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### Het peilen van de diepte

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# **Sounding the depth. The relationship between unemployment and delinquency under young adult men**

## Introduction

The Netherlands, like all western countries, has to face substantial unemployment figures. Opinion polls as well as policy speeches indicate that unemployment is considered to be a major problem. This has also been reflected in studies on unemployment and the unemployed. Within the group of unemployed people statistics regarding the so-called 'hard-core' unemployed — also known as the long-term unemployed or non-employable people — tell us that over 200.000 people are jobless for over a year, some 80.000 even over three years. Another well-known effect is that the longer someone is out of work, the harder it is to find a job, especially a regular job in the primary segments of the labour market. After three months of unemployment the prospects of finding a job diminishes; after being unemployed for two years the chance in getting a job is slightly over 5%. Some 60% of the hardcore unemployed possesses insufficient labour market qualifications and their future perspectives are indeed dim. Within the group of longterm one out of five is younger than 25 years of age. Being long-term unemployed implies at the same time a prolonged dependency on welfare benefits, mostly accompanied by economic problems. Another problem is that unemployment is unevenly spread over the country and some regions and inner-cities find themselves clearly above the national average.

This particular study concerning young unemployed, white adults has been executed, at the end of the '80's in Drachten (Smallingerland), a medium-sized municipality (slightly over 50.000 inhabitants) in the province of Friesland. The unemployment figures (1989) of the dependent labour force for males are: The Netherlands: 11,2%; Friesland: 14,2%; Region of Drachten 12,3%. In the regional labour market of Friesland young people below 25 years of age are hit disproportionately by unemployment; they account for some 40% of the total unemployment in Friesland (Verhaar, 1990).

The question I am interested in is: how do long-term unemployed young men, from different backgrounds, cope with unemployment and living on welfare within the confinements of a local labour market? Do they comply with their position as unemployed and living on welfare or do they resist? What kinds of solutions are acceptable and what kinds of alternatives do they see to alleviate their plight? In this way I can also look into the more illegal solutions from a criminological point of view. Although

not all motives will be of an economic nature, there is credence to contend that being unemployed, marginally employed or underemployed are important criminogenic factors (Allan and Steffensmeier, 1989).

In reviewing the 'economics-crime link' literature (Belknap, 1989), however, one can easily become bewildered by contradicting outcomes. Although there seem to be valid grounds to assume a relationship, the implications of different research methods make unequivocal statements regarding the economics-crime link tenuous.

In part I of this study the theoretical and methodological foundations are under scrutiny. In part II the results of the study - a typology of lifestyles - are presented. Part III discusses these findings in regard with the central question: the economics-crime link. Thereafter I compare these findings against the backgrounds of some mainstream theories in criminology: strain, social control, subcultural and new subcultural perspectives. The final chapter discusses the merits of the life course method and the sociological implications for employment policy.

## The research model

In order to study this relationship I did not compare 'statistics' about unemployment rates and criminality (crime-sheets, arrest rates, incarceration rates) as in cross-sectional or time-series studies. Neither did I compare employed versus unemployed people, as in matching designs with at random samples and survey techniques. My aim is more down to earth. Since no theory can explain the totality of criminal behaviour — its frequency, duration or seriousness, its diverging motivations for different categories and their characteristics (class, age, sex, ethnicity etc.), their historic contingencies etc. — I decided to concentrate the research to some thirty unemployed young adults, who were at least a year living on welfare. We<sup>1</sup> have chosen for an in-depth study of a more interpretive kind (De Bie and Miedema, 1990; Miedema, 1993, 1994). Reasons for this strategy were our interests in the processual character of the influence of major life events like unemployment/living on welfare in life histories. That way we would be able, so we hoped, to understand better the development of variegated forms of delinquency, its maintaining or discontinuing, its rationality and, at the same time, to pay attention to its, often neglected, counterpart: forms of respectability, its rationality, stability and its threats. Even although there is evidence for a relationship between unemployment/living on welfare and forms of property crime, this link is of course not a perfect one. Working people do commit also crimes, while (probably) the majority of the unemployed do desist from crime. By choosing young adults we hoped to neutralize the age-related normalized forms of peer-group offences, although in our developmental model these are given due attention. It is a well-known demographic fact that

1. I use here the plural "we" because I started this research project with drs. Edgar de Bie. Together we wrote the book about coping strategies of young females living on welfare (De Bie and Miedema, 1990).

the majority of criminal offences is committed by youth in the age-range of 15-25 years. We also know that, when we look at arrest rates, crime is male dominated. Within this age-group one has to distinguish between the so called age-related crimes of 'normal' adolescent youth, the (petty) crimes of peer-groups within the domain of leisure activities (with a peak-age about 16-18). Those crimes (delinquency, misconduct, status offences) are foremost vandalism, violence and property offences, often of an expressive and/or a provocative nature (kicks), with an overrepresentation in arrest rates of lower class youth. The focal concerns of working-class youth, e.g. the maintenance of status and a macho-reputation, material gains, disrespect for authority, use of drugs and/or alcohol, in combination with the visibility of their street-crimes, are said to contribute to their crime-proneness. The crimes committed by young adults can be a prolongation of these kind of crimes (they are as yet not matured out), but at the same time it is conceivable that there will be a new group of (unemployed) first-offenders with different motives and reasons, which can be of a more instrumental character. In this research project attention is primarily given to the more, so to say, 'economic' reasons in committing crimes. On the one hand it is possible to study the links between these two kinds of crime forms (age-related and position-related), and on the other hand I can give attention to circumstances of being unemployed and/or living on welfare, and subsequently if these factors play an independent or amplifying role. Furthermore, the dimension delinquency-respectability is not a dichotomy, a binary either-or division, but a continuum including a full range of grey zones. Still, it is possible to delineate the overall outcome of social practices, and their underlying meaning systems (belief-systems or discourses), as respectable (law-abiding), cultural deviant or delinquent. Our concern for respectability, or if you like compliance or conformity, is in our model as important as our concern for deviance and delinquency. Both kinds of actions fulfil meanings to the actors concerned and have the same theoretical status. Which kind of discourses as structures of meaning will prevail is an empirical question I will return to later on in discussing various life-styles.

The original research question *Does a relationship exist between living on welfare/unemployment and delinquency among young adults?* can be reformulated by using the concept of life-style and coping strategy. Stated this way the question is transformed to a categorical level (Does there exist a relationship between living on welfare and delinquency as a special kind of coping strategy within particular life-styles?). So the construction of a typology of life-styles had to be done first.

### Life-styles and discourses

The concept of life-style means an analysis on an aggregate level. The meaning of paid work (work ethic, work commitment) is still a central part of the developmental tasks for youth. In general adolescents have to make the following transitions in becoming a fully fledged adult with accompanying identity and status: — lessening the bonds with the family of origin and starting a life of one's own and being responsible. Peers

can be of assistance, for instance the support of close friends. The newly won social space presupposes financial independence (or that of a partner). The main aim is that, as an adult, a person is capable of preserving its own interests; — developing and maintaining a stable sex-role and gender identity. For women this can mean the presenting of a 'respectable' (sexual) reputation and/or emphasizing feminine values; for men this can mean the role of provider and an instrumental/competitive attitude; — getting steady, mostly with a heterosexual partner as a prerequisite for starting a family and having children. Women are judged for their affective-emotional capacities as mother and spouse (caring function); men for their earning capacities; — the building of one's own belief- and value-system and a reflective attitude regarding the incumbency of positions. At the same time young people have to mark their relationship regarding the institutional society and the societal inequalities (income, but also race, gender and age); — the developing of consumer attitudes and use of leisure facilities/mass-media, financial (budgeting) competencies and time resources; — the appropriation of civic duties and obligations (political socialization), combined with bureaucratic-institutional skills as a citizen; — an (organized) anticipation of making future choices and developing a time perspective regarding the life course and a flexible attitude regarding alternative options (cf. De Bie and Miedema, 1990).

Those transition points (combining elements like changes in or redefining positions and/or beliefsystems, fateful moments, consequential decisions) "... have major implications not just for the circumstances of an individual's future conduct, but for self-identity. For consequential decisions, once taken, will reshape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences which ensue" (Giddens, 1991: 143). To be integrated into society means, first and foremost, to have a job or having a partner as a breadwinner.

Distinction between life-styles can be read as labels for diverging life plans and/or opportunities to realize them. Taking as a starting point the 'ideal' routes from adolescence into adulthood, we assume, as just mentioned above, a number of developmental tasks, which young people have to master as a kind of 'rites the passage' into the world of adults. These tasks or lifeplans can be seen as societal embedded prescriptions for the successful integration of new generations. As cultural norms they are institutionalized into tacit standards, which were unquestioned in the '50's; they were, so to say, the invisible agenda of the dominant culture. Nowadays there is more place for individual translations and the linearity or chronology of the status passages of the standard model is diverging into more modern models in which multiple subpatterns and, henceforth, partial and flexible identities can be discerned. This means also that work and family ethics have lost their uncontested dominant meaning.

Within the confines of this summary I can only make some brief remarks regarding the specific model in use (see for more details: De Bie and Miedema, 1990; Miedema, 1993, 1994). Theoretically the model comes very close to the familiar phenomenological and symbolic-interactionist approaches, in which e.g. the social and societal positions and perspectives of the actor, his cognitive structure and learning capabilities, his mundane reasoning and routinized behaviour are central topics. Summarized, we are

interested in the different forms of (social) knowledge actors use to give shared and symbolic meanings to their lives by analyzing their communicative and argumentative, or stated otherwise, discursive abilities in explaining lived-in experiences. They have, in other words, to account for their behaviour, to give legitimate (valid) reasons, justifications and rationalizations for proper conduct and its deviations. We assume human beings to be competent, knowledgeable and reflecting (in the sense of reflexivity) actors. As lifeworlds and socialization trajectories differ, so does knowledge. "Knowledge is both part of what joins people in groups and what divides groups; it is a dimension of human life that involves agreement and disagreement, debate and negotiation" (Dant, 1991: 1). Social knowledge — discourse — has no epistemological privilege, but its claim to validity is the outcome of cultural struggles over meanings (world-views, lifeplans), based on the use of resources and power. Social support from peers and significant others in social networks are in that respect of paramount importance in assessing competence and, henceforth, a mechanism for evaluating and controlling conformity to group standards. Individual solutions are only acceptable when they are considered legitimate (valid) by the other participants of a particular life-style. The support of the group, as a form of inter-subjective agreement, is a necessary prerequisite for maintaining membership. If this is not the case, one has to make a transition to a more accommodating discourse or one will run the risk of being ridiculed or, in extreme cases, be ostracized.

Discourses are, so to say, projects of cooperation and validation, in which four interrelated topics are of interest: — how people's social identities are constructed and altered over time; — how categories (collective agents) develop and unform in an unequal society; — how discourses orient themselves to the wider society and how the cultural hegemony of the dominant culture is reproduced or transformed by negotiations or contests; — how discourses shed light on social change and political practice and illuminate constraints (see also: Fraser, 1992).

A discourse is, therefore, more than a symbolic or cultural system; it implies practice, agency and communication, emerging into social identity and group-formation.

## Method

### **The research method**

The best way to obtain insight in the perspectives of respondents and their reasons for acting in particular ways, is simply asking them to tell their life histories, significant life events, opinions, expectations, time-horizons and so on. So we employed a qualitative approach in which we used an open-ended conversational instrument: the method of depth-interviewing. In the interview focal concerns were the developmental process (the life history along lines of our three phased socialization model, and the accompanying socialization domains of family, school, work/unemployment, leisure, relationships, autonomy and dependence, institutional contacts and so on). We concluded the interviews by asking them questions regarding selfhood (identity), worldview (images of society) and the future (their own life plans, time perspectives and expectations

regarding changes within society). These interviews — a retrospective view of how people narrate and verbalize their lives, cognitions and acts — gave us the raw data for the subsequent processes of constructing a typology of life-styles of unemployed youth. Those interviews were taped and lasted generally over three hours.

### **The respondents**

The young adults we interviewed were on welfare for at least one year, born in the beginnings of the ('golden') '60's (at the time of interviewing they were 24-26 years old), white and living in the same municipality. In total we interviewed 28 males and 22 females during the period 1987-1988. Their participation was on a voluntary base. The sample is not a-select, but can be considered as a 'purposive' and homogenized one regarding age, domicile, length of unemployment and ethnicity. Limiting myself to the relatively small sample of male respondents it will be clear that the findings can not be generalized in a statistical way. The generalizations, in the form of ideal typifications (Weber), are more theoretically inspired and have to lead to a better understanding of the routes into and the conditions of being unemployed.

The various steps of the process of analyzing and the construction of the typology can be found in more detail in chapter 5.

### **Findings**

The different types of life-styles can be described sociologically as: Type I: the life-style of single living adult men on welfare with traditional marginal 'hustle' ethics, in which forms of deviance/delinquency are normalized features (2 respondents); Type II: the life-style of young adult men on welfare with traditional work ethics (in unskilled segments of the labour market) with family responsibilities and restricted delinquency (3 respondents); Type III: the life-style of young adult men on welfare with traditional working-class backgrounds with family responsibilities, in which age-related delinquency within the domain of leisure is prevalent (10 respondents); Type IV: the life-style of young adult men on welfare with skilled working-class backgrounds, who are in the main respectable (5 respondents); Type V: the life-style of young adult men on welfare with a defensive middle-class work ethic, who are in the main respectable (4 respondents); Type VI: the life-style of young adult men on welfare with more non-conformistic lifeplans and cultural deviance (4 respondents). In composing the labels of various life-styles, class position, educational career and occupational achievements, segments of the labour market and labour orientation are intertwined. The concepts of youthculture-, family-, peer-, relation- and subject-centredness parallel these life-styles. Regarding the meaning of work, the kind of work and the meaning of marriage and parenthood the overall picture is, however, fragmented. The meaning of respectability and delinquency has to be related to these notions. These sociological labels can be 'translated' into the following 'popular' tags:

Type I: Cutting corners: hustling

Type II: Hard living: my family first

Type III: Aspirations down: respectable survivors

Type IV: Be optimistic: our turn will come

Type V: Everybody on its own: defensive achievers

Type VI: Rebels with a cause: doing your own thing

The ideal-typed descriptions will now be summarized into six 'profiles'.

### **Type I: Cutting corners: hustling**

These men are coming from marginal lower-class backgrounds. In that sense economic and cultural marginal positions are intertwined. They grow up in hard-living and often multi-problem families in low-income neighbourhoods (domestic quarrels and family violence, alcohol problems, long spells of unemployment of father, divorce/single parent families, welfare dependency, bad living conditions, low control regarding outdoor activities of the children, foster homes). At an early age they go their own way and take care of themselves. Attachments to others are weak and they have a lot of problems with authority and rules. They hang around with peers, develop street wisdom and emphasize masculine values. Age-related, sometimes gang-related, forms of delinquency are normal outcomes (i.g., vandalism, breaking and entering, violence). Their secondary school level is lower vocational and their educational performance is nominal. Dropping out of school before the minimum compulsory leaving age, especially when there is a chance getting a job, is quite frequent. Their occupational trajectory shows a succession of odd jobs and spells of unemployment. When working in low skilled jobs, they are soon bored of monotony or depart with a clash. There are many job turn-overs, but in the end they are unable to find a steady job which lasts. They become part of the hard-core unemployed (lack of qualifications and out-dated experiences, insufficient social and technical skills, obedience problems, unstable employment career, criminal past). They stress their own autonomy in which self-preserving is dominant: these characteristics can be labeled 'defiant individualism' (Jankowski, 1991). They emphasize having a good time and high-living, including use of alcohol and drugs (hedonism). Gradually they drift into a career of crime, sometimes petty, but often more serious. Instrumental delinquency (property and acquisitive crimes, dealing drugs, welfare fraud, informal earnings) combined with being street-smart is for them an additional source ('quick money') to welfare. When having a relation it is strictly on their terms and when the problems can not be handled any more deserting is a means to be free again, even if they have fathered a child. The child is than the sole responsibility for the mother. They can be considered self-centered individuals without strong social bonds.

Their discourse is based on surviving and the use of illegal means are neutralized by rationalizations (cf. Sykes and Matza, 1957; Jankowski, 1991). Between the dominant culture and this particular discourse exists a great social distance. They have little to loose and much to gain by not playing by the rules. Judicial contacts are risks of the game and in this context they become institution and legal wise. They are not deterred by penal sanctions. Feelings of 'us-them' are wide spread and they are openly hostile to the demands of respectability. Minority groups are more or less tolerated, but are

judged on their willingness to assimilate. The wider society has hardly a meaning for them and they do not invest in their future in a conventional way. They emphasize the here and now and a prolonged living on welfare, combined with doing odd jobs and hustling, gives them the monetary base to continue this way of life. Perhaps they will settle down when engaging in a more lasting relationship, but they themselves are not optimistic regarding a more ordered life. They can, however, mature out and try to live a less delinquent and a more stable existence, but the structural conditions of their position are not conducive to this kind of solution.

**Type II: Hard living: my family first**

This life-style is proximate to the life-style just discussed. In a way these men can be considered the plus variant of the marginal working-class. Their backgrounds are, sometimes just slightly, more favourable, although they also grow up in hard-living families and in similar neighbourhoods like type I. They maintain, however, relationships with their family, although with a lot of quarrels. In their secondary socialization phase they take part in the same kind of 'street gangs', and delinquency is therein a way of proving one's masculinity and looking for kicks. They have, however, the luck of getting involved into a more stable relationship at an early age, although their unemployment causes domestic problems, financial and relational, and can be threatening to their marriage. They take their responsibility of fatherhood and provider, in spite of these problems, serious. Their unemployment is felt bitterly and is a blow in the face of their masculinity and male role-expectations. Age-related delinquency stops after some time, but they can take resort to more illegal means as a substitute for their earning capacities (role of bread winner). Odd jobs, welfare fraud (including thinking about pseudo divorce in order to get double assistance) still have the risks of getting caught and subsequently living on a harsher welfare regime. Their financial position fits the description of filling one gap with the other, borrowing money, problems with rent and gas/electricity bills, calculating the advantages of claiming extra social services benefits. As a last resort they do not exclude the committing of property crimes, but they fear the negative feedbacks of jeopardizing the reputation of their family and the consequences for their children. They still apply for all kinds of jobs, even the most marginal ones, but they have few labour market assets (they are too old, they have too little experience, they possess no qualifications) and few introductions into adequate labour market networks. The longer their unemployment lasts, the more resigned they become on the one hand and the more desperate on the other. Even when succeeding in balancing their sheets, they still feel inadequate in regard to looking after their wife and children.

Their discourse is negative and hostile to minority groups, which in their eyes are more supported and positively treated. They tend to ignore the wider society and are predominantly employed in solving their own problems, sometimes with aid of their relatives. There is some hope to get out of their financial problems by securing a regular (low-skilled) job, but at the same time they feel themselves increasingly alienated from the main stream society. Future forms of instrumental delinquency (crimes out of despair) for this life-style can not longer be ignored. The caring position and the role of provider

are at the same time a push factor as well as a restricting factor. Personal (financial) problems and dialogues with relevant others, e.g. their partner, probably will decide the outcome of these forces. The future takes the form of fate and their time-horizon is limited.

### **Type III: Aspirations down: respectable survivors**

This life-style can be seen as the dominant pattern for the majority of working-class males. In this way they reproduce, although modernized, the discourse of their milieu. In this discourse the adolescence-period is viewed as having a good time before taking the responsibilities of a family life. They gradually enter into adulthood, in which having a paid job is a prerequisite condition. When they do not succeed in getting or maintaining a regular job, most of them blame themselves, but at the same time finding a job is often also a fate of luck or having good connections.

When we take their class backgrounds into account, those backgrounds are in general more favourable than those of the types I and II. This is reflected in their upbringing and educational careers. Although some leave school before graduation — they apply than successfully for a job — in most cases they have qualified for a vocational training. In the secondary socialization phase they shift their orientation from their parents towards their peers, who are especially important in the sphere of leisure. They are interested in going out, dating, experimenting, mainly with alcohol, and, in the beginning, in motor-bikes, maintenance and mechanics. Those give them freedom and mobility and are a focal concern in their leisure discourse. Traffic (speed and alcohol) violations are rather common. Their leisure activities are masculine and taking care of oneself in a physical sense is expected. Fights and looking for kicks correspond with their 'hanging around' and 'having a laugh'. Property crimes are the exception, although shoplifting and other kinds of petty crime do occur occasionally. They have, however, invested in their future careers and they are not willing to risk negative setbacks like loss of reputation or convictions. When they start going steady, after some loose affairs, they settle down. In this life-style a mixture of relational trajectories can be seen. Some young men are still single and dating, some have a serious relationship and others are in the stage of having families with young children. Their peer-networks dissolve gradually and they tend to orient themselves increasingly on adulthood roles. Drifting from job to job and, in the end, losing their job (due to redundancy, closing down of the firm, military service (draft), health problems) generate spells of unemployment (seasonal and frictional). Due to the recession and the high regional unemployment figures, and in spite of their informal applications and assistance of networks, they discover, after some time, that they belong *nolens volens* to the long-term unemployed. They are still willing to take all kinds of jobs, but they, or their wives, have strong familial and local ties, which diminish their prospects in other local job markets. They do, however, try to keep faith in their good luck in finding a job. Having to provide for a family leads to comparable problems of hard-living as type II, but they are more able to budget and to stay out the poverty trap, at least for the moment. Recourse to property crimes is not seen as a solution, although doing odd jobs is considered legitimate. Sometimes they, or their wives, have part-time jobs, but the earnings are partly subtrac-

ted from their welfare benefits. When in problems they sometimes borrow money, preferably from family or family-in-law, but they fear getting in debt too heavily. They hope that in the near future they will get a job, although in some instances they are already unemployed for a number of years. Further education is not considered a viable option. They are too long out of school and they know their own handicaps, e.g. their sensitivity towards authority, problems with theoretical courses, loss of income.

Their discourse, although class-based, is more or less in line with the dominant culture, but the societal bonds and attachments are not very strong. Their identity is predominantly based on the role of provider, and is class-specific without explicit references. One could say, that they consider themselves the deserving (entitled) welfare recipients by showing their willingness to work and keeping in line.

Their political interests are limited: they consider politics a 'dirty' game with empty promises. They still vote, in particular on the labour party (social-democrats). Although rather tolerant, they consider the minority new-comers sometimes getting a special and more favourable treatment, which can eventually lead to feelings of hostility and (latent) racism. Society is in their view still based on too much (income-)inequality.

When married or cohabitating they consider themselves family men and those without a girl-friend still expect to get a steady relation in the near future. Societal changes are sometimes frightening and their solution is to live by the day. Workforce participation remains, however, the ideal.

#### **Type IV: Be optimistic: our turn will come**

Type IV parallels in many ways the backgrounds of type III. Differences can be found in their educational career, more aimed at skilled jobs, and their leisure patterns. They are more family-centred than peer-centred and in this regard they live a more sheltered, homely life. They go hardly out and their needs for exploring and meeting the other-sex are restricted. When they are single they mostly live with their parents. It is for both parties involved convenient. When they have a steady relationship they often think that having a paid job is a necessary condition for starting a household of their own and raising children. Until now, most of them have postponed this crucial step. Their position as an adult is rather ambiguous: no paid job, no family of their own on the one hand, but more or less financial independent (welfare) and an adult age position on the other. As a substitute for work most have developed a time consuming pastime, mostly within the sphere of the family of origin. Their work ambitions are mainly aimed at the more skilled jobs, but they are also willing to accept lower status jobs. They apply regularly for jobs, but so far without success. Sometimes they consider to apply for jobschemes, but deep in their heart they think that eventually, when the recession has blown over, the demand for their skills will rise again.

In their discourse they are more conformistic than type III men. They comply with the requirements of the dominant order and accept the inequalities of the prevailing system without much discussion. They vote, mostly in line with their parents, but politics do not form topics for debate. Society, e.g. the conditions within the labour market, are taken-for-granted. They have invested in society and hope to get the revenues in due time. Towards other deviant and, especially, delinquent life-styles they shy away. They

themselves do not commit offences and reject moonlighting, fraud and welfare swindles.

In the near future they believe in getting a job, and eventually to establish a family of their own. The problems of the wider society are not their first concern, although they can worry about future prospects in a personalized way.

#### **Type V: Everybody on its own: defensive achievers**

Those young men come mostly from families with middle-class backgrounds or the more aspiring skilled working-class segments. This parallels their educational career. They partake in forms of secondary schooling as a preparation for a more qualified labour market position. When graduated they take jobs in the more professional sectors, for instance nursing, education and so on. However, after some time, they discover that this kind of work does not suit their taste and they quit. Reasons are sometimes individual, but can be connected to the work climate, the authoritarian structure or too heavy demands. They start to look for other kinds of occupations, but they miss the essential qualifications. To ameliorate their positions they take courses or go back to school. They tend to view their unemployment time as temporarily. Object is to get still a middle-class position, even if one has to wait some time for a suitable vacancy. They believe that by improving their labour market qualifications they will succeed in the end. They can postpone having children, but not necessarily so.

In their secondary socialization phase they mostly leave home for an educational training or a job and at a relatively early onset they feel independent and responsible for their own lives. Although peer-oriented in that phase, they maintain contacts with their parents and when arriving in a more adult position these relationships become equalized and reciprocal. When delinquency, or better deviance, does occur, it has to do with age-related experimenting, i.g., the use of soft drugs and symbolic/stylistic expressions. They shun, however, violence, vandalism or property crimes. They will not risk their reputation and future job possibilities or disappoint their parents. They mostly have close friends with comparable backgrounds and future orientations.

Their discourse is relatively open and they have modern outlooks. Emphasized is the argumentative structure of communication and they are subscribers to the more serious papers and magazines, at least when they can afford it. They are more interested in literature and other forms of 'high' culture, including jazz or classical music. They are relatively content with the meaningfulness of their lives; they follow a study, do voluntary jobs or are otherwise engaged in the more public spheres of society. They consider themselves adults and stress their own choices and subsequently their own responsibilities. They are, considering the realization of their relational lifeplans (families of their own, children), settled down, although geographically spoken they are still mobile in looking for jobs or other training opportunities. In general they vote the more critical left wing parties and this is in line with their more critical and liberal societal outlook. They are tolerant to minorities and the permissive society. Sometimes they worry about negative developments like the endangering of the environment (ecology), the threat of war and nuclear disasters, the threat of an east-European disintegration, and the underdeveloped countries. But in most cases their attention is directed to their own problems.

**Type VI: Rebels with a cause: doing your own thing**

The last life-style I constructed, can be defined as the life-style of cultural rebels, in combination with an individualization of the life course/life plans. In this regard the label of a post-modernistic life-style can be applied also. Those men have more or less common roots in the middle-class. Their parents are respectable citizens, and most of their offspring are following into their footsteps, in which the ideology of achievement and meritocracy is emphasized. In this view a good education is the cornerstone for obtaining a high-income and high-status position. The socialization in these milieus is, at least in that respect, not gendered. The same expectations regarding investing in a career apply to girls too. Respectability — e.g. doing your best, avoiding trouble, being civilized — is the norm.

The secondary socialization phase can be seen as the beginning of a struggle for autonomy. They question the taken-for-granted rules of their parents and authorities in general. They become very critical towards the educational system and this attitude can lead to drop-outism, but in general they finish their secondary education. When they decide to go to a tertiary education the same processes start again and this time early leaving is more common. In this period stylistic experiments, expressive and provocative behaviour, set them apart from their respectable middle-class peers. At a relatively early age they go to live on their own and sometimes they move into other cities, with an additional advantage to see more action. They feel attracted to the underground and counter cultural scenes and they develop their own, authentic preferences. Some of them have a short work career, but as a rule they contest their subordinated positions and, in their eyes, authoritative and exploitive structures of the working conditions. Receiving welfare can be seen as a foundation for the maintaining of this particular life-style.

Central in their lifeworld is the domain of leisure, which tends to become absolutized and which functions as a medium for self-enhancement. In the beginning of the secondary socialization phase they orient themselves to peers, who, just like them, drift into the more radical and (youth)subcultural life-styles of punk, squatters and sometimes drug-users. Using marihuana is a normalized feature and experimenting with harddrugs is no longer excluded, but they take care not to become addicted. They have seen enough cases of degenerating junkies to be warned against. Sometimes they commit petty offences like shoplifting, but they neutralize these offences by renaming them 'proletarian shopping'. The normal (working-class) male bravado, being tough, fighting, does not apply to them, although in a communicative way they are street smart. They see girls/women as equals and their networks are of mixed sexes. Their voting behaviour is on the left side of the political spectrum. They sympathize with the social movements and sometimes they are active in one of those. Regarding military service most of them are conscientious objectors and anti-militaristic.

They develop communicative competence and with their cultural capital they can easily associate with different groups, but they preserve their identity as a subject by avoiding too much involvement in membership roles. Their life plans are very individualized, but a common denominator therein are their anti-establishment feelings. In that way they define themselves as 'outsiders'. Their cultural marginality is more or less self chosen,

not class based as by type I and II, and of a more avant-gardistic stance. The same holds for their economic marginality. If they preferred, they could take a job, and sometimes they do take part-time jobs, legal as well as illegal, for an additional income. They defend their welfare dependency on various reasons. Sometimes they are engaged in voluntary work within the setting of a social movement and in that way they feel entitled to their welfare money. Others think the Netherlands is a rich and civilized country, which can afford to let some people to live on welfare for reasons of their own. They possess institutional wisdom to negotiate this position, i.g., by referring to mass unemployment or unemployed people who are willing to work. They have mostly casual affairs, but when serious, they can decide to live together, be it with the maintaining of individual freedom. Their identity is subject-centred and they have the competence to switch to different contextual codes and, hence, to present partial (flexible) identities.

As said before their societal views are critical and they are concerned about the disadvantaged and dispossessed. In that way they are solidary with all kinds of marginal (respectable) groups and liberal towards other life-styles. They sympathize for instance with the gay movement, women's lib, squatters, minorities, and are anti nuclear power, the military system and the economic colonization of the third world.

Their future plans are diffuse, but they expect to continue the autonomy of this life-style. Marriage and fatherhood, at least for the moment, are postponed; these are too restrictive. Living on welfare and the accompanying (although limited) financial dependency give them a frame to develop their own future plans, in which artistic and creative jobs or starting a small-scale enterprise are highlighted.

### The meaning of different coping strategies

In the last section I already dealt, in a cursory way, with the problems, dilemmas and contradictions young adults are confronted with when living on welfare and/or being unemployed. We noticed that the composition of the group is very heterogeneous and that the label unemployed or welfare dependent has different and divergent meanings. Class is therein a relevant dimension, although not sufficient to explain the differences between the various life-styles. Analyzing discourses and their guiding principles (orientations, focal concerns) one can see different socialization trajectories, in which a gamut of life plans are present. Sometimes these are reproductions of the discourses found in the respective milieus, sometimes transformations of existing discourses and in some instances new produced discourses (the process of 'bricolage'). Within the contexts of discourses participants have to develop solutions for the problems encountered, which are considered rational and legitimate within the boundaries, the moral rules, of a specific discourse. Why in some discourses illegal or delinquent solutions are favoured over more conventional strategies, or are no longer excluded options, compared to discourses which remain respectable, will be analyzed next.

Delinquency, or in general deviance, has different starting points. In that respect — next to class and gender — age, or perhaps more aptly put the socialization phase, has to be drawn into the analysis also. This means that the use of a time perspective in which becoming unemployed and the meaning of being unemployed or long-term unemployed is framed, is a necessary condition. Specifying the different causal and chronological possibilities within the framework of the typology of life-styles, four possible relations can be distinguished:

- A:** There does not exist an empirical relationship between living on welfare and delinquency;
- B:** There does exist an empirical relationship between living on welfare and delinquency, in the sense that being locked up in the position of receiving welfare gives way to commit delinquency as a strategy for solving experienced (financial) problems;
- C:** There does exist an empirical relationship between delinquency and living on welfare, in the sense that the delinquency career is a priori established and unemployment is the logical outcome or that acquisitive delinquency is considered an alternative for working;
- D:** There does exist an empirical relationship between living on welfare and delinquency, but both factors are implications of an underlying dimension, e.g. cultural marginality. In this case a 'spurious' relationship or an intervening factor has to be included in the interpretation process.

The question is how these theoretical possibilities correspond to the empirical findings of this research project.

Generally speaking one can state that in respectable life-styles, and this is of course tautological, delinquency, and especially in its repeated and more serious form, is practically excluded. Sometimes because a discourse is law-abiding (the internalization of strict moral norms), sometimes because the members of a discourse fear the negative consequences like a penal record or loss of family reputation. Within some respectable life-styles a twilight zone exists regarding the acceptability of more or less illegal behaviour. An example is for instance the secondary socialization phase, in which experimenting and deviance can lead to petty forms of mundane delinquency without too much consequences when discovered. This holds especially for age-related crimes of (mostly working-class) boys, which are exonerated, when incidentally and not too serious. When they continue to commit delinquency they risk being marginalized or ostracized by the members or 'moral gate-keepers' of the respectable discourse in question. The choice is to conform, at least in a visible way, or to transfer to a discourse which is more lenient, which normally means, giving up the existing relationships and networks. The threat of exclusion is for most of the conventional young people — they can be referred to as the 'mainstream youth' — sufficient to hold them in line. When considered legally adults the odds of endangering the conventional order are even greater. So when a number of adherents of respectable life-styles confess that they no longer, in an absolute way, condemn some forms of property crime, welfare

fraud or illegally working, or that they see those possibilities as a last resort for themselves (desperation delinquency), one can say that the experienced deprivation of living on welfare and the declining of living conditions are indeed distracting. As yet most people choose other options like strict budgeting, under-consumption or social isolation. So we can conclude that the life-styles of the traditional respectable men (type IV and V) try to make amends to their situation in order to preserve their integrity and respectable identity. For them there is no direct link between living on welfare and crime and possibility **A** is still predominant.

The life-style of young adult men with traditional working-class backgrounds, in which age-related crime can occur (type III), shows, however, that the tensions based on a deprived situation, obstructed aspirations, and frustrations regarding being unemployed, can be translated in a lessening of the previously established forms of respectability. Although possibility **A** will be for most of them the dominant solution, possibility **B** is no longer logically excluded. Reasons for this transformation correspond with the rejecting of societal values, which stress equal opportunity, fairness and justice. If they feel victimised, they blame society instead of blaming themselves. Prolonged marginalization can result in striking back and getting even. If and when so, it is conceivable that especially doing illegal work or welfare fraud, or other innovative solutions, gain impetus. The more commune forms of property crime, breaking and entering and so on, are in my view no real options, because in the discourses there is no tolerance for this kind of 'destructive or predatory crime'. In their attitude one can witness the rise of the 'modern' calculating citizen and eventually the free rider problem of the non-committed.

The traditional marginal life-styles — in which the culture of poverty rests besides the double marginalization in general — view crime as a way of surviving and getting even with a neglecting and condemning society. Already before becoming welfare recipients or unemployed, age-related street crimes have become normalized features within these life-styles. In their trajectories into adulthood one can observe a shift from the more expressive forms of delinquency towards more instrumental and risk-calculating forms. The more violent means of interpersonal problemsolving, although a common feature, I do not discuss here. Remember that my interests are predominantly in the economics-crime link. When some, the model is not determining for all, develop a criminal career, looking back the signs of 'defiant individualism' were already at an early age visible. Personal and structural circumstances coincide and reinforce each other. Living off the street can for some also result in a drugcareer, which has its own multiplier effect. The conditions for getting a manual job decrease and due to their budgeting problems and other riskful behaviour — alcohol, drugs, gambling, wrong associations —, penal records and so on, the option of committing property crimes becomes increasingly reality. Their vulnerability inevitably leads them to a marginalized existence without material prospects or opportunities to escape this one-way street.

The career of the single living young males (type I) shows the relationship of possibility **C**. Prior to their welfare position they were already engaged in various forms of

criminal activity. They are hardly deterred by penal law and consequently they become entangled in the more adult 'underworld' and the criminal economy. When people have, however, to take care of children - type II - the costs can become too high on the one hand, but it can accelerate the propensity to commit property crimes as a means of providing for the family on the other. Other strategies are less risky and they can decide to take that course. Instances are welfare fraud, hustling and cutting corners like shoplifting or having an illegal job, combined with receiving welfare. They are prone to become victims of the trap of poverty, in which escape routes are hardly present. When the economic recession continues the visibility of this underclass, in its most extreme form the homeless and skid-row people, becomes a nuisance and can fire back to the members of this particular class. They become victims of a society (the undeserving poor), which has no place for them. Their qualifications are inadequate to get, even, a place in the reserve army of the labour market; they are just nonemployable and made redundant permanently.

The life-styles of the modern marginals — type VI — are not a direct and irreversible outcome of their milieu backgrounds, but a self assumed position. In this kind of life-styles one is able to distinguish between a plus and a minus variant. The plus variant is foremost the cultural deviant, who is looking for other systems of meanings than society can provide for. The minus variant has sunk into a more delinquent style, often combined with harddrug use and a more hectic hustling street life. In previous research we have met both varieties. In this project the plus variant was paramount: in their life course a gradual shift to a more regularized existence can be expected. Pivotal is their rejection of the bourgeoisie society, in which values of sobriety, achieving and conformity to the dominant culture are key features. In their life course they develop more individualized objectives which oppose the taken-for-granted socialization trajectories. They emphasize their independence and authenticity in their quest for self enhancement and orient themselves to the more radical underground cultures, bohemian as well as political. Clashes with authority and institutions of control are primarily based on their cultural marginality, but in this wake economic marginality is unavoidable and both reinforce each other. Deviance is not longer a pure age-related outcome, but becomes a way of living. They refuse to accept the proscribed societal rules and transform or redefine those to their own liking. A self-defined time regime, creating their own projects, here and now excitements and doing your own thing are incompatible with the demands of making a career or starting a family life. Yet, they possess the cultural capital of their milieux and their own educational qualifications, and one could say, that a kind of reintegrating option is possible if they would choose so. Their deviance is expressive and provocative and runs counter to the seriousness of adulthood. Delinquency can be placed into the same vein, but often develops into a more instrumental direction, in which welfare fraud, shoplifting and the negation of institutional rules are common cases. They are proud of their more avant-gardistic and anarchistic ideas and for the moment, although perhaps more subdued than in the highlights of their rebellious adolescence, they want to continue this life-style. Welfare benefits form the base for this particular way of living, be it perhaps in a more adapted way. Their street and

institutional wisdom give them the negotiating power to blunt the sharp edges. They are no longer looking for outright conflicts or confrontations, but in a sense they try to accommodate superficially to the hegemonic power in order to continue doing their own things without too much infractions. We can conclude that the relationship welfare-crime at first sight tends to parallel model **C**, but after some time, when settling more down, relationship **D** replaces **C** and both features are connected within the dimension of non-conventionality.

In part III I compare the results of this lifestyle project to different criminological theories. After presenting these theories - strain, subcultural, social control en new subcultural - I analyze their assumptions and explaining power regarding the economics-crime link. Due to the heterogeneity of the results one is able to state that no theory can explain all the outcomes. For type I, II and III the strain and subcultural theories still are valid. For type IV and V social control theory shows the best fit. For type VI the new (British) subcultural theories seems to be the most convenient. The advantages of the lifestyle approach - combining a developmental perspective with life courses, integrating socialisation theory with a lifeworld theory, attention for structural conditions, the interrelatedness of discourse and social practice - make clear that interpretation as a process is an ongoing activity and that structural and structuring conditions has to be taken into account for explaining the bounded rationality of different lifestyle coping strategies.

## Conclusions

Modern societies are changing fastly. Not only in a postmodern cultural sense, but also structural. Structural changes in the economy are increasingly tied to globalisation, technical and managerial innovations and shifts in demand and supply regarding production sites (flexibilisation). So if one looks at regional labour markets in an economic perspective one should not use a too restricted and local viewpoint. Yet at this level worldwide strategies are hardly usable. Policy makers have to maximise the opportunities within local settings. The netresults of local efforts can, however, be considered to be a kind of 'zero-sum game', as well as between regions as within regions. Concentrating on the latter, regional labour markets, and peripheral even more, have to cope with unemployment (under the assumption that full-employment for the moment is unrealistic). Unemployed people can be categorised on various dimensions: period of unemployment (conjunctural, short-term, long-term, school leavers); and typical characteristics related to personal aspects (gender, age, ethnicity, educational achievements, previous work career, work ethic and so on). So unemployed people can be divided in different global groups: a group with high prospects in finding a job (in my research: type V); a group with low prospects (types III and IV); a group with no prospects at all (types I and II). Type VI can be characterized as temporarily and voluntarily withdrawn from the labour market, but they have, if they choose so, a lot of possibilities within niches of the labour market (e.g. they possess an open and modern discourse,

communicative competencies, cultural capital, flexibility, dual earnings capabilities). The dilemma for policy makers regarding the deployment of employment policies is: which group assisting in finding jobs; which groups giving access to possibilities for improving qualifications and skills; and which groups helping for self-employment. In the last instance it is a moral dilemma whom to include and whom to exclude. A growing social inequality and polarisation can not be ignored when the unemployed with the least chances — the 'hard-core' nonemployable people — are condemned to a life in the shadows of the welfare state. The strategy of 'blaming the victim' — labelling long-term unemployed people as lazy, as welfare scroungers — ignores the structural nature of unemployment.

I am in no position to give recommendations how to 'fight' unemployment. Criminologists have to be modest — crime is still booming — but there are sound reasons not to abandon the less advantaged categories. The life-styles I presented make clear why.