

# **Class, Culture, and Politics**

## **Cultural Capital and Its Political Implications**

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# Class, Culture, and Politics

## Cultural Capital and Its Political Implications

*Peter Achterberg and Dick Houtman\**

### 1. Introduction

Almost half a century after its original publication, Martin Lipset's (1959, 1981) thesis that the working class is simultaneously characterized by economic progressiveness and authoritarianism is still prominent in contemporary political science.<sup>1</sup> Many studies since the 1960's have concluded that '(...) the conceptualization and measurement of social class has a great deal of influence on whether (...) the theory of working-class authoritarianism (receives) support or not' (Grabb, 1980: 369; see also: Lipsitz, 1965; Grabb, 1979). More specifically: the more a class measure relies on education, the stronger the class effect found. In fact, those with little education, rather than the poor, are authoritarian: 'A consistent and continuing research literature has documented relationships between low levels of education and racial and religious prejudice, opposition to equal rights for women, and with support of, and involvement in, fundamentalist religious groups' (Lipset, 1981: 478).<sup>2</sup> The decisive importance of level of education *in its own right*, i.e., independent of associated factors such as income or occupational conditions, has been underlined by studies into the authoritarianism of (economically inactive) students with low levels of education (e.g., Feldman and Newcomb, 1973: 71-105; Schulz and Weiss, 1993).

Under Bourdieu's influence (1973, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), sociology displays a tendency to replace the orthodoxy of income and education as 'two aspects of the same thing' (be it 'class' or 'social stratification') by conceiving of income as a key indicator for 'economic capital' and education as a key indicator for 'cultural capital' (e.g. Kalmijn,

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\* This paper is based on two previous publications: Dick Houtman, 'Class, Culture, and Conservatism: Reassessing Education as a Variable in Political Sociology', in: Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *The Breakdown of Class Politics: A Debate on Post-Industrial Stratification*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 161-195, and Peter Achterberg and Dick Houtman, 'Why Do So Many People Vote 'Unnaturally'? A Cultural Explanation of Voting Behaviour', forthcoming in: *European Journal for Political Research*.

1994; De Graaf and Kalmijn, 2001). Although political sociologists unfortunately still stick to the orthodoxy, Bourdieu's distinction between both types of capital looks particularly promising for the study of class and politics. After all, the circumstance that authoritarianism is strongly and negatively affected by education, whereas income does not affect it at all, may suggest that authoritarianism is not so much caused by economic capital, but rather by cultural capital. May Lipset's working-class authoritarianism be attributable to its limited cultural capital, whereas the economic progressiveness of the working class is caused by its limited economic capital?

The current paper studies, first, whether working-class economic progressiveness and authoritarianism are indeed attributable to its limited amounts of economic and cultural capital, respectively. Second, we study whether cultural-capital-driven libertarianism drives voting behavior that contradicts the traditional alignment of the working class with leftist parties and of the middle class with rightist parties.

## 2. Hypotheses

If working-class economic progressiveness results from its limited economic capital, this confirms one of the core hypotheses of the traditional class approach to politics, i.e., the idea that a relationship between social class and political values may be expected precisely because different classes have different economic interests. Working-class authoritarianism – or better: the authoritarianism of the poorly educated – , may instead be attributable to its limited amount of cultural capital, which cannot be interpreted in terms of traditional class analysis. This would rather indicate that the capacity to recognize cultural expressions and to understand their meaning is decisive. Lacking cultural capital then stimulates an interpretation of unconventional lifestyles and patterns of culture as morally reprehensible deviations from an absolute, 'extra-cultural' or 'meta-social' moral foundation. Reversely, cultural capital gives rise to an interpretation of such patterns of behavior as *culture* – i.e., as humanly constructed and ultimately contingent and arbitrary –, which is expressed in their acceptance and in a more general emphasis on the value of individual liberty (compare Gabennesch, 1972; Bauman, 1987: 81-95).

To test whether economic capital affects economic progressiveness / conservatism, whereas cultural capital affects authoritarianism / libertarianism, unambiguous indicators for

both types of capital need to be used, of course. Following the logic of traditional class analysis, it is not too difficult to add two explicit indicators for economic capital to income. First, of course wage dependence is traditionally considered a key class indicator. Individuals who depend on the wages they earn occupy a weaker economic position than independent entrepreneurs who own the means of production (Marx and Engels, 1948 [1848], Marx, 1967 [1867], Weber, 1982 [1921], Wright, 1979; 1985; Goldthorpe, 1980). Wage earners are after all dependent on the willingness of entrepreneurs to pay them for their labor and continue to do so. Second, for wage earners and independent entrepreneurs alike, job insecurity is important, because it also implies limited economic capital. Income, wage dependence and job insecurity are thus three unambiguous indicators for economic capital.

Education, however, is hopelessly ambiguous. On the one hand, it indicates *institutionalized* cultural capital, but on the other hand it does of course also indicate economic capital (i.e., ‘human’ capital). For that reason, *embodied* cultural capital, i.e. an interest in art and culture itself (Bourdieu, 1986; cf. Böröcz and Southworth, 1996; Lamont, 1986), is a second indicator of cultural capital, that is less ambiguous than education. Hence, if education’s negative effect on authoritarianism represents an effect of cultural capital rather than economic capital, then in addition to a low educational level, a low level of cultural participation should also lead to authoritarianism. The three unambiguous indicators of a limited amount of economic capital – low income, wage dependence and job insecurity – should then not affect authoritarianism at all. In explaining economic progressiveness, the opposite pattern should be found. Like education, the three unambiguous indicators for economic capital should affect it, while cultural participation should not.

This logic gives rise to three clusters of hypotheses. If members of the working class are distinguished from the rest of the working population primarily on the ground of their occupations, as is common practice in sociology, they can be expected to have limited economic as well as cultural capital. Such a ‘working class’ can consequently also be expected to be characterized by economic progressiveness (Hypothesis A1) and authoritarianism (Hypothesis A2). Even if these hypotheses are confirmed, this does not provide a satisfactory explanation of authoritarianism, because we still need to examine whether working-class economic progressiveness is generated by its limited economic capital and working-class authoritarianism by its limited cultural capital.

This gives rise to two additional clusters of hypotheses. The first pertains to the explanation of economic progressiveness (Cluster B). If economic progressiveness is really

caused by limited economic capital, the previously recorded effect of occupational class on economic progressiveness should be attributable to labor market differences between the classes. Wage dependence (Hypothesis B1), poor education (Hypothesis B2), low income (Hypothesis B3) and job insecurity (Hypothesis B4) should then lead to economic progressiveness and limited cultural participation should not (Hypothesis B5). Moreover, working-class economic progressiveness may be expected to disappear once the variables mentioned above are included in the analysis (Hypothesis B6). If these six hypotheses are confirmed, this convincingly demonstrates that the economic progressiveness of the working class should indeed be attributed to its limited economic capital.

The third and last cluster of hypotheses pertains to whether the authoritarianism of the working class can indeed be attributed to its limited cultural capital (Cluster C). A low educational level (Hypothesis C1) and a low level of cultural participation (Hypothesis C2) are expected to lead to authoritarianism, while wage dependence (Hypothesis C3), low income (Hypothesis C4) and job insecurity (Hypothesis C5) are expected not to affect it. Analogous to the cluster of hypotheses formulated above, working-class authoritarianism can be expected to disappear once these variables are included in the analysis (Hypothesis C6). If these six hypotheses are confirmed, this demonstrates convincingly that working-class authoritarianism has nothing to do with its limited economic capital, but that it is essentially its limited cultural capital that is decisive.

### **3. Data and Measurement**

#### *3.1. Data*

Data have been collected during the summer of 1997 by means of the panel of *Centerdata* (Catholic University Brabant, Tilburg, The Netherlands). This panel constitutes a representative sample from the Dutch population. Panel members have been given a home computer at their disposal, which enables them to answer questions from Dutch researchers. The length of the questionnaire necessitated a division in two, having the two parts answered at different moments. The first part included questions for the economically active as well as the economically inactive (primarily questions about cultural participation and political values). 1,856 persons aged 18 years or older have answered this first part of the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 90%. The second part included questions intended for the

economically active panel members only (e.g., questions to measure social lass, job insecurity, et cetera). Therefore, this second part of the questionnaire has only been answered by those economically active for at least 20 hours a week. This yielded 792 respondents – again, a response rate of about 90% -, with 711 of them having answered the first part of the questionnaire as well. The subsequent analysis is limited to those 711 respondents.

### 3.2. Measuring Political Values

*Economic progressiveness / conservatism* has been measured by means of six Likert-type items that together constitute a reasonably reliable scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.71$ ). High scores indicate economic progressiveness.<sup>3</sup>

*Authoritarianism / libertarianism* has been measured by means of a short version of the F-scale scale for authoritarianism (Adorno et al., 1950), Inglehart's index for postmaterialism (1977), a scale for the rejection of traditional gender roles, and a scale measuring educational values. As all of those tap values relating to individual liberty and maintenance of social order, they are all expected to indicate authoritarianism / libertarianism.

*Table 1. Factor analysis of five measures for political values (Varimax rotation; N=652).*

	Factor 1	Factor 2
F-scale (authoritarianism)	-0.84	0.11
Postmaterialism	0.63	0.25
Rejection of traditional gender roles	0.69	0.05
Intrinsic orientation towards education	0.74	0.06
Economic progressiveness	-0.05	0.98
Eigenvalue	2.15	1.00
R <sup>2</sup> (%)	43.1	20.1

First, nine Likert items that together constitute a short version of the *F-scale* developed by Adorno et al. (1950) have been used (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.79$ ). This short F-scale has often used in survey research before (e.g. Dekker and Ester, 1987; Eisinga and Scheepers, 1989; Meloen and Middendorp, 1991; Middendorp and Meloen, 1990).<sup>4</sup> Higher scores indicate stronger authoritarianism.

Second, *postmaterialism* has been measured by means of the well-known short version of Inglehart's (1977) index, which is based on the ranking of four political goals. Two of those are considered indicative of postmaterialism ('Giving the people more say in important government decisions' and 'Protecting free speech') and two of materialism ('Maintaining order in the nation' and 'Fighting rising prices'). To do justice to the ranking of the four individual goals, their relative priority has been factor analyzed. The first factor explains 44.2% of the variance, the lowest factor loading is 0.55 and the signs of the materialist goals are opposite to those of the postmaterialist goals. Factor scores are used in the analysis with higher scores indicating stronger postmaterialism.

Third, *rejection of traditional gender roles* has been measured by means of five Likert-type items<sup>5</sup> with high scores indicating a rejection of traditional gender roles (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.68$ ).

Fourth, one's *orientation towards education*, the degree to which one believes that education should be directed at either economic-technological or cultural-intellectual goals ('instrumental', respectively 'intrinsic' orientation towards education), has been measured by means of seven Likert-type items.<sup>6</sup> High scores indicate an 'intrinsic' orientation towards education (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.73$ ).

Factor analyzing the five measures discussed above yields the two expected factors (table 1). Economic progressiveness / conservatism proves unrelated to the four strongly interrelated others. This finding underscores the necessity to systematically distinguish between authoritarianism / libertarianism on the one hand and economic progressiveness / conservatism on the other. Therefore, the scale for economic progressiveness / conservatism is used separately in the subsequent analyses, while the four scales tapping authoritarianism / libertarianism are combined. Both resulting measures range from 0 through 10 with high scores indicating economic progressiveness and authoritarianism, respectively. The correlation between them is a mere -0.13 (two-sided test,  $p<0.01$ ).

### 3.3. Measurement of Social Class

In order to test the hypotheses formulated above, the class schema developed by Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero, the so-called *EGP class schema*, is used in the analysis in addition to the unambiguous class and cultural capital indicators mentioned above. This class schema was developed in the late 1970s (Erikson et al., 1979; Goldthorpe, 1980: 39-42) and according to observers it is the one most widely used by sociologists today (Bakker et al.,

1997: 8; De Graaf and Steijn, 1997: 131; Scheepers et al., 1989: 337; cf. Nieuwbeerta, 1995: 38-39). Since the EGP class schema is largely based upon the classification of occupations, which are themselves strongly related to education, there seems no way to keep it from expressing a mixture of economic capital and cultural capital. This is precisely why it is likely that the EGP classes will differ as regards both economic progressiveness and authoritarianism.

The coding system published by Bakker et al. (1997), based on Ganzeboom et al. (1989), is used to assign EGP class positions to the respondents. This is done on the basis of 1) their occupation, 2) whether they are self-employed and 3) the number of people they have working under them. As regards occupational titles, the *1992 Standard Occupational Classification* drawn up by the Dutch *Central Bureau of Statistics* (1994) is used. The classification of the 711 respondents who work at least 20 hours a week results in a reasonable distribution over the seven EGP classes, be it that class II is much larger than the six other ones (table 2).

*Table 2.1. EGP Class Schema (in %, N=711).*

EGP class		%
Class I	Higher grade professionals, self employed or salaried, higher grade administrators and officials in central and local government and in public and private enterprises; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors.	15.0
Class II	Lower grade professionals and higher grade technicians; lower grade administrators and officials; managers in small business and industrial establishments and in services; supervisors of nonmanual employees.	30.2
Class III	Routine non-manual workers: clerical workers, sales personnel, and other rank and file employees in services.	21.2
Class IV	Petty bourgeoisie: small proprietors, including farmers and smallholders; self employed artisans and all other 'own account' workers apart from professionals.	5.3
Class V	Supervisors of manual workers and lower grade technicians (to some extent manual work).	7.5
Class VI	Skilled manual workers in all branches of industry.	5.8
Class VII	Semi and unskilled manual workers in industry and agricultural workers.	14.2
Unknown		0.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>100.0</b>

Two points require clarification. Firstly, it is important to emphasize that the seven EGP classes do not constitute a one-dimensional hierarchy with class I occupying the most



privileged and class VII the least privileged economic position (Goldthorpe, 1980: 42). The nonmanual classes I, II and III are however arranged this way in the sense that class I occupies the most and class III the least privileged economic position, with class II in the middle. The same holds true for the manual workers in classes V, VI and VII, in which case VII is in the least favorable economic position and class V in the best one with class VI in the middle. However, the relation between these two separate hierarchies, and each of their relations to the class of small self-employed businessmen (class IV) is not simply hierarchical in the same sense. Class III is not simply higher than class V or even higher than classes VI or VII, and class IV is not necessarily lower than classes I, II or even III.

Secondly, it is important to say a few words about what constitutes the ‘working class proper.’ Classes I, II, and IV can be classified as middle class without any problems, while classes VI and VII, consisting of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, definitely constitute the working class. Although sociologists often collapse the EGP class schema into a manual-nonmanual dichotomy (e.g. Nieuwbeerta, 1995; Andersen and Heath, 2002), thus considering *all* manual workers, including Class V, as ‘working class’, and *all* nonmanual workers, including Class III, as ‘middle class’, this classification of those two classes is contestable. As to Class V, ‘a latter-day aristocracy of labour or a “blue collar” élite’ (Goldthorpe, 1980: 41) consisting of lower-grade technicians and supervisors of manual workers, it can be argued that it should be distinguished from the ‘real’ working class by classifying it as (lower) middle class. As to Class III, consisting of routine nonmanual employees, neo-Marxists such as Erik Wright (1979; Wright et al., 1982) argue that it is not part of the ‘middle class’, but consists of ‘white collar proletarians’ who should be classified as ‘working class’ accordingly. In short: although it is uncontested in the literature that EGP classes VI and VII are part of the working class and that classes I, II, and IV are part of the middle class, the classification of classes III and V is contestable.

Because the seven EGP classes cannot be classified in a universally acceptable way, they are not forced into a dichotomous distinction between working and middle class here. This prevents us from comparing two relatively heterogeneous and contestable classes and making the political values of classes III and V invisible by considering them as parts of a larger ‘working class’ or ‘middle class.’ Given the contestable classification of those two EGP classes, the most relevant distinction in interpreting the findings is the one between the working class proper, i.e. classes VI and VII, and the uncontested middle class, i.e. classes I, II and IV.

### 3.4. Measuring Economic and Cultural Capital

*Income* has been measured as net personal income as well as net family income. The former is used to assess the strength of the relationship between EGP-class and income in section 4.2, while the latter is used to explain economic progressiveness. Doing so, we follow Erikson's suggestion that with respect to the strength of the market position the household is the most significant unit of analysis (1984). Mean net personal income is Dfl. 3,072,- (s.d.= Dfl. 1,535,-); mean net family income, of course, is higher: Dfl. 4,468,- (s.d.=Dfl. 1,119).

*Wage dependence*, a variable also used to construct the seven EGP-classes, has been established by asking whether one is self-employed (6.0%) or in paid employment (94.0%).

*Job insecurity* has been operationalized by means of three questions. First, it has been asked whether (5.3%) or not (94.7%) one is working on a temporary contract.<sup>7</sup> Second, the number of times one has been unemployed since the completion of one's education has been ascertained. Answers have been recoded into three categories: never (86.8%), once (7.2%) and twice or more (6.0%). Third, respondents have been asked to estimate the likelihood of someone with a similar job and contract (either permanent or temporary) to be forced to find another job within the next three years. 20.4% answers 'very unlikely', 31.4% 'quite unlikely', 36.6% 'neither likely, nor unlikely' or does not know, 8.3% 'quite likely', and 3.4% 'very likely'. After standardization the three indicators have been added up and transformed into a scale ranging from 0 (lowest job insecurity) through 10 (highest job insecurity).

*Education*. Seven educational levels have been distinguished: 1) no education or only primary education (6.1%); 2) lower vocational education (LBO) (15.5%); 3) lower general secondary education ((M)ULO/MAVO) (16.8%); 4) higher general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (HBS/VWO/Gymnasium) (12.1%); 5) intermediate vocational education (MBO) (17.9%); 6) higher vocational education (HBO) (20.6%); 7) university (5.9%).

*Cultural participation* has been measured by means of seven questions: 1) number of books owned, 2) number of novels read during the three months preceding the interview, 3) frequency of attending concerts, 4) frequency of attending theater, cabaret or ballet, 5) frequency of visiting art exhibitions (for instance, in a museum), 6) frequency of discussing arts and culture with others and 7) degree to which one thinks of oneself as an 'art lover'. The seven scores have been standardized and added up. Next, they have been transformed into a scale ranging from 0 through 10 with higher scores indicating more cultural participation (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.79$ ).

## 4. Economic Capital, Cultural Capital, and Political Values

### 4.1. Social Class, Economic Progressiveness, and Authoritarianism

First, bypassing the distinction between economic and cultural capital for the moment, do we find an economically progressive and authoritarian working class? If so, those belonging to EGP-classes VI and VII, together constituting the working class, should display highest scores on the measures for economic progressiveness and authoritarianism.

As to economic progressiveness, four of the seven classes score above the grand mean of 4.89. As this applies only marginally to classes III and (especially) V, it is evident that the two others, classes VI and VII (the working class), are most economically progressive. They deviate especially from class IV (small self-employed businessmen), which is most conservative economically. Although those findings confirm the idea that the working class is more economically progressive than the other classes, it should be noted that the differences are quite small. Social class explains less than seven percent of the differences with respect to economic progressiveness.

*Table 2. Economic progressiveness and authoritarianism by social class (analyses of variance; deviations from grand means).*

Social class	Economic progressiveness	Authoritarianism
Class I	-0.27	-0.93
Class II	-0.30	-0.47
Class III	0.24	0.17
Class IV	-1.26	0.39
Class V	0.04	0.48
Class VI	0.67	1.05
Class VII	0.75	0.94
Grand mean	4.89	5.05
$\eta^2$	0.26***	0.34***
R <sup>2</sup> (%)	6.5***	11.3***
N	697	695

\*\*\* p < 0.001

With almost twelve percent of the variance explained, differences with regard to authoritarianism are more substantial. Only classes I and II are less authoritarian than the grand mean. Strongest authoritarianism is found within the two classes constituting the working class:

classes VI and VII. So, the idea that the working class is most authoritarian is also confirmed. Summing up, analyzing the relationship between social class and political values, we find exactly the pattern predicted by Lipset: an economically progressive and authoritarian working class.

#### 4.2. Opening Up the Black Box of EGP Social Class

It has been argued above that those relationships do not necessarily mean that both types of political values can be explained from social class in an identical way. To find out whether they can, instead, be attributed to economic and cultural capital, respectively, we now need to introduce this distinction, relying on the unambiguous indicators introduced above. The idea that the observed relationships stem from two different mechanisms – economic capital explaining economic progressiveness and cultural capital explaining authoritarianism – assumes that measures of social class such as the one just used, mix up economic and cultural capital. It is therefore important to open up the black box of EGP social class before testing hypotheses on the divergent effects of economic and cultural capital.

*Table 3. Net personal income, job insecurity, education, and cultural participation by social class (analyses of variance; deviations from grand means).*

Social class	Income	Income (corrected) <sup>1</sup>	Job insecurity	Education	Cultural participation
Class I	991	914	-0.11	1.3	0.98
Class II	224	261	-0.36	0.8	0.49
Class III	-621	-340	0.47	-0.5	-0.15
Class IV	556	-168	-0.53	-0.3	0.49
Class V	228	38	-0.11	-0.4	-0.76
Class VI	-512	-665	-0.12	-1.1	-1.48
Class VII	-692	-718	0.47	-1.7	-1.05
Grand mean	3080	3080	1.65	4.5	2.97
$\eta^2$	0.53***	0.47***	0.23***	0.59***	0.37***
R <sup>2</sup> (%)	0.28***	0.48***	0.05***	0.34***	0.14***
N	678	678	706	689	705

\*\*\* p < 0.001

1 Corrected (by means of covariates) for age, sex, and number of weekly working hours.

We bypass differences regarding wage dependence between the seven classes in this analysis, as those are used in the coding procedure of the EGP-class scheme. For instance, all members of class IV are self-employed, whereas workers (classes VI and VII) cannot be by definition. As to the remaining indicators for social class and cultural capital, table 3 displays the contents of the black box - to the extent relevant to the current discussion, of course.

As regards income, the seven classes differ substantially. Almost thirty percent of personal income differences can be explained from class membership. As income is usually considered the pre-eminent standard when assessing the validity of class measures, this is not surprising, of course. As the seven classes are likely to differ with respect to age, sex composition, and number of working hours, three variables known to have income consequences<sup>8</sup>, table 3 also displays income differences after controlling for those. This hardly affects the size of the income differences between the seven classes, however (? decreases only slightly from 0.53 tot 0.47).<sup>9</sup> On average, members of classes VI and VII, the working class, earn the lowest incomes.

As to job insecurity, the seven classes hardly differ: they tap only five percent of the differences, with classes III and VII characterized by most job insecurity. This is a remarkable finding, as the validity of a class measure that fails to capture differences with respect to economic security may be doubted.<sup>10</sup> Finally, differences regarding education and, to a somewhat lesser extent, cultural participation are substantial: 34% of the educational differences and 14% of those regarding cultural participation are captured by the distinction between the seven classes. The working class, classes VI and VII, is not only most poorly educated, but least interested in arts and culture as well.

Summing up, the working class is characterized by limited economic capital as well as limited cultural capital. This confirms that EGP-class mixes up the two, obscuring their possibly radically diverging effects in the process. Which of those two types of capital is responsible for the relationships between social class and both types of political values?

#### *4.3. Social Class, Economic Capital and Economic Progressiveness*

How exactly does the economic progressiveness of the working class come about? To answer this question, a regression analysis in two steps is performed. In the first step, education and the four explicit indicators for economic and cultural capital are entered. Next, in the second step, using the 'stepwise' option (SPSS), it is assessed whether or not the initial differences between the seven classes, as recorded in table 2 above, are attributable to the variables

already included in the analysis.<sup>11</sup> If neither of the class dummies is able to significantly improve on the percentage of variance already explained, this means that the initial differences between the seven classes were caused by the variables already entered in the first step. The key question, then, is which of those are decisive.

*Table 4. Economic progressiveness explained by (indicators for) social class and cultural capital ( $\beta$ 's; N=661).*

Predictors	$\beta$
<i>Step 1</i>	
Cultural participation	0.08 (n.s.)
Education	-0.15***
Income	-0.12**
Job insecurity	0.18***
Wage dependence	0.15***
<i>Step 2</i>	
Class I	-0.00 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class II	-0.07 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class III	0.00 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class IV	0.04 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class V	-0.00 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class VI	0.05 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class VII	0.07 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
<hr/>	
R <sup>2</sup> (%)	10.4***

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

n.s. Not significant (p>0.05)

1 Not included in regression equation

What are the results of this analysis? First, the differences between the seven classes recorded in table 2 above prove fully attributable to the variables already included in the first step of the analysis (table 4). Second, a low family income, a low level of education, higher job insecurity, and wage dependence - in short: limited economic capital -, all lead to stronger economic progressiveness. Although none of those effects is very strong (they range from 0.10 to 0.20), variance explained is somewhat higher than in the previous analysis, in which social class was used as the independent variable (10% and 7%, respectively). This difference mainly results from the influence of job insecurity, which does affect economic progressiveness, but is hardly captured by EGP-class. Third, cultural participation, the only variable entered in the first step which does not indicate economic capital, does not affect

economic progressiveness.

It can be concluded that the previously recorded economic progressiveness of the working class is caused by its limited economic capital. This relationship results from the economic interests which are at stake: as particularly the working class has an interest in state regulation of the economy and economic redistribution, it most strongly favors this.

#### 4.4. Social Class, Cultural Capital and Authoritarianism

Next, a similar type of analysis is performed for authoritarianism (table 5). Education has a strong negative effect on authoritarianism. So, whereas as an indicator for social class a high level of education leads to economic conservatism, it has a negative effect on authoritarianism as well. Of course, this is not surprising, as it has been demonstrated by many other studies. The effects of the other variables included in the analysis indicate that this educational effect has nothing to do with economic capital. There are three compelling reasons for this conclusion.

Table 5. Cultural conservatism explained by (indicators for) social class and cultural capital ( $\beta$ 's;  $N=659$ ).

Predictors	$\beta$
<i>Step 1</i>	
Cultural participation	-0.34***
Education	-0.24***
Income	-0.07 (n.s.)
Job insecurity	-0.07*
Wage dependence	-0.05 (n.s.)
<i>Step 2</i>	
Class I	-0.05 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class II	-0.02 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class III	0.01 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class IV	-0.04 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class V	0.03 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class VI	0.05 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
Class VII	0.02 (n.s.) <sup>1</sup>
$R^2$ (%)	26.3***

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

n.s. Not significant ( $p > 0.05$ )

<sup>1</sup> Not included in regression equation

First, neither a low income, nor high job insecurity, nor wage dependence leads to authoritarianism. This is not what we would expect to find if, like economic progressiveness, authoritarianism could be explained from limited economic capital as well. That education, indeed, indicates something else here is confirmed by a second finding: cultural participation has an almost equally strong negative effect. So, unlike the economic progressiveness of the working class, its authoritarianism is not caused by its limited economic capital, but by its limited amount of cultural capital. Third, indeed, the initial differences between the seven classes prove fully attributable to cultural capital. Moreover, in terms of variance explained, education and cultural participation provide a better explanation than social class. Working-class authoritarianism, we can conclude, is not caused by its limited economic capital, but by its limited cultural capital.

Summing up, the circumstance that the working class is characterized by both economic progressiveness and authoritarian does not mean that both types of political values can be explained in the same way. Its economic progressiveness stems from its limited economic capital. The economic interests of the working class, related to its limited economic capital, lead it to favor income redistribution and state regulation of the economic system. Authoritarianism stems from its limited cultural capital, however. It is thus necessary to complement Lipset's vital distinction between economic progressiveness / conservatism and authoritarianism / libertarianism with Bourdieu's distinction between economic and cultural capital, which has so far played no role in political sociology.

## **5. Why Do So Many People Vote 'Unnaturally' Today?**

### *5.1. The Breakdown of the Traditional Class Alignments*

The traditional class approach to politics maintains that working class and middle class 'naturally' vote for left-wing and right-wing political parties, respectively, because it is those parties that represent their 'true' economic class interests (Lipset, 1970: 186; Heath, et al., 1995: 564). Since World War II, this conventional class approach to politics has been challenged by a dramatic decline of the very patterns of voting it predicts. The working class has since become less likely to vote for leftist parties and the middle class has become less likely to vote for rightist parties (Nieuwbeerta, 1995; 1996). Why do today so many people,



working and middle class alike, vote for parties that do not represent their ‘real class interests’, producing a remarkable increase of ‘unnatural voting’?

The above analysis leads us to expect that this new type of ‘unnatural’ voting behavior can be explained by cultural voting motives tied to cultural capital rather than by economic voting motives tied to economic capital. After all, members of the working class, who have limited cultural capital and consequently adhere to authoritarian values, are likely to cast rightist rather than leftist votes. For members of the middle class, the reverse applies. Because of their substantial amount of cultural capital, they adhere to libertarian values that are likely to lead them to vote for leftist rather than rightist parties. As to the conventional voting patterns that are predicted by traditional class analysis, i.e., a left-voting working class and a right-voting middle classes (‘natural’ voting), the explanation offered by traditional class analysis is likely to hold, of course. In this case, economic capital and related economic voting motives are likely to be decisive. So, if people vote in line with their class positions (‘natural’ voting behavior), we expect this to be caused by economic capital and the economically progressive or conservative values this gives rise to (hypothesis D1). If people vote inconsistent with their class positions (‘unnatural’ voting behavior), this is expected to be attributable to the amount of cultural capital and the authoritarian or libertarian values connected to it (hypothesis D2).

## *5.2. Explaining ‘Natural’ and ‘Unnatural’ Voting*

To test those two hypotheses, voting behavior has been measured as the party respondents say they would vote for if there would be parliamentary elections. Respondents who indicated that they would vote for Labor (PvdA), the Greens (GroenLinks) or the Socialists (SP) were classified as ‘left’. Respondents who indicated that they would vote for the Liberals (VVD), the Democrats (D66), Christian Democrats (CDA), or one of three small fundamentalist Christian parties (SGP/GPV/RPF) were coded ‘non-left’. Respondents who indicated that they would not vote or would vote for a party not mentioned here, are left out of the analysis.

Table 6 demonstrates how weak the relationship between class and voting has become in the Netherlands today: the two are not even significantly associated. This implies that knowing one’s class position, no correct prediction can be made about the party one is most likely to vote for.

In testing our two hypotheses, we proceed by coding the respondents into separate categories of ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ voters. So, all members of the working class who said they would vote for a non-leftist party and all members of the middle class who said they

would vote for a leftist party are placed in the category of ‘unnatural’ voters. All members of the working class who said they would vote for a leftist party and all members of the middle class who said they would vote for a non-leftist one are placed in the category of ‘natural’ voters. For each of those categories of voters separately we present logistic regression analyses to test our hypotheses.

*Table 6. Voting behavior by EGP class position (in %; N ‘natural’ voters = 304 (56.6%); N ‘unnatural’ voters = 233 (43.4%) (‘unnatural’ voting behavior italicized).*

EGP-class	Non-left	Left
Class I	56.0	<i>44.0</i>
Class II	62.4	<i>37.6</i>
Class III	55.0	<i>45.0</i>
Class IV	81.8	<i>18.2</i>
Class V	<i>61.0</i>	39.0
Class VI	<i>57.7</i>	42.3
Class VII	<i>52.4</i>	47.6
Total	59.6	40.4

Cramer’s V=0.14 (p>0.10).

Table 7 presents the findings for the ‘natural’ voters. The two unambiguously cultural variables (cultural participation and cultural conservatism) play no role whatsoever here. The indicators of economic capital, however, significantly affect voting behavior. In the first model, we find significant effects for wage dependence and family income. For wage-dependent ‘natural’ voters the odds of voting left are higher than for those who are not wage dependent, and for those with lower family incomes the odds of doing so are higher than for those with higher family incomes. These effects disappear after controlling for economic progressiveness in the third model. This means that limited economic capital leads to economic progressiveness, which in turn leads to higher odds of voting left. Finally, a higher level of education increases the odds of voting for a non-left party, while a lower level of education decreases the odds of voting for a party on the left. Like the effects of wage dependence and income, this negative effect of educational level thus needs to be understood in terms of class-related economic interests.

In the final model, level of education and economic progressiveness explain almost

50% of the variance of the voting behavior of the ‘natural’ voters. The first hypothesis is thus accepted: ‘natural’ voting behavior can be explained by economic capital and the economically progressive or conservative values resulting from it. This is not a remarkable finding, of course: it is exactly what traditional class analysis has been assuming all along. The importance of this finding becomes clear when we look at the results of a similar type of analysis for the ‘unnatural’ voters, however (see table 8).

*Table 7. Explanation of the ‘natural’ vote (1=non-left; 2=left; logistic regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses, N=281).*

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Job insecurity	0.093 (n.s.) (0.092)		0.034 (n.s.) (0.098)
Wage dependence	2.226 * (1.123)		1.193 (n.s.) (1.137)
Income	-0.410 ** (0.145)		-0.132 (n.s.) (0.160)
Educational level	-0.734 *** (0.128)		-0.697 *** (0.137)
Cultural participation	-0.127 (n.s.) (0.225)		-0.367 (n.s.) (0.252)
Economic progressiveness		1.606 *** (0.267)	1.216 *** (0.311)
Authoritarianism		0.157 (n.s.) (0.240)	-0.500 (n.s.) (0.311)
Constant	1.369 (n.s.) (1.340)	-6.955*** (1.216)	-0.387 (n.s.) (2.176)
-2 Log likelihood	197.435	227.149	176.547
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)	0.387	0.251	0.474

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

Job insecurity, wage dependence, family income, and economic progressiveness, all unambiguously economic variables, do not play any role whatsoever in explaining ‘unnatural’ voting behavior. The effect of cultural participation, however, is significant and positive in the first model, indicating higher odds of voting left for those with more cultural capital. This effect disappears after controlling for authoritarianism / libertarianism in the third model. The effect of authoritarianism / libertarianism is significant and negative, indicating that libertarians are more inclined to vote for a left-wing party. This means that, as expected, people with a larger

amount of cultural capital are more libertarian, which increases the odds of voting for a party on the left.<sup>12</sup>

*Table 8. Explanation of the ‘unnatural’ vote (1=non-left; 2=left; logistic regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses, N=218).*

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Job insecurity	0.130 (n.s.) (0.091)		0.092 (n.s.) (0.101)
Wage dependence	-5.555 (n.s.) (16.174)		-5.701 (n.s.) (15.961)
Income	0.149 (n.s.) (0.132)		0.186 (n.s.) (0.000)
Educational level	0.456 *** (0.119)		0.344 ** (0.128)
Cultural participation	0.854 *** (0.208)		0.442 (n.s.) (0.243)
Economic progressiveness		0.306 (n.s.) (0.249)	0.490 (n.s.) (0.270)
Authoritarianism		-1.835 *** (0.284)	-1.147 *** (0.340)
Constant	3.581 (n.s.) (16.190)	5.705 *** (1.244)	6.173 (n.s.) (16.118)
-2 Log likelihood	200.244	200.504	179.406
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)	0.375	0.374	0.470

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

Note that, in the final model, about 50% of the variance of the voting behavior of the ‘unnatural’ voters is explained by level of education and authoritarianism / libertarianism. This closely resembles the percentage of variance explained in the analysis for the ‘natural’ voters. Therefore, the cultural explanation of voting behavior is equally valuable for explaining ‘unnatural’ voting behavior as the class explanation is for explaining ‘natural’ voting behavior. In short, the second hypothesis is accepted as well: ‘unnatural’ voting behavior can be explained by a person’s cultural capital and the cultural values resulting from it.<sup>13</sup>

Rightist-voting members of the working class and leftist-voting members of the middle class, in short, vote the way they do because their voting behavior is culturally rather than economically motivated. Working-class votes for the left and middle-class votes for the right

are, as they are traditionally expected to be, caused by economic voting motivations, attributable to economic capital. The rightist-voting working class and the leftist-voting middle class are, in short, likely to remain an unresolved theoretical problem as long as students of political behavior neglect the cultural dynamics that underlie voting behavior.

## 6. Conclusion and Debate

The key question in today's so-called 'Death of Class Debate' is why the traditional alignment of the working class with the left and the middle class with the right has eroded in most western countries since World War II (e.g., Evans, 1999; Clark and Lipset, 2001). This question has so far not been answered satisfactorily and this seems to be primarily caused by the theoretical dominance of the traditional class approach to politics. It is telling, for instance, that Nieuwbeerta (1995) attempts to explain the decline of the familiar class-party alignments through the logic of traditional class analysis, but that this attempt fails dramatically.

The foregoing points out why this should be so. Assuming that voting inconsistent with one's economic class interests is basically 'unnatural' or 'abnormal', typical of the class approach to politics, does not seem a particularly fruitful point of departure in solving this problem. Instead, breaking up political sociology's virtual theoretical monopoly of class theory is necessary. Without supplementing class theory with a cultural theoretical logic that addresses the political implications of cultural capital, the mystery of the declining relationship between class and voting is likely to remain unsolved.

## Notes

1. *Economic progressiveness* and *economic conservatism* refer to the extent to which people are for or against the state imposing restrictions on the inequality generated by a free market. *Authoritarianism / libertarianism* entails the extent to which people believe deviations from traditional values and norms are acceptable. As regards economic conservatism / progressiveness, people who are in favor of economic redistribution by the state are defined as progressive and people who prefer a distribution based on the free market are defined as conservative. As regards the dichotomy between authoritarianism and libertarianism, people who feel individuals should be free to live their lives as they wish are defined as libertarian and people who believe deviations from traditional values and norms are unacceptable are defined as authoritarian.

2. This is revealed by research into tolerance for nonconformity (e.g., Stouffer, 1955; Nunn, Crockett and Williams, 1978; Grabb, 1979; 1980; Bobo and Licari, 1989), research into authoritarianism (e.g.,

Dekker and Ester, 1987; Eisinga and Scheepers, 1989), and by research which shows level of education to be an important predictor of racial prejudice (e.g., Case, Greeley and Fuchs, 1989; Eisinga and Scheepers, 1989; Pedersen, 1996) as well as authoritarianism in a more general sense (e.g., Zipp, 1986; Woodrum, 1988a, 1988b; Davis and Robinson, 1996).

3. The six items are: 1) The government should raise the level of social security benefits, 2) Real poverty no longer exists in the Netherlands (item reversed for scale analysis), 3) Large income differences are unjust as people are equal in principle, 4) Nowadays, the working class no longer needs to fight for an equal position in society (item reversed for scale analysis), 5) The government should take drastic measures to reduce income differences, 6) Companies should be forced to give their employees a fair share of their profits.

4. The nine items are 1) Nowadays more and more people are prying into matters that should remain personal and private, 2) Familiarity breeds contempt, 3) Young people sometimes get rebellious ideas, but as they grow up they ought to get over them and settle down, 4) Our social problems would largely be solved, if we could somehow remove criminal and antisocial people from society, 5) What we need is less laws and institutions and more courageous, tireless and dedicated leaders, whom the people can trust, 6) A person with bad manners, habits, and breeding can hardly be expected to get along well with decent people, 7) People can be divided into two distinct classes: the weak and the strong, 8) Sexual crimes, such as rape and assault of children deserve more than just imprisonment; actually such criminals should be given corporal punishment in public, 9) If people would talk less and work harder, everything would work out better.

5. The five items are: 1) If a child gets ill, it is natural that the mother instead of the father stays at home, 2) As to the possession of leadership qualities, women are equal to men (item reversed for scale analysis), 3) Men are equally fit as women to raise young children (item reversed for scale analysis), 4) It is best for young children if their mother does not work outside the home, 5) Failing to complete one's education is more problematical for women than for men.

6. The following items have been used: 1) If many students of an educational institution become unemployed after graduation, the government should restrict its number of first-year students, 2) It is a waste of public funds to have people receive a training which gives them only a slight chance of obtaining a job, 3) Education related to arts and culture is at least as important to society as technical training (item reversed for scale analysis), 4) The government should spend less money on branches of knowledge which fail to yield applicable knowledge, 5) Young people should be free to choose the education they are most interested in (item reversed for scale analysis), 6) Getting a well-paid job later is the principal motive for obtaining a degree, 7) The government should see that universities conduct research which is useful to the government and/or the business community.

7. Of course, this question has not been asked to the self-employed. They have been given the same score here as workers and employees with a permanent contract (0).

8. Given the type of work one does, one's income tends to be higher when one is older, male and, obviously, working more hours. As to the income differences between men and women, the reader is referred to Schippers (1995).

9. As expected, young people, women, and those working a limited number of hours, earn lower incomes than the others do. The combined effect of those three variables is considerable, as the increase of variance explained from 28% to 48% indicates (the three separate effects are not displayed in table 3). Nevertheless, the initial income differences between the seven classes are hardly caused by disproportional numbers of young people, women, and part-time workers within the classes with the lowest average incomes. There is one exception to this, however, as the remarkably low mean income of class III (routine nonmanual) is caused by this phenomenon. The dramatic decline of the mean income of class IV after controlling for those three variables is, of course, especially caused by the relatively high number of working hours of the self-employed.

10. Steijn and Houtman (1998) have found this as well. There are two likely causes for this remarkable finding. First, as a consequence of recent socio-economic changes, analyzed by Beck (1992) as the rise of the risk society, it might be that job insecurity is no longer an exclusive characteristic of the working class. If this is the case, the usefulness of the EGP-class scheme has gradually declined as a consequence of changes in the real world. A second possibility, which is logically compatible with the one just mentioned, is that the EGP-class scheme has never tapped job insecurity adequately: it might have been a weak indicator for job insecurity in the past as well.

11. Using this stepwise option has the additional advantage that dummies for all seven classes can be offered for inclusion in the second step without creating problems of multicollinearity.

12. The effect of level of education is significant and positive in the first as well as the third model, which needs to be understood in a cultural sense. It indicates that the odds of voting for a left-wing party increase as the educational level of the 'unnatural' voters increase. This effect clearly contrasts with the effect of education found in our analysis of the 'natural' voters.

13. The role of education in both analyses deserves some comments. In the first analysis (table 7), its effect is negative, in the second one (table 8), it is positive. This confirms the ambiguous nature of education as an indicator of class and cultural capital simultaneously. It is also remarkable that, in tables 7 and 8, the direct effects of education on voting behavior do not disappear after controlling for economic and cultural values. This suggests that voting behavior is not only value-rationally motivated (i.e., driven by economic progressiveness/conservatism and authoritarianism / libertarianism), but that economic and cultural identities related to economic and cultural positions (both indicated by education) play a role as well (compare Weakliem and Heath, 1994).

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