

*Please note that this is a work in progress and contains only preliminary conclusions or findings.

Reflections on the (Greek) Underdog Culture: A rebellious and radical political identity?

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Abstract

The construction of an 'underdog' political identity is no stranger to the realm of politics, and especially the part of contentious, rebellious and radical politics. More specifically, it is often the case that 'underdog' identities are seen as politically or socially desirable and morally superior, a fact acknowledged by various recent studies on underdog phenomena in diverse social contexts. In the literature of Greek politics, the 'underdog' culture is widely considered as one of the main ideological entities and a source of resistance to the processes of modernization, Europeanization and globalization. As such, the Greek underdog phenomenon is seen predominantly as an obstacle to overcome and carries negative connotations, rather than positive. The purpose of this paper is to situate the Greek underdog phenomenon in the wider and recently developed literature of underdog identifications and to interrogate the dissonance found between them. Furthermore, this paper aims to pose new questions regarding the Greek underdog phenomenon that have remained thus far unaddressed in the existing literature, and to contribute to a wider theory of an underdog political identity. Finally, the paper aims to criticise the adverse climate that the economic crisis has inflicted on the Greek underdog culture by highlighting the contradictions and pitfalls of wishing to do away with the underdog and pointing out its possible merits.

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Reflections on the (Greek) Underdog Culture

President Snow: So, you like an underdog.

Seneca Crane: Everyone likes an underdog!

*President Snow: I don't. (...) There are lots of underdogs out there.
And I think if you could see them, you would not root for them either.*

The Hunger Games

If the underdog were always right, one might quite easily try to defend him. The trouble is that very often he is but obscurely right, sometimes only partially right, and often quite wrong; but perhaps he is never so altogether wrong and pig-headed and utterly reprehensible as he is represented to be by those who add the possession of prejudices to the other almost insuperable difficulties of understanding him.

Jane Addams

Introduction

It would be fair to say that the phenomenon of the 'underdog' is a well-known one in popular consciousness (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2012). Several social researchers observe that stories of underdogs have been some of the most enduring in history, spanning across cultures, contexts and time (Kim *et al.*, 2008; Paharia *et al.*, 2010; Vandello *et al.*, 2007). This cross-cultural and temporal pervasiveness has led some to state that underdogs have acquired the status of 'archetypal cultural reference points'. (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2012: 34). Looking widely for examples, underdog narratives, understood as 'rhetorical structures' (Paharia *et al.*, 2010: 776), inhabit a variety of contexts, such as history, mythology, religion, art, sports, politics, literature, and film (Paharia *et al.*, 2010; Vandello *et al.*, 2007). Since stories of underdogs have been with us for a long time (Kim *et al.*, 2008: 2550), some of the oldest examples used in the academic literature to illustrate an underdog's defiance of daunting odds - regardless of the actual outcome - are the ancient battle of Thermopylae and the 300 Spartan warriors led by Leonidas (Vandello *et al.*, 2007: 1603), or the age-old religious texts of the Bible and the story of David and Goliath in I Samuel 17 (Kim *et al.*, 2008: 2550).

In the political arena, the construction of such a political identity is no stranger to the realm of politics, and especially the part of contentious, rebellious and radical politics. From Marx's historical materialism and the 'proletariat' as a class underdog (Kain, 1991), to post-Marxist identity politics centred on gender, race and queer identities with women, blacks and homosexuals understood as social underdogs (Eriksen, 2007), the term appears to strike a strong resonance. The same could be said of activist identities, such as anti-globalist, pacifist or environmentalist ones, whose self-understanding and self-presentation is often that of a small actionist David who fights against Goliath-like multinational corporations and tainted political channels that stretch around the world (Zelko, 2014). Another example could be the 'subaltern' of post-colonial studies (Spivak, 1988), a figure essentially tantamount to that of the underdog. It may often be the case that such identities are perceived as morally superior because of their assumed powerlessness, disadvantage, and real and

perceived experience of having been done wrong (Vandello *et al.*, 2011). However, the construction of an underdog political identity is not only common in activist and rebellious politics, but it seems to emerge in formal and conventional forms of political action, such as electoral politics and candidates' self-presentation (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009).

But why would politicians and other political actors try so excessively to stretch their seeming weaknesses and shortcomings? What is the meaning of the underdog phenomenon in politics? What are the potential benefits or pitfalls of adopting an underdog political identity? Is it really the case that stories about underdogs can touch 'something deep in the human psyche' as Spencer claimed back in 1873 (in Kim *et al.*, 2008: 2551) – or may we add, in human experience - and elicit sympathy, identification and support? Over the years, researchers themselves have described the narrative of the underdog with words such as 'rousing', 'inspiring', 'endearing', 'exciting', 'passionate', and 'fascinating' (Kim *et al.*, 2008; McGinnis & Gentry, 2009; Paharia *et al.*, 2010), which could raise questions regarding the reflexivity of social sciences, the role of values in social inquiry, and researchers' objectivity and partisanship (Gouldner 1973; Hammerley 1999; Lumsden, 2013). However, the same could be claimed for any inadequately substantiated, poorly examined and overtly polemical attitude *against* the underdog.

Researchers across different social fields have only recently tried to explore empirically the reasons and motivations for underdog identifications, and many argue that it is an under-researched phenomenon (Goldschmied & Vandello 2009, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Paharia *et al.*, 2010; Vandello *et al.*, 2007). While research in different contexts acknowledges the 'appeal of the underdog' as a *distinct psychological phenomenon* and an equally *distinct social identity*, and recent research findings have achieved a degree of progress in understanding why people insist on supporting the underdog, even at times against their better judgement (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009), the literature of Greek politics presents a different picture. In the literature of Greek politics, the underdog term carries a distinctly negative aura, and it appears to be the case that Greek studies literature verges on the other side of the pendulum that does not use words such as 'fascinating' to describe the underdog phenomenon.

Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the underdog, as it stands in the literature of Greek studies, is little more than a shortcut term for every kind of attitude, value, belief, political choice or practice, state administration model, structural condition, and so on, that has ever been wrong or problematic under the Greek sun. In 1994, Diamandouros's convincingly, and admittedly for good reasons (i.e. corruption, individualism, lack of meritocracy, absence of professionalism, dysfunctionality, obstructive foreign policy, and many others), described the Greek political culture as a polarised system where two dominant ideological forces, the modernizing, reformist one and the underdog, populist one, compete with each other for ideological dominance. Ever since, Diamandouros's underdog thesis has become a largely popular and important source of explanation for various shortcomings among researchers working on Greece (Triantafyllidou *et al.* 2013; Stavrakakis, 2002; Tsakalotos, 2008). Especially since the economic crisis emerged, the constructed opposition between modernizers and underdogs has acquired a renewed intensity and has been elevated to a reinforced explanatory framework for the origins of the economic fallout in Greece (Triantafyllidou *et al.* 2013; Xenakis, 2013).

In the context of the domestic politics of blame, while the so-called underdog culture is charged with most of Greece's misfortunes, as an extension of the polarised climate, the modernizing, reformist pathway is often unquestionably accepted as the only legitimate way forward. However, nothing is purely good or evil in itself, neither modernization, nor underdog populism. As Stavrakakis's (2002) has argued to complicate or criticise the Diamandouros's thesis is not to deny it, while as stated by Moschonas (2001), just like the populist PASOC of Andreas Papandreou cannot be understood through the modernization-underdog opposition, it also cannot be understood without it. The same applies to

Greek politics; although the underdog thesis does not exhaust its meaning, this meaning cannot be entirely disentangled from it. Alternatively, this paper wishes to pose different questions. For instance, how can we look beyond the theory's popularity and polarism and make the familiar, unfamiliar? How can we situate it in the wider literature, or develop it theoretically? What are the reasons for the sharp dissonance between what the underdog stands for in other kinds of literature and the one focused on Greek politics? Is there anything worth salvaging from the Greek underdog culture, and if so, which part?

This paper aims to address the above dissonance and to argue that current accounts of Greek politics appear keener on placing blame and fault, rather than *understanding* the phenomena in question. This creates a tension between judgement and understanding that puts into question the purposes of social research. As such, this paper insists that such an understanding of the Greek underdog culture, especially in the Weberian (1968) sense of *verstehen*, is absent in the literature. Consequently, the paper attempts to remedy this gap by suggesting alternative ways to investigate the underdog phenomenon in Greek politics. The paper will start by summarising the existing literature on the underdog phenomenon in general and in Greek politics in particular, before moving on to propose its own alternative readings.

A brief literature review of the underdog phenomenon

The purpose of this literature review is to capture the thus far meaning and utilisation of the term underdog in various social contexts and social sciences. Confronted with such a dramatic overtone for a word, one has to wonder: what's in a name? Where does it come from? What does it mean? How is it employed? A brief exploration of dictionary definitions reveals two lines of reasoning. According to the first, an underdog is the competitor that is least expected to win in a contest or conflict or the person or team that is the weakest among others (Cambridge Dictionaries, 2013; Dictionary.com, 2014; Oxford Dictionaries, 2013). The second stream of definitions, which is more socially inclined, designates that the underdog is a person or group with less power or money than others (Cambridge Dictionaries, 2013), someone who is in adversity or in a position of inferiority and low status (Dictionary.com, 2014; Oxford Dictionaries, 2013) or a victim of social or political injustice (Dictionary.com, 2014). The origins of the word, as one might intuitively assume, can be found in the practices of dogfighting of the 19th century whereby the weaker, losing dog would be declared the 'underdog' of the fight because it would usually roll over on its back and allow the winning dog to tower over it and position itself on top of it (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2012), hence the antonym 'top dog' or 'upper dog'.

It should be clarified that the present literature review focuses exclusively on those streams of research that employ the term 'underdog' explicitly and recognise it as a particular social phenomenon. Various bibliographical searches reveal a limited number of academic texts, which confirms researchers' recent claims that there has been little research, and hence understanding, of the underdog effect (Goldschmied, 2007; Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2008). The disciplines that have mostly paid attention to the phenomenon of the underdog are those of political science, social psychology, business and marketing research, but also sports research (e.g. *Bijleveld et al.*, 2011; Wever & Aadland, 2012; Woodland & Woodland, 2011) and religious studies (e.g. Niditch, 1987). The discipline of sociology has added another layer of inquiry by researching the very relationship of the social researcher with the phenomenon of the underdog itself, producing some of the most elaborate and self-reflective debates.

Beginning with political science, early public opinion research explored episodically differences between 'higher status' people and 'lower status' people at the socio-economic spectrum (e.g.

Knupfer, 1947) or varying degrees of sympathetic identification with ethnic minority underdogs (e.g. Schuman & Harding, 1963). However, the most salient use of the term has been recorded in opinion poll and voting behaviour studies initiated in the fifties (e.g. Simon, 1957) and made popular in the seventies (e.g. Fleitas, 1971; Gartner, 1976) that focused on the 'bandwagon versus underdog' effect. According to this debate, the 'bandwagon effect' referred to people being more likely to vote for the candidates that appeared to be winning, while the 'underdog effect' referred to those voters that were more prone to vote for the candidates that appeared to be losing or falling behind (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009).

The overall results of this stream of research have been equivocal (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009) with some studies supporting the underdog hypothesis (e.g. Ceci & Kain, 1982), others supporting the bandwagon hypothesis (e.g. Kenney & Rice, 1996; Mehrabian, 1998) and others supporting both theses with mixed results (e.g. Lavrakas *et al.*, 1991; Marsh, 1984; Morwitz & Pluzinski, 1996). As concluded (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009: 25), there is no clear-cut tendency in voters' preferences with reference to 'underdog' status and perceptions possibly depend on a variety of demographic and situational factors. To this we should add psychological and identity-related factors, an issue only recently touched upon (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009). The use of the 'bandwagon-underdog' conundrum has waned since the nineties, only recording scarce recent examples (e.g. Lee, 2011).

The subdiscipline of social psychology has produced some of the most focused and insightful accounts on the underdog effect, with most notable the recent works and collaborations of Joseph A. Vandello, Nadav Goldschmied and Kenneth S. Michniewicz (e.g. Goldschmied 2007; Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009, 2012; Michniewicz & Vandello, 2013; Vandello *et al.* 2007, 2011). While traditionally the social sciences had focused on people's fascination with winners or hate for top-dogs (Allison & Burnette, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2008), often followed by malicious joy at their downfall, a well-researched phenomenon known as *Schadenfreude* (Leach *et al.*, 2003; Leach & Spears, 2008; van Dijk *et al.*, 2006, 2008), these researchers revitalised the underdog term and set out to explore the dynamics of people's attraction to underdogs.

Social psychological research confirmed that people were significantly more likely to sympathize with underdog figures, and that support for specific competitors would increase when they were framed as underdogs (Kim *et al.*, 2008; Vandello *et al.*, 2007). Experimental psychology revealed that people's sympathy for the underdog would even go as far as to extend to inanimate objects, with research participants expressing support for struggling, yet lifeless, shapes and figures on screens or pieces of paper (Heider & Simmel, 1944; Kim *et al.*, 2008). However, although this stream of research confirmed the 'appeal of the underdog' it additionally indicated that people's support and identification with the underdog was not unconditional or forever granted. For example, research findings indicated that participants would support the underdog if they thought that the underdog expends maximum effort to overcome its status, or that its low status is unfairly imposed or attributed (Allison & Burnette, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2008). This can be argued to be these studies' the major contribution: the determination of *the limits of underdog identification*.

Business and market research has also produced useful and insightful empirically tested accounts of underdog identification. For example, Paharia *et al.*'s (2010) research describes an emerging trend in firm branding of constructing what they call an 'underdog brand biography' that emphasizes the firm's humble origins, lack of resources and determined struggle against odds. The researchers find that such biographies can increase purchase intentions and brand loyalty, especially among those who see themselves as underdogs and those who come from cultures where the underdog narrative is part of their national identity. Similarly, McGinnis and Gentry's (2009) exploration into motives and meanings of underdog consumption supports the thesis that consumers choose underdog brands on the basis of empathy, social equilibrium, or personal inspiration, while it further differentiates between

postmodern, anti-consumerist and identity project consumption. Although these pieces of research have been produced in market contexts, their findings can be used to generate useful hypotheses for political research and underdog political identifications.

Sociology is the discipline that stands at the exceptional position of having taken the initiative to reflect upon the relation of the social researcher with the phenomenon of the underdog itself, questioning and evaluating the researcher's identification, or lack thereof, with the underdog. This is perhaps no accident since sociology has been described as a discipline populated by people who share a particular ideology and set of values that result in sociologists identifying strongly with the underdog (Harper Simpson & Simpson, 2001; see also Hammersley's 'occupational ideology', 1999). This debate goes back to the beginnings of the discipline with Max Weber's (1946) essay on 'science as a vocation' and is today situated into the 'reflexive turn' in the wider social sciences, whereby researchers are asked to reflect upon their social location and question how this influences the research process from the choice of research topic to the argumentation chosen and promoted (Lumsden, 2012).

In the literature, this debate is best illustrated in the argumentative exchange between Howard Becker and Alvin Gouldner in the late sixties (e.g. Becker, 1967; Gouldner, 1968). Both Becker and Gouldner agreed on the inevitability of bias and partisanship and the impossibility of examining social phenomena from a purely objective and neutral standpoint. However, the difference between them reclined in the position researchers should take on this matter. Becker argued that sociologists, and as an extension social researchers, should take the side of the powerless and disadvantaged in society, and coined the term 'sociology of the underdog'. Becker supported his argument by saying that in society there is what he called 'a hierarchy of credibility' according to which the views and opinions of those in positions of power, such as politicians, journalists or experts, are more valued than the opinions of those who have no access to power. Based on this, Becker argued that social researchers should use their voice to support and improve the conditions of those away from positions of power.

In contrast, Gouldner (1973: 27) warned against replacing the value-free pretence of social research with 'a new, but no less glib rejection of it'. Gouldner referred to this research phenomenon as 'underdog identification' and declared that researchers do not necessarily have to take sides, but if they do, they need to justify their choice on firm grounds that are not based on particular ideological assumptions. Gouldner further problematized the phenomenon of researchers' underdog identification arguing that it often seemed to be based on a titillated exoticization of the underdog figure by middle-class, well-paid, and well-meaning sociologists, which often obscured the fact that the underdog was not always a victim, or passive, or pure, as many underdog researchers wished to believe. However, as critical as Gouldner may have been towards Becker's thesis, not without good reasons, he ultimately concluded that an 'underdog' standpoint is beneficial because it can give us new information concerning social worlds which many members of society know nothing or little about (Gouldner, 1973).

The underdog in Greek studies

In the literature of Greek politics, the term 'underdog' was first used by the social psychologist, Harry C. Triandis in 1972, when he argued that the Greeks were uniquely sensitive to the wrong doings of the powerful and identified particularly strongly with the underdog in any given struggle (in Stephanides, 2007: 7). However, the term gained wider acceptance and popularity after Nikiforos Diamandouros's influential essay published in 1994, where he discusses what he refers to as the 'Greek underdog political culture'. In this essay, Diamandouros employs a historical and cultural analysis of Greek society and diagnoses that the Greek political landscape is divided into two antagonistic political cultures, the modernizing, reformist one and the underdog, traditionalist one.

The two cultures will be presented here by following a close reading of Diamandouros original writing, before moving on to presenting the stream of work it inspired over the years, both espousing and opposing, as well as its status after the start of the economic crisis in Greece.

The underdog culture is the older of the two and is rooted in the Ottoman, Balkan and Byzantine heritages (Diamandouros, 1994: 12). As described, it has long maintained an often militant anti-western and anti-American stance, an introvertedness, a strong statist orientation and a profound ambivalence towards capitalism and the market mechanism, as well as a preference for paternalism and protectionism, a fondness for pre-capitalist practices, combined with a sensitivity for moral sentiments and primordial attachments coupled with intolerance of the alien (Diamandouros, 1994: 12-13). Furthermore, the underdog culture is closer to what Weber has termed a 'sultanistic regime', has a strong religious component, and a latent authoritarian orientation, is prone to parochialism, suffers from a siege mentality regarding the 'contraction of Hellenism', has an obsessive disposition regarding perceived losses, exhibits a pronounced xenophobia and a distinct preference for conspiratorial interpretations of events (Diamandouros, 1994: 13-18).

Moreover, the underdog culture shares a defensive view of the international environment, has a pervasive and exaggerated but fragile and insecure sense of nationalism that undermines its democratic element, conducts a manichean division of the world into 'philhelines' and 'mishellines' (friends of the Greeks and enemies of the Greeks), displays a particular sense of inferiority towards the Western world accompanied by a hyperbolic and misguided conception of Greece's importance in international affairs and Western history, while it tends to identify closely with and support other collectivities that are judged to be underdogs too by having been done wrong by Western dominance, often asking for compensatory justice (Diamandouros, 1994: 18, 38). In addition, the Greek underdog culture is distinguished by its levelling egalitarianism, characterised by preference for an increased state role, direct and unmediated exercises of power rather than for institutions, with an ambivalent attitude towards an active civil society, while it is prone to familism and clientelism, a formal rather than substantive understanding of democracy and a commensurately instrumental view of politics (Diamandouros, 1994: 18-20).

Moreover, the underdog culture maintains a distrustful and rudimentary understanding of modernization, wishes to experiment with alternative routes to modernity, being ambivalent to the liberal Western socio-economic model, and has an enormous capacity for adaptability and resistance, combined with a pervasive populist ideology and a reductionist logic (Diamandouros, 1994: 21-22, 38). Finally, the social strata that adhere to the underdog culture suffer from an inability to forge strategies of collective action capable of providing alternatives, carry a victimised mentality and are fixated with short-term goals rather than long-term considerations (Diamandouros, 1994: 22). Other descriptions include fear of rationalization and structural reforms, and extreme affect regarding admission to the European Community, expressed in demonological beliefs about the project of European integration (Diamandouros, 1994: 43-44). As explained (Diamandouros, 1994: 22), this is the political culture that has claimed the allegiance of the majority of the Greek population since independence.

The modernization culture is the younger of the two cultures and is rooted in the ideas of the Enlightenment and political liberalism (Diamandouros, 1994: 22). Being secular and extrovert, the modernizing culture looks at the industrially advanced nations of the West for inspiration and support, has a distinct preference for reform, rationalization along liberal, democratic and capitalist routes, favours the market mechanism and an internationally competitive economy, and is receptive to innovation and less anxious about the costs of breaking away from tradition (Diamandouros, 1994: 22-23). Politically, the modernizing culture promotes constitutionalism, the mediated exercise of power through modern political institutions, expansive rather than restrictive conceptions of citizenship and human rights, and the diminishing of clientelism (Diamandouros, 1994: 23).

Furthermore, the Greek modernizing culture exhibits sensitivity and adaptability to changing conditions, an imitative and eclectic temperament to ideas coming from Western European prototypes, a cosmopolitan attitude often linked to a high sense of Greece's international significance, a mild, secular and more sophisticated xenophobia compared to the underdog's aversion, and a dynamic nationalism grounded in the will for survival, combined with a manipulative and simultaneously realistic approach to international affairs (Diamandouros, 1994: 25-26). The social strata that adhere to the modernizing culture include business and industrial elites linked to the international system, Greek diaspora communities, especially their bourgeois segment, and various intellectual exponents inside and outside Greece (Diamandouros, 1994: 24).

Diamandouros's underdog thesis is scholarly situated inside a wider stream of research on Greek politics and society, populated by researchers such as Nicos Mouzelis (1978, 1985, 1996), George T. Mavrogordatos (1993, 1997), Constantinos Tsoukalas (1983, 1993, 1995), Christos Lyrintzis (1984, 1987) and Nicos Demertzis (1994, 1997). Since 1994, Diamandouros's theory of cultural dualism has become 'a reference point for understanding Modern Greece' (Triantafyllidou *et al.*, 2013: 3). As such, the underdog culture scheme has served as an explanatory background in a variety of studies on various topics, ranging from the relation between religion and politics (Anastasiadis, 2004; Chrysoloras, 2004; Stavrakakis, 2002) to the politics of reproduction (Halkias, 2004; Paxson, 2004) and social capital in Greece (Paraskevopoulos 1998a, 1998b). However, most studies referring to the underdog have focused on Greece's Europeanization and reform policy (Featherstone *et al.*, 2001; Featherstone, 2005; Kazakos, 2004; Matsaganis, 2007; Monastiriotes & Antoniadis, 2009; Spanou, 2008), most notably foreign policy change (Agnantopoulos, 2006; Kalpadakis & Sotiropoulos, 2007; Mavrogenis & Kelman, 2013; Stavridis, 2003; Stefanidis, 2001; Stephanidēs, 2007).

Mouzelis's (1995) work further differentiates the underdog culture into two subcultures, namely the clientelist and the populist. The populist subculture revolves around a glorification of the people, views the West in a conspirational and threatening light and searches for the essence of the national culture, as well as for 'exits from Europe' (Kokosalakis & Psimmenos, 2002; Mouzelis, 1995). The allusions to Western conspiracy go back to the experience of the dictatorship and the invasion of Cyprus, combined with US and British interference (Mouzelis, 1978). The clientilistic subculture is a rather incoherent and vague ideology that functions mostly as an amoralistic mentality that prioritises personal and family interests rather than the 'common good' (Mouzelis, 1995). The clientilistic mentality and the practice that results from it stands in opposition to state interests and the Western bureaucratic ethos (Kokosalakis & Psimmenos, 2002).

Against the background of Europeanization, studies on reform policy of various areas have argued that the administrative reforms and structural adjustments in Greece would have assisted the country to converge with the EU average, but most authors agree that Greece lagged behind in implementing reforms (Allison & Nicolaedis 1997; Anastasakis & Singh, 2012; Diamandouros, 2011; Pappas, 2012). The relevant interpretation to the underdog culture has been its capacity to resist and hinder necessary political and economic reforms (Diamandouros, 2011). Literature focusing on the underdog and the recent evolution of Greek foreign policy in time, has stretched the obstructive and contradictory practice of Andreas Papandreou's PASOC, as the leading representative of this political culture (Featherstone, 2005; Pagoulatos, 2004), and many have argued that several international choices made by Greece were damaging to the country's relations with its EU and NATO partners (Economides, 2005; Pagoulatos, 2004).

As popular as the assumption of the underdog thesis has been in Greek studies, it has also triggered several critiques (Stavrakakis, 2002; Triantafyllidou *et al.*, 2013). Many of them focus on the theoretical and empirical problems associated either with modernization (Jary & Jary, 2000; Lyberaki

& Tsakalotos, 2002) or with the concept of political culture (Elkins & Simeon, 1979; Gendzel, 1997). In terms of the former, Bratsis (2003: 21) criticises the 'the many racist pitfalls and the mechanistic and formalistic tendencies of these modernization theory type arguments'. Others (Tsoukalas, 1983; Tziovas, 1995) argue that the modernization thesis projects a western-centric and Eurocentric vision of modernity, industrialisation and modernization, while several authors (Triantafyllidou *et al.*, 2013) indicate the evolutionist character of modernization theories and the problems of unilinearity and historical determinism, according to which all societies are supposed to follow the same footsteps followed by earlier industrialisers and more developed countries (Demertzis, 1997; Tsakalotos, 2008).

One of the problems associated with the concept of political culture is its essentialising tendencies and its potentiality to inspire the assumption of a homogenous concrete cultural formation with distinct and separable elements, problems found in the outdated concept of 'national character' that political culture was supposed to overcome (Diamandouros, 1994; Gendzel, 1997). In this respect, many (Tsoukalas, 1983; Herzfeld, 2002; Stavrakakis, 2002) have criticised the underdog thesis as an essentialist one, while arguing that the use of the theory in the Greek political arena and public discourse has treated individuals and groups in an essentialist 'either /or' way, stereotyping them as belonging to the one camp or the other, especially after the crisis (Xenakis, 2013). As an extension, the very assumption of dualism is criticised as reductive, rigid and overtly simplified (Demertzis 1997; Stavrakakis, 2002; Tziovas, 1995), to a degree that cannot account for the complexity of real social life. Finally, many have argued that the very term 'political culture' can serve as an umbrella term that encompasses several elements being too flexible, ending up explaining everything, and therefore, nothing (Gendzel, 1997; Stephanides, 2007).

Other critics have argued against the implicit tendency of the underdog thesis to deem as pathological and deviant the citizens that embrace it. For example, Sutton (2003) argues that the psychological explanations that underlie Mouzelis's accounts according to which conspiracy theories are seen as projections, jealousies, defence mechanisms, and schizophrenia are made to contrast with the author's rationality, whereby a rigid realm of common sense is created that deems pathological any deviation of opinion. A similar argument is advanced by Sotiris (2010, 2013) who maintains that the reactions of Greek mainstream intellectuals treated the December 2008 riots in Greece, an event interpreted with populist and underdog underpinnings, as a mere expression of deviance, anomie and deficient political culture, failing to recognise it as a 'highly original form of collective action' rooted in legitimate reasons.

Additionally, some (Tsakalotos, 2008; Triantafyllidou *et al.* 2013) mark the roots of the theory in the North-American research tradition of the 1950s and 1960s, perhaps implicitly questioning its relevance in time and space. Others view it as a moralising theory based on firm good and bad distinctions that may serve as a blame-pointing narrative that attributes fault and wrong doings to a pervasion of behaviours rather than shedding light to the phenomena in question (Tziovas, 1995; Tsoukalas, 2012; Triantafyllidou *et al.* 2013). Finally, some have pointed out that the theory has become overtly ideological with every interpretation of Greek reality occurring in a pre-given explanatory framework (Anastasiadis, 2010; Kokosalakis & Psimmenos, 2002;), which can hinder innovative thinking and alternative explanatory visions.

In a post-crisis context, the popularity and debate-breeding character of the theory have been revitalised and intensified (Triantafyllidou *et al.*, 2013; Xenakis, 2013). More precisely, as explained 'since the outbreak of the crisis in 2010, the underdog culture is widely under attack, both abroad and within national borders, for bringing the country to the verge of economic and political bankruptcy' (Triantafyllidou *et al.*, 2013: 9). In many respects, the all-embracing, non-differentiating, underdog culture construct has been enacted to the main culprit of the origin of the crisis. Amidst this climate, there have been various attempts at balancing out the existing interpretations with various authors

arguing that any single account of the origins of the crisis is necessarily partial and incomplete, and that there is a need to also point out the European and global components of the crisis, such as the inherent weakness of the Eurozone and the crisis of global capitalism (Triantafyllidou *et al.* 2013; Vasilopoulou *et al.*, 2013).

Most notably, several commentators, including Diamandouros (2013) himself, have observed that the very management and effects of the crisis may be increasing the intensity of the underdog experience. For instance, Featherstone (2014: 9-10) argued that the austerity measures of 2010 and onwards have increased the sense of vulnerability and victimhood because wages and jobs were cut, while the role of the EU became of a 'quasi-colonial' character. We can evaluate that the perceived infliction of disadvantage and loss of sovereignty has the capacity to intensify underdog sentiments (Dinas, 2012). Finally, the accumulated failures and scandals related to the Greek political elites, understood by some as the primary faulting line (Pappas, 2012), cannot but help increase the populist passion (Dinas, 2012).

Reflecting on the Underdog

Given the popularity and explanatory potential of the Diamandouros thesis in Greek studies, it is surprising that no efforts have been made to connect the Greek underdog literature to the wider literature of the underdog. This may be due to the recent development of the latter field and the scarcity of focused studies, but still none such endeavours have been encountered in the extended literature review presented above. The implication of this absence is that it has left Diamandouros's problematization regarding the use of the term 'underdog' unaddressed.

In a neglected footnote of his essay on cultural dualism, Diamandouros (1994: 86-88) explains that 'the use of the term underdog poses an intriguing problem [because a]lthough aptly capturing the meaning and defining properties of a particular cultural tradition, it fails to provide adequate indication of its theoretical content and its broader potential utility'. As such, some crucial questions regarding underdog identification and support are left theoretically underdeveloped and empirically unexamined. In fact, it seems that in the case of Greek studies, no systematic efforts are made to even formulate such research questions. This paper wishes to make some preliminary attempts to address this preoccupation. In this underdeveloped field, these research questions concern:

1. The phenomenon of the underdog itself in temporal and geographical contexts, and as an extension its comparative research; what kind of different underdog identifications can we find, depending on context?
2. The underdog appeal and possible explanations for it; in other words, what makes it psychologically appealing, why do people support it even at times against their better judgement?
3. Most interestingly, what are its limits? What makes an underdog identification cease to burn strong?
4. Finally, what are the political ethics of the underdog phenomenon? How does it relate to issues such as legitimacy? Can we possibly speak of a hierarchy of underdog credibility?
5. How can all the above help us (or not thereof) understand Greek politics and its ongoing crisis in a better way?

Looking at the two streams of literature, what is striking is the completely different climate that embraces them. While in the wider literature of the underdog, researchers are fascinated by its appeal and strive to understand it, in the literature of Greek politics the term carries overwhelmingly negative connotations. As such, anything of an ethico-political character that the underdog stands for, is

omitted. As illustrated in Jane Addams's quotation at the beginning of this paper, the underdog may not always be right, but its understanding can be obscured by the impulse of bias and prejudice.

Most importantly, in a post-crisis context, and the wider disdain it has unleashed in expert and lay communities alike, the theory has been used as a finger-pointing explanatory framework for everything that has been wrong under the Greek sun, summarised neatly under a single term: underdog. This not only obscures the ethical stakes at hand, but may also constitute a backlash against citizens that can legitimately claim to experience the 'underdog blues'. This backlash may be motivated more by the desire to judge and point fingers, rather than to understand or to acknowledge real social cleavages and disadvantages. In this sense, this current tendency to blame the underdog may constitute something more than the identification of culpability, and may as well be based on a disposition which is keener on judging, rather than understanding what gives rise to underdog identifications, makes them highly plausible or perpetuates their existence structurally.

The following sections wish to largely address this ethico-political dissonance between the two sets of literature. More specifically, the following sections wish to contest and problematize some of the assumptions found in the literature of the Greek underdog, such as Greek exceptionalism; the underdog phenomenon as an underdeveloped country symptom; the inability to accept the underdog as a distinct or valid political identity; the refusal to understand its appeal in a more empathetic way, as inspired by the Weberian sociology of *verstehen*; the lack of differentiation of different kinds of underdog identifications; and finally, the very suitability of the term.

The underdog phenomenon: archetypal and banal, but diverse?

In Greek studies, the hybrid or borderline character of Greece between modernity and backwardness, but also its assumed exceptionality have often been debated (i.e. Katrougalos, 2013; Pagoulatos, 2004). To be sure, both strategies apply to various other countries (Harvey, 2002). Pagoulatos (2004: 62) explains that Greek exceptionalism is 'a central ideational tenet or offspring of the underdog culture'. However, the issue of Greek exceptionalism is more complex and multi-dimensional than that. For instance, it is hard to pin down the boundaries and interrelations of lay beliefs of Greek exceptionalism, expert representations of it in social scientific research and real facts that contribute to its plausibility. How much 'truth' capital does each of these components hold, and how do they relate? To be sure, national exceptionalism is one of the fundamental principles of any kind of nationalism or nation-building action (Merom, 1999; Tyrrell, 2013). Why should a nation ever claim its very own geographical or symbolic space if itself does not believe, strive to prove, or is acknowledged by others, as 'special', thus worthy of its own space?

However, it can additionally be argued that in the case of Greece, scholarly representations of its underdog political culture may have contributed to its understanding as an exceptional country, or more accurately, an exceptionally problematic country. Certainly, Greek national exceptionalism is not always expressed in negative terms, as beliefs about Greece's 'unique' political contribution of democracy (Frangoudaki, 1997) or romanticised responses to Greek anti-austerity resistance demonstrate (see, 'We are all Greeks!' initiative, Common Dreams, 2012). This section wishes to contest the (Greek) national exceptionalism assumption, found both explicitly and implicitly in the literature. Although the case against national exceptionalism cannot be fully addressed in this paper, suffice to say that no country is ever that special - for better or for worse - while the national exceptionalist postulate can be a rather unhelpful outlook for the development of foreign policy by the (self) proclaimed 'exceptional' country towards others, or by others towards it (Pagoulatos, 2004).

Looking at the supposedly uniquely intense Greek underdog phenomenon in detail, and juxtaposing it against the wider literature of the underdog, its uniqueness becomes questionable. In the latter literature, several researchers argue that stories of underdogs have 'been with us for a long time' (Kim *et al.* 2008) and they cut across cultures and history (Kim *et al.* 2008; Paharia *et al.* 2010), while they can be encountered in a variety of social spheres, from art, literature, movies and politics to sports, mythology, folktales and religion (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009; Kim *et al.* 2008; Paharia *et al.* 2010). As such, underdogs have been argued to be ubiquitous and enduring in history (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009; Vandello *et al.* 2007), with many researchers characterising it as a 'pervasive' social phenomenon (Kim *et al.* 2008; Paharia *et al.* 2010).

Furthermore, many have argued that the underdog narrative or figure constitutes a phenomenon of an *archetypal* character (Goethals & Allison, 2012; Goldschmied & Vandello, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2008). For instance, Kim and his colleagues (2008: 2551) support that 'such narratives reflect a script or archetype of struggle that engages support and sympathy', and if may we add, as an extension, *identification*. As such, underdog stories as cultural reference points (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2012) appear rather banal and common-place, rather than extraordinary and rare. In this sense, it may as well be that underdog stories mostly reflect the desire and quest of the extraordinary, perhaps even the heroic, rather than being extraordinary themselves.

Vandello and his colleagues (2007) argue that underdog figures enjoy great appeal, 'largely because of their status as underdogs'. Inspired by evolutionist psychologist Herbert Spencer's statement (1873) that underdogs seem to 'touch something deep in the human psyche', Kim and his colleagues (2008) suggest that the underdog phenomenon may be a central part of human experience and social perception, while their empirical findings indicate that people have a highly accessible schema or script about struggling and overmatched underdog entities. Their four empirical tests across different domains, such as sports, business, art and one experimental context, specified that people expressed clear and reliable underdog effects across fields (Kim *et al.* 2008). The researchers were particularly impressed with people's ability to identify with and support inanimate struggling designs on mere pieces of paper, concluding that underdog effects can be particularly strong (Kim *et al.* 2008). Various other researchers have found that people often exhibit strong underdog inclinations in their identifications and judgements of support (Goethals & Allison, 2012; Goldschmied & Vandello 2009, 2012; McGinnis & Gentry 2009; Paharia *et al.* 2010; Vandello *et al.* 2007, 2011). As such, the underdog effect is not only fantasized to be recurring, but this view is frequently supported by empirical research.

According to Diamandouros's (1994: 88) culturalist proposal, an underdog culture could be seen as a variant of the 'traditional' that could apply to societies that have come in contact with more 'developed' systems, have established asymmetrical subordinate relations with them, and have internalised this asymmetry in negative and defensive ways that have transformed into corresponding insecure and xenophobic views of the international order. This can be understood as a particular (semi-) peripheral, developing or under-developed, even so-called, 'third world country' symptom, since at another point, Diamandouros (1994: 6) gives the examples of the post-colonial African and Asian countries, Latin America, Eastern Europe and especially Southern Europe, which is the focus of his work, as the countries that have been characterised by this precise form of cultural dualism, conflicted between traditionalism (alias, underdog-ness) and modernization. As such, we can understand underdog culture as an important part of a given national identity (Paharia *et al.* 2010). His thesis seems to make sense, but one cannot help but wonder: is it only underdeveloped and late industrialised countries that have developed underdog political cultures or mentalities in general?

This assumption can be challenged. It would be fair to say that the United States of America (hereafter USA) is not an underdeveloped or powerless small country in the world and we would expect it to

have been spared the underdog ideational obsession. However, the existence of a strong USA underdog culture can be defended on at least three grounds: a) we can identify a distinct US-branded underdog political culture, as well as, b) a distinct underdog culture in wider USA society, most notably exemplified by the well-known American Dream, and c) most 'underdog research' is in fact produced by North-American researchers, or researchers based in the USA, a testament of the interaction and influence between culture and research culture.

Beginning with the first line of argument, researchers (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009) have exemplified the frequency and insistence of political candidates during the 2008 USA Presidential race to describe themselves explicitly as 'underdogs'. During that time it appears to be the case that political leaders were paradoxically competing to prove themselves to be on the losing side or fighting each other over the authenticity of their respective 'underdog-ness'(all examples from Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009: 24):

"I know I am not the favorite in this race. As an *underdog* and governor of a small western state, I will not have the money that other candidates will have" (New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, 1/27/07)

"I'm here asking for your support. I'm the *underdog* in South Dakota, I've gotten used to that role" (Senator Hillary Clinton, 6/8/08)

"Yeah, I'm an *underdog*, but it's been the case almost every single time I've run" (Congressman Tom Tancredo, 1/27/07)

"Tim, I'm not comfortable being a darling . . . *Underdog* is better. Underdog from Brooklyn is much better" (Rudolph Giuliani, answering to TV host Tim Russert who called him "the darling of conservatives all across the country", 8/29/04).

"when your name is Barack Obama, you're always an *underdog* in political races" (Barack Obama, 1/24/07)

As can be seen in these examples, the notion of the underdog appears to be playing a significant role in USA politics. As such, it is no accident that North-Americans often self-proclaim their political love for the underdog. For example, Republican candidate, Mike Huckabee, declared in an interview: 'throughout our history, what we've often seen is that this country loves an underdog' (in Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009: 24), while others state that 'the underdog is the political history of America' (Trautman, 2010: 10). Michael Prell's book *Underdogma* (2010) advances the argument that the 'enemies' of America (sic) ironically use 'the American tradition of rooting for the underdog' to mask their anti-Americanism. In this sense, the underdog political identity is enthusiastically claimed by USA political actors, which testifies to the existence of an underdog political culture in this developed, industrialised, Western country. However, the past realities of the extermination of native Americans, slavery, racial segregation, as well as some more contemporary examples of US foreign policy contradict the self-promoted domestic rhetoric of an 'American underdog political tradition' (Trautman, 2010), while internationally it would seem rather implausible to represent the USA as an underdog in the world order.

Moving on to the second argument, this distinct 'American' tradition of the underdog can be observed most notably in the well-known story of the 'American Dream', based on an underdog narrative of humble origins, struggle against odds and eventual overcoming and success in a land of freedom and equality (Kim *et al.* 2008). This is indicated by popular media titles, such as *The American Dream Has Always Been about the Underdog* that argue that 'Americans are literally born in a land founded on and by underdogs' (Pelczar, 2013), as well as researchers examinations of USA culture, who reckon that the underdog rhetoric has been an integral part of the construction of an American national

identity (Paharia *et al.* 2010; Samuel, 2012). As such, we begin to understand that it is most certainly the case that not only 'third world countries' develop underdog ideations. The American obsession with the underdog can also be observed in its film industry which is full of numerous examples of underdog individuals who fight against odds and larger than themselves entities, such as *Rocky*, *Sea Biscuit*, *Erin Brockovich*, *Cinderella Man* and *Million Dollar Baby*, but also its literature. As Arthur Miller attested, 'the American Dream is the largely unacknowledged screen in front of which all American writing plays itself out' (in Abid, 2012). However, as Abid (2012) argues the validity of the American Dream and the ability of the US free enterprise system to deliver it to all people needs to be questioned.

Finally, in terms of the third argument, it comes perhaps as no surprise that the overwhelming majority of social researchers that work on the distinct phenomenon of the underdog come from or are based in the USA, perhaps a subtle testimony to how culture influences research agendas. North-American political science of the fifties and onwards focused on the 'bandwagon and underdog effect' debate (e.g. Simon, 1954; Fleitas, 1971; Gartner, 1976). Furthermore, during the sixties it was the North-American sociology that debated the researcher's identification with the social underdog (e.g. Becker, 1967; Gouldner, 1968), while recent revivals of the term underdog and its scientific exploration come from the field of North-American social psychology (e.g. Goldschmied 2007; Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009, 2012; Michniewicz & Vandello, 2013; Vandello *et al.* 2007, 2011). In fact, Diamandouros himself studied for several years in the USA, where he completed his doctoral studies, therefore it is unsurprising that he would use such an Anglophone term to describe Greek society. After all, the word 'underdog' has no direct equivalent in the Greek language. As such, Diamandouros's interpretation comes from the inside/outside peculiarity of his social positioning, being a Greek, yet also belonging elsewhere, to the diaspora that looks inside from the outside. This can be a powerfully insightful, but also a potentially flawed position for a researcher.

That having been said, it appears to be interestingly resonant that in preliminary findings of the present author's study on national and European identities in Greece, a male participant from the Greek diaspora, explaining the origins of the Greek crisis and referring to clientelism, shared the following:

'...what was happening? The state had you on the carrot and the whip; in order for you to vote for them - we're talking about the two biggest parties - [...] in order for the state to achieve what it wanted, which was to squeeze out for itself all that it could... and we're talking about individual persons here, and they are part of the Greek society, those 300 that we put in the parliament, that were voted by the Greek people themselves... so what did they do [the 300 MPs]? They promised you you'd be hired; they promised you the simplest thing; that your child would not go to the most borderland place during his army service... something very simple, aiming to secure your vote [...] so [the voters] would vote [for them] and they would turn a blind eye to the great feast that was happening behind the scenes. So, they [the MPs] would throw you a piece of bread, like to a stray *dog*, so that you, like the *dog* that you were, would guard and close your eyes to what was happening behind' (participant no. 4)

As seen, this participant made explicit use of part of the compound word 'under-dog', using the second part 'dog', while most importantly his interpretation of the relation between the Greek MPs and the Greek citizens exhibits elements of an underdog narrative implying that the citizens were subordinate to the MPs for, i.e. their jobs or army services, but also had the power to change the political system or overcome their subordinate status through their voting, a latent, unmet source of power which is an integral element of the underdog figure and narrative. The quotation also exhibits a sense of arrogance on behalf of the politicians and humiliation on behalf of the citizens, as well as a judgement focused on blaming the citizens for the doings of the corrupt politicians by the means of complicity and bought-out tolerance.

Returning to the case of the USA, how can we reconcile the existence of a strong underdog culture in a country like the US that has no large history of subordination to greater powers, no large experience of series of external impositions, while in addition, shows no signs of underdevelopment or lack of industrialisation? Is it perhaps the case that the underdog identification spares no country, but rather develops itself in mutant variations from context to context? To be sure, Greece's underdog has little to do with the North-American one, and a provisional, superficial comparison would indicate serious differences, such as the individualism of US underdog narratives compared to the collectivist interpretations of Greek underdog ideologies, the different approaches to the role of work ethic and of agency in public life, their different historical developments and construction of national identities, their disparate international standing, and many more. While in the case of the USA the mythology of the '*frontier*' induced ideals of 'individualism, opportunity and endeavour' (Hopkins, 2008), in the case of Greece the mythology of the '*borderland*' induced ideas of conflict between East and West, and equally conflicted identities.

However, all these reflections constitute only exactly that: reflections. As such, more research is needed to substantiate and develop theoretically the above suggestions. Nevertheless this section wishes to close with an ironic and paradoxical similarity in time and space. As found in Diamandouros's essay (1994: 49), the populist PASOC government of the eighties referred to various sections of the Greek population as 'the 90% of the population which comprises the non-privileged strata in Greek society'. Is it not the case that only a few years ago, the Occupy Wall Street movement echoed the same self-description of its own population declaring 'We are the 99%'? The numbers and the redistributive political sentiment expressed are close enough, although the circumstances couldn't be farther away from each other.

The underdog identification: why so appealing?

As discussed above, the underdog phenomenon is far more banal and ordinary than is made out to be in Greek studies, while an underdog political culture does not necessarily contain itself to an underdeveloped country symptom. Furthermore, it was argued before that current scholarship on Greek studies is often keener on judging, rather than understanding, while it also projects an overarching culturalist argument that addresses macro assumptions, but not the individual psychology of micro social conditions. To this respect, we need to wonder: what makes an underdog identification possible? What is its appeal? What does it offer psychologically speaking to its adherents? What kind of enchanting meanings does it hold for them? Most importantly, why do people support it quite often even against their better judgement, or against rational considerations? This section also wishes to argue that the wider literature of the Greek underdog avoids acknowledging it for the particular *political identity* that it constitutes for its adherents, or to account for variations of different underdog political identifications. This section will try to sketch out some possible theoretical pathways for these absences in the literature, based on various themes that emerge as important for underdog identifications. These themes include one's view of politics, the view of the underdog as an ethical identity, its emotional appeal, its links to one's personal experiences, and the difference between loving the underdog and merely hating the upperdog.

View of politics

Beginning with the appeal of the underdog, studies have shown that people often exemplify clear preference for perceiving situations through an underdog narrative schema, for occupying underdog identities and for supporting other underdog figures. Why is that so? A first reflection on this issue, especially in the political field, concerns people's perceptions of the nature of politics. According to

various theorists (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Mouffe, 2005; Schmitt, 1976), the question of the political concerns relationships of antagonism and violence in any form (direct, systemic-structural or symbolic-cultural; see Galtung, 1969, 1990; and Zizek, 2009) between various social groups. To be sure, this is not the only 'genuine' political relationship, although it would be fair to say that this darker view of politics as a conflictual vocation and a question of domination-subordination, is a prevailing one among experts (see, i.e. Arendt's excellent critique on this, 1972) and citizens alike. Consequently, when people are confronted with conflict and perceive antagonism, as put by underdog researchers (Vandello *et al.* 2007: 1176) 'it is in fact difficult to remain neutral when pulled into the drama of competition or conflict', and perhaps the more intense the conflict, the more difficult to maintain neutrality. Furthermore, we can evaluate that if people tend to perceive politics as a relation between dominators and dominated, then it logically follows from this that people with more conflictual views of politics would be more prone to characterise some groups or individuals as the underdogs in the relation of power.

An ethical identity

Another reason why underdog identities and narratives might be so appealing is their links to issues of ethics. It would be fair to say that underdog identities, exactly because of their assumption of powerlessness and victimization, as well as association with demands for justice and equality are widely considered 'ethical identities'. This may have a self-enhancing effect for the group or individual who assumes an underdog identity because this increases its self-righteousness and blamelessness, thus its collective or individual self-esteem (see, social identity theory, Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Given the proclaimed morality of underdogs, this choice may even indicate a guide for desirable social behaviour, filtered by the will to fulfil a social role and demonstrate group-derived behaviour (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2008). Lending support to others who are considered underdogs can also be seen as fulfilling a socially desirable role, i.e. the defender of the disadvantaged or the ethically sensitive person, and concerned citizen.

Additionally, research has indicated that people often show aversion to inequalities (Fehr & Schmidt, 1999; Messick, 1995; Tricomi *et al.*, 2010; Vandello *et al.*, 2007, 2011) and this can drive support for those perceived as disadvantaged (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009; Vandello *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, this can be characterised as a balancing act, that may be expressed practically or symbolically, whereby its purpose would be to restore equilibrium between the upperdog and the underdog (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). As such, underdog identifications may satisfy people's need for fairness and equity (Allison & Messick, 1985; Folger & Kass, 2000; Kim *et al.*, 2008). Research examples include participants' motivation to ascribe positive qualities to the underdog entity, most often unrelated to its disadvantage, or to view its performance in a more positive light (Vandello *et al.*, 2007; Goldschmied & Vandello, 2009). This may not only assist the impression of the restoration of fairness, but it may also function as a way to resolve cognitive dissonance and a strategic justification for the underdog support, against reasonable argument (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009).

However, there might be a twist to these moral concerns, since research has also indicated that sometimes powerless groups' use of violence is judged with a degree of moral licence because of their prescribed underdog status that dictates that their violence is more justifiable or understandable. For example, it was found in a study that 'using a bomb to kill one's adversaries was judged more moral, justifiable, legitimate, and necessary when perpetrated by the less powerful group' (Vandello *et al.*, 2011: 1174). Alternatively, in another study by the same researchers the use of violence by the underdog group served as a delegitimizing factor and decreased underdog support and identification (Vandello *et al.*, 2011). As such, to the degree that people have ethical concerns and an underdog identity or narrative is conceived as satisfying these needs in a better way than, for instance, a

narrative of reform and modernization, then we can assume that underdog identifications may be more appealing compared to reformist ones.

Emotional appeal

The issue of moral concerns can be linked to emotional ones, since several researchers have illustrated that moral judgements are emotional and intuitive (Greene *et al.*, 2001; Hoberg *et al.*, 2007; Vandello *et al.*, 2007). As such, underdog identifications may be fulfilling various human emotional needs, often seen as going against rational thinking (Kim *et al.*, 2008). As stated, underdog identifiers 'are ones who are emotionally driven, which makes intuitive sense based upon the fact that their choices often go against the grain... As such, their motives are replete with emotional directives that may seem to fly in the face of rational thought' (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009: 195). As such, we can understand that underdog identifications offer a distinct emotional benefit to people. But what could these emotional needs and benefits may be, besides the desire of compensatory justice?

One example concerns several researchers association of the theme of heroism with that of the underdog (Goethals & Allison, 2012; Kim *et al.* 2008) and we can understand that underdogs' resistance is often framed as 'heroic'. This may satisfy people's need for heroes (Goethals & Allison, 2012) or for transcendence of reality. This transcendence may be relevant to issues of social change, since some of the fundamental elements of the underdog narrative is that of transformation and change, framed in positive terms, such as success, overcoming or victory. Other related needs and emotional motives that might be satisfied by underdog identifications are those of hope and optimism, empowerment, nostalgia, dramatization, honour, authenticity, inspiration, personal sovereignty and uniqueness, with various researchers empirically associating these themes with the underdog narrative (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Prestin, 2013). As such, we can assume that for individuals that value emotional concerns more than rational and self-interested considerations, identifications that satisfy these choices, such as those of the underdog, may be more attractive and self-fulfilling, thus preferable.

Personal experience

Research has established that underdog identifiers support underdogs out of empathy, the ability to feel another's feelings (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). But how is this attitude towards others triggered or intensified? Several researchers support that people identify with other underdogs and lend their support because they have personal experiences of being or having been in the past an underdog, thus of understanding themselves as such (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Paharia *et al.*, 2010). As argued, 'all or nearly all of us have experienced struggle and have been small and powerless' (Paharia *et al.*, 2008: 2552). After all, we all have been children: vulnerable, dependent, fearful, irresponsible – some of the more negative attributes of the underdog condition. What we can gather from the above discussion on the psychological appeal of the underdog is that it operates through an identity mechanism (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009; Paharia *et al.* 2010).

In this sense, we can view the underdog effect as a particular and valid political identity that is based on and mediated through people's view of politics, ethico-political concerns, political emotions and personal experiences at the individual and collective level. As such, we can assume that the more the experience of the economic crisis in Greece, or elsewhere, increases the experience of social disadvantage and the feeling of political victimization, the more underdog identities will strike a strong resonance with people's subjective and collective experiences. Finally, since most supporters of modernization have traditionally belonged to the diasporic communities or business and political elites (Diamandouros, 1994), we can assume that lived experience cannot facilitate identifications

with modernizing political identities, because most people do not belong to the above social categories, thus their personal experience is radically different.

Love for the underdog or hate for the upperdog?

Researchers who work on the underdog have been keen on differentiating motives for underdog identifications between those who are prompt by the love for the underdog and those that mostly spring from a hate for the upperdog. To this respect, the phenomenon of *Schadenfreude* (Leach *et al.*, 2003; Leach & Spears, 2008) has shed light to this qualitative difference. The German word *Schadenfreude* stands for the 'malicious joy when another's misfortune and suffering brings one pleasure' (Heider, 1958; Kim *et al.* 2008) and in this context it connotes the emotional pleasure felt at seeing the upperdog lose. According to some (Feather, 1999; Feather & Sherman, 2002; Kim *et al.*, 2008), the key factor of *Schadenfreude* is deservingness, the belief that the advantage of the upperdog is unfair and undeserving which can lead to feelings of hatred, envy, resentment and preference for radical actions (see also Diken's conceptualisation of *spite* and its relation to political nihilism and terrorism, 2009).

Some empirical research has confirmed that some participants were indeed more anti-topdog, rather than pro-underdog (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). As such, we can differentiate between *positive* underdog identifications by their *embracement* of a particular political identity based on the underdog narrative, and the *negative* underdog identifications by their overwhelming focus on the *rejection* of the upperdog. Such differentiations are underscored in Greek studies where non-ideological clientelists, populists of any degree and character, anti-establishment collectives and corrupted politicians are all grouped under the umbrella term 'underdog culture'. More research should be able to make many more differentiations and treat the above figures and phenomena with the distinct attention they necessitate.

The underdog conditionality: what are the limits?

In the only recently developed subfield of – if we can call it that – 'underdog studies', empirical research suggests that people do love an underdog, however not always and not forever. Underdog identification and support seem to rest upon certain conditions, that is, a certain conditionality. In this respect, an underdog, be it a figure or narrative, an individual or a collectivity, needs to prove its credentials. Alternatively, various other considerations may override the underdog effect. One of the most interesting findings of research on the underdog effect, is that the assumption of the underdog label does not always guarantee support and that although underdogs may capture our hearts, at the same time it is argued by participants that underdogs may deserve their subordinate status (Goldschmied & Vandello, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2008).

One of the limits of underdog identifications concern the issue of interest. As explained (Kim *et al.*, 2008), people can be quick to abandon underdog identifications if it is in their better interest to do so, thus people may support the underdog if their pragmatic interests are unaffected, but they may switch allegiance to more topdog identification if their interests dictate so. This may occur even in cases where the underdog can put on a strong moral case. For example, past research has indicated that people can quickly abandon a moral principle if this suits their interests (Batson *et al.*, 1997, 2002; Kim *et al.*, 2008). Alternatively, some researcher supports that concerns with justice may overwhelm self-interested considerations with people experiencing more, perhaps symbolic, utility with equality, rather than with advantageous inequality (Camerer, 2003; Vandello *et al.*, 2007).

While this may connote an economic or instrumental rationality, there are wider rational considerations that relate to the limits of underdog identifications, and they are often contextualised as a matter of clash between rationality and emotion. For example, some researchers (Kim *et al.*, 2008) support that although our heart may lay with the underdog, rational considerations may go against this emotional leaning. Needless to say, the constructed opposition between reason and emotion is flawed in various ways, albeit a common place one in social sciences and in society. Nevertheless, such rational concerns may be based on evidence or perceptions that contradict the underdog narrative and its plausibility, and as an extension trigger alternative emotions, such as doubt, contempt and disbelief (Vandello *et al.*, 2007). To this respect, there are various behaviours or attributes that the underdog is not expected to hold.

For example, in order to reconcile one as being an underdog without creating dissonance..., underdog status support and/or self-concept has to be framed in a positive manner (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). As such, the underdog cannot be a mere 'loser', which means that underdogs need to exemplify potential in order to merit support and identification and cannot be a hopeless case that nobody expects anything from it (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). The cultural use of the word 'sleeper' as a close synonym to that of the underdog, referring to an entity whose capability proves to be greater than expected after long past failure, punctuates this point (Dictionary.com, 2013). Most importantly, and especially on the perception of the difference between underdogs, sleepers and losers, the underdog needs to be perceived as being hard-working, strong and indefatigable, while trying hard to change its subordinate conditions (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). According to deservingness theory, positively valued attributes and actions, such as the above, are perceived as corresponding to positively valued outcomes, such as success, symbolic or actual (Vandello *et al.*, 2007). Empirical research has indicated that people would stop supporting the underdog if it stopped trying to achieve something better (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009).

To this respect, although ability is conceived as outside one's control, effort is understood as a controllable dimension (Vandello *et al.*, 2007). As an extension, in order to merit identification, the underdog's subordinate status needs to be perceived as not responsible for its disadvantage, (Vandello *et al.*, 2007), but as a victim of externally opposed detriment. In the case of Greece the debate on the origins of the crisis with the constructed polarised dilemma between blaming *either* the internal Greek political culture *or* the external inherent inequalities of the Eurozone has played an important factor in terms of the plausibility of viewing Greece as a mere loser or an underdog. Other pieces of research have shown that participants would support an underdog with little possibility for success if it was perceived to be disadvantaged by scarce resources. As stated (Vandello *et al.*, 2007: 1613), 'not everyone with low expectations is seen as an underdog... When an individual or group with low expectations has ample resources, people may perceive their position as fair and just'. In the Greek case, the argument that Greek elites and citizens have been enjoying ample resources prior to the crisis undermines any claim to an underdog status in a post-crisis context.

Other ideational elements that create dissonance with the underdog condition and can decrease corresponding identification and support is the underdog being perceived as arrogant. For instance, respondents would withhold their support to an underdog that suddenly appeared arrogant (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). The same would occur if the underdog appeared to be whining because this behaviours was mostly associated as an attribute of losers (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). Finally, underdog support would fall if the underdog appeared to be winning, enjoying success and gaining widespread respect (McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). Alternatively, the underdog is generally perceived to remedy for its shortcoming with passion, determination, tenacity, persistence and effort (Paharia *et al.*, 2010; Prestin, 2013) or a put by McGinnis and Gentry 'evidence of heart and spirit' (2009: 195).

According to self-identification with the underdog, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) argues that the social status of the group one belongs to is a socially important source of self-esteem. In line with this, underdog researchers (Vandello *et al.*, 2007) assume that high status groups should be more attractive for the individual that seeks self-validation, thus association with the higher status group should be more desirable and sought after, hence the pursuit of outgroup preference and social mobility strategies. However, this argument ignores the possibility of the multiple ways that underdog status constructs its own positive social identity, and as such, social self-esteem, especially in relations to the moral concerns described above. Adversely, the failure to construct an alternative self-esteem, can be exemplified in low status groups that having found themselves in long periods of social disadvantage exhibit the phenomena of self-hate and self-depreciation, an assumption shared by social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982). This shift should be highly influenced by the factors described above and the distinctly ethical concerns of the underdog narrative and the ability to substantiate the credible status of the underdog entity in question.

Researchers have argued that given what we can call the ‘conditionality of the underdog’, claiming an underdog identity may be a far more risky decision than imagined (Vandello *et al.*, 2007). This applies to individuals and collectivities alike. It may be the case that in collective identities such as national ones arguing in favour of an underdog identity is complicated by the diversity of the collectivity and the multiple opportunities for the loss of legitimacy. In the Greek case, although there may be several vulnerable social groups that can plausibly claim an underdog identity, such as the impoverished elderly, the disadvantaged unemployed, the lower working classes, the immigrants and various others, there are also various groups that may claim an underdog identity for reasons that may not be perceived as legitimate, such as the political elites or the former public sector workers that have widely been charged with responsibility for the economic crisis. As such, Becker’s ‘hierarchy of credibility’ described above becomes relevant in the sense that in the public arena where politics is judged, some underdogs are understood as more genuine than others, and thus more justified and legitimate (see also, self-categorization theory on prototypicality, Turner, 1985).

Conclusion: Rebellious and Radical?

This paper attempted to investigate the underdog phenomenon in Greece and in Greek literature in a reflective and preliminary way. To this respect, the paper argued that current literature on the Greek underdog appears to be more prone to judge, rather than to understand the phenomenon in question. As such, attempts were made to connect the literature of the Greek underdog to the wider and recently developed literature of the underdog, and to pose new questions. Consequently, three thematic sections were presented. In the first one, the assumption of the underdog political culture as an exceptional Greek phenomenon, as well as the assumption of it an underdeveloped country symptom were questioned. In the second one, a *verstehen* approach was followed to understand people’s subjective meanings and motives for identifying with the underdog, whereby a variety of different associations were revealed, such as view of politics, ethics, emotions, lived experience, and so on. In the final part, attempts were made to elaborate on what was named ‘the conditionality of the underdog’ and the different social criteria that people use to decide on the proclaimed underdog’s status of credibility. However, more research is necessitated to draw any plausible conclusions.

Regarding this conference’s theme on rebellious and radical politics, the question of whether the underdog is in fact a rebellious and radical political identity, the answer would have to rest once again on a conditionality: not always, and not forever. Understanding rebellious politics as an objection to and a rejection of what is perceived to be the political reality, and radical politics as the attempt to change profoundly this reality, the underdog needs to be judged on its desire and commitment to struggle for such a purpose. As exemplified by the empirical findings of researchers working on the

underdog label above, people believe that the 'genuine' underdog has a passion and a dream combined with a restless spirit, and strives to change its condition and overcome its low status. As such, the underdog condition may be more similar to Hannah Arendt's (1972) understanding of power as action in concert and as latent and potential, but also fleeting and momentary. As put, 'wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever' (Arendt 1998: 199). As such, the overcoming element and outcome of the underdog narrative and its condition is always pending, until its eventual realization.

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