegoating occurs much less among them than among the ritualists and the conformists. They put the blame and the responsibility for their situation on themselves.

5.2 A fatalistic culture of unemployment

The retreatists can be located in square B. This square is characterised by weak group and high grid commitment. Over the years most retreatists have become fairly isolated and completely dependent on state institutions. Their social and geographical living space is considerably diminished (Engbersen and Van der Veen 1987).

The grid dimension of their social environment is very high. Their action is governed by strict social stratification “leaving minimum scope for personal choice, providing instead a set of railway lines with remote control of points for
interaction” (Douglas 1978, p. 16). Retreatists’ actions are regulated by the prescriptions of State institutions, upon which they have come to be completely dependent. Whereas the other types of unemployed people defend themselves against the intervention of governmental institutions in their private lives by means of an internal rule system, this is not the case with the retreatists. Their control over their own actions has become insignificant. External State rules dominate their social lives.13

**Job-search and work ethic**

Retreatists have stopped looking for a job. This does not mean however that they do not value work. Most of them have a traditional work ethic and long, tough work experience. Resignation to the fact that no jobs are available is characteristic of the retreatist’s attitude. This resigned attitude is primarily the result of a realistic cost-benefit analysis. Frequent rejections confront them with rising social costs (loss of self-esteem) which, in the end, induce them to refrain from further job-search. The complete absence of social coercion also accounts for their resignation. Since their social surroundings have strongly diminished they are under much less pressure to keep looking for a job than the conformists and ritualists (cf. Wilson 1987: 137–139).

**Income strategies and risk perception**

Retreatists are incapable of earning extra income or developing informal activities. They have no access to the necessary open networks and have lost most contacts with other people during the years of their unemployment. Retreatists’ income strategies are individual ones to make ends meet and they include the contracting of debts. Indebtedness is fairly frequent among retreatists, and their liabilities are usually taken over by the Social Security Office. Such intervention into retreatist household finances represents further State dependence.

Retreatists have no perception of risk with regard to informal activities: their isolated social position and absolute dependence on the Social Security Office lead to welfare dependency. Taking risks and engaging in informal activities have ceased to be realistic options.

**Perceiving and dealing with time**

The social position of retreatists drastically influences the ways in which they spend their time. On the one hand their tight financial circumstances limit participation in (costly) spare-time activities. On the other hand their isolated social position leads to a decrease of meaningful activities. The time-surplus facing retreatists mainly represents a shortage of meaningful activities. Finding ways to spend one’s spare time consequently becomes a problem of scarcity. The few available activities are spun out, with the time in between filled by doing nothing or by ‘killing’ time.
Also characteristic of the perception of time among some groups of long-term unemployed people, is the loss of some kind of future orientation. The temporal horizon of retreatists is enormously diminished. In their famous study 'Mariënthal' (1972) Jahoda et al. speak of 'resignation': "It’s an attitude of drifting along, indifferently and without expectations, accepting a situation that cannot be changed...But the future, even in the shape of plans, has no longer any place in the thought or even dreams of these families. All this seems to us best characterized by the word resignation". (Jahoda et al. 1972, p. 53).

**Dependence and responsibility**

Over the years retreatists come to consider their dependence on governmental care as a natural state of affairs. They are not in conflict with the State institutions and take their continual relationship with the Social Security Office for granted. Many retreatists are familiar with defeat and most are completely dependent on governmental care, as a result of which they are convinced of their own incapacity to solve their situation by themselves. There is a tragic sense of destiny among the retreatists: "It just happens", "That’s the way things are", etc. In their tragic notion of life both the optimism of the enterprising as well as the self defenses of the conformists are missing. The future is uncertain; blind fate and the relentless course of events rule people’s lives. Retreatists blame neither themselves nor the system for their situation: as far as they are concerned it is a matter of destiny.

**5.3 A conformist culture of unemployment**

Conformists and ritualists are located in square C. This square is characterised by a strong group and a low grid dimension. In some parts of the New West closely knit, geographically restricted social networks are to be found. A similar observation was made by Bovenkerk et al. in their ethnographical study of Utrecht, *Vreemd volk, gemengde gevoelens* (1985), (Foreign faces, mixed emotions). In that study they use the concept of 'pockets': small areas of a neighbourhood, a street, or part of a street which still retain some of the characteristics of the former working communities: few cultural dissimilarities, egalitarian relationships and a high degree of social control. These former working class quarters have been described in the Dutch literature by Haveman (1952) and Simonse (1971). Mutual aid and assistance were available to all members of the community through collective strategies and gradually a culture developed which provided for the maintenance and development of working class 'self-esteem' (cf. Hoggart 1957, and Blackwell and Seabrook 1985). Such homogeneous working class quarters have of course changed over the years; it is still, however, possible to come across their remnants in certain streets and quarters.

The grid dimension of this kind of social environment is relatively low. Social intercourse is egalitarian, and yet an internal rule system which serves as a form of resistance against too much governmental influence can be detected.
As members of relatively strong groups, conformists and ritualists have reached a certain degree of autonomy with respect to the governmental institutions. Within the group, the principle of reciprocity dominates. It gives the unemployed a chance to do something in return for the help they receive.

**Job-search behaviour and work ethic**

Conformists and ritualists have a fairly traditional work ethic. They feel they have a duty to work; therefore life without work is a source of problems. Whereas the enterprising and the calculating hardly seem to suffer from the lack of a regular job, conformists and ritualists do so very much. Conformists’ and ritualists’ job-searching is strongly influenced by their social relations. Family relationships and neighbourhood bonds exert considerable pressure to keep looking for a job. Taking this social constraint into consideration helps to clarify why feelings of shame about unemployment are relatively commoner among conformists and ritualists than among the other types of unemployed. Ritualists are particularly susceptible to feelings of shame, and this partly explains their ritualistic behaviour. The rituals of job-searching are kept up for the sake of appearance, but faith in their efficacy is lost.

**Income strategies and risk perception**

Conformists’ income strategies consist on the one hand of individual ways of coping on welfare, while family and/or neighbours provide extra support or financial aid on the other. This assistance is usually rendered on mutual terms. Family and neighbour support are collective strategies, through which the principle of reciprocity is expressed.

Conformists and ritualists lead very public social lives with a great deal of social control. This element of social control is embodied in their perception of the risks of having an informal job. Most of our respondents considered taking on an illegal/informal job to be too risky. The homogeneous, egalitarian structure does not allow for some people to distinguish themselves from the rest of the group by earning extra income from illegal sources. Those found guilty of such misdeeds are rejected by the rest of the group. One of the most effective strategies to accomplish that is gossip. Simonse writes the following about Dutch working class districts: “Deviant behaviour is put straight by means of mockery, contempt, gossip, teasing and sabotage. Those who persist in unacceptable behaviour are isolated or cut off” (Simons 1982, p. 120).

**Perceiving and dealing with time**

Conformists and ritualists have a fairly integrated social position. They spend a lot of time with family and neighbours: almost half their time is spent in some kind of association. Unemployment nonetheless keeps presenting them with problems, one of the most frequent of which is boredom.
With regard to the temporal perception of people located in square C, Douglas observed that they have a strong historical consciousness: "They select from the past a loyal justificatory charter for their present actions" (Douglas 1978: p. 29). Conformists and ritualist's perception of time is an extrapolation from the past. Their past job experiences can hardly justify expectations for upward mobility. Most conformists and ritualists used to be employed in peripheral and therefore less stable positions and/or branches of industry. These past work experiences, through which they have learned that career-planning is not within their range of possibilities, caused a short-term orientation towards the future. This short-term perspective brings about a conservative attitude in which present securities are not easily given up (cf. Lauer 1981, p. 117).

*Dependence and responsibility*

Conformists and ritualists are bothered by their dependence on welfare. Though welfare is looked upon as a right, a certain feeling of embarrassment with regard to their dependent situation persists and therefore they try to maintain as much of their independence as possible. The internal rule system of the group to which they belong puts up a barrier against too high a degree of dependence on the State. One of the dominant values within that system is to try to manage on one's own as much as possible. It is indeed interesting to see that the internal rule system of the ritualists' and conformists' groups is in harmony with the external rule system of State institutions. The stress on values such as order, decency and independence by the former, leads in fact also to obedience to the latter.

The self-contained nature of the group to which the conformists and the ritualists belong encourages a strong 'us' and 'them' distinction (Hoggart 1957, p. 72; Elias and Scotson 1976). This 'us-them' perspective is expressed in their opinion on politics and immigrants. Conformists mainly blame 'The Hague' and immigrants for their unemployment. This means blaming the system and scapegoating respectively. The dichotomous cosmology of conformists and ritualists reflects their marginal position (Engbersen and Van der Veen 1987, p. 155). The self-image is that of the small man who feels himself manipulated by the 'powerful', and threatened by the arrival of the immigrants.

*5.4 An autonomous culture of unemployment*

The autonomous operate within a social context which partly coincides with square A.

The group dimension of the autonomous' social environment is quite weak: they go their own way and try to be as independent as possible. Some lead very isolated lives, though usually of their own free will. They don't invest in the upkeep of social contacts in order to gain extra income (network building), but only keep contacts with other people out of personal interest.
The grid dimension is also weak. The autonomous decide for themselves with whom they associate, how they spend their time and in which activities they engage.

**Job-search behaviour and work ethic**

The autonomous do not look for a job. The explanation for this behaviour is twofold: on the one hand, there is a group with an alternative labour ethic, which strongly rejects the idea of having a regular job; on the other hand, there is a group which has accepted unemployment as a fact and developed alternative activities to deal with it. The latter differ from retreatists inasmuch as they are far more able to cope independently; and they are distinguished from the enterprising and the calculating by their rejection of illegal or improper income strategies.

The autonomous’ alternative labour ethic is quite different from the traditional labour ethic: they only want to do work they like. The duty to work has been transformed into the right freely to choose work and to live as one pleases. Their autonomous social position means that this category does not experience social coercion, which activates job-searching among conformists and ritualists.

**Income strategies and risk perception**

The autonomous are those who manage best on welfare. They live economically and hardly contract any debts. They do not make extra income by informal labour or lucrative arrangements. The risk perception with regard to having an informal-illegal occupation is relatively high. This risk-consciousness is not, however, inspired by the fear of being denounced by neighbours, as is the case among the conformists and ritualists. They lead their own lives and cannot be bothered with other people’s requirements. The autonomous mention other obstacles when discussing the risks of informal labour, such as investigation officers’ proceedings. Welfare is the only source of income for most of this category, and it represents the financial guarantee for an autonomous existence. They do not wish to endanger that existence by earning illegal extra income.

**Perceiving and dealing with time**

The autonomous have no difficulty in spending their spare time. Self-determination is one of the most precious things they have achieved. While retreatists, conformists and ritualists find it difficult to find new ways in which to spend their time, and while the enterprising and the calculating are sometimes in need of more time, the autonomous know exactly how to manage their time. They prefer to use it in giving full scope to their personalities, in whatever way they think best. Time is organised according to their own insights, independently of social pressure exerted by other individuals, groups and dominant institutions.
The temporal perception of the autonomous represents the opposite to that of the retreatists.

*Dependence and responsibility*

Through strict management of their financial affairs, the autonomous try to keep their dependence on family, friends and acquaintances to a minimum. The same is true of their relations with the Social Security Office, which they avoid as much as possible. Most maintain a purely 'administrative' relationship with the Social Security Office: contacts are mainly written and anonymous. The autonomous do not experience welfare dependency as a problem. Van Stolk and Wouters have introduced the concept of 'the inward peace of mind of the welfare state' to point to how social security offered by the welfare state has to be internalised to a certain extent and, in some cases, has become a personal security (Van Stolk and Wouters 1984). Such inward peace of mind is not found among most respondents. It is however present among the autonomous who consider welfare a reliable base for their autonomous existence.

The autonomous' sense of responsibility corresponds to that of the enterprising. They do not refer to external factors and/or other social groupings to justify the situation they are in. They consider themselves responsible for their situation and actions. The liberal optics which are characteristic of many of the enterprising are not, however, shared by the autonomous. The notion that he who fails has only to blame himself (blaming the victim) will not be encountered among the autonomous.

5.5 A culture of modern poverty

Several recent studies have recourse to the notion of 'a culture of unemployment'. According to this idea, long-term unemployment leads to a specific culture of unemployment in certain neighbourhoods with high levels of unemployment. A culture characterised by rejection of work ethic, acceptance of unemployment and the development of illegal survival strategies (De Neubourg 1986, pp. 30–37). De Neubourg's description mostly refers to elements that have been characterised here as part of the individualistic culture of unemployment. Three other cultures however have been classified besides this individualistic one: conformist, autonomous and fatalistic. Within the conformist culture of unemployment the work ethic remains important and, although this is not the case among the autonomous, it is characteristic for both cultures to reject informal/illegal income strategies. As for the fatalistic culture of unemployment, all hope of getting a job on the formal as well as the informal market has gone. These four cultures together reflect the different ways in which long-term unemployed people deal with their situation.

The fatalistic culture of unemployment can be conceived as a modern variant of the culture of poverty (cf. Lewis 1969). For some people long-term unemployment leads to substantial financial problems, to exclusion from any kind of
social life, and to complete State dependency. This group develops fatalistic feelings and an attitude of acceptance in reaction to their situation.

One of the important questions arising from this matter is the extent to which the various cultures of unemployment succeed one another chronologically. Is it possible for a conformist or an individualistic culture to become fatalistic in the long run? This question will be dealt with in the next section.

6. Long-term unemployment in a developmental perspective

It is difficult to make definitive statements about the development of long-term unemployment since longitudinal research on this subject has yet to be done. Some trends, however, can be deduced from the available research materials. It seems that in the course of time conformists change into retreatists. The reasons for such a change are the lack of success on the labour market, high social costs of continued job-searching, and the diminution or termination of social networks when unemployment continues.

The change from conformist into retreatist or ritualist does not however apply to everyone. There are different developments among the enterprising and the calculating. Many enterprising unemployed choose to maintain their "welfare" situation. The advantages of welfare (freedom, spare time and extra income) outweigh the income and the requirements of a proper job. A proportion of the calculating manage to quit their welfare situation after some time as, for instance, when they have completed their studies.

Clear developmental patterns are difficult to establish since the development of each respondent's unemployment is also in part the consequence of his or her social environment, as has been repeatedly stated in this paper. At least one development does, however, stand out: among a relatively large group of long-term unemployed people, especially when they are older and poorly educated, long-term unemployment leads to a reduction of social and geographical horizons and thus to a more isolated existence in which dependence on State care progressively increases. In terms of Douglas' model this implies a decrease in group commitment and a corresponding increase in the strength of the grid dimension. In other words, life at welfare level results in the long-term in changes of group- and grid dimensions: thus a conformist culture can change into a fatalistic culture. This conclusion is most relevant when considered in connection with the debate on the possibilities for social resistance among long-term unemployed people (cf. Köbben and Godschalk 1985). In a fatalistic culture there are no possibilities for collective action: there is no group consciousness, and no belief in the idea that one can influence one's own fate. It is also possible to see that social resistance cannot be expected of the enterprising, the calculating or the autonomous for whom the main focus of attention is personal interest.
7. Cultural heterogeneity

In this paper a description has been given of four different cultures of unemployment encountered in the New West, a neighbourhood of Rotterdam: individualistic, fatalistic, conformist and autonomous cultures. The ‘culture’ concept which has been used for this description was adopted from Douglas and Wildavsky. In this sense, culture comprises the social context in which long-term unemployed people live, their social strategies, and their cosmologies. A global description of long-term unemployed people’s social strategies has been given by pointing out the way in which they deal with labour, time and money. Their cosmologies were set out in terms of their work ethic, risk perception, time perception, experience of State dependency and imputation of responsibility.

In policy statistics all long-term unemployed people from the New West are classified as long-term unemployed, but in social reality such statistical, administrative classifications break down making way for much more complex categories. Many of the long-term unemployed are only formally unemployed, and some live well above the welfare level by earning extra income. The cultural analysis of long-term unemployment in the New West, presented in this paper, aims at a better understanding of the heterogeneous reality of long-term unemployed people. The definition of six types of unemployed people and four cultures of unemployment is an attempt to attain a more solid sociological classification; a classification which is rooted in the everyday reality of unemployed individuals.

NOTES

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1. Research was carried out in the New West for one year. Two colleagues, Anki Tan and Jaap Timmer, cooperated on the project. An apartment was rented in the New West from the outset of this study. The author of this paper lived there for nine months.

2. The Dutch social security system is divided in three: first, there is public insurance (for which premiums have to be paid). All inhabitants of the Netherlands are entitled to this insurance. Second, there are employee insurances (financed by premiums); and third, there are public provisions (financed by tax revenues). The long-term unemployed receive an unemployment provision (RWW). The amount is calculated to be the minimum social income of the Dutch Welfare State, which implies a sum of about $665 dollars per month for a nuclear family, $600 dollars for a single-parent family and $465 dollars for an individual living alone and over 23 years of age.
3. The category of unemployed to which each of our respondents is assigned was ascertained by taking into account *labour market behaviour, labour market expectations* and *informal work* and *income strategies*. Each respondent was subsequently classified according to his most dominant characteristics. Many intermediate types are however possible in reality.

4. Douglas's model has been used to study several forms of social organisation, including religious organisations (Layendecker and Thung 1977), professions and workplace crime (Mars 1982), scientific communities (Boon 1983), modes of leadership (Wildavsky 1984), a tiny Maoist sect (Rayner 1982), commerce in Himalayan mountaineering expeditions (Thompson 1982) and the environmental movement (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982).

5. Falk Moore distinguishes "...two kinds of rules: rules that were consciously made by legislators and courts and other formal agencies to produce certain intended effects and rules that could be said to evolve 'spontaneously' out of social life..." (Falk Moore 1978, p. 80). There does not have to be any hierarchical relation between these two kinds of rules. Falk Moore writes about the existence of 'semi-autonomous fields'.

6. By 'cosmology' Douglas understands: "The ultimate justifying ideas to be invoked as if part of the natural order and yet which, since we distinguish four kinds of cosmology, are evidently not at all natural but strictly a product of social interaction" (Douglas 1982, p. 5).

7. Douglas does not assume that there is a linear, causal relationship between a specific social environment and a corresponding cosmology. Cosmology and social context are interdependent and closely interwoven (Douglas 1978, p. 53). She starts from the principle of a 'negotiating individual'; a purposive acting individual, not completely dominated by the limits set by the social environment.

8. A fundamental problem of Douglas' group/grid model is the location of the hermit or autonomous individual. Douglas does not provide a decisive answer to this. On the one hand she seems to prefer "to leave the hermit off the map of social controls, crediting him with full escape" (Douglas 1982, p. 11), on the other hand she seems to locate him at the bottom the left corner of square A (Douglas 1978, p. 42). The problem is that if the autonomous are located in this corner, square A will comprise two types of individuals with very divergent cosmologies: the successful entrepreneur and the voluntarily withdrawn hermit. Douglas mentions however two basic differences between the hermit's and the entrepreneur's social environments. Firstly, the autonomous individual receives hardly any stimuli to take up transactions with other people - "His transactions are sporadic, spontaneous and uncalculated" (Douglas 1978, p. 42) - and secondly, the autonomous individual lives much more at the margins of society's dominant institutions.

9. Square D (strong group, strong grid) will not be discussed since no corresponding (hierarchical) social environment was encountered during this study. The ritualists who according to their descriptions would seem to belong in this square, have not been located in it for the simple reason that they do not belong to a hierarchically structured social environment. An important part of the working population is located in this square.

10. Thompson and Wildavsky write: "If an individual looks to his group for all his resources - all his life-support system - then 'selfish' behaviour will be suicidal. 'Altruism' - subordinating himself to the totality - is the sensible path to take. 'Selfishness' only makes sense when group constraints are absent". (Thompson and Wildavsky 1986, pp. 174-175).

11. The most frequently occurring strategies were co-habiting while receiving double welfare and studying while receiving welfare.

13. Thompson’s and Wildavsky’s characterisation of poor people living in a similar social environment, (square B), applies beautifully to the retreatists: “In the top left context individuals’ lives are everywhere hedged with prescriptions. Each individual finds his way through the bewildering maze of forms, papers, offices, government departments, entitlements and disqualifications – the whole vague, baffling yet basically benevolent apparatus controlled by ‘them’... Those who remain in this context, either because they cannot leave or because they choose not to leave, have very little control over either time or space and their common world-view is correspondingly myopic” (Thompson and Wildavsky 1986, pp. 191–193).

14. Douglas and Isherwood made the following observation about the control-mechanisms of envy in social environments with strong group and weak grid-dimensions: “...the stronger the group the greater its capacity to accumulate assets in its own name and less the power of its constituent members to accumulate assets themselves. A strong group has its own characteristic ways of controlling the envy that might spoil the relations of its members and so threaten its permanence. The group imposes group values and so prevents deviant individual spending, defines what counts as too much conspicuous individual consumption, and proposes punishments” (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, p. 37).

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