

Social Classes vs Professional Stereotypes in Greece. A View to a Foggy Social Construction

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Abstract: *In the context of the largest crisis that capitalism has ever faced the discussion on social class and class consciousness seems more relevant than ever. The Greek crisis strikes as an ideal opportunity to start this debate. The phenomenal rise of the middle class in Greece over the last four decades has shaped a very problematic framework for a deep and rational analysis of social classes in contemporary Greek society. The policy that had enabled public servants and small businessmen to have access to social goods - that until a few years ago was exclusive privilege of the upper class - has changed the dominant model of interpretation of social stratification and hierarchy in modern Greek society. This study by using a mixed questionnaire (Likert scale and Content Analysis of the written texts) investigates the class stereotypes and the class consciousness of the Greek youth, while trying to clarify the facts of class stratification in the country in the midst of an unprecedented economic, social and political crisis.*

Keywords: *social class, class consciousness, university students, social stereotypes*

1. Introduction

The unprecedented economic and fiscal crisis in Greece and in the entire Western world brought back to the timeliness the academic and political debate on social class and class consciousness. The phenomenal rise of the middle class in Greece over the last four decades has shaped a very problematic framework for a deep and rational analysis of social classes in contemporary Greek society. The policy that had enabled public servants and small businessmen to have access to social goods - that until a few years ago was exclusive privilege of the upper class - created a wide confusion in the field of "legitimation", changing the dominant model of interpretation of social stratification and hierarchy in modern Greek society. What ultimately defines the social class in which everyone belongs? Is it the level of income? Is it the social origin? Is it the nature of his/ her work? Is it the social status, the civic culture or the family background?

In modern societies, classes are characterized by complexity, fluidity, ambiguity of boundaries, or even their content. Using the academic theory of conflicts, the "classic" criteria of existence and differentiation of the social classes

are based on factors like the possession or not of the means of production, the degree of dependency of work, the division of labor, the level of income, the capability of consumption, the level of educational background, the social status, the access to social goods (such as education, healthcare, leisure time etc.), the ability to gain upward social and occupational mobility (Gurvitch, 1954).

According to Marxists, the appearance of classes is a social and historical phenomenon. Neither existed always classes nor will always exist. The first form of social organization that appears in the history of mankind was the stage of primitive communism, a kind of a classless society. The society was not divided into classes while the division of labor, was based on the difference between the two sexes. The everyday life was dependent by nature while the labor productivity was according to the people's needs. Social subjects enjoyed the balance of nature and their activities took part according to the circular time. So, the question arises: in what circumstances the social classes appeared? What happened in the historical process which provoked the structure of class society?

Undoubtedly, factors such as the development of means of production or the discovery and development of agriculture and livestock, prepared the conditions for the social division of labor. So the increasing of labor productivity led to the creation of social surplus, promoting the emergence of private property and exploitation human by human. In that way began the deconstruction of primitive classless scheme and appeared gradually the division of society into classes.

It is explicit that Marx predicted the polarization of classes as a consequence of capitalist development. It is also certain that, from the Marxist's point of view, the formation of distinct and separate classes consists one of the most significant process in the Marxian theory and philosophy of political action. The challenge which is currently remains is to analyse the process of formation of distinct and different social groups, taking account new criteria as well as rational tools of understanding.

Both the legacy of Frankfurt School and Neo-Marxist writers, have overcome the traditional orthodox Marxism in the theoretical interpretation of modern capitalist society (Jay, 2004). According to Marcuse, both the working class is not the revolutionary subject as orthodox Marxists argued and new social categories and movements have appeared who can play a significant role in the process of social transition. (Marcuse, 1969). Additionally, intellectuals as Poulantzas, Carchedi and Wright have tried to deal theoretically with the phenomenon of "new middle class", concluding that the traditional division of labour is not enough to explain the modern social and class differentiation. (Carchedi, 1977; Wright, 1976; Poulantzas, 1975).

Among non-Marxist sociologists, only Giddens (1973) has attempted to find a theoretical solution to the problem of class formation. Building on Weber's work, he introduces the concept of 'structuration' to distinguish a few clearly defined classes. According to Weber (1968, 46), *a 'social class' makes up the totality of those class situations within which individual and generational mobility is easy and typical*. Based on this definition, Weber argues that modern capitalism is characterized by four classes: a) the working class, b) the petty bourgeoisie, c) property less non-manual employees, and d) large property holders. There are also some general characteristics of advanced capitalist societies which create important divisions within the middle class as well as divisions between the middle and upper class and the middle and working class. Giddens points out three factors, the division of labour within the enterprise, authority (control) relations within the enterprise and the influence of distributive groupings (Stephens, 1979).

It is clear that the debate on social classes is theoretically complicated. This is illustrated to the students' views and it is certain that the political and sociological discussion will be continued, specifically in the era of fiscal and economic crises which is a crucial epoch in transition.

2. Sample and methodology of the research

The research sample was comprised of 150 students, who, during the academic year 2010-11, were asked to give spontaneous answers to a questionnaire. Data collection was based on a questionnaire, which investigated the subjects' views about the social classes and attempted to investigate the class consciousness of Greek youth. The questionnaires include initially some demographic questions and then open and closed questions related to social class, class consciousness and class stereotypes. Specifically, the first three open-ended questions concerned the description of the three main social classes, the lower class, the middle class and the upper class. Below there is a range of occupations which should be characterized by the subjects using various adjectives and immediately following two more open-ended questions that ask the students to tell what profession they want to do and why, and in what social class their family belongs and why. In this piece of research we have selected the questionnaire as a research tool for the following reasons: a) The questionnaire attracts the interest of the people questioned more easily and increases their participation in the research procedure (Anderson, 1990; Javeau, 1988) b) The necessity of using a large sample of subjects (Davidson, 1970), c) The questionnaire is suitable for the collection of information, such as perceptions and opinions,

which cannot be easily observed (Verma & Mallick, 1999; Fraise & Piaget, 1970) and d) The questionnaire is a research tool that provides the opportunity for continuous trials and interventions, in order to be constructed in the best possible way (Javeau, 1988) The questions/ statements had to be answered by a fixed answer on the basis of Likert's five-point scale (1: *Strongly Disagree*, 2: *Disagree*, 3: *Neither Disagree nor Agree*, 4: *Agree*, 5: *Strongly Agree*). The questions with negative implications were reversed in order to derive positive implications. The questionnaire includes 36 sentence-statements which investigate the above mentioned issues. The corpus of data was analyzed on the basis of Factor Analysis, which is widely applied in Social Sciences. Factor Analysis was employed with a view to investigating the social subjects'/ students' response motif which enables interpreting a complex set of variables, reducing them to a smaller number, each of which is equivalent to a greater number of the initial ones. In addition, Factor Analysis enables identifying the variables, which are typical of each factor (factorial axis) and conducive to its development. Finally, the specific analysis facilitates the identification of the groups of students, in terms of their attitudes/views to the phenomenon of immigration. The internal consistency of the questionnaire (that is, whether the questionnaire statements investigate the same situation, and in particular, the students' stance towards the immigrants) was estimated in terms of alpha reliability. Alpha coefficient (Cronbach's α) is the means of all the probable dichotomy reliability values for the questionnaire and was applied because it is not dependent on the statement layout ($\alpha=0,845$).

Regarding the analysis of the written answers of the subjects in questions such as: "which are the characteristics of the lower or the upper social class?" or "What profession would you like to do and why?" we used the methodological tool of Quantitative Content Analysis, which, as Curley (1990) states, allows (a) the combination of quantitative and qualitative data, (b) traces and records the types of social interaction through discourse analysis, (c) records historic and cultural elements, (d) records and analyzes social ideologies and (e) investigates concepts as well as the ways in which the specific concepts are perceived by social subjects. In detail, the texts were analyzed following the principles of Quantitative Content Analysis, as they were stated by Holsti (1969), Berelson (1971), De Sola Pool (1959), Palmquist (1990), Weber (1990) and by French researchers (Moscovici, 1970; Mucchielli, 1988; Veron, 1981; Bardin, 1977; Grawitz, 1981) (classical thematic analysis). The "theme" was considered as the basic unit of analysis (Lasswell, Lerner & Sola Pool, 1952; Lasswell & Leites, 1965). According to De Lagarde (1983), the interpretation of the results and their effect is the responsibility of researchers, as it is characterized by the utter absence of any a priori hypotheses. In the present research, the specific method was employed with a view to identifying the criteria for grouping the students' views and attitudes in terms of issues related to social classes, class self-consciousness e.t.c., identifying the interrelated factors that affect their views, and, finally, examining the flow of information that the interrelations at issue generate. In addition, the specific method was employed in order to identify the characteristics of each of the resulting groups. However, the limited number of participants does not enable any generalizations and relevant conclusions; nevertheless, the analysis can be the basis for further discussions and research into the theme of the class consciousness of Greek youngsters.

Table 1. Distribution of sample by gender

Gender	N	%
Male	32	21,3%
Female	118	78,7%
Total	150	100%

Table 2. Educational characteristics of the sample

School	N	%
Public	146	97,5%
Private	4	2,5%
Total	150	100%
Year	N	%
1st year	47	31,7%
2nd year	35	23,3%
3rd year	38	25%
4th year	30	20%
Total	150	100%

According to the tables provided the sample consisted of 32 boys (21.3%) and 118 girls (78.7%). Of the total sample, 97.5% completed the student's education in public school and only 2.5% in a private one. The attended university

departments are the Department of Primary Education with a 36.7% portion the Department of Preschool Education with a 33.3% and the Department of Balkan Studies with 30%. Finally, the 31.7% of students are studying in the first year of their schools, 23.3% in the third year, 25% in the second year and 20% in fourth year.

Table 3. Socioeconomic status of the family

Degree of Urbanization			N		%
Metropolitan urban centre (Athens/Thessaloniki)			31		20,7
Prefecture capital (major cities)			46		30,7
Small towns (up to 10.000)			32		21,3
Rural region (villages)			41		27,3
Total			150		100
Father's profession			Mother's profession		
N	%		N	%	
Free lancer/Scientist	14	9,4	Free lancer/Scientist	7	4,7
Civil servant	53	35,6	Civil servant	28	18,7
Private sector servant	24	16,1	Private sector servant	26	17,3
Free lancer/Technician	26	17,4	Free lancer/Technician	7	4,7
Trader	7	4,7	Trader	6	4
Workman	5	3,4	Workman	4	2,7
Farmer	19	12,1	Farmer	5	3,3
Domestic duties	1	0,7	Domestic duties	67	44,7
Retired	1	0,7	Retired	0	0
Total	150	100%	Total	150	100
Father's education			Mother's education		
N	%		N	%	
Illiterate	3	2	Illiterate	6	4
Elementary school graduate	35	23,5	Elementary school graduate	37	24,7
Secondary school graduate	65	43,6	Secondary school graduate	70	46,7
Technological institution graduate	30	20,1	Technological institution graduate	22	14,7
University graduate	14	9,4	University graduate	13	8,7
Post graduate degree	2	1,3	Post graduate degree	2	1,3
Total	149	100	Total	150	100

According to the table 3, 30.7% of the research's sample was born in an urban center, 27.3% in a rural area, 21.3% in small towns and 20.7% in one of the two metropolitan cities of Greece, Athens and Thessaloniki. Referring to the educational level of the parents of students who responded to the questionnaires we can see that regarding to the fathers' education, 43.6% are secondary school graduates, 23.5% are primary school graduates, 20.1% are graduates of technological institutions, 9.4% are graduates of universities, while only 2% are illiterate and 1.3% holds a postgraduate degree. Similarly for the education of the mother we have: 46.7% who have graduated from the secondary education, 24.7% are primary school graduates, 14.7% are graduates of technological institutions and 8.7% are graduates of universities or polytechnic schools, while a smaller percentage of 4% are illiterate and 1.3% holds a graduate degree.

Regarding the occupations of the parents the results are as follows: for the father, 35.3% are employed as civil servants, 17.4% as free lancers / technicians, 16.1% as private employees, 12.1% as farmers, 9.3% as free lancers/scientists, 4.7% as traders, 3.4% as workmen, and only 2 fathers are in retirement or are responsible for the domestic duties of their house. In the case of mother, 44.7% are homemakers, 18.7% are civil servants and 17.3% are private employees. In a much smaller percentage mothers are employed as free lancers / technicians and free lancers / scientists, (4.7%), traders (4%), farmers (3.3%) or workers (2.7%).

3. Analysis of the results

Table 4. Distribution of characteristics of the lower/ middle and upper social class

Characteristics of the lower social class	%
Low income	31,4%
Low educational level	20%
Low social education	1,7%
Poor	10%
Uneducated	4,8%
Low-income occupations	8,6%
Unemployed	8,3%
Aliens - Immigrants	2,8%
Low living standards	12,4%
Total	100%
Characteristics of the middle social class	%
Average income	48,7%
Advanced education	23,2%
Sufficiency of goods	12,7%
Occupation in the public sector	15,4%
Total	100%
Characteristics of the upper social class	%
High income	28%
Advanced education	21,2%
Rich	35,2%
High social status	11,4%
Exploitation of the weak social groups	4,2%
Total	100%

According to table 4, the major characteristics of the lower social class are: the low income by 31.4% and the low educational level (20%). After that the sample characterized the lower social class to have low standard of living (12.4%), to be poor (10%), to have low-income occupations (8.6%) and to be unemployed (8.3%). The 4.8% of the sample believes that the lower social class is uneducated, the 2.8% states that foreigners and migrants belong to the lower class, while the 1.7% of the sample came up to the low social education.

Regarding the middle class characteristics the 48.7% of the sample mentioned a satisfactory income and another 23.2% of the sample stated the advanced education as the main characteristic of the mid-classes. Furthermore, the professional security of a job in the public sector (15.4%) and the adequacy of goods (12.7%) are mentioned by the participants to the research.

Concerning the views of the sample for the main characteristics of the upper social class, the largest number of statements represented the members of that class as "rich" (35.2%). Furthermore, high percentage of the sample mentioned the high income (28%) and the maximum education (21.2%) as features of the culture of the upper social class. Finally, plenty of statements stated the high social status (11.4%) and the exploitation of the weak by people belonging to higher social class (4.2%).

Table 5. Distribution of statements by type of profession

Type of profession	N	%
Manual industrial	4	2,7%
Pneumatic/ Academic	114	76%
Artistic	12	8%
Sports	2	1,3%
Armed Forces	4	2,7%
DK/DA	14	9,3%
Total	150	100%

The students participated to the research were invited to answer the question: "What profession would you want to do and why?" For the first part of the question, the most preferably answers were the intellectual professions (76%), as most of the students would like to become teachers, professors, lawyers, doctors, etc. As a second preference the artistic occupations were selected (8%). The Armed Forces follows (2.7%), the manual occupations (2.7%) and Sports (1.3%). Finally, 7.3% said they have not decided or chosen profession yet, while 2% did not answer at all.

Table 6. Distribution of statements by selection criterion of profession

Selection criterion of profession	N	%
Love for the subject	81	51,9%
Professional rehabilitation	15	9,6%
Best working conditions	13	8,4%
Best financial rewards	19	12,2%
Contribution to society	28	17,9%
Total	156	100%

Regarding the main selection criteria of the profession, the first place holds the love for the subject of work (51.9%), followed by the temper to offer to mankind and society (17.9%), the good financial rewards (12.2%) the direct vocational rehabilitation (9.6%) and the good working conditions (8.4%)

Table 7. Distribution of the sample by social class

Social Class	N	%
Lower social class	12	8%
Middle social class	128	85,3%
Upper social class	7	4,7%
None	3	2%
Total	150	100%

Answering to the question "In which social class do you think your family belong to and why? The results were as follows: According to the table 7, 85.3% of the sample indicates that their family belongs to the middle class, 8% states that they belong to the lower social class, 4.7% in the upper social class and only 2% says that they do not belong anywhere, because they believe that there is no segregation of people into social classes.

Table 8. Distribution of the statements in accordance with the reasons of self- classification in social class

Criteria of classification	Social class		
	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Income	9 (56,3%)	97 (76,4%)	4 (57,1%)
Unemployment	2 (12,5%)		
Social status	5 (31,2%)	8 (6,3%)	1 (14,3%)
Educational level		22 (17,3%)	
High standards of living			2 (28,6%)
Total	16 (100%)	127 (100%)	7 (100%)

The reasons that the subjects of the research enroll their families in the lower social class are the low income (56.3%), the low social status (31.2%) and the unemployment (12.5%). The reasons for classifying themselves and their families to the middle social class are the satisfactory income (76.4%), the up to average educational level (17.3%) and the good social status as a result of their occupation (6.3%). Lastly, the high economic level (57.1%), the comfortable life (28.6%) and prestigious occupations (14.3%) are the reasons why the subjects to believe that they belong to the upper social class.

Table 9. Distribution of positive an negative characteristics by thematic category and profession

Thematic category	Teacher	Ship-owner	Worker	Farmer	Industrialist	Politician	Clerk	University professor	Businessman	Street sweeper	Plumber	Builder	Physician	
Positive Characteristics	Social status	15 (5,6%)	16 (7,8%)	15 (9,1%)	3 (8,1%)	14 (7,5%)	11 (10,3%)	7 (3,8%)	22 (9,4%)	9 (6,5%)	8 (4,5%)	3 (3,3%)	17 (7,3%)	
	Economic rewards	1 (0,4%)	89 (43,4%)	3 (1,9%)	3 (1,9%)	70 (37,8%)	20 (18,6%)	6 (3,3%)	10 (4,3%)	105 (75,6%)	6 (3,4%)		25 (10,6%)	
	Skills Elements of behavior and character	140 (52,4%)	62 (30,2%)	137 (82,5%)	124 (77%)	74 (40%)	55 (51,4%)	143 (78,1%)	86 (36,9%)	116 (58,6%)		111 (62,5%)	126 (82,9%)	97 (41,8%)
	Nature of occupation	50 (18,7%)	13 (6,4%)	9 (5,4%)	14 (8,7%)	14 (7,7%)	8 (7,5%)	20 (10,9%)	21 (9,1%)	10 (5,1%)	23 (16,5%)	49 (27,4%)	16 (10,5%)	38 (16,7%)
	Educational level	54 (20,3%)	10 (4,9%)			6 (3,2%)	12 (11,3%)	1 (0,5%)	90 (38,6%)	4 (2%)			1 (0,7%)	51 (22,2%)
	General characteristics	7 (2,6%)	15 (7,3%)	5 (3%)	7 (4,3%)	7 (3,8%)	1 (0,9%)	6 (3,4%)	4 (1,7%)	6 (3%)	2 (1,4%)	4 (2,2%)	4 (2,6%)	4 (1,6%)
		267 (100%)	205 (100%)	166 (100%)	161 (100%)	185 (100%)	107 (100%)	183 (100%)	198 (100%)	198 (100%)	139 (100%)	177 (100%)	152 (100%)	232 (100%)
Negative Characteristics	Social status			25 (20,2%)	22 (22,5%)		7 (8,9%)	1 (2,8%)		24 (22,2%)	2 (2,1%)	12 (12,5%)		
	Economic rewards	5 (23,8%)		41 (33%)	23 (20%)		3 (3,8%)			30 (27,8%)	12 (19%)	29 (30,5%)	4 (14,8%)	
	Skills Elements of behavior and character	8 (38,1%)	76 (93,8%)	5 (4%)	8 (7%)	73 (96,1%)	174 (96,7%)	31 (39,2%)	34 (94,4%)	6 (5,6%)	25 (39,7%)	6 (6,3%)	14 (51,8%)	
	Nature of occupation	6 (28,6%)	5 (6,2%)	42 (33,9%)	40 (34,8%)	3 (3,9%)	4 (2,2%)	33 (41,8%)	9 (15,8%)	31 (28,7%)	19 (30,2%)	39 (41%)	6 (22,3%)	
	Educational Level			8 (6,5%)	10 (8,7%)		2 (1,1%)			11 (10,2%)	3 (4,9%)	7 (7,6%)		
	General characteristics	2 (9,5%)		3 (2,4%)	8 (7%)			5 (6,3%)	1 (2,8%)	6 (5,5%)	6 (5,5%)	2 (3,1%)	2 (2,1%)	3 (11,1%)
		21 (100%)	81 (100%)	124 (100%)	115 (100%)	76 (100%)	180 (100%)	79 (100%)	36 (100%)	57 (100%)	108 (100%)	63 (100%)	95 (100%)	27 (100%)

Analyzing the answers given by the interviewees regarding the annotation of various professional categories we can see the percentage of positive characterizations that are attributed in the profession of schoolteacher rates about 92,7%, while the negative characterizations hardly reach the percentage of 7,3%. According to table 9 therefore, the characterizations that are related to skills - elements of behaviour and character gather the largest number of statements with 52.4% ("patient", "smiling", "polite", "conscientious", "responsible", "sensitive", "infectious", "affectionate", "intelligent", etc.). Immediately following the characterizations referred to the educational level of the schoolteacher with 20.3% ("educated", "cultured", "qualified") and those dealing with the nature of the work with a rate of 18.7% ("useful", "necessary"). A smaller percentage is following with characterizations related to social status with 5.6% ("breadwinner", "scientist", "strong") and to the financial status / financial rewards of the schoolteacher ("wealthy") with a percentage of 0.4%. In the table 9 we can also see that the statements of negative content given for the profession of the schoolteacher have mostly to do with the skills and the elements of behaviour and character ("ironic", "miserable") with a rate of 38.1%, with the nature of work with a rate of 28.6% ("difficult", "stagnant", "monotonous",) and the financial status with percentage 23.8% ("low-paid").

Regarding the profession of ship-owner the positive characterizations given by the interviewees are reaching the percentage of 71.1%, while the negative views are reaching a rate of 29, 9%. The positive characterizations concerning the economic status and financial rewards assemble the greater number of statements with 43.4% ("wealthy", "financially independent") and immediately after the interviewees are referred to the skills and elements of both behaviour and character with a rate of 30.2% ("demanding", "responsible", "sociable", "hardworking", "intelligent", "dynamic"). The social status gathers a much lower percentage of 7.8% ("strong", "successful", "famous"), the nature of work a rate of 6.4% ("profitable", "relaxing",) and the educational level gathers only the 4,9% of the positive statements ("educated"). On the other hand the 93.8% of the negative characteristics for the ship-owners concerns their skills or their features of character ("exploiter", "arrogant", "oppressive", "greedy", "cruel"), while some of the interviewees (6.2%) referred to the nature of work to 6.2% ("difficult", "time consuming", "stressful").

The positive statements referred to the profession of the worker reach a rate of 57.2%, while the percentage of the negative characterizations is 42.8%. The majority of the statements with positive content are in the thematic category of Skills and Elements of behaviour and character with 82.5% ("dynamic", "inventive", "patient", "honest"). Following the characterizations referred to the social status of the work with a rate of 9.1% ("breadwinner") and the nature of the work with 5.4% ("useful", "creative", "independent") The characterizations with negative content have primarily to do with the nature of the work ("tedious", "painful", "difficult") and the economic status or the financial rewards of workers ("poor"), with rates 33.9% and 33% respectively. Immediately after, there are the statements referred to social status with a 20.2% ("marginalized", "underclass"), the educational level with 6.5% ("illiterate") and finally those referred to skills and elements of behaviour and character with 4% ("edgy", "tough", "insecure").

Concerning the profession of the farmer the positive characterizations given by the interviewees are reaching the percentage of 58.3%, while the negative views are reaching a rate of 41, 7%. Concerning the statements with a positive connotation, the 77% are related to skills and personality traits ("hardworking", "patient", "methodical", "responsible", "dynamic"), the 8.7% of the positive statements referred to the nature of the job ("significant", "efficient", "creative", "profitable"), the 8.1% to the social status ("breadwinner"), and the 1.9% to the economic status / economic returns of the specific profession ("rich"). On the other hand the statements with negative content are related more to the nature of the work ("tiring", "stressful", "difficult", "dirty") and the social status ("poor", "underclass", "outsider"), with rates of 34.8% and reports 22.5%, respectively. Immediately after come the statements that referred to the financial status of those who work to this profession with 20% ("poor"), the level of education with 8.7% ("uncultured") and finally to the skills and elements of behaviour and character with 7% ("unsociable", "insecure").

In terms of the profession of the industrialist the positive characterizations given by the interviewees are reaching a percentage of 70.9%, while the negative views are reaching a rate of 29, 1%. The positive statements that are related to skills and personality traits gather the largest number of statements with 40% ("smart", "creative", "responsible", "ambitious"). Shortly afterwards follow those that are referred to the economic status of the industrialists with 37.8% ("rich", "wealthy"). The nature of the work follows with a lower rate (7.7%) ("interesting", "profitable", "pleasant", "relaxing"), the social status with 7.5% ("prominent", "successful", "famous", "important") and the educational level with a percentage of 3.2% ("well educated"). On the other hand, according to table 9 the negative statements on the profession of the industrialist are related primarily to the skills and the elements of behaviour and character with a percentage of 96.1% ("exploiter", "hypocritical", "dishonest", "arrogant", etc.).

The positive statements referred to the profession of the politician reach a rate of 37.3%, while the percentage of the negative characterizations is 62.7%. The 51.4% of the statements with positive content are in the thematic category "Skills and Elements of behaviour and character" ("social", "eager", "industrious", "dative", "consistent", "smart"). Shortly after, are the statements related to the economic status of politicians with 18.6% ("rich", "wealthy"), those referred to their

educational level with percentage 11.3% ("well educated") and those that mentioned their social status with 10.3% ("powerful", "popular", "famous"). On the other hand, the statements with negative content have primarily to do with the skills and elements of behaviour and character of the politicians with a 96.7% percentage ("liar", "ironic", "hypocritical", "self-seeker", "sneaker"), while a much smaller percentage (2.2%) referred to the nature of the work ("stressful", "difficult").

The positive statements referred to the profession of the clerk reach a rate of 69.8%, while the percentage of the negative characterizations is 30.2%. The 78.2% of the positive statements are related to skills and personality traits ("hardworking", "typical", "conscientious", "obedient", "conscientious", "helpful"), the 10.9% referred to nature of the work ("permanent", "easy"), the 3.8% to the social status of the clerk ("breadwinner"), the 3.3% to the financial status ("well paid", "well off"), and just the 0.5% of the positive characterizations referred to the educational level of the clerks ("well educated"). On the other hand, the 41.8% of the statements with negative content referred to the nature of the work ("stagnant", "uncertain", "miserable", "dependent", "laborious") while the 39.2% of the negative characterizations have to do with the skills and elements of behaviour and character ("cowardly", "lazy", "spineless", "weak"), the 3.8% of the negative statements with the financial status of the job ("low paid" and 2.2% with its social status ("wronged").

Considering the profession of university professor, the positive characterizations given by the interviewees are reaching the percentage of 86.6%, while the negative views are reaching a rate of 13.4%. The majority of the positive views (38.6%) concerning the educational level of professors ("trained", "well educated"), The 36.9% of the positive views related to professors' skills and personality features ("smart", "hardworking", "responsible", "ambitious", "patient", "transmissible"), the 9.4% of the positive views concerning the social status of that specific job ("potent" "recognizable", "important", "neat", "scientist"), the 9.1% nature of the work ("permanent", "spiritual", "creative", "interesting"), and 4.3% of the positive statements about university professors referred to their financial status ("rich", "well paid"). Concerning the negative views of the interviewees the great majority of the statements (94.4%) referred to professors' skills and elements of behaviour and character (egocentric, arrogant, domineering).

The positive statements referred to the profession of businessman reach a rate of 77.6%, while the percentage of the negative characterizations is 22.4%. The 58.6% of the statements with positive content are in the thematic category "Skills and Elements of behaviour and character" ("creative", "sociable", "intelligent", "diplomatic", "industrious"). Shortly after, there are the statements related to the economic status of businessmen with 27.3% ("rich", "wealthy"), those referred to the nature of their work with percentage 5.1% ("profitable", "enjoyable", "productive"), those that mentioned their social status with 4% ("powerful", "popular", "famous") and finally those that referred to the educational level of businessmen with a rate of 2% ("well educated"). On the other hand, the statements with negative content have primarily to do with the skills and elements of behaviour and character of businessmen with a 84.2% percentage ("exploiter", "immoral", "self-seeker", "cunning", "selfish"), while a much smaller percentage (18.2%) referred to the nature of the work ("stressful", "difficult").

In terms of the profession of the street sweeper, the positive statements reach a rate of 56.3%, while the percentage of the negative characterizations is 43.7%. The 75.6% of the positive statements are related to skills and personality traits ("patient", "hardworking", "proud"), the 6.5% of the positive views concerning the social status of that specific job ("hardworking" "breadwinner"), and the 16.5% concerning the nature of the work of street sweepers ("important", "helpful" "necessary"). On the other hand, the characterizations with negative content have primarily to do with the nature of the work ("tedious", "painful", "difficult", "dirty") and the economic status or the financial rewards of street sweepers ("lowly paid"), with rates 28.7% and 27.8% respectively. Immediately after come the statements referred to social status with a 22.2% ("marginalized", "underclass"), the educational level with 10.2% ("illiterate") and finally those referred to skills and elements of behaviour and character with 5.6% ("spineless", "rude").

Concerning the profession of the plumber, the positive statements reach a rate of 73.8%, while the percentage of the negative characterizations is 26.2%. The 62.5% of the positive statements are related to skills and personality traits ("hardworking", "sociable", "responsible", "intelligent", "patient"), the 27.4% concerning the nature of the work of plumbers ("important", "helpful" "necessary"), the 4.5% of the positive views concerned the social status of that specific job ("hardworking" "breadwinner"), while the 3.4% of the positive statements for the profession of a plumber concerned its financial rewards ("well paid"). On the other hand, the characterizations with negative content have primarily to do with the skills and elements of behaviour and character with 39.7% ("sly", "inconsistent", "self-seeker"), the nature of the work with 30.2% ("difficult", "dirty"), the economic status or the financial rewards of plumbers ("lowly paid", "poor"), with a rate of 19%, their educational level with 4.9% ("uneducated") and lastly the 3.1% of the negative statements referred to the plumber's profession concerned its social status with a percentage of 3.1%.

Observing the profession of the builder, the positive statements reach a rate of 61.5%, while the percentage of the negative characterizations is 38.5%. The 82.9% of the positive statements are related to builder's skills and personality traits ("hardworking", "responsible", "intelligent", "patient"), the 10.5% concerning the nature of the work ("important", "helpful" "necessary"), while the 3.3% of the positive views concerning the social status of that specific job ("hardworking" "breadwinner"). On the other hand, the characterizations with negative content have primarily to do with the nature of the work with 41%("occasional", "tiring", "dangerous", "difficult", "dirty"), the economic status of builders ("lowly paid", "poor") with 30.5%, with their social status (12.5%), their educational level with 7.6% ("uneducated") and lastly with builders' skills and elements of behaviour and character with 6.3% ("rude").

Finally, concerning the profession of the physician, the positive statements reach a rate of 89.6%, while the percentage of the negative characterizations is 10.4%. The 41.8% of the statements with positive content are in the thematic category "Skills and Elements of behaviour and character" ("responsible", "reliable", "patient", "sensitive", "ambitious", "smart", "hardworking", "conscientious"). Shortly after, there are the statements related to physician's educational level with 22% ("well educated", "well trained"), the statements concerned the nature of the work with 16.7% ("responsible", "safe", "interesting", "useful", "necessary»,» indispensable") the economic status with 10.6% ("rich", "wealthy"), and lastly those referred to the social status of their work with percentage 7.3% ("powerful", "famous", "popular", "successful"). On the other hand, the statements with negative content have primarily to do with the skills and elements of behaviour and character of businessmen with a 51.3% percentage ("exploiter", "immoral", "selfish"), while a much smaller percentage (22.3%) referred to the nature of the work ("stressful", "difficult").

Table 10. Degree of agreement of the subjects with the statements by thematic axis

IDENTIFICATION OF CLASSES						
1	Each social class has different interests	3 (2%)	8 (5,3%)	26 (17,3%)	78 (52%)	35 (23,3%)
2	The class that someone belongs to does not affect his social advancement	12 (8%)	39 (26%)	60 (40%)	27 (18%)	12 (8%)
3	The occupations of increased social status (doctors, lawyers, academics) are identical with the upper social classes	5 (3,1%)	11 (7,1%)	24 (16%)	77 (51,3%)	33 (22%)
4	Social class determines the lifestyle of people	5 (3,4%)	7 (4,7%)	30 (20%)	90 (60%)	18 (12%)
5	Each social class has each own characteristics	2 (1,3%)	3 (2%)	28 (18,7%)	95 (63,3%)	22 (14,7%)
6	The occupation of each person defines the social class that belongs to	9 (6%)	17 (11,3%)	54 (36%)	60 (40%)	10 (6,7%)
CLASS INEQUALITY						
7	The lower social classes are carriers of poor culture	29 (19,3%)	25 (16,7%)	47 (31,3%)	40 (28%)	7 (4,7%)
8	Public servants belong to the lower social class	32 (21,3%)	75 (50%)	30 (20%)	12 (8%)	1 (0,7%)
9	The majority of Greeks belong to the lower social class	12 (8%)	56 (37,3%)	48 (32%)	24 (16%)	10 (6,7%)
10	The educational system contributes to the reproduction of social classes	8 (5,3%)	19 (12,7%)	34 (22,7%)	70 (46,7%)	19 (12,7%)
11	Social class determines the daily habits of individuals	5 (3,3%)	12 (8%)	44 (29,3%)	79 (52,7%)	10 (6,7%)
12	Social class determines the general behaviour pattern of subjects	4 (2,7%)	15 (10%)	60 (40%)	58 (38,7%)	13 (8,7%)
CLASS FORMATION						
13	I know very well in which class I belong to	1 (0,7%)	11 (7,3%)	29 (19,3%)	75 (50%)	34 (22,7%)
14	I believe that I have class consciousness	8 (5,4%)	14 (9,3%)	29 (19,3%)	67 (44,7%)	32 (21,3%)
15	I belong to the same class with my parents	7 (4,7%)	26 (17,3%)	26 (17,3%)	62 (41,3%)	29 (19,3%)
16	One of my goals is to become a member of a higher social class	11 (7,3%)	31 (20,7%)	47 (31,3%)	48 (32%)	13 (8,7%)

17	I live my life according to the characteristics of social class to which I belong	9 (6%)	32 (21,3%)	37 (24,7%)	60 (40%)	12 (8%)
CLASS AND STEREOTYPES						
18	Social class is determined only by the economic level of the individual	24 (16%)	33 (22,7%)	35 (23,3%)	41 (27,3%)	16 (10,7%)
19	The educational level is a determinant of the class where a person belongs to	9 (6%)	34 (22,7%)	57 (38%)	39 (26%)	11 (7,4%)
20	The social class determines the political / electoral choices of the individual	17 (11,3%)	32 (21,3%)	47 (31,3%)	42 (28%)	12 (8%)
21	The upper classes are ideologically more conservative	14 (9,3%)	35 (23,3%)	51 (34%)	32 (21,3%)	18 (12%)
22	The lower social classes are ideologically connected with the left wing parties	13 (8,7%)	41 (27,3%)	57 (38%)	29 (19,3%)	10 (6,7%)
23	Social class is an element of social racism	14 (9,3%)	28 (18,7%)	28 (18,7%)	58 (38,7%)	22 (14,7%)
24	Social class is an inherited trait	20 (13,3%)	44 (29,3%)	47 (31,3%)	36 (24%)	3 (2%)
25	Social class is a criterion for the interaction between individuals of a society	3 (2%)	26 (17,3%)	40 (26,7%)	67 (44,7%)	14 (9,3%)
26	The outward appearance identifies the social class of an individual	12 (8%)	38 (25,3%)	47 (31,3%)	43 (28,7%)	10 (6,7%)
27	Social class is the only criterion for distinguishing the individuals within a society	35 (23,3%)	49 (32,7%)	47 (31,3%)	14 (9,3%)	5 (3,3%)
28	In any society, members of the upper classes exploit the members of the lower classes	2 (1,3%)	11 (7,3%)	25 (16,7%)	73 (48,7%)	39 (26%)
29	The race affects an individual's inclusion in a social class	10 (6,7%)	21 (14%)	42 (28%)	60 (40%)	17 (11,3%)
DEPRECIATION OF SOCIAL CLASSES						
30	Nowadays there is no class war	40 (26,7%)	66 (44%)	32 (21,3%)	9 (6%)	3 (2%)
31	There is a possibility of advancement within social classes.	1 (0,7%)	9 (6%)	28 (18,7%)	82 (54,7%)	30 (20%)
32	Nowadays there is no division of classes	52 (34,7%)	54 (36%)	30 (20%)	10 (6,7%)	4 (2,7%)
33	Nowadays there is no clear division of social classes	10 (6,7%)	55 (36,7%)	47 (31,3%)	33 (23,3%)	3 (2%)
34	The social classes are imaginary creations of individuals	36 (24%)	59 (39,3%)	32 (21,3%)	14 (9,3%)	9 (6%)
35	The social classes no longer exist	35 (23,3%)	68 (45,3%)	25 (16,7%)	12 (8%)	10 (6,9%)
36	The classless society does not exist	9 (6%)	19 (12,7%)	47 (31,3%)	46 (30,7%)	29 (19,3%)

Regarding the statements of the first thematic axis, we can see that 52% of the students believe that *each class has different interests and its own characteristics* (63.3%), which *define the lifestyle of individuals within a society* (60%). At the same time the interviewees believe that *the increased social status professions (doctors, lawyers, and academics) are identical with the upper social classes* (51.3%) and that *each person's profession determines the class he belongs to* (40%). However, the students seem not to be so sure *that the class they belong to affect their social advancement* (40%).

Analysing the second thematic axis, it is perceived that the statements concerning the class inequality are the main variables that contribute to the construction of that specific axis. At a rate of 52.7% the students think that *the social class determines the individuals' daily habits*, but they are not so sure if *the social class determines the general behaviour of the subjects* (40%). They believe that *education contributes to the reproduction of social classes* (46.7%), but they are unsure whereas *the lower social classes are carriers of low education* (31.3%). Moreover, the subjects of the research disagree with the statement that *civil servants belong to a lower social class* (50%) and that *the majority of Greeks belong to a lower social class* (37.3%).

To the third thematic axis we notice the fact that 50% of the subjects stated that *they are aware of what class they belong to*. The 40% of the *sample lives its life according to the characteristics of social class to which it belongs* and 44.7% of them *have class consciousness*. Also the 41.3% indicates that *belongs at the same social class with its parents and one of its main goals is to become a member of a higher social class* (32%).

The fourth thematic axis refers to the stereotypes concerning the social classes. Students believe that *the class is determined only by the economic level of individuals* (27.3%), while they are not certain whether *the educational level of someone is a determinant of the class where he belongs or not* (38%). The subjects believe that *the lower social classes are ideologically associated with the left wing parties* (38%) and that *the upper social classes are ideologically conservative* (34%). However they are not absolutely sure that *the social class determines the political / electoral choices of the individual* (31.3%). Students also believe that *the ethnic background affects an individual's membership in social classes* (40%). They are certain that *social class is an element of social racism* (38.7%), but they are not sure that *social class is an inherited trait* (31.3%). At a rate of 44.7% they agree that *social class is criterion for socializing among individuals of a society*, but they are not so sure if *the external appearance of a person is also such a criterion* (31.3%). They disagree with the statement that *social class is the only criterion for distinguishing the individuals of a society* (32.7%), but they agree that *in every society, members of the upper classes exploit the members of the lower classes* (48.7%).

Finally, there is a great percentage of students who disagree (44%) or strongly disagree (26.7%) with the statements that *today there is no division of classes*, that *social classes no longer exist* (45.3%), that *nowadays there is no clear separation of social classes* (36.7%), and that *social classes are creations of people's imagination* (39.3%). They are absolutely sure that *classless society does not exist* (31.3%), but they agree (54.7%) or strongly agree (20%) that *there is a possibility of advancement within social classes*.

4. Discussion

The problematic of social classes is a social and historical process which is based on the differentiation of social groups. It is no doubt that in the period of late capitalism, the hegemony of neo-liberalism shaped a false consciousness about the role of social class, evidence which created a huge illusion that ultimately has come the end of class society. Factors such as easy and fast wealth, sustainable growth, educational opportunities, consumption, e.t.c. shaped the image of a society where everyone can do anything he wants. On the other hand, the theoretical discussion under the ideological domination of orthodox Marxian theory, provided a restrictive focus. As a result of this, for many years the debate remained trapped in a narrow field of social analysis creating a huge lack of understanding. This is actually illustrated to students' answers proving the rise of the "affirmative culture". As we can see, students consist of a part of this conformist legacy because their attitudes are based on traditional social stereotypes. We can also observe that they have assimilated the dominant ideology of social stratification and they tend to be a part of the systemic logic of status quo. Although they believe in the upward social mobility they argue that the class stratification is the only satisfactory criterion for rating and social classification. For instance factors such as occupation, educational level, social status, income, nature of work e.t.c still play a significant role in ranking process. Finally they hope that everyone can change his class position provided that he will find the appropriate circumstances.

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