Codebooks for the Analysis of Abstraction and Blame-Deservingness in Unemployment Debates

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## 1. Purpose of the codebook

The codebook is designed to analyse parliamentary debates on unemployment. The general aim is to evaluate how unemployment is framed on a level of abstraction and a blame-deservingness level based on deservingness theory. Therefore, two separate but linked coding schemes are developed: the first coding scheme analyses the level of abstraction; the second one uses a part of the coded material from the first scheme and analyses this material further under the lenses of blame-deservingness. The first coding scheme’s codebook is called ‘Codebook for the analysis on the level of abstraction in parliamentary debates on unemployment’, the second coding scheme’s codebook is called ‘Codebook for the analysis of blame-deservingness in the context of parliamentary debates on unemployment’.

# Codebook for the analysis on the level of abstraction in parliamentary debates on unemployment

## 2. Purpose of the codebook

The codebook is designed to analyse parliamentary debates on unemployment with the aim of identifying on which level of abstraction unemployment is identified and dealt with.

## 3. General coding instructions

The idea of the coding scheme is to analyse on which level of abstraction statements are made in parliamentary debates over unemployment.

Transcribed laughter or applause is deleted from the protocols, because these cannot be interpreted in a meaningful way.

The analysis of the parliamentary debates is done by coding the original paragraphs of the parliamentary protocols. Only paragraphs with a focus on unemployment/ the unemployment system are coded. Not coded are: paragraphs including general parliamentary rhetoric (e.g. greetings, government/opposition talk, voting), paragraphs having a more general focus (e.g. the social security system or the economic system), paragraphs only conveying facts on the legislative act, and paragraphs exclusively on the employees in unemployment agencies.

A paragraph is attributed to one speaker only. Hecklers’ interruptions are treated as an own paragraph and the interrupted statement as two paragraphs.

The context of a paragraph is only relevant for paragraphs in which the coding is ambiguous/ unclear. The context is defined as the paragraphs preceding and following the paragraph.

## 4. System of categories

The coding scheme has three codes: Society (macro), organisation (meso), individual (micro).

Table 1 Coding scheme: level of abstraction in unemployment

|  |
| --- |
| **Level 1: Attributional Level** |
| Societal (macro) |
| Organisational (meso) |
| Individual (micro) |

The level of abstraction determines the reference point in society. This builds on the fact that the problem of unemployment - its reasons and solutions - can be discussed on a macro (societal), meso (organisational) and/or micro (individual) level. If a paragraph in itself does not convey the level of attribution, the context of the paragraph is decisive. One example is the central term ‘support and demand’ (‘fördern and fordern’), which receives the individual code (see below). Another example is the term ‘sanction’ (‘Sanktion’) which is based on the individual level if no context is given.

### 4.1. Societal

The code is given if paragraphs on unemployment have a focus on the macro level of society, be it the economic or the political system, or the general social or demographic structure of society. Paragraphs with this code address (un)employment on a societal level. ‘Temporary employment’ (‘Zeitarbeit’) and ‘subcontracted labour’ (‘Leiharbeit’) generally belong to this level. The level changes only if employers, unions or the individual employee are explicitly mentioned. Words like ‘frameworks’ (‘Rahmenbedingungen’), ‘demographic development’ (‘demographische Entwicklung’), ‘labour market’ (‘Arbeitsmarkt’), ‘employment policy’ (‘Beschäftigungspolitik’) signal a societal level, if no further specification is given.

### 4.2. Organisational

The code is given to paragraphs with a focus on the meso level of society, defined as organisations, be they private companies, trade unions, employer associations or other organised interest groups. Although the unemployment agency (‘Bundesagentur für Arbeit’, BA) is also an organisation, the coding of paragraphs, which include the BA is not determined to be in this category, because the BA’s role might also be discussed in societal terms or in terms of individualistic solutions to unemployment. However, in many situations, where a societal context is not strongly given, the paragraphs fall into the ‘organisational’ code. Paragraphs discussing a certain sub-branch of economics like ‘craft industries’ (‘das Handwerk’) are coded under the organisational level. Words like ‘companies’ (‘Unternehmen’), ‘employers’ (‘Arbeitgeber’), ‘trade unions’ (‘Gewerkschaften’) signal an organisational level, if no further specification is given. Furthermore, references to collective bargaining are included into the code (e.g. ‘tariff partner’ (‘Tarifpartner’), ‘(free) collective bargaining’ (‘Tarifautonomie’, ‘Tarifverhandlungen’)).

### 4.3 Individual

The code is given to paragraphs focusing on the micro level, meaning solutions and problems concerning unemployment, re-employed or the risk of unemployment based on the individual. This includes also paragraphs on specific groups, having a high risk of un- or re-employment, e.g. the unemployed, the old, the long-term unemployed, women with care obligations. For ‘subcontracted or temporary workers’ (‘Leih- or Zeitarbeiter’), the context is decisive for the coding. Furthermore, the household level belongs to this code. The central term ‘support and demand’ (‘fördern und fordern’) generally belongs to this level of abstraction. The central term ‘sanction’ (‘Sanktion’) is based only on the individual level if no context is given. Although words and terms in their singular form such as ‘individual’ (‘Individuum’, ‘individuell’), ‘the unemployed’ (‘der Arbeitslose’) or ‘each individual’ (‘jeder Einzelne’), ‘each’ (‘jedem’) are good indicators for this code, plural forms can indicate an individual code too. In addition, words like ‘custom-fit/ tailor-made’ (‘passgenau’), ‘affected person’ (‘Betroffene’), ‘integration contract’ (‘Eingliederungsvertrag’) or ‘reporting obligation’ (‘Meldepflicht’) signal an individual code if no further specification is given.

# Codebook for the analysis of blame-deservingness in the context of parliamentary debates on unemployment

## 5.Purpose of the codebook

The Codebook is designed to analyse how individuals are blamed and how their deservingness is established for their own unemployment in parliamentary debates. The purpose of the codebook is a secondary analysis of the individual codes based on the ‘Codebook for the analysis on the level of abstraction in parliamentary debates on unemployment’.

## 6.General coding instructions

The purpose of the coding scheme is to analyse if and how much unemployed individuals are blamed for their situation or on the contrary if and how much deservingness is established for unemployed individuals. The idea on the blame-deservingness level is based and operationalised via the deservingness criteria (van Oorschot, 2017) of control and need. The paragraphs that have prior been assigned an individual code (see ‘Codebook for the analysis on the level of abstraction in parliamentary debates on unemployment’) are coded with *one* code on the degree of need and *one* code on the degree of control. It is not possible to assign only a control code without a need code and vice versa. Both dimensions have three levels: ‘high,’ ‘neutral,’ and ‘low’ with attached values of +1 to -1. It is important to note that the values are reversed. The degree of need has three levels ranging from +1 to -1, whereby -1 means a high degree of need, +1 a low degree of need and 0 a paragraph with a neutral position. The degree of control has three levels from +1 to -1, too, whereby -1 means a low degree of control, +1 a high degree of control and 0 a paragraph with a neutral position. For both dimension the neutral position indicates that nothing at all is framed in the terms of individual need or control. The neutral code is *only* given if the dimension is not touched at all. By adding the degree of need and the degree of control the level of blame- deservingness is calculated. The level ranges from inflicting blame (+2 and +1) to establishing deservingness (-2 and -1). As an example: a low need (+1) and a high self-control (+1) would indicate inflicting blame (+2).

Table 2 Coding scheme: blame-deservingness

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level of Control | Level of Need | Control + Need | |
| High control (+) | low need (+) | 2 | Inflicting Blame |
| high control (+) | neutral need (x) | 1 |
| neutral control (x) | low need (+) | 1 |
| high control (+) | high need (-) | 0 | Neutral |
| neutral control (x) | neutral need (x) | 0 |
| low control (-) | low need (+) | 0 |
| neutral control (x) | high need (-) | -1 | Establishing deservingness |
| low control (-) | neutral need (x) | -1 |
| low control (-) | high need (-) | -2 |

The coding is not influenced by the speaker of the text. Furthermore, codes refer to the content of a paragraph and not to its meaning. For example, if a speaker takes up an argument of an opposing party (mainly in order to negate or turn around the argument) the frame is given to the content of the paragraph (which is the argument of the opposing party) and not to the negated meaning. If two or more arguments in conflict with each other are included in one paragraph, the theoretically more important argument for the discourse is coded. An example would be: ‘The XY party [opposing party] thinks unemployed are lazy. We do not think so.’ In this example, the repetition of the opposing argument enforces this argument and is thus taken as the basis for coding. In this example, the code would be ‘low need’ and ‘high control’.

An argument on eastern Germany is generally coded with the codes ‘low control’ and ‘high need’ because unemployment in this part of Germany is generally much higher than in the western part as a result of a weak economic infrastructure. Arguments that focus on the ‘care’ (Betreuung’) of the unemployed are coded with ‘low control’ and ‘high need’. Arguments on agency work and sanctions have to be coded by focusing on the exact context.

## 7.System of categories

### 7.1 Need

The dimension of need is part of the construction of blame-deservingness. It focuses on the level of individual need of the unemployed. The notion is that people with low/no (perceived) need (e.g. financial, medical or psychological) are easier to blame for their unemployment, because they could use their resources for getting out of unemployment, whereas people with a high (perceived) need do not have any resources to enable them to get out of their unemployment and are, thus, less able to be blamed.

#### 7.1.1 Low need (+)

This code is given to paragraphs in which unemployed individuals are framed as without (a high level of) need.

Example:

‘Do you remember the last march, when Mister Merz blustered about food stamps for unemployed who are not willing to work? I am glad that this unworthy debate was replaced by a discussion on concepts.’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2002b, 675 D, own translation.)

#### 7.1.2 Neutral need

This code is given to paragraphs in which no need frame is employed. Segments including terms like ‘basic income’ (Grundsicherung) or ‘sanctions’ do not have a general connotation. Only if they are set into a specific context the coding is ‘high’ or ‘low’. Without specification, these terms indicate a neutral need code.

Example:

‘The government wanted to set a focus on the reduction of consolidated long-term unemployment. Three years have passed and nothing has happened.’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016b, 17067 D, own translation.)

#### 7.1.3 High need (-)

This code is given to paragraphs in which unemployed individuals are framed as having a high level of need. This includes the need for accommodation, money and food, as well as the need for these resources due to (‘hard’) sanctions. Furthermore, the code includes help from a third party (family, social work, the state etc.) that is needed and taken.

Example:

‘What does this lead to? – Temporary work will remain, that is not the point, but it will change. In the future, there will be no chances anymore to get a permanent job for the low-qualified and the long-term unemployed, because they will not transition into employment. Only the high qualified and the skilled workers will be placed in temporary work. The others will be excluded from the system; you deny them the last chance to find a permanent job.’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2002b, 674 D - 675 A, own translation.)

### 7.2 Control

The dimension of ‘control over neediness’ (van Oorschot and Roosma, 2017: 13) is central to the construction of blame-deservingness. It focuses on the individual responsibility of the unemployed for being in this situation.

#### 7.2.1 High self-control/responsibility (+)

This code is given to paragraphs that emphasise the individual responsibility for being unemployed or for getting out of unemployment. Furthermore, paragraphs that stress the lack of motivation or incentives to work are coded here, because they implicitly focus on the potential (but lack of effective) self-control and responsibility. This includes ‘asocial behaviour’ (‘sozialwidriges Verhalten’), which hints at the active choice of this behaviour. A lack of education/qualification is coded here because it is the individual’s responsibility to take up appropriate qualification measures. An exception to this rule are cases in which this lack of education/qualification is combined with the notion of low self-responsibility for this situation. Furthermore, paragraphs stressing the individual freedom of choice are included in this code. ‘Support and demand’ (‘Fördern und Fordern’) indicates a high control.

Examples:

‘The chances lie mainly in the area of skilled employment. Occupational qualification is and remains the best protection from unemployment. Therefore, the massive subsidies for qualification remain an essential and permanent task. This applies to the older people and to those, who have not mastered their first apprenticeship, too.’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2002b, 673 B, own translation.)

‘Lowly-qualified people do not provide the same performance and productivity as the well-trained permanent staff.’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2002b, 674 D, own translation.)

#### 7.2.2 Neutral self-control/ responsibility

This code is given to statements which do not implicitly or explicitly focus on control. Segments on ‘young people/young unemployed’ are neutral in their meaning on control, unless a specific other context is set.

Examples:

‘We are talking about new instruments, for example, how we can develop the Personal-Service-Agencies for temporary work from a trail to a pathway for the long-term unemployed to transition into the first labour market.’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2002b, 676 A, own translation.)

‘With the I-Agencies we will use the routine skills of the unemployed, whose talents are only used in the basement, to help them in using these skills to get into the labour market. We will promote autonomy with this. Furthermore, we will modernise the qualification system with practice-oriented modules. I have been in such an institution recently. Somebody there said to me: Give me a hammer, let me work and stop talking.’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2002b, 677 C, own translation.)

#### 7.2.3 low self-control/responsibility (-)

This code is given to paragraphs that stress individual hardships, which make it difficult to get (re)employed (e.g. physical and psychological limitations, caring duties). A lack of sufficient education or qualification is only coded here if it is combined with a frame that stresses that it has not been the individual’s responsibility to receive sufficient education/qualification. Generally, older people (people aged 50 or more) are a synonym of low control, except for segments explicitly focusing on a different aspect of these people.

Examples:

‘Second. Long-term unemployed persons need special conditions if their reemployment should succeed, for temporary work to be a bridge into the labour market. They need this because they have a distance to the first labour market. We will ensure these conditions.’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2002b, 676 D, own translation.)

‘Yes, we, as the ministry for work and social affairs, have proposed to enhance and facilitate the eligibility to unemployment benefits, especially for temporary employment, and to extend the qualifying period to three years. That would have accounted for specific employment biographies that are marked by many short-term employments, for example, people in the cultural sector. (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016b, 17067 A, own translation.)

‘You are saying you want to increase the number of long-term unemployed who start additional occupational education and you want to strengthen their motivation and stamina by paying premiums. Again, you pretend that these people are entirely responsible for the situation they find themselves in because they are not motivated enough. Just asking: Motivated for what? To be honest, there are nearly no further qualification programs. Instead of acknowledging this, you still refer to the legend of the unmotivated unemployed. (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016b, 17067 C, own translation.)

# References

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