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"Choosing a private school in the Greek education market: a multidimensional procedure"

Despoina Valassi

Ph.D. Candidate of Sociology of Education, University of Crete, Greece

External Researcher, National Centre for Social Research (NCSR), Athens

dvalassi@gmail.com

Abstract

The Greek education market is structured by two fundamental educational sectors: the public educational system and the private one. The choice between the two systems of education seems to be related to the differences between the social classes and their strategies of social reproduction. The purpose of our study is twofold: a) to determine the social factors that influence the process of choosing a public or private school (primary and/or secondary education), such as social class, economic, educational and cultural capital of families making this kind of choices, and b) to consider the interdependence of these factors. Up to now, our study leads to the conclusion that the choice of private education is the product of accumulation of different types of capital (economic, cultural, symbolic) as well as of their structure. Our approach aims to contribute critically to the scientific debate about the limits and borders of the notion of 'educational choice'. In our view, the study of private education can constitute a privileged field for studying the social construction of educational strategies, as those appear and become activated in order to make relevant educational choices. Our theoretical approach is based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory about the role of the educational system in relation to the reproduction of educational and social inequality, as well as the impact of economic and cultural capital on family strategies and educational trajectories. The sample of the research consists of 930 pupils of public and private schools (primary and secondary education) of the greater Athens area. More specifically, what our research examines is the statistical significance of the impact of social factors, such as, parents occupation, and their educational, economic and cultural capital, on choosing public or private school for their enfant. The source of our data is the Household Budget Survey of the National Statistical Service of Greece (Data: 2004 – 2005). This particular research collects data on household consumption and the social characteristics of household members.

Keywords: private schools, private education, education market, Greece, cultural capital, Bourdieu, middle class, field

List of tables:

"Choosing a private school in the Greek education market: a multidimensional procedure"[1]

The most profitable strategies are usually those produced, on hither side of all calculation and in the illusion of the most 'authentic' sincerity, by a habitus objectively fitted to the objective structures

*(*Pierre Bourdieu, *Reproduction in education, society and culture*)

Introduction

In contrast with the education systems of other countries, like the USA and the UK, where the provision of education is more pluralistic in nature, the Greek education market might be described as more traditional. The education market in Greece is structured along two main axes: the public and private sectors[2]. The choice between the two systems seems to be related to the differences between the social classes and their strategies of social reproduction.

Research has shown that the choice of school is related to the economic, cultural and social resources of the families of the upper and middle classes, the result being to 'increase the advantages of those already advantaged' (van Zanten, 2007). Also, the educational markets – both the more traditional and the more differentiated forms that have evolved – appear to have functioned as 'fields' for the development of middle class strategies to secure their privileges (Ball, 1993). Furthermore, the promotion of the 'ideology of parentocracy' as a 'third wave' in the socio-historical development of education (Brown, 1990) and the conversion of parents into

[1]The particular study has been realized during a research project titled "Aspects of social structure and social transformation in Athens of the 21th century" implemented by the Institute of Urban and Rural Sociology of the National Centre of Social Research. I would like to thank Prof. Thomas Maloutas, Director of Institute of Urban and Rural Sociology of the National Centre for Social Research (NCSR) for giving me the opportunity to work in the research project and offering me a very favorable research environment.

[2]We should note here the existence of another kind of educational institution in Greece, the *frontistiria*, which are attended by virtually all students in senior high school to prepare for university entrance exams. They can best be described as private preparatory crammer schools or private tutoring. Another dominant type of expenditure in the Greek educational market is for a *foreign language* (Kanellopoulos & Psacharopoulos, 1997). Moreover, in recent years Athens has seen the development of a phenomenon witnessed in other European cities, whereby the middle classes determine their residential strategies in terms of the educational opportunities in particular areas. The 'positive neighborhood effect' seems to play a significant role, as does the fact that almost all the best-known private schools in Athens are located in specific areas. In other words, we are now witnessing a type of residential segregation in relation to educational strategies (Maloutas, 2007)

consumers have contributed to increased inequality in education and the reproduction of the distinction between various social classes (Ball 1996, Bowe *et al.*, 1994).

But in what way is the reproduction of educational and social privileges and distinctions achieved? Bourdieu was among the first sociologists to highlight the importance of culture in social stratification and the way in which 'education actually contributes to the maintenance of a non-egalitarian social system by allowing inherited cultural differences to shape academic achievement and occupational attainment' (Swartz, 1997:190). Ball (1993) had mentioned the role of cultural capital in relation to school choice, where 'certain types and amounts of cultural capital are required in order to be an active and strategic chooser' (Ball, 1993: 13). The culture of choice has a discriminatory effect: 'the system of choice presupposes a set of values which give primacy to comparison, mobility and long-term planning' (Ball, 1993: 14). Also, Reay (2004) underlines the importance of understanding cultural capital in relation to education.

Subject and purpose of our sturdy

The purpose of our study is twofold: a) to determine the social factors that influence the process of choosing a public or private school (primary and/or secondary education) in greek education market, such as social class, economic, educational and cultural capital of families making this kind of choices, and b) to consider the interdependence of these factors.

Our theoretical approach is based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory about the role of the educational system in relation to the reproduction of educational and social inequality, as well as the impact of economic and cultural capital on family strategies and educational trajectories.

Our approach aims to contribute critically to the scientific debate about the limits and borders of the notion of 'educational choice'. In our view, the study of private education can constitute a privileged field for studying *the social construction of educational strategies*, as those appear and become activated in order to make relevant educational choices.

Method, source and sample

Method and source

More specifically, what our research examines is the statistical significance of the impact of social factors, such as parents' occupation, and their educational, economic and cultural capital, on choosing public or private school for their offspring.

The source of our data is the Household Budget Survey of the National Statistical Service of Greece (Data: 2004 – 2005). This particular survey collects data on household consumption and the social characteristics of household members.

A comment on the statistical significance of associations in cross tabulations

The test of significance used was *Pearson's Chi-square* measure. Significance levels are cited as a note below each table depicting a cross tabulation. The criterion probability value used is 0.05. This is a standard criterion used in the social sciences. Also, we used Correspondence Analysis as an exploratory technique for analysing multi-way frequency tables and converting them into a plot of points in a small number of dimensions (Bartholomew *et al.*, 2002: 81).

Sample

Most of the private schools are in the Athens area. Moreover, the fees for Athenian private schools are higher than for those in other parts of the country. Kanellopoulos & Psacharopoulos (1997) report that six out of ten households paying for private schooling are located in the Athens area.

The research sample consists of 930 pupils of public and private schools (primary and secondary) in the Greater Athens area. Of the 930 individuals making up the sample population, 819 (88.1%) are enrolled in state schools and 111 (11.9%) in private schools. This means that roughly one in ten is enrolled in the private education sector at some level (Table 1). The percentages are almost identical to those given in the Greek National Data for Enrollment in Public and Private Education[3]. The proportion changes at the level of pre-school education, where almost two out of ten pupils are attending private pre-school centres. If we look more closely at the data for distribution at different levels in private education, we see that 39.6% of children are in primary school, 37.8% in secondary school and 22.5% in pre-school (Table 1).

[3] National Statistical Service: Education Statistics (School Year 2004-05).

Table 1: Pupils in Public and Private Schools				
		Public schools	Private schools	Total
Preschool Education	Count	111	25	136
	% within Education Level	81,60%	18,40%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	13,60%	22,50%	14,60%
Elementary Education	Count	372	44	416
	% within Education Level	89,40%	10,60%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	45,40%	39,60%	44,70%
Secondary Education	Count	336	42	378
	% within Education Level	88,90%	11,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	41,00%	37,80%	40,60%
Total	Count	819	111	930
	% within Education Level	88,10%	11,90%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Statistical Significance: x^2: value = 6,353, df = 2, asymp.sig = 0,042

Parents' occupational background

The first factor which appears to be related to the choice of public or private school is the parents' occupation.

Without going into more detail than we have space for here, the 'occupation' as defining element in the individual's position in terms of social stratification has been used *ad nauseam*, at least on the empirical level, in those studies related to social structure and mobility. There has been particularly keen academic debate on the extent to which occupation and occupational categories relate to social classes. In brief, for Marx and the neo-Marxists occupational categories do not produce social classes. Occupations are understood more as positions related to technical relations of production, while classes are defined by the social relations of production. Moreover, while his position differs significantly from that of the Marxists on social class, Weber too believes that social classes are more than just occupational categories. On the other hand, such scholars as Wright (1985) have treated occupation as a means of recognizing social class, especially the middle class, in the occupational hierarchy. David and Moore (1945) accepted the view of Parsons, who believed that the occupational structure has a functional relationship with society as a whole. Finally, Goldthorp (1993), despite his systematic use of occupation and position within a occupation, with the emphasis on social status, came to believe at a later stage in his research that the occupational categories he had defined and their equivalence with social classes should be seen as a research tool (Kassimati, 2001, in Greek). However, the fact is that the usefulness of occupation is widely acknowledged today as a way of recognizing lifestyle in contemporary societies – and for this reason its use is now common practice.

Within this context, occupation was chosen as a variable showing the social position of the individual in society, on the grounds that it provides information about income and consumer patterns, level of education and skills, lifestyle, values, attitudes and political behaviour – in other words the identify of the individual and his prestige and status in the broader social space. As Payne (1987) observes, these factors are part, or elements, or manifestations of stratification, and can be related to a greater or lesser extent with occupation. Thus occupation is an indicator of the position of the individual in the social hierarchy.

From the data yielded by our research we see that in respect of father's occupation (table 4, Appendix) 41.3% of private school pupils have a father in the category 'Independent Professional and related academic and artistic professions', compared with just 8% of in public schools. The most frequent vocational category encountered among parents of public school pupils is 'Craft and related trade workers', at 29.8%.

The pattern is repeated when we look at mothers' occupations (table 4, Appendix). 15% of pupils in public schools have a mother in the 'Independent Professional' category, compared with 37.9% of private school pupils. Also, 20.6% of public school children have a mother in the 'unskilled labour' category, compared to a tiny 3.4% of children in private schools.

Thus parents of private school pupils are, in the main, independent professionals or work in sectors that require knowledge and qualifications – which are some of the most important middle class assets (MacDonald, 1995).

Parents' educational background

With regard to the father's level of education, across the range of educational levels we are studying here, we see from the data in table 2 that 28% of fathers are graduates of secondary education, 17.2% have completed only the mandatory years (9) of education, and 14% have completed elementary school. 14% are graduates of institutes of higher education.

The picture is significantly different when we examine the data for private education. 51.4% of pupils in private schools have fathers who have been in higher education, 12.6% of fathers have degrees from technical colleges and 17.1% are graduates of secondary education. We should add that 3.6% of pupils in private schools have a father with a Master's degree, compared with only 0.4% of their counterparts in public schools. If we add the whole range of higher education studies (4-years Bachelor's degree, Master's, Doctorate) then the percentage of private school pupils whose fathers have attended higher education rises to 55.9%, compared with 14.5% of fathers of public school pupils.

Table 2: Father' s educational background of the pupils in public and private schools

ALL EDUCATIONAL LEVELS		Schools		Total
		Puclic	Private	
Less than Elementary	Count	4		4
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,50%		0,40%
Elementary	Count	115	2	117
	% Education	98,30%	1,70%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	14,00%	1,80%	12,60%
Compulsory (9 years)	Count	141	3	144
	% Education	97,90%	2,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	17,20%	2,70%	15,50%
Secondary	Count	236	19	255
	% Education	92,50%	7,50%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	28,80%	17,10%	27,40%
Technical high school	Count	83	5	88
	% Education	94,30%	5,70%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	10,10%	4,50%	9,50%
Post-secondary	Count	36	6	42
	% Education	85,70%	14,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	4,40%	5,40%	4,50%
Technological Institutes	Count	85	14	99
	% Education	85,90%	14,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	10,40%	12,60%	10,60%
Higher Education Degrees (4 years)	Count	115	57	172
	% Education	66,90%	33,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	14,00%	51,40%	18,50%
Master Degrees	Count	3	4	7
	% Education	42,90%	57,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,40%	3,60%	0,80%
Doctorate Degrees	Count	1	1	2
	% Education	50,00%	50,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,10%	0,90%	0,20%
Total	Count	819	111	930
	% Education	88,10%	11,90%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Statistical Significance: x^2: value = 111,095, df = 9, asymp.sig = 0,000

In respect of mothers the educational profile (table 3) is more or less the same. 38.8% of public school pupils have mothers who completed secondary education, 17.6% have mothers who completed just the basic mandatory 9 years of school, 12.5% have mothers who only completed elementary school and 13.9% have mothers with higher education. By contrast 43.2% of private school children have mothers who have been in higher education and 22.5% have mothers who graduated from secondary school. If we add the total range of higher education (4-years Bachelor's degree, Master's, Doctorate) then the percentage of private school pupils whose mothers have attended higher education rises to 45.9%, compared with 14.5% of mothers of public school pupils.

Table 3: Mother's educational background of the pupils in public and private schools

ALL EDUCATIONAL LEVELS		Schools: Puclic	Schools: Private	Total
No school at all	Count	4		4
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,50%		0,40%
Less than Elementary	Count	1	2	3
	% Education	33,30%	66,70%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,10%	1,80%	0,30%
Elementary	Count	102	7	109
	% Education	93,60%	6,40%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	12,50%	6,30%	11,70%
Compulsory (9 years)	Count	144	6	150
	% Education	96,00%	4,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	17,60%	5,40%	16,10%
Secondary	Count	318	25	343
	% Education	92,70%	7,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	38,80%	22,50%	36,90%
Technical high school	Count	37	4	41
	% Education	90,20%	9,80%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	4,50%	3,60%	4,40%
Post-secondary	Count	46	8	54
	% Education	85,20%	14,80%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	5,60%	7,20%	5,80%
Technological Institutes	Count	48	8	56
	% Education	85,70%	14,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	5,90%	7,20%	6,00%
Higher Education Degrees (4 years)	Count	114	48	162
	% Education	70,40%	29,60%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	13,90%	43,20%	17,40%
Master Degrees	Count	2	3	5
	% Education	40,00%	60,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,20%	2,70%	0,50%
Studying	Count	3		3
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,40%		0,30%
Total	Count	819	111	930
	% Education	88,10%	11,90%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Statistical Significance: x^2: value = 73,758, df = 10, asymp.sig = 0,000

The differentiation in percentages is similar when we look at the data for each level of education (tables 2.1. and 3.1.).

The data show that the percentage of parents with higher education opting for private schooling for their children is particularly high. It is definitely higher than that for parents of children in public schools, and also much higher than the percentage of graduates of higher education for the population as a whole and for Athens as the

nation's capital[4]. Private schools therefore have a higher representation of certain social categories than is found in the economically active population.

At the same time the high level of educational capital of parents opting for private schooling for their children appears to have a range of functions: it offers parents the necessary knowledge when seeking information relating to the choice of the school that best suits them. It also makes them more ambitious for their children, with aspirations that can only be met through certain educational environments (Sullivan & Heath, 2002).

The high level of education of parents choosing private schools for their children is directly linked with their position in the professional world. As we have already shown, certain professional categories are more heavily represented when we move from public to private education. In other words we are speaking of families which are at the top of both educational and professional hierarchies and which succeed in reproducing their social privileges through the institutions of private education.

School choice as strategy

Study of the professions and level of education of parents with children at private and public schools has shown that there is a significant correlation between these factors. In this chapter we shall seek to describe this correlation in terms of 'field', i.e. to examine the above factors in a *social space of objective relations* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For Bourdieu 'a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:97). Moreover, as Ball observes, the analysis of choice of school as *social field* 'allows us to think relationally about human actions which simultaneously take on multiple and complex meanings' (Ball, 1996:92).

In order to construct the social space which may present *relatively* the way in which the occupation and educational level of the father is related to the choice of public or private school, we have tried to convert the data of tables 2 and 4 into a plot of points in two dimensions, beginning the analysis with a chi-squared test. The word *relatively* is very important in describing the association of a pair of row – column categories.

[4]National Statistical Service, 2001 Population Census.

When these categories 'are close together, they are more strongly associated than a pair of categories that are further apart'. (Bartholomew *et al.,* 2002).

Figure 1 presents the results of this endeavor. In more detail, the choice of private school appears to be closely linked with a higher educational level of the father and with his exercise of a Profession. Also closely related to the choice of private education is membership of the professional category 'Legislators, senior officials and managers'. The points occupied by the other professional categories and educational levels either indicate 'distance' from private schooling or show public education as the only option. This 'distance', indicated through the *relationship* which links the various points, is a *social distance*, and concerns not only the percentages or probabilities of enrolment at private school, but also the distance in lifestyle and disposition of certain families as well as their ability to select the private sector for their children's education (Bourdieu, 2007). On the other hand, there are parents who 'choose private schools precisely and simply because they are not public schools, because they are different and separate from public sector schools. Public schools are the unacceptable 'other', wrong for their child, by definition unable to deliver or ensure their aspirations" (Ball, 2003).

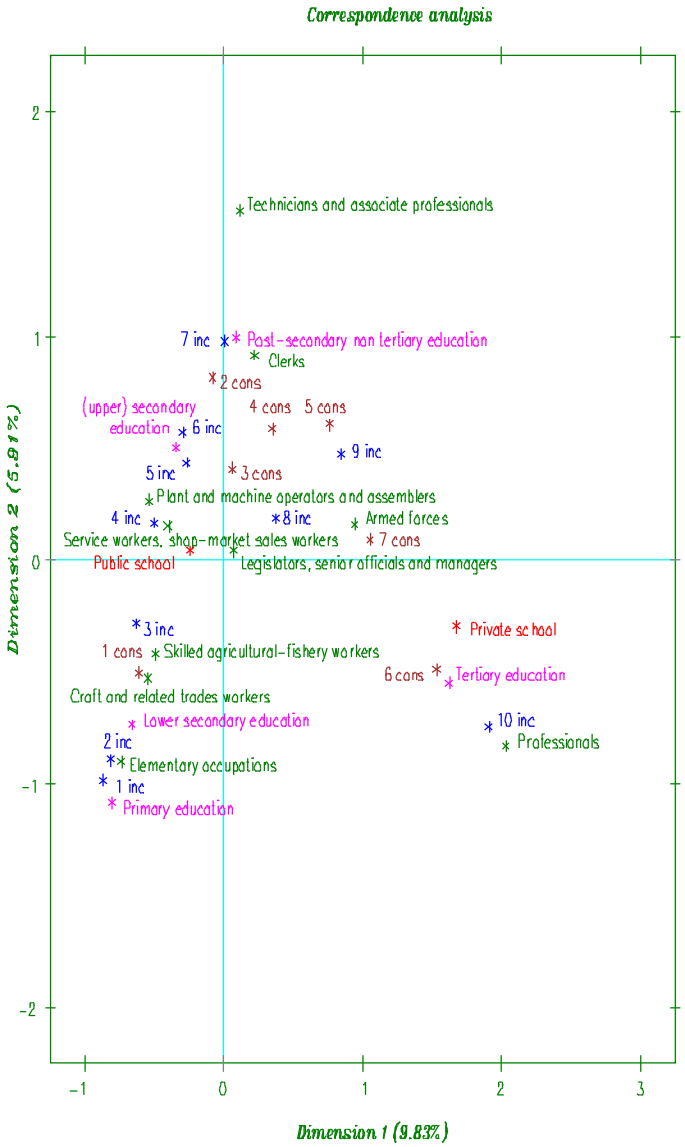
Furthermore, a whole range of *elective affinities* and socially grounded 'mental concepts' (up/down, private/public, market/state) appear to ensure the social reproduction of the privileges of the specific families as both legal and natural (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1996a). Thus families from the middle and upper classes choose school institutions with an affinity to their own social characteristics. These are institutions in the private sector which in their turn are situated in the upper – symbolically and socially – stratum of the educational hierarchy, through which the parents ensure their own social reproduction in the world of the free market and the private sector (Valassi, 2009 forthcoming). We should also point out that as the school constitutes a cultural asset, the possession of a higher educational level is a precondition for a cultural capital capable of giving one such an educational choice (Bourdieu, 1986).

In light of the above we might assert that by reason of the objective relations among the positions[5] there appears to exist between father's profession and educational level and enrolment in public or private school, the *choice of school* would appear to be more in the nature of a social *strategy* directly related to the terms and conditions

[5]Objective relations are an important element in understanding action as strategy, but not the only element. 'Practical Knowledge' and the 'sense of practice' may, in combination with objective correlations, offer a more comprehensive description of a practical dimension of action which is absent from structuralistic accounts of human agency (Swartz, 1997).

of social reproduction of the middle and upper classes. This strategy, according to Bourdieu, does not relate to the deliberate and calculated attainment of an objective, as seen by rational actor theorists, but instead to practices capable of maximizing material and symbolic gains (Swartz, 1997).

Figure 1: Correspondence Analysis of the data concerning father's occupation, educational background and school type (public or private)



The economic background of the family

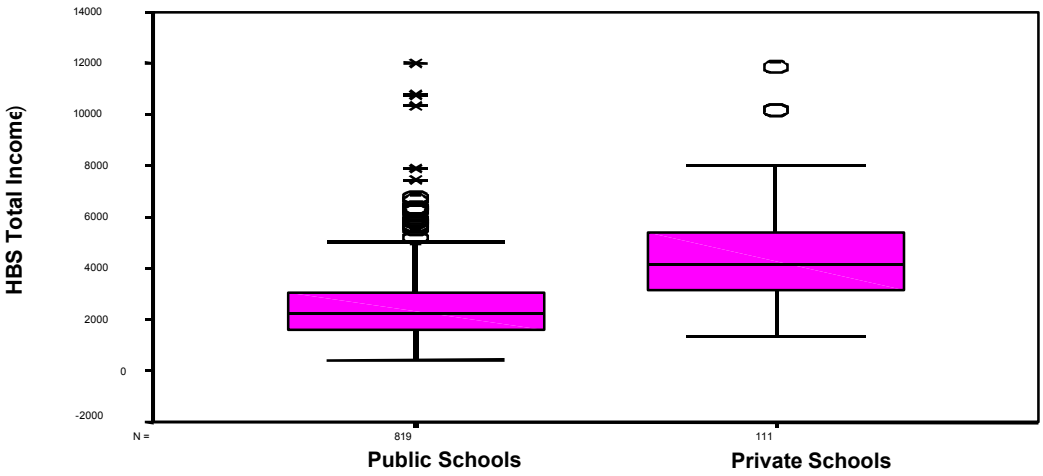
Past research in Greece has demonstrated beyond a doubt a clear correlation between income, socio-professional class and level of education – a correlation which highlights the predominant social dimension of income. In the upper income brackets we find individuals who belong mainly to the categories: independent professionals, legislators, senior officials and managers – in other words, professions which require a high level of education, special administrative skills and experience, and which involve a high degree of responsibility. On the other hand, careers found most frequently among the lower income brackets include those involved in provision of services, technicians, small tradesmen and salesmen – jobs which do not require advanced education or significant training and skills and have low social status (Karagiorgas *et al*., 1988, in greek).

In the preceding chapters we have referred at some length to the relationship between parental occupation and educational level on the one hand and attendance of children at private schools on the other. We have shown that there is a clear correlation between these factors. Here we shall examine the differentiation between household income and the choice of public or private schooling.

According to Ministry of Development data[6] for the school year 2008-2009 most annual fees for private schools fell within the range 5,500 to 10,000 Euro. Evidently spending on private schooling will form a considerable part of the annual consumption of households choosing to send their children to private school. The differentiation between high incomes and low incomes and the likelihood of enrolling children in private schools, if one takes into account the fees required, is clear. The data in Boxplot 1 show that the monthly income of parents sending children to private schools exceeds 4,000 Euro. This is almost twice the income of those households whose children go to public school. If we compare the data for enrolment at public and private schools in relation to family income, it is clear that there are different income categories which correspond to one or the other kind of education.

[6]Ministry of Development, General Secretariat for the Consumer, Price Observatory, 'Tables of school fees 2008 – 2009'.

Boxplot 1: Total income of all families of pupils in public and private schools



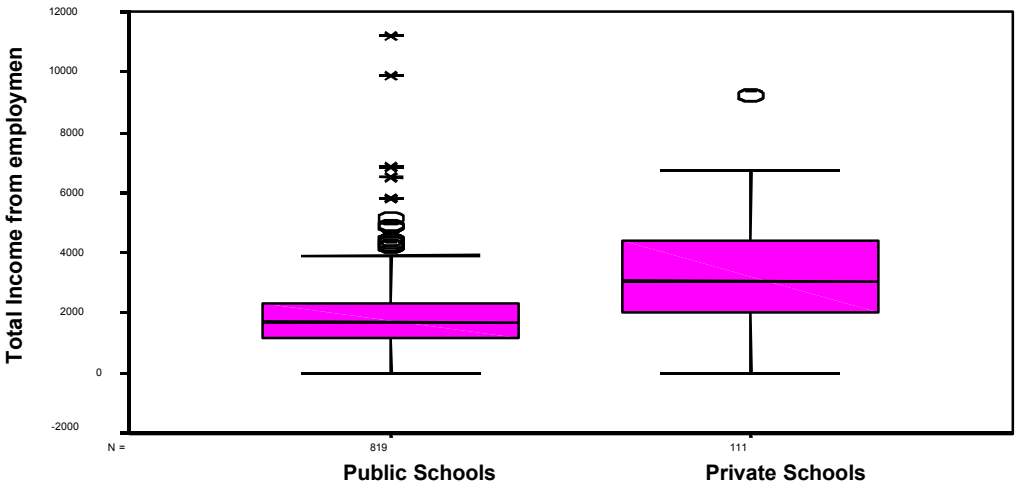
In light of the above there would appear to be a clear correlation between total family income and choice of private school. To some extent this is only to be expected, given that to pay private school fees requires a certain financial capacity. This has led a number of researchers to assume that financial status is the main factor in the choice of private schooling. However, more careful examination of Boxplot 1 shows that at public schools, too, there are some children of parents with very high incomes. It is our view that although a certain financial status is a precondition for enrollment at private school, we should not overlook the fact that the manner in which capital is spent, as well as the anticipated results and expectations from any form of investment, such as education, depend to a great extent on the position occupied by the social subject within the social space (Bourdieu, 2005).

Since as a rule 70% of household income is derived from employment (Karagiorgas *et al*., 1988, in greek), we thought it necessary to examine more closely this parameter in relation to enrollment at public or private school. In this way it will be possible to identify the income behaviour of the employee and, more specifically, his behaviour in respect of choice of school.

Thus according to the data in Boxplot 2, there is a differentiation between the income from employment of families opting for private schooling and that of families opting for public school. Once again those with higher income from employment tend to

enroll their children in private school. This fact must be added to the results of our study relating choice of private school with specific professional categories. This may allow us to conclude that high income brackets are associated with two professional categories – independent professionals and legislators, senior officials and managers.

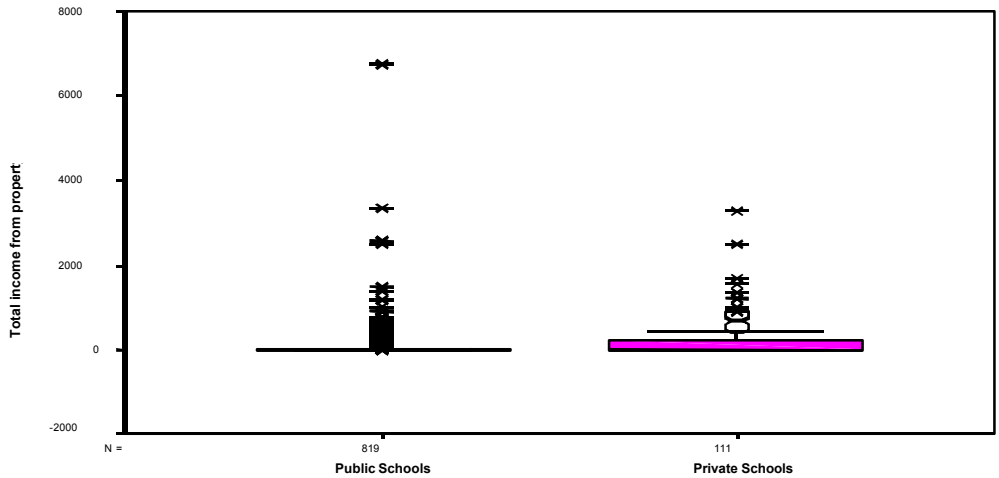
Boxplot 2: Total income from employment of families of pupils in public and private schools



In our attempt to explore the income of a family and its relationship to the choice of private school we have examined both total family income and income from employment. Subsequently, starting from the assumption that not only the financial capital available to an individual or family, but also the structure of that capital, may be among the explanatory factors in the choice of school, we have attempted to study the relationship which may exist between choice of school and family income from 'assets'. To this end we have created a new indicator which defines as 'assets' the income derived from rents, shares, bonds and dividends.

The data in Boxplot 3 show that some families who have chosen to send their children to private school have income from other sources than employment. In fact these sources do not simply expand the diversity of their financial capital, but actually have characteristics of real wealth – such as the possession and renting out of houses or shops, the ownership and management of shares and bonds.

Boxplot 3: Total income from assets of families of pupls in public and private schools



Our examination of the income of families sending children to public or private schools has demonstrated a clear link between level of income and enrollment in private schooling. However, the decisive factor would appear to be the position of the family in the social space, which determines the way in which income is spent and is linked with both profession and level of education.

Family' s cultural capital and school choice

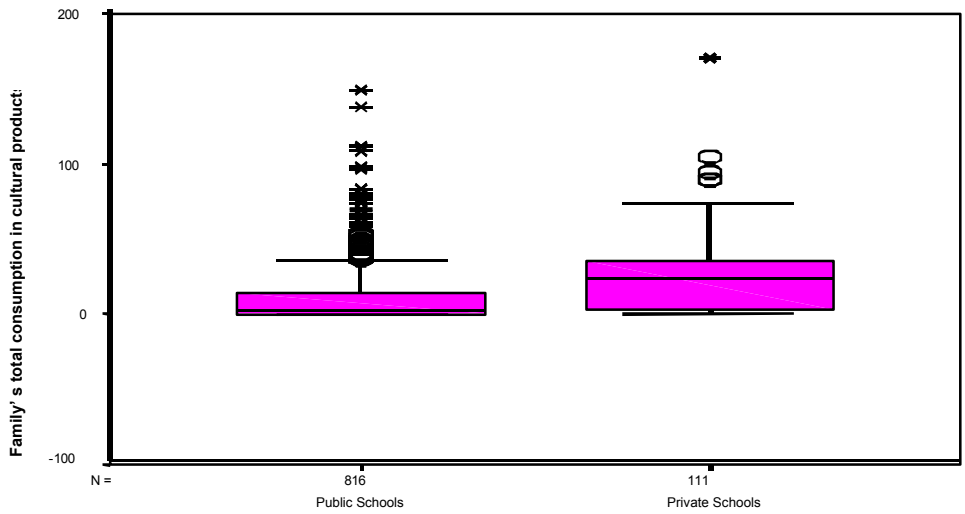
The decision to send a child to private school is associated, as a rule, with the degree of financial comfort of its parents. This view is particularly prevalent in Greece. The debate on private education has focused almost entirely on the level of school fees and the inequalities of opportunity for which they are responsible. This concentration on the economic dimension of school choice and educational inequality is particularly limiting, because it overlooks a range of social factors, such as the issue of cultural capital, which may contribute significantly to a family's framing of its educational strategies. Since the decade of '60's, Bourdieu had cited the important role of the family's cultural capital in the educational progress and success of the pupil (Bourdieu, 1996b, in greek).

In light of the above it was deemed important to conduct a study of the effect of the family's cultural capital on its choice of school. We have chosen here to assess cultural capital through consumption on *cultural goods*, measured as the sum of parental spending on cinema, theatre, concerts, museums, newspapers, magazines and books (not counting school textbooks).

From the results of this measurement (Boxplot 4) we see first a significant differentiation in consumption of cultural goods by households which send their children to private school; their spending on goods of this kind is clearly much higher. Our second observation is that the social group which opts for private education appears more homogeneous in its cultural consumption than those families which send their children to public schools. The latter demonstrate significant levels of deviation from the dominant trend in their group.

On the basis of this investigation we may assume, initially, that families opting for private education spend a significant part of their income on cultural goods. In the case of these specific social classes the consumption of cultural goods appears to be linked not only with their tastes but also with their social status (Bourdieu, 2007). At the same time we might maintain that the commitment to private schooling itself is part of their lifestyle, and of the aspirations and social advantages they wish their children to enjoy (Ball, 2003).

Boxplot 4: Parents' s total consumption in cultural products



Consumption of cultural goods is an indication of the cultural capital of a family, in combination – of course – with their educational capital. Research has shown that cultural capital is related to the educational progress and school achievement of pupils, which is one of the basic mechanisms 'through which the inter-generational transmission of class advantage occurs' (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Families of private school students use their cultural capital to secure a favourable

educational environment for their children, an environment which will assist the '*osmosis'*, the absorption of knowledge and skills through the learning process; they also use their *informational and social capital*, which is directly related to their educational choices and decisions. This latter, in particular, has still not been fully investigated.

Conclusion

In order to define in social terms the process of opting for public or private schooling in the context of the Greek education market, we have examined a range of social factors such as parental occupation, the parents' educational level, the social status of the family, its cultural capital. Analysis of the research data would appear to indicate that these factors do indeed have a decisive effect on *choice of school*.

Specifically, families which opt for private education enjoy a *privileged status within the social world*. They are mainly independent professionals, or people in academic, scientific or administrative occupations, with a high level of education and skills, enjoying a substantial income, in some cases giving them the privileges of real wealth, and they spend a significant part of their income on cultural goods.

If we adopt Bourdieu's definition of social classes, according to which they are "structured by amounts and types of capital 'understood as the set of actually usable resources and power"' (Swartz, 1997: 158), then we can assert that private school students' families enjoy *an accumulation of different forms of capital (economic, cultural, symbolic) and a significant volume of capital, through which they ensure their continued dominance*.

The choice of private school is one element in the educational strategies of the upper and middle classes to preserve their privileges and their social reproduction, through the social closure which private education secures. Moreover, we should not overlook that *these specific social strata, precisely because of their social position and status, attach great symbolic value to private schools within the hierarchy of educational institutions*.

In our research we have laid particular emphasis on the impact of cultural capital on the choice of school. For Bourdieu, it is cultural capital which shapes, to a great extent, the *dispositions*, *perceptions*, *ways of thinking* and *behaving*, of social subjects (Bourdieu, 1986), and represents the main defining factor in social and educational inequalities (Bourdieu, 1996b). So, 'the unequal distribution of objectified and institutionalized cultural capital across social classes is one of the key dimensions of social inequality in modern societies' (Swartz, 1997). Families of private school students are distinguished not only by the institutionalized form of

cultural capital they possess (e.g. university degrees), but also by the objectified form of cultural capital (e.g. purchase of cultural goods).

The study of the development of educational choices, such as the choice between public and private education, is a significant area for academic debate in respect of the educational strategies of the various social classes, since in contemporary societies educational systems play an extremely prominent role. *The school is not a neutral institution, but a space where the dispositions, attitudes and behaviors of various social classes both encounter - and are distinguished from - one another*.

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Appendix

Table 2.1.: Father's educational background of the pupils in public and private schools by level on education

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

		Schools		Total
		Puclic	Private	
Less than Elementary	Count			
	% Education			
	% Public/Private			
Elementary	Count	10		10
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	9,00%		7,40%
Compulsory (9 years)	Count	21	2	23
	% Education	91,30%	8,70%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	18,90%	8,00%	16,90%
Secondary	Count	37	7	44
	% Education	84,10%	15,90%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	33,30%	28,00%	32,40%
Technical high school	Count	15	1	16
	% Education	93,80%	6,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	13,50%	4,00%	11,80%
Post-secondary	Count	4	1	5
	% Education	80,00%	20,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	3,60%	4,00%	3,70%
Technological Institutes	Count	11	2	13
	% Education	84,60%	15,40%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	9,90%	8,00%	9,60%
Higher Education Degrees	Count	12	10	22
	% Education	54,50%	45,50%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	10,80%	40,00%	16,20%
Master Degrees	Count	1	1	2
	% Education	50,00%	50,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,90%	4,00%	1,50%
Doctorate Degrees	Count		1	1
	% Education		100,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private		4,00%	0,70%
Total	Count	111	25	136
	% Education	81,60%	18,40%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

		Schools		Total
		Puclic	Private	
Less than Elementary	Count			
	% Education			
	% Public/Private			
Elementary	Count	50	2	52
	% Education	96,20%	3,80%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	13,40%	4,50%	12,50%
Compulsory (9 years)	Count	58		58
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	15,60%		13,90%
Secondary	Count	115	5	120
	% Education	95,80%	4,20%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	30,90%	11,40%	28,80%
Technical high school	Count	42	1	43
	% Education	97,70%	2,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	11,30%	2,30%	10,30%
Post-secondary	Count	15	2	17
	% Education	88,20%	11,80%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	4,00%	4,50%	4,10%
Technological Institutes	Count	33	6	39
	% Education	84,60%	15,40%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	8,90%	13,60%	9,40%
Higher Education Degrees	Count	57	26	83
	% Education	68,70%	31,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	15,30%	59,10%	20,00%
Master Degrees	Count	2	2	4
	% Education	50,00%	50,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,50%	4,50%	1,00%
Doctorate Degrees	Count			
	% Education			
	% Public/Private			
Total	Count	372	44	416
	% Education	89,40%	10,60%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

SECONDARY EDUCATION

		Schools		Total
		Puclic	Private	
Less than Elementary	Count	4		4
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	1,20%		1,10%
Elementary	Count	55		55
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	16,40%		14,60%
Compulsory (9 years)	Count	62	1	63
	% Education	98,40%	1,60%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	18,50%	2,40%	16,70%
Secondary	Count	84	7	91
	% Education	92,30%	7,70%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	25,00%	16,70%	24,10%
Technical high school	Count	26	3	29
	% Education	89,70%	10,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	7,70%	7,10%	7,70%
Post-secondary	Count	17	3	20
	% Education	85,00%	15,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	5,10%	7,10%	5,30%
Technological Institutes	Count	41	6	47
	% Education	87,20%	12,80%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	12,20%	14,30%	12,40%
Higher Education Degrees	Count	46	21	67
	% Education	68,70%	31,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	13,70%	50,00%	17,70%
Master Degrees	Count		1	1
	% Education		100,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private		2,40%	0,30%
Doctorate Degrees	Count	1		1
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,30%		0,30%
Total	Count	336	42	378
	% Education	88,90%	11,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Statistical Significance: preschool education: x^2: value = 20,898, df = 8, asymp.sig = 0,007, elementary education: x^2: value = 58,296, df = 7, asymp.sig = 0,000, secondary education: x^2: value = 48,668, df = 9, asymp.sig = 0,000

Table 3.1.: Mother's educational background of the pupils in public and private schools by level of education

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

		Schools		Total
		Puclic	Private	
No school at all	Count			
	% Education			
	% Public/Private			
Less than Elementary	Count			
	% Education			
	% Public/Private			
Elementary	Count	8	1	9
	% Education	88,90%	11,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	7,20%	4,00%	6,60%
Compulsory (9 years)	Count	21	2	23
	% Education	91,30%	8,70%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	18,90%	8,00%	16,90%
Secondary	Count	44	2	46
	% Education	95,70%	4,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	39,60%	8,00%	33,80%
Technical high school	Count	4	2	6
	% Education	66,70%	33,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	3,60%	8,00%	4,40%
Post-secondary	Count	7	3	10
	% Education	70,00%	30,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	6,30%	12,00%	7,40%
Technological Institutes	Count	6	4	10
	% Education	60,00%	40,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	5,40%	16,00%	7,40%
Higher Education Degrees	Count	20	10	30
	% Education	66,70%	33,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	18,00%	40,00%	22,10%
Master Degrees	Count	1	1	2
	% Education	50,00%	50,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,90%	4,00%	1,50%
Studying	Count			
	% Education			
	% Public/Private			
Total	Count	111	25	136
	% Education	81,60%	18,40%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

		Schools		Total
		Puclic	Private	
No school at all	Count	3		3
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,80%		0,70%
Less than Elementary	Count		2	2
	% Education		100,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private		4,50%	0,50%
Elementary	Count	45	3	48
	% Education	93,80%	6,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	12,10%	6,80%	11,50%
Compulsory (9 years)	Count	59	2	61
	% Education	96,70%	3,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	15,90%	4,50%	14,70%
Secondary	Count	144	7	151
	% Education	95,40%	4,60%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	38,70%	15,90%	36,30%
Technical high school	Count	18	1	19
	% Education	94,70%	5,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	4,80%	2,30%	4,60%
Post-secondary	Count	20	3	23
	% Education	87,00%	13,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	5,40%	6,80%	5,50%
Technological Institutes	Count	22	3	25
	% Education	88,00%	12,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	5,90%	6,80%	6,00%
Higher Education Degrees	Count	58	22	80
	% Education	72,50%	27,50%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	15,60%	50,00%	19,20%
Master Degrees	Count	1	1	2
	% Education	50,00%	50,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,30%	2,30%	0,50%
Studying	Count	2		2
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,50%		0,50%
Total	Count	372	44	416
	% Education	89,40%	10,60%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

SECONDARY EDUCATION

		Schools		Total
		Puclic	Private	
No school at all	Count	1		1
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,30%		0,30%
Less than Elementary	Count	1		1
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,30%		0,30%
Elementary	Count	49	3	52
	% Education	94,20%	5,80%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	14,60%	7,10%	13,80%
Compulsory (9 years)	Count	64	2	66
	% Education	97,00%	3,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	19,00%	4,80%	17,50%
Secondary	Count	130	16	146
	% Education	89,00%	11,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	38,70%	38,10%	38,60%
Technical high school	Count	15	1	16
	% Education	93,80%	6,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	4,50%	2,40%	4,20%
Post-secondary	Count	19	2	21
	% Education	90,50%	9,50%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	5,70%	4,80%	5,60%
Technological Institutes	Count	20	1	21
	% Education	95,20%	4,80%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	6,00%	2,40%	5,60%
Higher Education Degrees	Count	36	16	52
	% Education	69,20%	30,80%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	10,70%	38,10%	13,80%
Master Degrees	Count		1	1
	% Education		100,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private		2,40%	0,30%
Studying	Count	1		1
	% Education	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private	0,30%		0,30%
Total	Count	336	42	378
	% Education	88,90%	11,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Statistical Significance: preschool education: x^2: value = 19,181, df = 7, asymp.sig = 0,01, elementary education: x^2: value = 55,800, df = 10, asymp.sig = 0,000, secondary education: x^2: value = 28,998, df = 10, asymp.sig = 0,001

Table 4: Parents' Occupational background of the pupils in public and private schools (all levels of education)

FATHERS' OCCUPATION

		School		Total
		Public	Private	
Armed forces	Count	5	3	8
	% Occupation	62,50%	37,50%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	0,70%	2,90%	1,00%
Legislators, senior officials and managers	Count	76	10	86
	% Occupation	88,40%	11,60%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	10,60%	9,60%	10,50%
Professionals	Count	57	43	100
	% Occupation	57,00%	43,00%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	8,00%	41,30%	12,20%
Technicians and associate professionals	Count	47	8	55
	% Occupation	85,50%	14,50%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	6,60%	7,70%	6,70%
Clerks	Count	109	17	126
	% Occupation	86,50%	13,50%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	15,20%	16,30%	15,40%
Service workers, shop market sales workers	Count	91	8	99
	% Occupation	91,90%	8,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	12,70%	7,70%	12,10%
Skilled agricultural - fishery workers	Count	10		10
	% Occupation	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	1,40%		1,20%
Craft and related trades workers	Count	213	12	225
	% Occupation	94,70%	5,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	29,80%	11,50%	27,50%
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Count	66	1	67
	% Occupation	98,50%	1,50%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	9,20%	1,00%	8,20%
Unskilled workers	Count	41	2	43
	% Occupation	95,30%	4,70%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	5,70%	1,90%	5,30%
Unemployed	Count			
	% Occupation			
	% Public/Private Schools			
Total	Count	715	104	819
	% Επάγγελμα (πατέρας)	87,30%	12,70%	100,00%
	% Δημόσια/Ιδιωτική	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

MATHERS' OCCUPATION

		School		Total
		Public	Private	
Armed forces	Count	4		4
	% Occupation	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	0,80%		0,70%
Legislators, senior officials and managers	Count	10		10
	% Occupation	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	2,10%		1,70%
Professionals	Count	73	33	106
	% Occupation	68,90%	31,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	15,00%	37,90%	18,50%
Technicians and associate professionals	Count	30	8	38
	% Occupation	78,90%	21,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	6,20%	9,20%	6,60%
Clerks	Count	131	26	157
	% Occupation	83,40%	16,60%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	27,00%	29,90%	27,40%
Service workers, shop market sales workers	Count	87	12	99
	% Occupation	87,90%	12,10%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	17,90%	13,80%	17,30%
Skilled agricultural - fishery workers	Count	3		3
	% Occupation	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	0,60%		0,50%
Craft and related trades workers	Count	29	3	32
	% Occupation	90,60%	9,40%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	6,00%	3,40%	5,60%
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Count	6		6
	% Occupation	100,00%		100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	1,20%		1,00%
Unskilled workers	Count	100	3	103
	% Occupation	97,10%	2,90%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	20,60%	3,40%	18,00%
Unemployed	Count	13	2	15
	% Occupation	86,70%	13,30%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	2,70%	2,30%	2,60%
Total	Count	486	87	573
	% Occupation	84,80%	15,20%	100,00%
	% Public/Private Schools	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Statistical Significance: *fathers' occupation: x^2: value = 112,062, df = 9, asymp.sig = 0,000, mothers' occupation: x^2: value = 44,579, df = 10, asymp.sig = 0,000*