

NATIONAL REPORT GREECE -  
**CATEGORY 4 - UNQUALIFIED UNEMPLOYED YOUTH**

**Elizabeth Mestheneos and Elli Ioannidi, Sextant Co, Athens**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL CONTEXT**

The major characteristic of unqualified unemployed youth, rather different from the rest of the Member States, is that those youth most likely to suffer currently from unemployment are **not** those who have the **least** formal education, but rather those who stay on and complete high school (secondary education until the age of 18) and then have no real skills which are in demand in the Greek labour market. Few of those from the ordinary high schools have taken any kind of technical or vocational training and thus, although formally having more than the minimum education, they are actually not fitted for the labour market. In 1995 the unemployment rates for young men and women (under 25 years) were 3.0 and 2.7 times higher respectively than for men and women in the labour market as a whole. This trend is unlikely to be reversed given that overall unemployment is expected to stay at a relatively high level (10 per cent approximately) over the next few years, with the levels of knowledge and skills required for most jobs constantly increasing.

In the 1996 Labour Force survey, covering those aged between 14 and 65, 53 per cent of the unemployed in the age group 20-24 were men who had completed secondary education, with 54 per cent of young women of the same age unemployed. In the same age group unemployment amongst young men drops to 17 per cent amongst those who have only finished compulsory education, while this figure is 9 per cent for the girls. For those with the minimum education in the age group 15-19, unemployment is higher, with 28 per cent of the boys and 21 per cent of the girls being unemployed.

The explanation for the lower probability of unemployment in those with lower levels of education relates to a number of possible factors:

- those not staying on to complete secondary school are likely to be those from poorer families<sup>1</sup> who need to work for economic reasons and who, through parents, friends and family enter the labour market, usually at the same level or in the same field.
- there are still many jobs available which require little training e.g. shops assistants, construction work and agricultural employment.
- the areas where young people are most likely to leave school early are in tourist areas where there is a demand for their labour and there are possibilities of self and family employment.
- young people from rural areas are more likely to leave school early so that they can be employed in farming regardless of the family's income level.
- the boys, in particular, leave school to a large degree so they can take up a training apprenticeship e.g. as carpenters, construction workers, smiths and car mechanics.
- the economic needs of these young people and their families mean that they are willing to take any job under any conditions.

The worsening of the figures for unemployment in the age group 15-19 amongst those with the minimum level of education may be accounted for by the delay in finding

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<sup>1</sup> Poor families in Greece, despite having the same educational aspirations for their children as other Greeks, spend one fifth of the average amount on education (Chrysakis M 1996).

the first job and also by the increasing improvement in the standard of living which allows parents to support their unemployed children for a longer period. However, yet another and more realistic interpretation, since this is in line with developments in the rest of Europe, is that employers can increasingly demand more qualified, experienced and trained people for the same salary. Thus finding the first job is an increasingly difficult proposition for young unqualified people. This also extends to those who finish high school without any technical qualifications or with very limited technical and vocational training e.g. secretaries. In general one difference which accounts for the higher rate of unemployment amongst girls is that many more go on to finish high school education than their male counterparts yet are less likely to have had any technical or vocational training or have chosen to be trained in areas where the demand for their profession is limited or declining e.g. office work and nursery nursing.

The very large size of the black/unofficial economy, as well as the large numbers of jobs of a seasonal nature, particularly in agriculture and tourism, means that many young people do have opportunities to work. However, this is typically in low skilled, uninsured work which does not necessarily help them into the permanent, insured and more skilled sections of the labour market. Even where young people are employed in their own small family businesses, in the long run these jobs are also opportunistic and insecure since the standards required in services and the developments in agriculture make many of these vulnerable to current social and economic changes.

Another issue in Greece is the drop out rate of youths who do not complete the nine years of compulsory education. 300,000 children have dropped out of school over the past 15 years (Vouidaskis V., 1997). 120,000 in the age group 15-19 years and 150,000 in the age group 20-24 have never completed compulsory education. Approximately 30,000 never received any primary education. (1991 Census). The 1996 National Statistical Office in its annual Labour Force study reported that a total of 400 out of the total sample number of 49,400 (0.08 per cent) in the age group 15-19 never went to school while a further 200 (0.04 per cent) attended only a few classes of primary school. In the slightly older age group (20-24) 900 never went to school from a total sample of 117,700 (0.7 per cent). It is estimated that about 15,000 (0.10 per cent) drop out of school every year out of the approximate 145,000 who enter primary school annually. The number who drop out has declined slowly since 1981. The majority of these children come from poor families, from remote agricultural areas, from illiterate families, from minority, refugee, migrant and gypsy families, and enter the labour market at a very early age.

A relatively low rate of participation in training and apprenticeship courses in order to learn specific skills and to prepare for the demands in the labour market has been characteristic of the Greek labour force. Training was primarily undertaken by the Training and Apprenticeship Schools of the National Manpower and Employment Organisation, who can only cover a minor part of the youth population entering the labour market. The past few years saw the rapid growth of private technical training schools (IEK), training courses offered by a variety of public and private bodies for both young and older people, and post secondary technical colleges. In the late 90s efforts have been made through a series of licensing procedures to ensure that the quality of education and training given was adequate. In particular those public and private bodies offering training are being encouraged to establish themselves as KEK (Centres for Vocational Training). These are to be registered and will then receive large public subsidies. Young people may also attend courses in the KEK and will continue to be

offered some economic subsidy thereby allowing them to participate in the training. Previous experience from participation in such courses suggests that the subsidy was the major motivating force for attending such courses, though the wider extension of the KEKs and the greater availability of places may begin to change attitudes. However, in a situation where there is very limited unemployment benefit and no social security, many young people see vocational training as a way of ensuring a small income. Thus one major problem is that training is perceived by Greek society as a way in which the public sector deals with unemployment rather than as a critical way of upgrading the skills of the labour force.

Amongst the serious problems for young people approaching the labour market are:

- lack of information about labour market trends and job opportunities, the relationship between training and the labour market as well as the very limited implementation of careers counselling;
- the aspirations parents and children have for employment in high status jobs even when this is unrelated to abilities and education. For historical reasons civil service employment and employment in the wider public sector - which covers directly and indirectly nearly 70 per cent of the Greek labour force - is the ambition of many families. This arises from the fact that though wages are not very high there is a career structure based on seniority, secure employment conditions and a light work load.

In the category of unqualified youth the families tend to be those who have an insecure place in the labour market. Though they are not economically able to support their children for an extended period, since they themselves are vulnerable, the tendency is for them to share the common aspirations of Greek parents for education and upward social mobility. Their lack of knowledge about the general conditions in the labour market and their own low educational qualifications makes them feel that investment in high school education is adequate and thus they don't push their children into technical and vocational training in skills which are in demand in the labour market. Indeed research from various studies (Mihelis Th., 1996, Chrysakis M., 1996) into inequalities in the educational system made it clear that there are growing inequalities between children drawn from the upper and upper middle social classes, and the urban working class, as well as agricultural population. In the 1960s, when national studies were conducted into education and social stratification, the differences in educational opportunities were at a ratio of 6 to 1 and this figure was the lowest in Europe, east or west (Lampiri-Dimaki I., 1971). At this time the urbanisation of the population reflected in great part the desire of parents from rural areas to educate their children and to help them to be upwardly mobile (Tsoukalas, 1987,1990). Additionally many of those in the major urban areas who were refugees from Asia Minor were people who gave a high premium to education as they came from relatively well off backgrounds even though they had been reduced to poverty in Greece. In the 1950s and 60s they were finally able to establish themselves economically and this allowed them to help their children to study.

Thus the difficulties of defining social class has come out of the rapid social and economic changes that have occurred in Greece over the past 40 years. Shared aspirations for economic security and a good income, urban life style and home ownership, educational success and potential social mobility for children constitute the majority worldview of Greek families. However, the economic problems of the past ten

years and increasing unemployment have inevitably begun to harden the class dimensions in respect of the significant economic inequalities which have long existed. Thus some families are increasingly trapped in irregular, insecure work, in declining and poor neighbourhoods and with family and social networks that offer them few opportunities for a different vision of their lives and opportunity for change. Young people coming from sections of this lower social class appear to have fewer opportunities for steady jobs with insurance, something which becomes increasingly problematic as people get older. If they are unable to obtain some special skill that is in demand in the labour market, they are at risk of finding themselves constantly vulnerable and thus at risk of social exclusion. This echoes old social theorising on the circle of poverty, indicating how difficult it can be for some young people to escape into a more prosperous future than that of their parents. The dimensions of this have been little studied.

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## **ROULA**

### **Biographical Data**

Roula was born in 1972, one year after her brother, in a poor working class area of Athens. Two sisters are born in 1975 and 1976. When Roula is five problems start at home because of her father's alcoholism, and he is often in and out of hospital. In 1983 Roula's brother leaves school and gets a job so he can help with the family finances. Roula's mother also starts working secretly, cleaning stairs in the neighbourhood. In 1985 her father dies and shortly afterwards, the family gets a housing loan. A year later they move to a two room flat in a mixed, working class area of Athens. In 1987 Roula leaves school and gets a job in a factory. The following year Roula's paternal grandmother comes to live with them but soon becomes bedridden and she dies two years later. The same year Roula loses her job in the factory when it closes down, and from then on she only has temporary jobs, often with no social insurance. In 1994, Roula meets a young man who has no family of his own and who comes to live with Roula's family when they get engaged the following year. In 1996 her fiancée gets killed in a knife fight. At the time of the interview, Roula was unemployed, working three times a year in a factory and as an office cleaner once a week.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ANALYSIS**

*Roula's mother comes from a mountainous area of Thrace. She was one of eleven brothers and sisters and came to Athens as an adult seeking a better life. Roula's father comes from one of the Ioanian islands and he was one of five children. His family all came to live in Athens after an earthquake on the island which destroyed their home, and the grandfather obtained work in the local authority. Roula's mother and father met in an industrial workshop making pots where they were both working, and married at a relatively young age.*

Roula's family on both sides are from rural origins and very large families which indicates that both parents were very poor and had virtually no property resources on which to call. On the father's side the destruction of the family property meant that there was no village to return to. Earthquakes have historically been one of the reasons for migration to the bigger cities since there has been no effective insurance to compensate people for their losses and the state has only been able to give temporary relief. One of the ways in which such relief was offered was the provision of public sector jobs to earthquake victims.

Thus the only rural roots with which Roula can have any effective and continuing contact is with her mother's family, as her grandparents remain in the village. However, their remoteness from Athens makes even this difficult.

The period in which the parents migrate to Athens, during the late 1950s, is one that saw industrial development begin and Athens grow rapidly into a major urban city. However, much of the industrial development was in small workshop units where the conditions of employment were not good. This is also a period in which many Greeks were migrating to Northern Europe to seek work, particularly in Germany. This suggests that the families of origin on both sides had few social networks which could help them choose migration abroad.

The fact that her mother came to Athens to work with some of her siblings and thus escape the tremendous poverty that her family experienced, suggests that Roula has a role model of a working woman who earns her own money in order to survive and probably help her own family in the village.

*Roula's parents have four children; Roula is the second after her brother who is one year older, with two girls following her. Her mother stops work after the birth of the children because her husband did not want her to take paid work. Her father changes jobs and goes to a factory making chemicals, which is unhealthy but better paid.*

Roula's family, despite their limited economic resources, follow a quite traditional pattern with the mother staying at home to care for the children and the father working hard to provide for them. He changes jobs in order to earn more money, suggesting that he is unskilled and can only improve his income through taking on more difficult and dirty work.

Although this is a period when family size declined quickly in Greece, the parents come from large families and to some extent reproduce their experiences and expectations. This may continue to affect Roula's own perceptions of family life and the desirability of having several children. The fact that she is the second child, with another two daughters born after her, suggests that she is not spoiled and that she will have to help her family practically and economically as soon as she can, which could involve her leaving school quite early. On the other hand this is a period in Greece in which parents

had ambitions for their children and would have encouraged them to continue their schooling. Roula may have wished to escape the poverty of her family through the educational route.

*When Roula was five years old and her last sister was born, her father started drinking and spending his money on alcohol. Financial problems began. Roula remembers that she went to her mother's village every summer as a child to stay with her grandparents and that she didn't like school.*

The fact that the father starts drinking at a time when he is still creating his family and therefore has tremendous economic responsibility for them suggests that he comes from quite a problematic family himself and that his own family represents a burden he cannot take on and bear. On the other hand dangerous working conditions may also have been a factor in making him drink. Thus Roula grows up in a difficult family atmosphere with poverty and problematic relationships with her father. The fact that Roula goes to her mother's village reinforces the hypothesis that her only effective emotional roots are on the mother's side and that at this period of her life these holidays represented a period of pleasure and security. The fact that she does not like school, together with the family's financial problems, reinforces the hypothesis that Roula will probably leave school early rather than continue in education.

*When Roula's brother is 12 years old, he starts work in a factory. The father is a serious alcoholic who is constantly in and out of hospital. He still refuses to let his wife work even though the family's financial problems are worse, and his wife starts cleaning stairs in the neighbourhood without telling him. At the age of 35 the father is given a disability pension and the mother fills in an application for a worker's housing loan.*

The tradition of men working to keep the family continues with the early entry of Roula's brother into the labour market. Roula is faced by the model of inadequate men trying to keep the family together though in fact relying on the practical and economic support, indirectly given, of the woman, her mother. Her brother takes over the role of the male head of the household, thus further undermining the father who is too ill to fulfil the duties this role entails, though he still assumes the mantle of the head of the household. The pension would have helped him maintain some authority in his home. The application for the housing loan while in this desperate economic and psychological situation occurs in the context of more general Greek values, coming out of the poor, rural origins of the majority that stress the importance of having the security of one's own home. If they do obtain such a loan the immediate consequence will be to worsen the family's financial situation and oblige as many members as possible to find work in the labour market to keep up the payments.

For Roula, given the worsening situation of the father and thus of the family as a whole, this will mean pushing her into the labour market early.

*Roula goes to high school but is not a very good student. After one year in high school her father dies and three days later the housing loan is approved. Her mother takes the loan and after the second year in high school Roula leaves and starts work in a factory.*

The death of the father may well have been a relief to the family since they no longer had to deal with the shame and problems caused by alcoholism. The mother's pension continues by virtue of her widowed status which compensates for the loss of the father's disability pension. However, the loan will force the rest of the family to enter the labour market early to pay the instalments and ensure that they have a roof over their heads; this may well act as a factor against geographical mobility for any of them. At the same time the debt taken on by the family will bind them together in the common project of paying for it and this will limit them educationally and socially in terms of upward mobility. Nonetheless owning a house would be seen as a significant accomplishment and indicate that the family has made some progress socially.

*The family buy a two-roomed flat in a working class neighbourhood of Athens. The mother obtains a widow's pension. The father's mother comes to live with them as she is ill and her other children have abandoned her. After four months she becomes bedridden and the mother looks after her. Roula continues to work.*

The traditional role of the daughter-in-law caring for her mother-in-law, despite the death of the son/husband, is evident. What is striking is that none of her other children are willing to care for her, suggesting that the father's family has some emotional problems as well as possible financial ones. There are no choices with respect to the care of the old lady when she becomes dependent since the number of places in public residential homes for the bedridden are extremely limited. Additionally it would be considered a great shame to leave someone old to the mercies of the inadequate state sector. Roula perceives her mother as the centre of the house, caring for all her children and the grandmother while also trying to earn some money in the informal economy. The old lady's pension would to some extent have helped the family's economy.

*Roula continues to work while her younger sister enters the labour market on a very low salary. Three years after the mother-in-law moves into the house she dies and after a period Roula is fired when the factory where she worked closes down.*

Again the hypothesis is enforced that all the children are pushed into the labour market early in order, in part, to repay the housing loan. The death of the grandmother would have been a physical and emotional relief but at the same time would have caused economic problems, given that her pension would also stop and that she almost certainly had no assets to leave to her daughter-in-law's family. The loss of Roula's job constitutes another economic blow to the family fortunes.

*For four years (1990-94) Roula finds various temporary jobs though not always with insurance stamps. The youngest sister enters the labour market in 1994. Roula meets a young man who was an orphan with no brothers or sisters and they get engaged. He comes to live in the flat with her family, where he stays for two years.*

The hypothesis is further strengthened that the housing loan makes the family's economic problems worse with each child being forced into the labour market to repay it. However, at the same time they remain united, bound by the same set of values. The loss of Roula's permanent work and the taking up of temporary work marks the crisis in the Greek economy with the restructuring of Greek industry leading to rising unemployment.

Another hypothesis is that Roula's fiancée is taken into the house as a potential male breadwinner.

*In 1996 Roula's brother is made unemployed as well as one of her sisters. Roula cleans the stairs of her fiancée's office once a week and has virtually no other work. She begins to dislike her fiancée because he complains a lot, but feels sorry for him because he has nowhere to go. Three months before their planned marriage he is killed in a knife fight.*

The family is now faced by what must be one of the worst phases of its existence since three of its members are unemployed and the only man with an income is killed. They have to rely on the mother's pension and the earnings from one sister and this is inadequate. The family will never have had enough resources in the past to have saved any money. The fact that many of Roula's jobs even before she is unemployed do not pay insurance contributions means that she would not have even received the unemployment benefit available for up to one year. For all the family members the lack of social assistance for the unemployed after one year means that they have either to rely on other family members or seek work casually in the informal economy. The mother cannot easily find work either since she has not specific skills and is also getting older. The death of the fiancée for Roula would have been a relief as she had begun to see his faults but could not find any escape from the situation of all living together. The loss of his contributions to the family economy would have represented the most serious issue. It is probable that the knife fight indicates that the fiancée had been mixed up with dubious characters possibly in the protection rackets or narcotics since such kinds of fights tend to occur in the social margins of Greek society. Given the economic precariousness of this family the fiancée's search and involvement in the illegal sector is explicable even though this is not discussed in any detail.

*Today Roula is unemployed. She works about three times a year in a factory when they need extra staff for a few days each time. She still continues to clean the stairs. They live on her mother's pension and her brother's work as he has now found a job, while the youngest sister attends night high school in order to get her leaving certificate, while in the mornings she studies design. They live in extreme poverty, helped by the neighbours but not by any members of the father's family.*

Roula is likely to become depressed, arising not only from the death of her fiancée but by the lack of work or prospects for the family for getting out of the poverty trap. She will have difficulties in forming new relationship with a man given the problems of her relationship with father, the problematic relationship with her late fiancée and her own depression. The probability is that given her age and her financial situation, she will nonetheless eventually find a new relationship, a man who can offer some financial security. She will probably reproduce the female caring role that she has experienced from her mother's behaviour in her family. Nonetheless it is her sister who is beginning, as the youngest, to find the road out of the poverty and educational trap. It is probable that Roula will not take training in the future and will only look for the temporary jobs that are available to her. Only marriage or the unlikely increase in demand for unskilled labour will solve her problems.

## **Self-Presentation**



1. Roula probably will present herself in a narration focussed on the negative aspects of her life given her depression and the objective situation in which she lives.
2. It will be a narration focussed on financial rather than emotional issues.
3. She will present herself as a victim of her own family.
4. She will not get into narration but just report since her life has many unpleasant events that she would not like to talk about.
5. She will emphasise destiny, the fates and the inability to control her future.

## **THEMATIC FIELD ANALYSIS**

The way in which Roula presents herself in the initial narration is closer to the first hypothesis: the only two narrations in this section of the interview do focus on the negative aspects of her life. Roula starts by reporting some of the basic data about the family and she continues with a major description devoted to her father and his problem with alcohol. In her main narration, every time she refers to her mother she uses evaluation, stating how brave, dutiful and heroic her mother is by managing to overcome the problems of the father's illness and the financial difficulties the family has faced. She describes events in a minimalist way and does not present herself as a victim in any way, nor does she relate to the destiny or fate of the family. In this sense she accounts for her own survival and that of the family as the result of her mother's efforts. She presents the family as honest, though poor, which is honourable, and who thus do not look for easy (and dirty) money or for personal connections which they could possibly benefit from. She described them as people who simply seek a daily wage.

In her second narration at the end of the initial self-presentation, she describes the difficulties of the temporary job she has in relation to the low wages, the attitudes and demands of the employer and the fact that it is illicit labour.

It appears that Roula does focus only on negative events, there is nothing good reported in her initial presentation with the sole exception of her mother's positive evaluation.

It is noticeable that in her main narration she makes no mention whatsoever of her fiancée, either in terms of their relationship or his violent death, suggesting that this is strangely insignificant to her.

At the time she was asked to talk about her life she was told that she was chosen as an unqualified unemployed young person and this may well have influenced the way she described her life in terms of work and family. However, even with reference to work

and unemployment she enters into few reflections of a general nature on the problems she faces nor does she mention any strategies that she has or contemplates in order to get out of unemployment and temporary employment.

When she was asked to talk more about her personal life she started by linking her home to three main deaths (her father, grandmother and fiancée) as well as the many deaths of other kin; this is the first time she mentions the existence of a fiancée. When asked about the happiest moment of her life she couldn't remember anything happy or pleasant in her life and she returns to talking about deaths and bad moments. When she tried to end her response, she mentions that perhaps a happy moment might have been her engagement. Although her family's objective situation is very poor and miserable, the deaths and bad moments that she recounts in her current recollections reflects her undoubted depression. In great part this depression comes from her unemployment since she has no financial or other emotional resources and cannot help the one central part of her life to which she is dedicated, her family.

## **CASE STRUCTURE**

Roula's life is marked by dire poverty and limited resources on both sides of her family and the weakness in the family structure resulting from the alcoholism of the father. Both the mother and the father's families are 'traditional' i.e. have separate roles for men and women, involving women in the domestic and familial duties and men in the economic and external sphere accounted for by their origins in poor areas of provincial Greece:

*When she (Roula's mother) was young she came with her brothers to work in Athens. She had eleven brothers and sisters.*

*My father or rather my grandparents came from Cephallonia at the time of the huge catastrophic earthquake. There were seven children but my grandfather found work straight away in the Local Authority.*

With reference to male/female roles her father preferred to take on dirty and dangerous work that paid better rather than letting his wife work:

*My father didn't let her and my father went to another job in a factory which made tyres, soles and other rubber goods.*

From her mother's family, despite their poverty and large number of children, there remained a strong, positive bond that is linked to Roula's summers and good times. However, this is likely to act as a support to her ideas of the positive aspects of family and tradition.

*We went there for holidays when we were small. We loved it and had a good time. They were lovely days and up till now whoever can go, does.... If we don't go granny shouts that we've forgotten her and abandoned her. And so we still go in the summer.... If financially we're OK we go more often.*

This model is of the traditional good mother and wife who looks after her husband who does not fulfil his duties. The mother not only carries out these roles but also takes on some responsibility for earning, even though in a traditional female sector, as well as the taking the risk of a bank loan to secure the family dwelling. While strong in her willingness to take on responsibilities, at the same time she has very limited resources, educational, intellectual or financial and thus cannot get her family out of being trapped in poverty and low educational standards alone. For Roula the mother represents a strong role model which Roula looks up to:

*My mother stood by him completely. She managed to bring up four children on her own.... When she lost her husband her oldest child, my brother was 13 years old, and my youngest sister nine years old.*

*The loan was approved but a lot of problems were created and they didn't want to give it to us ... Fortunately we chased after it and didn't let the matter drop and this we owe absolutely to our mother... If we didn't have this house now, our situation now would be desperate... We get to the point of leaving the house bills unpaid until they are overdue and even ten days later.. as long as we can delay them.. That is just before they cut us off.*

Despite the family's poverty and the financial and physical obligations that rested on the mother, she wanted her children to have a better future - perceived as ever in Greece as arising from an investment in more education. It may well be that the depressing atmosphere in the house and the immediate economic problems that faced them did not create an environment that encouraged study. Roula is clear that the responsibility is her own:

*The decision was mine ... I can't say that I stopped so that I could go to work, really I was not a good student. I prefer to go out and play basket rather than doing homework. But I said to myself the time has come to go out to work. My mother didn't want me to.... She told us that everything seems wonderful now but later the problems will start.*

Working in unskilled jobs acts to keep Roula trapped in the labour market since she never obtains the further skills which would allow her to improve her situation or move into other kinds of jobs. Being unskilled means uninteresting and relatively low paid work with no career prospects. Her only hope of 'escape' from poverty and tiring work is through marriage - an option still available to more traditional men and women. Thus in finding a man she cared less about the quality of their mutual relationship but more about his potential to help her and her family financially. In finding a man without a family she was able to guarantee that he would care exclusively for her family; thus she takes him into the family home even though they are not married. Eventually the problem of the compromise she is making with her choice arises:

*It wasn't a relationship where I was what you could call madly in love. That I couldn't live without him. And at some point we began to have problems. Our relationship didn't excite me.. I wanted to part... But I was sorry for him and couldn't tell him.... He was also an orphan, neither a father, brothers and sisters or kin. He didn't have anyone... And I saw that he was happy being with me, he saw my family as his own... And I was frightened to tell him because he was an irritable person.*

This characteristic of her fiancée's personality may well have been the reason for his death by violence. If he had not been killed she would have gone ahead and married him, being traditional enough to feel that she was forced to do this, but would then have been depressed or frustrated by being trapped in this relationship.

*Obviously with his death I was very sorry... I can't say that I was relieved from making a decision that I couldn't make in my life. The event made me very sad. And it happened suddenly... He had a disagreement with his friend and as they were sitting one day and discussing, they started fighting... His friend pulled out his knife and stabbed him.*

External circumstances i.e. the worsening situation for the employment of unskilled labour and the death of her fiancée, drive Roula into a dead end. She has few resources except for her family, whose members are also not in a strong enough position to offer more than minimal help. She has no skills and her physical appearance (being overweight, poorly dressed and unattractive in her self-presentation) are indications that does not look after herself. She is probably depressed and this is likely to be a long-term problem that will not be solved easily.

*I have no dreams. I have nothing. Whatever time will bring... Things are difficult and they will get more so... I don't dream since afterwards I'd have to wait for disappointment since nothing comes out of those dreams we make. My mother tells us all the time "Go on, get married so that I've no worries" but I can't even keep myself. Can I keep a family? And if it's to be in a worse situation than I am now then it's better not to start one."*

## CONCLUSIONS

### **Family and class**

Roula's family constitutes the source of the two most central elements in her life. On the one hand it is virtually the only resource providing permanent support for her, both emotionally and financially. On the other hand its members and its history have trapped her into a life course that has constantly limited her choices and opportunities. The role of her alcoholic and powerless father affected everyone in the family and in particular did not permit any of them to get out of their initial poverty. Although they had rural roots and belonged to the urban working class, in contrast to many Greek families from similar backgrounds, the father's role in the family followed by his death meant that his family was effectively without substantive resources through property, education, secure jobs, kin networks etc. which would have enabled at least some of the members of the next generation to escape and be upwardly mobile. Even though the father was unable to provide adequately for his family, he placed restrictions on his wife who, though a resourceful and hard working person, accepted them. If she had been allowed to work in the formal labour market at a time when the unemployment rate was still quite low, she would have been able to establish her own social security rights as well as a higher income. When her husband dies she then places a priority on putting a permanent roof over the family's head which forces her into taking on a loan for a very small apartment in a poor area. This occurs at a time when jobs are getting harder to find for the unqualified, and thus for all the members of the family paying off the loan becomes a tremendous burden. It also acts to limit their geographical and social mobility, their access to jobs and even their social networks. A rented poor quality apartment in a more mixed neighbourhood might have enabled the family members to establish networks with people who could provide them with temporary or part time work or support.

Roula, caught in this trap, tries through her engagement to start her own family but her choice is a man without any family of his own - indeed he moves in with her family. Thus again, instead of extending her family and social networks, she falls into the same

trap of choosing someone who can offer nothing except a small salary which will enable her to radically and effectively change her situation. The death of her fiancée is effectively unimportant to Roula's life course.

### **Community and Network Resources**

In a community and family that shares similar values with the rest of Greek society, though without the resources to fulfil them, the situation of Roula who cannot finish education, obtain training or a permanent job, has no financial resources and is not particularly attractive, is one which most closely approaches the intuitive idea of what is meant by social exclusion. The only resources that Roula uses and feels she has access to are those of her mother and her siblings when they are in work. Although those in the neighbourhood who know the family and are in a slightly better situation can occasionally help by finding a plate of food or some clothes or money, this cannot help Roula escape from her unemployment since they themselves don't have the right social connections. Additionally where once this form of neighbourhood support and aid was the norm in Greek society, even in urban areas, this is no longer the case and there is an increasing danger that Roula and her family will become identified as failures, marginal and problematic and finally ignored.

### **Power Relations in the Workplace**

The lack of social networks through her family and neighbourhood along with her lack of any kind of skills are the two factors which determine her relationship to the labour market. In a situation of increasing urban unemployment Roula is in that group of people who is most vulnerable to being pushed into the category of the long term unemployed. She thus cannot dictate or have any say about the conditions of the labour contract she is offered. Her experience of employers who offer her casual and uninsured work is the result of her marginality to the labour market. Her lack of skills means that only a marginal employer or one in the black economy is likely to offer her work. Unless she receives training - and there is no evidence that she plans or conceives of doing such a thing, nor are there many opportunities for her - there is no obvious way in which she can be integrated into the formal labour market. Even the creation of more jobs would not necessarily solve Roula's problem, since the demand is for skilled and trained people.

### **Personality**

By personality is meant a combination of psychological, physical and emotional characteristics which are particularly critical in the relationships of individuals to others. It is important to recognise that family background and history, physical appearance, self presentation and personal traits e.g. determination, energy - are elements that play an important role in the strategies that each individual adapts and which finally help determine the life course. Take for example being good looking - this constitutes an objective social fact that affects social relationships; many people 'use' their looks as a strategy of gaining opportunities not available to those who are not as attractive. Being tough, able to communicate well, optimistic, cheerful, charming etc. are things that are recognisable and 'open doors'.

The deaths of her fiancée and grandmother, and the alcoholism and character of her father have without doubt created a psychological problem for Roula. She has learned that dependence on men is no solution to her own economic and social problems but she has no strategies for becoming independent and as a result she becomes depressed. Her depression and the fact that she is not more 'enterprising' or 'aggressive' in terms of setting goals (work, marriage, social life) and fighting for them are thus the result of her family background. Her family cannot help her since they share the same experiences and worldview, are probably also depressed and thus cannot recognise Roula's need for help. On the other hand there is no social mechanism which would enable her to link herself to the available public psychosocial counselling services. Her depression stops her from physically caring for herself and making a good self-presentation. Her unkempt state was remarked on and she was not fortunate enough to be good looking enough for this to be irrelevant. These two elements reduce Roula's possibilities in the mating game which could be another solution to her situation.

### **Poverty and Social Exclusion**

Poverty defines Roula's situation but is not the deciding factor in allocating her to being most at risk and vulnerable to permanent social exclusion. Her marginal relationship to the labour market as unskilled and untrained offers no hope of permanent and secure employment. Her lack of any permanent employment and thus her effective long-term unemployment exposes her to depression and exclusion from social life. Her depression does not permit her to develop any strategies in order to improve her situation such as taking training, finding another man to marry or developing social networks. Her personality has been determined in great part by the models presented by her parents and neither offered any indication of how the labour market and training could be used as a way to escape poverty. Though she knows that she needs to work to escape poverty, she has no conception of the need to develop strategies to enter the labour market. Even if she marries she is likely to find a husband who himself has the same limited resources, opportunities and visions and thus her chances of escaping her current situation of marginality and exclusion are low.

## **OTHER CASES**

### **OLYMPIA**

#### **Biographical data**

Olympia is 19 years old. Her father owned a small farm but is now retired due to illness, and her mother is a housewife. Her older brother lives in the same village as Olympia, is married with two children and has taken over the farm from her father, although he initially studied to be a mechanic. Olympia was born 15 years after her brother and was a good student in secondary school. She wanted to finish the lycio (the three last years of secondary school) and she would have liked to continue further studies. However, she was aware that her parents did not want her to leave the village so she did not engage in the process of preparing for the Panhellenic entrance examinations for tertiary education.

*The first three years of secondary education were compulsory. The other three if you wanted to continue, you could. OK. I was a good student so I completed those three years but I didn't attend the Panhellenic examinations because my parents wouldn't let me. Even if I passed they wouldn't let me leave and go to Athens. First it's a lot of money and also they wouldn't like to split up the family. To leave the village, and thus I quit school.*

She originally wanted to become a hairdresser but then she changed her mind. She said that after a lot of thought she decided to complete her secondary education because as she says for any kind of work it is necessary to have a high school diploma, even for a job as a sales assistant.

Since leaving school she has helped her brother with farming work when there was a seasonal demand although she doesn't like it much since it is difficult and tiring. In the winter she spends the remaining time knitting, embroidering and helping her mother with domestic work, and in the summer she thinks about trying to find work through a relative as a shop assistant serving tourists. She is not very worried about being unemployed since:

*The man has the priority. He has to find work in order to support the household. If a woman finds work and she wants to take it is her business. Most importantly the man must have a job.*

All her school friends are either engaged or married and she is contemplating getting married in the near future. She never thought of trying to find a career because:

*I never had any plans because what can you do here in the village. You have to leave it. And I don't want to leave because I like it here. It has fresh air, generally I like my village very much.*

When she was asked how she sees her future in relation to work she said:

*I don't know, maybe it won't be necessary for me to work.. I don't know...I like to work, I don't want to sit around doing nothing...*

When asked what she thought her life would be like in the near future she says:

*Ah... I don't know.... I can't say anything about that. Many things can change. It's a matter of luck. It's what we call fate. Now I don't know, I may stay, I may leave...*

## **KYRIACOS**

### **Biographical Data**

Kyriacos was born in 1971 in a very small village on a small island in the Aegean. When he was three years old his parents moved to a working class area of central Athens in order to have a better life. His father was a shepherd on the island, and his mother a housewife. He has four younger sisters; one owns a hairdressers, another a beauty institute, the third works in a shop selling clothes and the other doesn't work. All are married with children. Kyriakos attended school until the second class of secondary school.

*I stopped because I didn't want to continue... I didn't like it.*

At 16 Kyriakos got work in a pharmaceutical warehouse where he stayed for three years. At the age of 20 he went to France and stayed there for two years without knowing the language:

*I had friends who were living there.... They were musicians, they had a group and held concerts.... I like music a lot and I helped them to transport their instruments... here and then there..... and I was also being paid... Of course we all lived together.*

Later when Kyriacos got bored with this he returned to Greece and worked periodically: *I worked for three months, for six months... just like that... for the money... and then after I went for holidays to the islands.. and such things..... I worked because I liked travelling, I liked holidays on the island and music.*

Kyriacos then worked in a workshop producing decorative objects and then in a leather goods workshop. In the latter he made leather wallets for tourists. These two jobs lasted 18 months. His father was killed five years ago in a traffic accident *He had a workshop, he made animal fats.... He got the fat from the slaughterhouses and he made them into soap or butter, such things...*

His father had started the workshop on the island but his mother remained in Athens to look after her daughters' children in Athens, and she visited him at the weekends.

Currently Kyriacos lives with his mother in Athens and they survive on the widow's pension and economic help from the daughters. His last work was 15 days as an assistant to a carpenter. Kyriacos said:

*Previously there used to be jobs, one could work six months and then stop then you looked somewhere else. I don't like the family, I don't want to get married. My mother is doing the housework, is cooking .... I don't want her to be alone.*

The most unhappy moment in his life was the death of his father.

He is looking for work through personal contacts and says:

*I saw a girl friend some days ago and she told me about work as a janitor in Athens. I will see if the job is still open. I may take this job. .... In newspapers I never find anything interesting to me..*

He has been unemployed for two and a half years. His best friend is also unemployed and living with his parents and is supported by his father's pension.

## **MARIA**

### **Biographical Data**

Maria was born in 1973 in Athens. She has an older brother, seven years older than her who looked after her as a child as both of her parents worked in a small general household shop. Her brother enjoyed this. She remembers that on Sundays her father went hunting, a hobby that her brother also followed. She remembers with nostalgia her annual summer holiday when they went camping on different islands where they met lots of people. In school she was a mediocre student and she remembers that when she was young she was frightened of the teacher and found going to school very stressful. She has pleasant memories of her years in high school and as she says:

*I was always the life and soul of the company. I always made everybody laugh.*

When she finished secondary education she had several relationships with men and when she was 19 she met someone to whom she got engaged at 21. She went to secretarial school and continued the English lessons she had started at elementary school. She has worked in various jobs. The first job was as a sales assistant in a supermarket:

*It was so tiring that I stopped. I stayed only for eight days... that's how much I could stand. In the next job as a sales girl in a clothes shop I stayed a little longer ... It was a friendly environment and it was closer to my mother's shop. It was not as strict as in the supermarket and the anonymity of the owner... It was more friendly.*

After this she did not work for a month and then she went to another supermarket where she worked as a deputy supervisor. She says:



*It was very tiring again... long hours. The supervisor left everything on my shoulders.. all the responsibilities. And it was not only for eight hours. And because I was very young and I could not give orders to the others, I was doing everything myself. All the young people who worked there loved me because I was not like a deputy supervisor to the other staff. We had very good relations.*

She left this job after a while because the supervisor made a pass at her. He wanted her to wear skirts and passed compliments constantly; she tried to avoid him but after a while she couldn't pretend any more and had to leave. The second reason was that she wanted to find a job as a secretary. She submitted her resignation but it was rejected and they sent her to another department. When she told them that she was no longer interested in this kind of work and that she would like to work in the office as a secretary they transferred her to the central accounts office.

*There was the worst thing that could happen to me. In that place I realised how important sales was for me. As much as I liked office work I began getting depressed because I didn't see anyone. I was shut up in four walls and I was writing all day. I was retiring home and couldn't relax. I was hearing the fax sound in my ears. I couldn't sleep at night. The seniors had sent all the work to me and they weren't doing anything... Finally I left, I had problems with my stomach. I had to relax. My doctor gave me medicine and asked me to relax. Specifically my mind.*

Maria subsequently worked in a woman's clothing shop and became friends with her manager's daughter who was the same age. She liked the work there because she trusted the people but over the summer, because the shop didn't have enough business, they asked her to stop for two months and start again in September. She got upset since she didn't expect this to happen; she did however want to go back. A relative offered her work in line with her qualifications. It was copywriting:

*When they offered me this job I went crazy. I really liked it. I was impressed. I thought it was the proposal of my life. And of course I would quit everything else. I said "what, I'm going to sell underwear when I have the opportunity to work in a job that I was expecting for so long." And I got the job.*

Maria did not stay in this job long because again she was working for long hours, starting at 9 in the morning and working until 1 at night. The long hours in front of a computer gave her eye problems and the doctor suggested she stop work for a while. On the other hand they didn't pay her as much as originally agreed. She wanted to prosecute them but her parents stopped her:

*This experience has made me tougher. I realised that one shouldn't be so efficient because I was working for so many hours out of my pride.*

Maria then worked in a shop selling men's shoes but even in this job the environment was unfriendly and unpleasant:

*They didn't allow me to sit down even for a moment. I had to ask for permission to go to the toilet, to eat a sweet. It seemed like a mountain to me because the manageress was always busy on the phone and I had to wait to ask her to get permission. I thought it was very formal and I didn't like it at all and I left.*

The next job, where she stayed for a year, was as a sales assistant in a chain selling children's clothes. At the end of the year they proposed that she took on a managerial position but she had to go for training abroad. Maria refused saying:

*I was not really interested in this kind of job. I didn't want long hours of work since I'm thinking of starting my family life. I'll find something else but it will also fulfil my needs.*

*I like to work very much but not only work and nothing else. For me an important role in my life is my personal life.*

She was fired from this last job. Since September 1995 Maria has been unemployed; only during the holidays does she help a friend in a shop selling gifts just to pass her time. She's planning to find work as a sales assistant again because she likes the personal contact, and to get married as she is already engaged. Her fiancée also finished secondary education at 18 and works occasionally as a guard to a shipowner. His contract is due to end in September and for this reason they are thinking of starting a business together or of enrolling on some training seminars that will help them find better jobs. She has many old school friends because she has never moved neighbourhood; her parents have their shop there and her fiancée is from there. When asked about the best moment in her life she said she has nice memories of her family without quarrels and problems. The worst moment is that she rarely remembers her family all eating around the same table, something that she plans to do in her own family.

**ANNA**

### **Biographical Data**

Anna was born 20 years ago in a working class neighbourhood of Athens. Her father is a construction worker and her mother, who only completed primary education, worked in a factory for 15 years and has for the last five years, with the help of 'connections', worked in the public sector. Anna has a brother two years older than herself and when she was asked to start speaking about her childhood the first thing she said was:

*It's very difficult to recall my childhood.*

When she was in elementary school she liked to read and go to school though her parents also pressured her to study. When she went to secondary school she stopped liking studying and said she was bored; the only things she was interested in were friends and being naughty. In school she said she remembers herself constantly changing ideas about the occupation she would like to follow:

*I wanted to become a cop. I was watching too many police stories. Then I saw the journalists on TV and I was impressed with their knowledge and I wanted to become one. After that I wanted to become a doctor. Then a teacher... Every year a different occupation.*

When she completed secondary education, she took the Panhellenic examinations to enter university but failed.

*All my friends were having extra preparation lessons. I didn't study, I went to take the examinations like a tourist. I went for the fun of it. And of course I failed.*

She tried again to take the examinations a second time because her parents forced her to but failed again:

*I never liked reading... I also see those who have graduated from university and they are doing different jobs from what they have studied. And I didn't want to study for four or five years at the university and in the end not to do what I've studied.*

Her brother also tried once but failed and after completing his military service he found a job in a hotel and is thinking of studying in one of the tourist schools.

*My mother was disappointed that neither of her children went to university. My mother has a psychosis about the university. I always remember her telling me that "you must*

*go to the university". She's still hoping that I may go. She says "If you don't go, I will force my grandchildren to go".*

After the second failure, her parents wanted her to try again but she didn't want to. As she likes foreign languages she is thinking about starting to study English and then something else. Her friends talk to her about the various private and public technical colleges and she has just entered one to study shipping.

*I desperately went there. I didn't know anything about shipping and I didn't like it. But after I attended the first courses - I'm there for two months there now - I began to like it and now I want to continue and to work in this field.*

Anna never mentioned relationships with friends or men and when she was asked she said that when she was young her parents did not allow her to go out, she was very oppressed and now that they allow her to go out she doesn't want to. She says:

*I don't like to go out with friends for a coffee.... I prefer to stay at home, read, watch television.*

She has many friends and says that the moment she went to the technical institute, although she went one week later than everyone else did, she got to know everybody in two days.

*I get to know people very easily. I'm always the centre of the company. I talk very much and I talk a lot while I was in secondary school. My teachers loved me because even though I was naughty and talking a lot I was doing things indirectly and they liked me.*

She doesn't have a boyfriend, saying that she is very frivolous. She prefers going for a coffee with friends to having a boyfriend. She plans to marry after 25 because her mother has persuaded her to get married the moment she has found a job and has her own money so she is not dependent on anyone.

## **LILI**

### **Biographical Data**

Lili was born in Athens 23 years ago. Her mother was originally from an island and came to the mainland at a very young age to work. Her father is from the Peloponnese and came to Athens with his brother as there was no future in his village. Lili's parents met in the factory where they both worked and soon married. When they started having their children - four in total with Lili being the third - her mother left the factory and worked at home doing piece rate sewing (outwork), and her father started as an independent painter and decorator.

*My mother is now 42 years old and really we didn't see much of her round the house because she was always working. And we missed her but she always understood our problems, she tried to help us... OK we were a big family but they paid a lot of attention to us and they cared a lot about us. My father was a very calm person. He has never beaten me up in contrast to my mother who always hit us. She was very abrupt maybe because she stayed longer with the children and she was irritated.*

When Lili was 14 years old her parents had their last child and the mother left Lili to look after her and went back to work at the factory. Lili went to school and looked after her sister. During the summer she helped her father in his work and when her mother's vacation finished she looked after her little sister again.

*We had found a doll and we played with her. It's very nice to see a child from the moment that it is conceived till now that she is seven. This child changed our lives. I and my older brother looked after this baby and the baby was confused and called me mother and my brother father, and the nursery teacher came to us once and told us that we have to clear it up as to who is the mother and who is the father because the child was telling the other kids at school that she had two mothers and two fathers. She told us "You will cause psychological traumas to this child".*

Lili finished the first three years of high school and wanted to attend the technical high school but her parents didn't let her go because her father thought the college had a bad reputation and she wasn't a good enough student to continue into the ordinary higher secondary school (lice).

*I went alone and I enrolled myself and I told the teachers that my father was working and couldn't come. That he would come later. I had all the necessary papers and after some time my father realised that I was spending my time somewhere because they have strange hours - three days in the morning and three in the afternoon. And then I told him that I am going to the technical school and you have to come and sign. Finally my mother came and signed.*

When she finished the technical school she was selected and enrolled in a higher technical college far from Athens in Patras. She never went there because it was so far away she didn't have the money to get there and her father told her that he could not support her.

*I decided not to go because I'm not one of those who expect others to support them and to give them pocket money. I was used to working from a very young age and I had learned to satisfy my needs, at least financially. I always wanted to be economically independent and I had managed that. Besides we were a large family and I didn't want to be a burden on them. And I decided to work.*

Lili found a job as a sales assistant. She couldn't find anything through the newspapers and one day she saw an advertisement in a shop window asking for temporary sales staff in a toy and sports shop. She worked there:

*I enjoyed working there because I played with the toys. I wound them up to show them to the customers and as much as I hadn't played as a child, I played in that shop. But because I was enjoying my job I was selling well, I was number one in sales.*

After a year the owner closed the shop down after a hundred years of its existence and sent her to another branch in a northern suburb. He didn't want to fire her because she would have been eligible for a lot of compensation so he tried to make her go somewhere else. She asked advice from the salespersons union and knowing her rights she asked for the money due to her in compensation for losing her job. She left and got the money. She then went to the shop across the street and told them she wanted to work there but while they were considering this she found another job in a shoe shop.

However, she got no time off or basic salary but was on commission. Her employers also paid her insurance contributions. The job was tiring since it involved going up and down ladders to get the shoes. The worst thing about it however, was that the owner made a pass at her so she left because she was worried about the situation.

*The risk wasn't that he would make a pass at me. The most important thing was the insurance stamps (that the employer would not pay the contribution). Do you understand what the employers do to us?*

After this she went to work for her father, painting the house of a manager of a large company. He met her and offered her work but didn't specify when the job would start. After five days she found work in a sports shop:

*What a coincidence. The owner was the nephew of the first sports shop I'd worked in. And at one point he'd asked my previous owner "Don't you have a girl to send me" and he said I had a young one who is now looking for work. When they asked me there if I had work again I said yes, Ha, we were looking for you, And I started working there. I didn't like it at the beginning because I was used to communicating with people and now they had me behind the cash register. I didn't like that job at all.*

Lili is married; her husband is in the construction industry. She keeps looking for a better job that will satisfy her but she knows that having children will make it more difficult to change jobs because employers prefer unmarried girls, especially as sales personnel.

## **ROSA**

### **Biographical Data**

Rosa was born in Athens. Her parents are both from different Ionian islands. When Rosa's mother was ten years old she came to Athens because her parents had divorced and later, when her father died, she stayed with his sister and worked first in a shop that made curtains and then in a bridal shop. During this period she met Rosa's father. Her aunt didn't approve of him because he was a construction worker and they thought she would have an economically and socially difficult life. They got married however, and from that time on Rosa's mother was always working as a baby sitter, and currently as a daily housekeeper in a rich area of Athens. Rosa's father wanted to be a mechanic but his family had no money so he followed in his father's footsteps. They had two daughters, Rosa being the older. Currently her father is underemployed as an independent self-employed tiler.

Rosa attended high school and at the same time took private English, sports, dancing and swimming lessons. When she finished high school she tried to enter university because she wanted to become a designer but she failed:

*I was disappointed and I said to myself I'm not trying again, and then I also thought about work and that it's difficult to find work as a clothes designer. You must have many acquaintances and find a place where you can learn otherwise you can't be good in your work. Customers do not trust young workers and then I thought to start working as a baby sitter or as a secretary because I like to do secretarial work. And I chose to become a secretary.*

She went to a small private secretarial school for a year where she studied managerial secretarial work. When she finished this her maternal uncle found her a temporary job accompanying children in a school bus. She stayed there for five months but in June she was told she wouldn't be re-hired in September as many of the pupils would not be re-enrolling. With the money she'd saved she went on holiday and relaxed and then in September she tried to find work, mainly through advertisements in newspapers. She realised that in many cases they were asking for door to door salesmen and she didn't want this kind of work:

*I'm easily frightened and I'm hesitant to knock at a stranger's door and go in since you don't know who is living there. I'm scared. And on the other hand I don't like to run up and down the streets.*

She went to several interviews but they never called back. On the last occasion in response to a newspaper advertisement, she was interviewed by an old man who made a pass at her and she got frightened. He asked her to go out with him and pulled her close to him and she ran away crying:

*Now I'm scared, if I get into an office I would feel terrible. I wouldn't trust anybody. Thus I'm looking for any kind of job except as a secretary. I like children, I know it's a responsible job and it's difficult to look after someone else's child, not to do any harm to the child, but I can manage because I like it.*

Now that she's not working she helps her mother with the housework since her mother is working away from home. And she spends some time with her fiancée whom she plans to marry:

*I'm all the time hovering over the phone and I'm tired and disappointed because I am young. I want to work. I'm planning to get married in a year but I have no motive because I have nothing of my own. I cannot say I have worked and now I can get married. Because if two people aren't working in a house they can't support a family. Like my own house they are both in the same situation. It isn't the man or the woman in distinctive roles, they are the same. And I want to do the same thing.*

Rosa explains the reasons why she isn't called to interviews, even though they promise they will call her, by the fact that she has been to a small private secretarial school and that there are three or four big schools with a lot of connections to employers who look after the placements of their own students first. She has also tried to find work through the National Manpower Employment Organisation and they found her a job in a technical company but it was necessary to have a car, and since she didn't have one they never called her back. She also said that those finishing OAED training courses had priority with their employment offices, and thus people like her found it difficult to find work.

### **Family and class**

The young unqualified people we interviewed shared in common the fact that their parents came from backgrounds of limited education and economic resources. In the case of Olympia her father and mother are involved in subsistence farming in a fairly remote mountain village on a large island very far from the capital. Although they have land and a village house, they are relatively poor. However, they can survive very adequately within this traditional society and had the resources to invest in some extra education for her. But their world vision extends only to her marrying. Her environment with its traditional attitudes and family security offer protection and ensure that at an individual level she is not at risk of social exclusion even though she is marginal and unemployed in the labour market. The family offers both financial and psychological support to Kyriakos even though he, like Roula, has lost his father at a critical moment in his life. The mother's pension and the fact that he states that he does not want to marry are factors permitting Kyriakos to take occasional jobs and not be under pressure. Sophia has a supportive family and an ambitious mother who is aware of the value of training and education as a way of entering the labour market. Marina comes from a family of self-employed people and an older brother who cared for her. She has grown up with the notion of hard work and risk and the family pushed her to study to become a secretary. Lili is again from a family of self-employed semi-skilled people who have always had to find work and to take risks. She has learned to work in the safety of this family background and get an idea about the labour market. Rosa also comes from a

background where the father is self employed and her mother has always worked, giving her a model that demonstrates the need for women to have a job and be equal partners in a marriage.

### **Power Relations in the Workplace**

The lack of skills and training means that the young people interviewed were highly vulnerable and found it difficult to obtain either a first job or else a permanent one. They were consistently at risk of being offered jobs of a temporary or uninsured nature. Olympia has only worked to help her father and brother on the land but though she dreams of working in a shop in the summer season for the tourist business, this cannot be a career since it is temporary and of short duration. Kyriakos has worked as an assistant in small workshops and also on various islands in jobs linked to tourism but of a semi-skilled nature. Although he is at the mercy of employers he does not feel this since he is neither desperate, i.e. in dire need or poverty, nor is he interested in most permanent jobs of an unskilled nature. Sophia failed to enter higher education and her parents, unlike her, have recognised her need for training in order to enter the labour market. She attends a training course for an occupational qualification but although she is not very interested she knows this is the only way to get a well paid, secure job which is her aim. Lili, Marina and Rosa share in common the experience of looking for work or being in a job that exposes them to sexual harassment. The fact that these young women are all very attractive but unqualified or semi-qualified and without relevant work experience, exposed them to the power relationship in the labour market. Male middle aged employers used their position and authority against the young women in order to satisfy their own desires and without fear of being prosecuted or punished for this. They made work offers or tried to make advances at work and this led the girls to either feeling forced to leave their jobs or to be effectively barred from access to the job.

### **Community and Network Resources**

In this category although community and network resources are as important as for all sections of Greek society, the young people are at a relative disadvantage since families, school, friendship and community have relatively little access to positions with any power or influence. Olympia can find work through her family and kin but this network is entirely local and without wider links to the modern economy and wider Greek society. Kyriakos finds work through his friends but always at the same level of skill with very limited career opportunities. Sophia, although training in a job in shipping where there is potential employment, may not have any effective social mechanism which will enable her to get her first entry and job into this sector. Marina and Lili both have a lot of work experience in various jobs, found through their own efforts as well as their social and kinship contacts. However, they tend to work with small employers who are themselves vulnerable to the economic climate and this means their staffing needs, their ability to provide permanent employment or training are very limited. Rosa's problems arise not so much out of her lack of social contacts and networks or her lack of knowledge about how to look for work, but out of the lack of contacts with people powerful or well placed enough who can offer her first job in an office where she can gain real work experience and which is where she wants to work.

### **Personality**

The vulnerability to social exclusion appears to depend in great part on personality, despite the fact that those in this category share the characteristic of being unqualified and unemployed and at the same time come from similar backgrounds which do not offer many financial resources or networks that could provide better opportunities to employment. Lili, Marina, Sophia and Rosa are all good looking with strong or pleasant characters and positive self-presentation. All have a permanent relationship with a man (husband or fiancée). Lili and Marina, although unemployed at the time of the interview, have never been long term unemployed which directly relates to their personalities and ability to be flexible in the jobs they are willing to do. Olympia is a pleasant girl who though having few chances of permanent employment, is highly likely marry in the near future. Kyriakos gives no evidence of having a strong personality; his willingness to live on his mother's pension when it suits him suggests that he has no particular pride or ambition. Thus it can be argued that Roula and Kyriakos run a greater risk of exclusion than the others by virtue of their personalities as well as looks.

### **Poverty and Social Exclusion**

While the interviewees were all from working class backgrounds, actual poverty, i.e. living below the poverty line<sup>2</sup>, was only experienced by Roula, Kyriakos and Lili. The first two depended on a widow's pension while in Lili's case the unemployment or temporary employment of her and her husband kept pushing them below the poverty line. In Lili's situation their lack of stable employment and the general state of the labour market are the determining factors in their social situation; an improvement in their levels of skills, or an upturn in employment in general would be enough to ensure that they are not excluded. The situation of Kyriakos who is marginal to the economy and has no goals in terms of becoming included, is a more risky one. He depends on his mother financially and socially and is not developing labour market skills. If he stays in this type of temporary and often uninsured employment he runs the risk of being marginal and in poverty in his old age.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this category are probably to be found those people, who though not belonging to any minority, are most at risk of social exclusion within a Greece which is undergoing rapid economic and social restructuring. Their lack of knowledge of the labour market, their lack of specific skills and in some cases their problematic or poor families who cannot offer substantive support, have consequences because they are paralysed, not being able to make any effective moves that will enable them to change their situation in the long run. Even if opportunities for employment improve, their lack of training makes them those who will be at the back of the queue for hiring. Those who have the most personal resources will manage again to be employed in longer-term jobs, while those without personal resources will become employed in temporary and seasonal work. In the long

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<sup>2</sup> The lack of social security benefits means that there is no institutionalised method of assessing poverty. Minimum wages are established but since so many people are employed in the black economy it is difficult to know whether these represent real household income. However, on the principle that poverty can be defined in terms of a level of income less than half that of the average household income, we can assume that those living on widow's pensions or insecure, seasonal unskilled employment are well below the national average.



run all are at the risk of not having paid enough in pension contributions (to the state or a private scheme) that will ensure that they will have adequate resources for their old age. Difficulties exist in the development of social and employment policy since targeting this section of the population for relevant training linked to employment is not easy since they have often not been successful in school while their parents or partners may not be able to offer them support of any kind for training.

However, at the same time it was striking that the girls, in particular, had a better understanding of the labour market than the girls in the group of unemployed graduates previously interviewed. They were tougher, more aware of the employment situation and all had some experiences of the labour market. The potential role that small employers could play in training and enabling young people to gain formal qualifications is perhaps something that emerges from this work. All too often the jobs, when found, were dead end and did not lead to an acknowledgeable increase in skills.

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