

Gender Equality in the workplace: The case of Cyprus

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Abstract

This thesis takes up with the investigation of the position of women in the workplace and in the society in general in Cyprus. This thesis is focused on the investigation of gender inequality in Cyprus and especially the reasons of the non-progression of women in the workplace under the scope of the theoretical framework of agency, structure and culture. The empirical study was based on an inductive approach and using a mixed methodology the findings of the research were extracted both from an online survey and semi-structured interviews amongst accountants and academics as two representative professions in Cyprus. The main goal of this research was to examine whether there is gender inequality both in the workplace and the society in Cyprus and whether this inequality can be linked to the national culture. The thesis contributes to the general investigation of gender issues but most importantly in the investigation of gender issues in Cyprus as this area has been under-researched. The findings of this research suggest that women encounter obstacles on their way to the top of the organisational ladder and there is evidence that the difficulties they are faced with are mainly due to their role as mothers but also due to the gender specific roles deriving from Cypriot culture. However, albeit gender inequality is evident in Cyprus both in the society and the workplace things have started to improve both through the introduction of legislation on equality and also through women themselves who form their own networks and claim their rights in the workplace and the household.

Dedication

In loving memory of my grandfather Andreas...

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

*‘Man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female: whenever she acts as a human being she is said to imitate the male’ (Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*).*

1.1 Introduction

Simone de Beauvoir noted that women are thought to be inferior to men and the only way to be taken into consideration is to act like men. It is suggested that we live in a man’s world and women are not equipped to play a male game made up of male rules. Thus, it is important to investigate the experiences of women within the workplace and the society in general. In the light of these, this study deals with the exploration of the place of women in the workplace in Cyprus, the existence of gender inequality and whether the latter is affected by the national culture.

This thesis was triggered by the personal interest of the researcher in gender inequality in Cyprus. Being a working woman in Cyprus herself and observing the inequalities between men and women both in the society and in the workplace in addition to her interest in the notion of culture, introduced early on during her bachelor studies, combined with her unease nature lead to the result of the present research.

This chapter consists of an overview of the research area providing also the aims and objectives followed by the rationale of the study and the composition of the following chapters is outlined.

1.2 Working Women in Today’s Society

During the last four decades there has been an increase in the number of women in the workplace in modern economies (Davidson and Burke, 2004). However, the advancement of women in managerial or high ranked positions has not been so flourishing; the progress of women in the professional and managerial world has been uneven compared to the proportion of working women (Wirth, 2001). While it is

evident that women are educated and trained equally with men for the most part, according to Powell (1999) they still encounter a 'glass ceiling' on their way to the top.

According to Ely et al. (2008) many people share the view that giving emphasis to gender, race, or any other element of divergence is, at best, frustrating due to the fact that the more one discusses an issue the more of an issue it becomes. Indeed, some might argue that focusing on these kinds of discrepancies can create problems. On the other hand, there is the view that the observation of organisational life "through a gender lens" (Ely et al., 2008, p. ix), as with other dimensions of difference, makes it possible to comprehend more about individuals' behaviour, the structure of companies and to better acknowledge the importance of certain policies.

Scientific research has often ignored women's voices hence, did not examine the latter's point of view within the scope of their research and consequently did not take into account women's interpretation of political and/ or social phenomena (Ackerly and True, 2010). However, from the flourishing of feminist movements, around 1960s and 1970s onwards, many issues such as sexual harassment, workplace discrimination, pay gap, and the care economy were inserted in the investigation schedules of researchers who "made the conceptualization of these political and social concerns a cornerstone of their work" (Ackerly and True, 2010, p. 465). Despite these, little has changed in terms of the proportion of women in higher managerial positions.

Ackerly and True (2010, p. 468) indicated that "gender works differently in different contexts because of multiple political, economic, and social forces". In addition, Liff and Cameron (1997, p. 35) suggested that "conventional equality measures have made a limited impact on women's position in the workforce" and as a result there is the belief that women are not as capable as men and are seen as unadjustable to the business reality. Alternatively, feminist approaches to the gendered economy have identified such issues as the pay gap between genders, resulting in efforts to promote equal pay for work of equal value, and reveal the importance of women in the development procedure of incorporations and countries (Folbre, 1984).

This study will focus on the perceptions of both men and women regarding gender equality in organisations in Cyprus and in the society in general. This study is important due to the fact that there are limited studies focusing on gender discrimination in Cyprus, there exist mainly surveys and reports, and additionally, it would be interesting to investigate the place of women in Cypriot society and how cultural and societal norms are transferred in the workplace and affect women's progression.

1.3 Researches' Background

According to Lewis (2006) we are, from the day we are born, programmed depending on our cultural environment to act in certain ways and this programmed behaviour is reinforced in every stage of our lives. The word programmed implies that society shapes peoples view of themselves and others even before they are born; "we think our minds are free, but, like captured American pilots in Vietnam and North Korea, we have been thoroughly brainwashed. Collective programming in our culture, begun in the cradle and reinforced in kindergarten, school and the workplace, convinces us that we are normal, others eccentric" (ibid., p. 17). If this is indeed true the phenomena that are observed in the societies and in the managerial environments of a certain country are culturally driven. Henceforth, one could only assume that culture would be 'responsible' even for the existence of gender inequality in a certain society which would, inevitably, be transferred into the workplace.

The European Commission has identified the problem of gender inequality faced by women and has introduced several directives in order to resolve it. The quest of gender equality has been the central and the most highly developed pillar of the EC's social policy (Barnard, 2004). Women in the European Union captured in 2004 more than one third of working positions and are more likely to be recruited in 'atypical' jobs, especially part-time jobs, and are mostly affected by long-term unemployment due to their choice of motherhood and family (ibid.).

The essence of gender discrimination is unequal treatment on the basis of sex. The treatment to be considered discriminatory must not simply be different, but also unfair¹. It is gender discrimination that provides different working conditions, salaries, hiring or promotions between women and men. The statistics on the status of the world's women show that they have a long way to go before achieving equality with men. According to a report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), women fall short in many of the main indicators that measure progress towards gender equality and women's advancement².

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore gender issues in organisations in Cyprus, exploring women and men's experiences and perceptions. In order to do that the thesis will focus on the following research objectives:

- (a) Explore issues around culture in Cyprus and in organisations and its impact on employees
- (b) Investigate whether employees in organisations in Cyprus perceive gender inequalities in the workplace/ careers
- (c) Explore the impact of family, in particular motherhood, on the experience of work for professional women in Cyprus
- (d) Explore ways organisations support equality in the workplace in Cyprus

Hence, the main purpose of the study is to examine the perception of employees with regard to gender issues within organisations in Cyprus as well as Cypriot society, whether there is gender inequality within Cypriot society and whether this discrepancy is transferred in the workplace.

The following section deals with the structure of the thesis.

¹ www.employment.finlaw.com.

² www.unifem.org.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of nine interlinked chapters. The following chapter, Chapter 2, presents the theoretical framework of agency, structure and culture on which the analysis of the findings was based. The three mentioned components are analysed in detail and a correlation between them is attempted. Further, organisational culture and gendered organisations are presented in an effort to introduce the notion of gender inequality within the workplace.

Chapter 3, as a continuation of the theoretical framework, investigates the place of women in the workplace and obstacles they are faced with on their way to the top of the organisational ladder. This chapter engages with gendered jobs, wage gap, glass ceiling, mentoring and networking, and working mothers. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the legal framework for gender equality that is now in place within the European Union.

The study moves on to the investigation of the Cyprus case in Chapter 4. The chapter gives an overview of the history of Cyprus and the important political events that scarred the island and its people. The chapter continues with the analysis of the position of women in the Cypriot society and concludes with some statistical evidence and presentation of some survey findings with regards to women's position in Cyprus. Acknowledging the history of the country under investigation is important in order to better understand the socio-economic situation which in this case has played a vital role in the entrance of women in the workforce. The chapter concludes with the identification of the research questions based on the gaps in the literature especially in the Cyprus context.

Chapter 5 introduces the research methodology on which this study is based. The methodology adopted for this study, social constructionism, suggests that society is socially constructed and that perceptions are inherited from one generation to another through culture. Emphasis is given on the research design used for this study examining in depth both the online survey and the semi-structured interviews that were used for the

data collection. The chapter continues with the explanation of the data analysis and concludes with a section on reflexivity.

The study then proceeds to Chapters 6 and 7 where the findings of both the online survey and semi-structured interviews are presented. The findings are presented according to the research questions. The answers of the participants have led to the identification of the emerging themes which were used for the analysis of the findings in the discussion chapter that follows.

Chapter 8 deals with the discussion of the main findings of the research which are then related back to the literature and research methodology. An analysis of the research findings is attempted taking into account the research methodology and acknowledging the importance of all three agency, structure and culture in the progression of women in the workplace as well as the position of women in the Cypriot society.

This thesis concludes with Chapter 9 which firstly presents a summary of what has been discussed in previous chapters. Further, the main points deriving from the findings are presented here and are linked back to the theoretical framework of agency, structure and culture suggesting the interaction of the three however, with clear prevalence of culture over the other two components. The chapter summarises with critical assessment of the study, a number of recommendations for further research and a final conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework – Agency, Structure and Culture

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will critically engage with the theoretical framework chosen for this study which acknowledges the interaction of agency, structure and culture. On the one hand, there is the debate that people can act freely and are capable of controlling the conditions in their lives (Giddens, 1997). This is *agency*. On the other hand, there is the belief that actions are a result of “social forces outside our control” (Giddens, 1997, p. 567) reflecting the notion of the impact of *structure*. Furthermore, there is the debate that people’s actions are affected by *culture* however, this is distinguished from *structure* in that culture is not structured and thus can be investigated as a distinct context (Hays, 1994). This study is based on the notion of social constructionism in a sense that knowledge is constructed as opposed to created, through the society itself (Young and Colin, 2004). In effect, reality is considered socially constructed but this reality reflects the subjective experience of everyday life (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). Therefore, all three constituents of this theoretical framework are considered constructed and interlinked. Hence, any frequently repeated action evolves into a pattern, which can then be reproduced mechanically throughout time (ibid.).

2.2 Agency and Structure

Social structure as a concept is of crucial importance to social analysis yet according to Hays (1994) some researchers engaged in sociology use the term in vague ways. Probably the most obvious ambiguity is that of contrast between structure and agency. In effect, their in-between connections are lost dividing the two into separate and distinct entities for example “structure is systematic and patterned, while agency is contingent and random; that structure is constraint, while agency is freedom; that structure is static, while agency is active; that structure is collective, while agency is individual” (Hays, 1994, p. 57). However, most social phenomena in democratic societies are situated somewhere between social structure and agency.

At first, agency and structure were seen as two distinct notions nevertheless, as Evetts (1992) noted between 1970s and 1980s their interaction was acknowledged. A debate between structure and agency has been identified and as per Giddens (1997) there are two approaches with regards to this connection; the first approach shares the belief that people's lives are guided by social structures and the second approach suggests that people do exercise their agency which is somehow infused by the national culture. To some extent people are faced with structural constraints by family, society etc but at the same time can exercise their agency at least up to a point (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) therefore, suggesting the interaction of structure and agency in shaping people's lives (Bhaskar, 2011).

It is worth mentioning that agency can take individual or collective forms. Individual agency is the will of the person as a unit and collective agency is the will of a group working and acting together in the same direction for example religion and family. This collective agency derives from collective identities. Collective identities, apart from the individual point of view, can also be seen as cultural collectivities and communities defined by shared memories and myths, and common values and symbols. Collective identities become stronger when they are primarily based on "cultural elements as in the case of castes, ethnic communities, religious denominations and nations" (Smith, 2001, p. 19). Cultural collectivities are much more stable than other types of collective identities because the basic cultural elements from which they are constructed- memories, values, symbols, myths and traditions- tend to be more persistent and binding; they represent recurrent elements of collective continuity and difference (ibid.).

Sometimes individual agency can be stronger than collective agency and this is how revolution or change in the society begins. For example, the agency of a child being abroad and away from his/ her family can shape the construction/ norms of the said family by bringing in new ideas. "Cultural identities and communities are as much subject to processes of change and dissolution as everything else, although this change must occur in clear boundaries as identity denotes a measure of stability and of sameness over time" (Smith, 2001, p. 20).

Further, debates between agency and structure presume that these notions entertain causal relationships (Clegg and Bailey, 2007). This suggests the uniqueness of both structure and agency in a way that they exist irrespective of each other although one can affect the other in any given moment. Hence, according to Clegg and Bailey (2007) an organization could affect its environment, or the other way around, instead of both interacting and influencing each other at the same time.

In its hypothesis that women do not proceed in the workplace as a consequence of choice, preference theory (Hakim, 1996) positioned within the agency-based paradigm. Hakim (2003b) suggested that in the absence of financial need only a very small percentage of women would choose to work on a full-time basis, the majority would prefer a part-time job and the rest would rather not work at all (on this basis one might speculate of course that some men, given the opportunity, might choose not to work either). Hakim (1996) applied preference theory, based on an extensive review of the research evidence on women's choices in the last decades, in order to explain and predict women's choices between career and family. Preference theory specifies the "historical context in which lifestyle preferences become important predictors of behaviour" (Hakim, 2003b, p. 54). According to Hakim (2003b) five historical changes have had a significant impact on women's choices in life. These five historical interventions are: "the contraceptive revolution; the equal opportunities revolution; the expansion of white-collar occupations; the creation of jobs for secondary earners; and the increasing importance of attitudes, values and personal preferences in lifestyle choices" (Hakim, 2003b, p. 54).

According to Hakim's (1996, 2000) research women, once they have the freedom of choice in education and society, choose one of three different lifestyles; work-centred, home-centred or adaptive.

- (a) Work-centred are those people who are dedicated to competitive activities such as careers, sports, politics, music (or the arts in general) mostly in the public sphere (Hakim, 2003b). The family is "fitted around their work, and many of these women remain childless even when married" (Hakim, 2003b, p. 55).

- (b) Home-centred are the people who give priority to their personal lives and their family after they get married. These women are likely to have families with many children and are not prone to engage in paid jobs unless the family is faced with financial difficulties (Hakim, 2003b).
- (c) Adaptive women try to combine family and work without giving obvious priority to either. This group is generally the largest among women and can be identified in several occupations (ibid.).

Hakim (1996, 2000, 2003b) suggested through her research that the majority of women do not develop adequately within their workplace not because they are being discriminated against but because they choose not to. She indicated that men and women have substantial differences concerning work orientation and labour market behaviour and these differences are correlated to deeper differences, mostly due to the relative importance of family life and careers (ibid.). Hakim (1995) also opposed the dominant feminist view that childcare problems are the main barrier to women's employment³. She claimed that is not only women with children who 'choose' to work part-time but also women with no childcare responsibilities many of whom decide not to work at all (ibid.). The other feminist myths proposed by Hakim (1995) are as follows:

- (a) Myth 1 (the myth of rising female employment): this myth is the notion that female employment has increased substantially through the past century although according to Hakim (1995, p. 431) what really happened was the "substitution of part-time for full-time jobs, and the substitution of married women for single women workers".
- (b) Myth 2 (the myth of no sex differential in work commitment and work orientations): this myth is the notion that female workers are as "committed, dedicated, hard-working and productive as are men" (Hakim, 1995, p. 432) however, according to Hakim (1995, p. 434) the truth is that there are two types of women workers; one that is committed to careers and the other that gives priority to the marriage career.

³This opposition is the third of the Five Feminist Myths about Women's Employment that Hakim proposed (1995).

- (c) Myth 4 (the myth of exploited part-time workers): this myth is the notion that employers perceive part-time workers as not seeking improvement within the workplace. However, according to Hakim (1995, p. 439) “part-time workers will behave just like full-time workers if only the quality of the jobs can be improved”.
- (d) Myth 5 (the myth of employment stability among women and part-time workers): Hakim (1995, p. 442) indicated that the most important difference between female and male workers were “women’s higher rates of absenteeism, higher labour turnover and lower employment stability”.

Through Preference Theory (Hakim, 1996) and the five Feminist Myths (Hakim, 1995) Hakim proclaimed that everything is about choice and that women who do not progress in the workplace is due to lack of their own aspirations. It is asserted elsewhere also that not all women wish to follow a career path (Fearfull and Kamenou, 2006), and that some actually feel that it is their choice not to. However, the degree to which this is attributable to agency is highly arguable. From a cultural perspective Fearfull and Kamenou (2006, p. 889) point out that “stereotyping and the identities that are ascribed to people are the result of an interplay, down the centuries between people’s views on different cultures, gender roles and even nations’ roles’ can be considered accountable for several discriminatory practices” (equally, it is as likely to be true that some men ‘choose’ to become breadwinners and to advance within the workplace because this is the role culturally ascribed to them).

In turn, cultural influences can work themselves into structural contexts, for example, Hakim (2006) admitted that men can be helped to achieve high ranked positions by having a full-time housewife or by remaining single. Hence, as Clegg and Bailey (2007) pointed out agency can be affected/ influenced by different and distinct factors such as gender, age, or ethnicity of an individual, the use of technology in the workplace (i.e. surveillance cameras), or the legislation proclaiming conditions of employment.

Hakim was seriously critiqued in the fact that she failed to take into account that women shape their preferences according to the cultural and societal norms of their environment

(Leahy and Doughney, 2014). Leahy and Doughney (2014, p.38) indicated that “Hakim’s approach does not deal with the crucial phenomenon of ‘adaptive preference’, whereby women adjust their preferences in response to persistent gender inequality”. Further to the above, Hakim’s work has been critiqued that it failed to recognise that preference is not something static but rather it can evolve or change over time (Pocock, 2003) and in effect people’s agency can be altered accordingly.

Structure on the other hand can be described as the context in which actions occur socially, economically and politically. In the debate of structure versus agency the supporters of the former suggest that human actors are somehow positioned instead of holding the ultimate truth of their lives. Structuralists indicated that since conditions change throughout the years so the human behaviour and actions change accordingly (Giddens, 1976). Therefore, behaviour is not considered as a result of a free will but a consequence of structures. When it comes to organisations Cockburn (1991) noted that the dominant group is the one responsible for the creation of its structures and she indicated that the norm is the white, heterosexual non-disabled male. Hence, under this concept women need to be able to compete following the male norm in several aspects of the organisation i.e. hiring, promotion, remuneration, development etc. (Kolb et al., 1998). Helgessen (1990) indicated that women are disadvantaged within their workplace because the female ‘working style’ is not yet valued appropriately and Fletcher (1998) noted that women who try to adopt a more ‘feminine’ style in their workplace find that others do not even notice them most of the time. In this effect, it is suggested that structure is of utmost importance in the workplace and it pre-determines the role of each gender regardless of each person’s agency.

2.3 Structure and Culture

At the same effect, a contrast between structure and culture is also proposed by certain researchers (Berger, 1991; Geertz, 1973). This contrast implies that culture is not structured and proposes certain clashes between the two suggesting that “structure is objective and material, while culture is subjective and ideal; structure is hard, while culture is soft; structure is external, publicly-accessible, and open to scientific observation, while culture is internal, hidden, and requiring interpretation” (Hays, 1994,

p. 58). Again, there is little doubt that culture has an impact on social phenomena. Dichotomies do not allow the chance of interaction between the three perspectives; agency, structure and culture. However, it is reasonable that each plays a part in social phenomena in the context of women studies. Evetts (2000) identified the interrelation between three dimensions in order to explain women's careers; action dimensions which reflect women's choices, structural dimensions which entail an amalgam of family structures and organizational practices and, cultural dimensions which embrace family and feminine ideologies along with organizational culture.

Evetts (2000) referred to the cultural dimensions as people's beliefs and the norms of the society and to the structural dimensions as the organisational ladders and the division of labour within both the organisation and family. She also argued that despite the fact that structure and culture are interlinked there are distinct entities and are "sometimes difficult to disentangle in practice" (ibid., p. 59). In addition, Evetts (2000) indicated the element of agency when it comes to women's career choices and albeit acknowledging the interaction between agency, structure and culture she argued that the former is dependent by neither structure nor culture. Henceforth, she indicated that women are able to make free choices and form strategies when it comes to their careers as well as other roles and responsibilities ascribed to them (ibid.).

Hays (1994) suggested that the way a researcher views agency, structure and culture affects what the researcher chooses to study as well as the research itself. Hays further indicated that albeit social life is structured these same structures "do make possible a whole range of choices in everyday life" (1994, p. 70). Depending on the structural alignment one can make larger or smaller interventions on with agency. Furthermore, some impacts of culture are easier to alter (i.e. by changing geographic location, job, even sex) while others based on fundamentals such as language and ethos are almost impossible to change (Hays, 1994). Therefore, the three notions are interlinked and can be used together in analysing the results of any research having to do with the human behaviour and the effect of social and organizational environment on people.

Henceforth, the theoretical framework of this study will be based on agency, structure and culture as all three notions are of utmost importance in order to fully engage in the understanding of the experiences women have within their workplace, their career path, possible change as well as continuity in organisations (Evetts, 2000). After all, the analysis in women's careers can also include further experiences deriving from other roles and responsibilities (family, friends, and social groups) embraced by women either by choice or imposed on them by social structures (Finch and Mason, 1993).

For the purposes of this study culture will be seen as distinct but interlinked to structure, as per Evetts' identification, and the former will be examined in two parts namely organizational culture and national culture focusing on how these two affect the position of women in their workplace and in Cypriot society respectively. Additionally, as Bhopal (1997) indicated, culture is a very important factor in the definition and determination of women's lives. Adding to the above, structure and agency are equally important for the purposes of this study as they allow for identification of the constraints possibly imposed on women, (career-wise) by certain configurations within the organization and the society in general, and the choices and opportunities available to and taken up by women within a given structure. Within the scope of this study it will be investigated whether the choices people make are, or are not, entirely free and if they are somehow affected by national culture under the prism that everything is socially constructed.

The next section deals more specifically with the notions of national and organisational cultures and how these two interlink to the point that gender discrimination stems from society and then is transferred into the organisation. The connection between the existence of gender inequality in the workplace and in the society, where the organisation is established, will be investigated.

2.4 Culture

Tylor (1924 (orig. 1871): p.24) defined culture as “the *sum* of knowledge, beliefs, arts, moral values, laws and customs and any other faculties and habits that are adopted by the individual as member of a society”. The definition of culture is a very complicated

issue. According to Terpstra and Sarathy (2000) culture is everything. It consists of the tangible (clothes, food, objects) and the intangible (ideas, opinions, values) and determines a certain way of behaviour (Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000). Culture constitutes a complete system of behavioural elements which can be learned and adopted by the members of a given society. These elements are constant and compatible with each other and certain behaviour in a society is learned and transmitted from one generation to the next (ibid.).

According to Hodgetts and Luthans (2002) culture is the knowledge that is used by individuals to translate their experiences and create their social behaviour. This knowledge shapes values, creates attitudes and influences behaviour. Furthermore, they identified six characteristics of culture. Namely culture:

- (a) is learned and is not biologically inherited
- (b) is shared among people of an organisation or a society
- (c) is transferred from one generation to another
- (d) is symbolic
- (e) has a chain structure, that is to say, a change in one point will result in changes in another
- (f) changes, since it is based on the ability of individuals to change or adopt new perceptions.

There are several descriptions and analyses of culture and its proposed component parts. It is not possible to explain them all in this thesis, so while the work of Hall and Hall (1987), Hodgetts and Luthans (2002) is acknowledged here, the work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998), Lewis (2006) and Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) is explained in the following section as a consequence of the direct link in these works between societal and organisational culture.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) formulated a perception for culture which involves social interaction, communication and presupposes common ways of information analysis among the involved individuals. It is suggested that these elements have consequences for the activities of enterprises as well as the administration of different cultures (ibid.). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) introduced three layers of culture; explicit culture, norms and values, and implicit culture.

Explicit culture entails the things that can be identified/ seen by others outside the culture. These include language, nutrition habits, architecture, fashion, art, monuments; “they are symbols of a deeper level of culture” (ibid., p.21). *Norms and Values* suggest that norms can be identified in the constitution of every country in the form of written, formal laws or even as informal, unwritten social contracts (often derived from religion) and entail “the mutual sense a group has of what is right and wrong” (ibid, p.22). Values refer to the ideals of a certain group as to what is good or bad. It can be said that norms and values comprise the structure of the society. *Implicit culture* entails basic assumptions about existence itself. Implicit culture depicts the deeper level of culture which is only assumed and cannot be seen or identified by outsiders and sometimes not even by the group itself (ibid., p.23). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner suggested that implicit culture is the unseen force that drives and guides peoples’ actions. Similarly, Hall and Hall (1987) divide culture into high and low context ones. High context proclaims the existence of many unwritten rules while low context suggests that more explanation of situations is essential to reducing the chances of misunderstanding (Scheffknecht, 2014).

The work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner was influenced by the work of Geert Hofstede (Draguns, 2007) moreover their main themes involved “culturally perceptive management and marketing practices to intercultural communication, cooperation, and reconciliation” (ibid., p. 51). Consequently, the application of their findings is very working environment-focused.

Lewis

Lewis (2006), split culture into two categories; linear active and multi-active. Linear-active cultures are made up of people who tend not to deal with several tasks simultaneously; they focus to a great extent on a concrete job which they complete according to scheduled timetables. According to Lewis such individuals are often introvert, patient, quiet, typical, work under defined hours, extract information from statistics and databases, make limited use of body language and separate their professional from personal life. Linear-active cultures give great attention to professional development and devote many hours in the workplace. In contrast, multi-active cultures comprise populations that do not follow specific programmes and are not typical. Lewis suggests that they are characterised by extroversion, impatience, talkativeness, do not follow timetables, sentimentality, and use of body language and an overlap between personal life and professional life. Multi-active cultures give great emphasis to the personal life. The first priority is family and then comes professional development.

Lewis (2006) indicated that we are able to envision a person's behaviour or reaction both in personal and professional life, only in the context of cultural background. He specifically suggested that "when parents returning from the hospital carry their baby over the threshold, they have often already made one of their first culturally based decisions-where the baby will sleep" (p. 17). Paraphrasing this, every step that we take from the moment we are born is according to the cultural environment that we are born in. If this is indeed true then the way we act in our workplace must be highly influenced by our cultural background, hence different experiences of men and women in organisations and in careers might be a culturally related issue. The hypothesis that culture affects experiences and perceptions of men and women in Cyprus is investigated within the scope of this study and will be analysed in depth in Chapter 8.

Hofstede

Finally, Geert Hofstede, a prominent researcher on cultural issues has defined culture as the collective programming of the mind which separates the members of a team or category of individuals from others. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) compare culture

with mental software stressing that human behaviour is partly predetermined by intellectual programming. Every group of people who share the same culture has its own way of thinking, its own way of feeling and acting; “culture is learned, not innate. It derives from one’s social environment rather than one’s genes” (ibid, p.4). Hofstede stratifies culture and compares it with the layers of an onion which consists of symbols, heroes, rituals and values (Diagram 1).

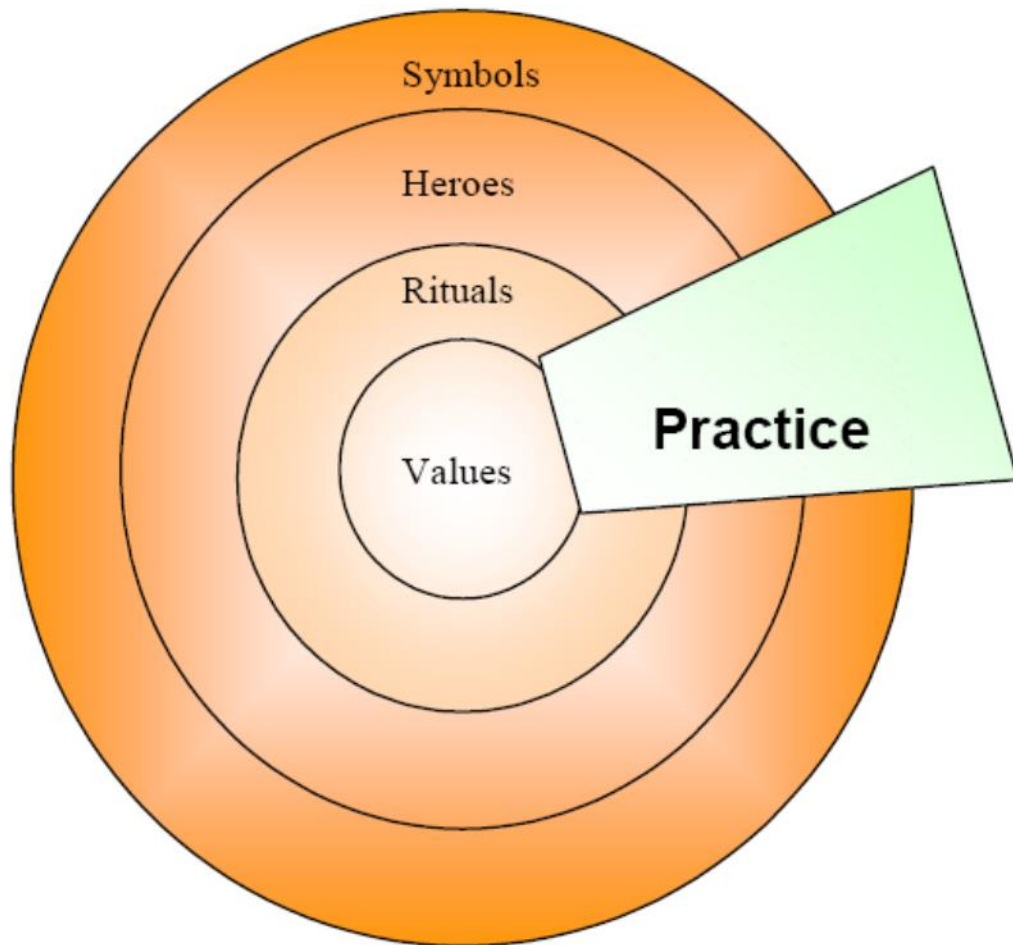


Diagram 1: (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p. 7)

Symbols are “words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning only recognised as such by those who share the culture” i.e. flags (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p.7). *Heroes* are persons who serve as role models in a certain culture due to the fact that they have highly valued characteristics. These people could be alive or dead, real or imaginary, i.e. Asterix in France. *Rituals* are “collective activities, technically superfluous to reaching desired end, but which within a culture are considered as

socially essential. Rituals include discourse, the way language is used in text and talk, in daily interaction and in communicating beliefs” (ibid., p.8). *Values* are acquired early in a persons’ life. Up until 12 years of age a person unconsciously absorbs necessary information from its environment (i.e. values). At the end of this period learning becomes conscious and can be changed.

Hofstede⁴ (2005) identified five dimensions of culture namely (a) power distance, (b) uncertainty avoidance, (c) individualism Vs collectivism, (d) femininity Vs masculinity and (e) long Vs short term orientation. *Power Distance* reflects the degree in which people that belong in the lower lane (do not hold high ranked positions) within an organisation or an institution (such as a family) accept and expect inequality in the distribution of power. A High Power Distance ranking indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within the society. On the other hand, a Low Power Distance ranking indicates the society de-emphasizes the differences between citizens’ power and wealth. In these societies equality and opportunity for everyone is stressed. *Uncertainty Avoidance* is the degree to which individuals feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have created beliefs and institutions through which they try to protect themselves. It indicates how comfortable the members of a society feel when involved in unstructured situations. A High Uncertainty Avoidance ranking indicates the country has a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. This creates a role-oriented society that institutes laws, rules, regulations, and controls in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty. A Low Uncertainty Avoidance ranking indicates the country has less concern about ambiguity and uncertainty and has more tolerance for a variety of opinions. *Individualism Vs Collectivism* refers to the degree with which individuals are fulfilled through groups, that is whether a culture is based or believes in the group or in the individual. A High Individualism ranking indicates that individuality and individual rights are paramount within the society. Individuals in these societies may tend to form a larger number of looser relationships. A Low Individualism (High Collectivism) ranking typifies societies of a more collectivist nature with close ties between individuals. These cultures reinforce extended families and collectives where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. *Femininity Vs Masculinity* (nurturance Vs achievement) focuses on the degree the society does or does not reinforce the traditional masculine work role model of male

⁴ These dimensions were firstly introduced in 1973 after he completed the survey study with IBM

achievement, control and power. A High Masculinity ranking indicates the country experiences a high degree of gender differentiation. In these cultures, males dominate a significant portion of the society and power structure, with females being controlled by male domination. A Low Masculinity (High Femininity) ranking indicates the country has a low level of differentiation and stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented. *Long Vs Short term orientation* refers to the degree society embraces, or does not embrace long-term devotion to traditional, forward thinking values. High Long-term Orientation ranking indicates the country prescribes to the values of long-term commitments and respect for tradition. This is thought to support a strong work ethic where long-term rewards are expected as a result of today's hard work. However, business may take longer to develop in this society, particularly for an 'outsider'. A Low Long-term (High Short-term) orientation indicates the country does not reinforce the concept of long-term traditional orientation. In this culture, change can occur more rapidly as long-term traditions and commitments do not become impediments to change.

Since the original framework, Hofstede, working with Michael Minkov, has identified two more cultural dimensions namely, Indulgence Vs Restraint, and Monumentalism Vs Self-Effacement⁵. The new dimensions, along with an updated version of the research methodology used were launched in January 2008 but have only been published on Hofstede's website. *Indulgence Vs Restraint* is self-referring. Indulgence stands for a society which allows relatively free gratification of some desires and feelings, especially those that have to do with leisure, merrymaking, spending, consumption and sex. Its opposite pole, Restraint is characteristic of a society which controls such gratification. *Monumentalism Vs Self-Effacement* refers to the distraction between cultures that reward people who are like *monuments* (metaphorically speaking): proud and unchangeable, and the opposite pole, Self-Effacement, which rewards humility and flexibility.

Hofstede's work and recommendations have been largely embraced by many researchers as well as by the business communities throughout the globe (Draguns,

⁵More details can be found in <http://stuwww.uvt.nl/~csmeets/VSM08.html>.

2007). Hofstede's insights have affected the way we see and understand culture and, moreover his work is probably the most cited in academic articles and books, he has been criticized by several researchers. Despite this Wallerstein (1990, p. 34) indicated that he is "sceptical that we can operationalize the concept of culture... in any way that enables us to use it for statements that are more than trivial". Moreover, MacIntyre (1971) suggested that Hofstede's work tries to measure the immeasurable. Certainly, culture is not something that can be fully measured due to the fact that it is not stable. It evolves and changes throughout the years. Measurement of culture, using Hofstede's dimensions, it is a good indication, though, of how people of a culture hierarchize their priorities and how they think and act under specific situations. These dimensions are thus useful for comparison among different cultures.

Hofstede was also criticised about his methodology (McSweeney, 2002). Smith (2002) indicated that the VSM (Value Survey Module) questionnaire (used in Hofstede's original study of the corporate culture at IBM) has been altered many times and has little resemblance to the original that was used during the research in IBM. In spite of these, Sondergaard (1994) indicated that the VSM questionnaire remained at that time the most used instrument in managerial investigations or researches about cultural differences and Hofstede's findings are applied worldwide.

McSweeney (2002) also critiqued that Hofstede should refer to comparative characteristics of national cultures rather than absolute. Furthermore, he identified some inconsistencies while Hofstede, in some occasions, claimed to have identified cultures per se and sometimes to have identified differences between national cultures (ibid.). Culture changes but a certain culture cannot be identical to some other culture. A certain culture will evolve within its own characteristics for example a femininity culture cannot turn into a masculinity one. It will only shape the femininity characteristics. Therefore, results of a certain study should not be overgeneralised and should not be presented as absolute.

Clark (2001) indicated that many researchers, especially social scientists, have criticised Hofstede on the grounds that he suggested that a nation is equivalent to a culture

whereas in fact, distinct subcultures exist within countries. McSweeney (2002) and Eckhardt (2002) contested that *nationality* and *culture* are not necessarily synonymous. Despite the above mentioned, and other criticisms, Hofstede (1980, 2001) himself acknowledged that the notion of national culture suffered from vagueness. Responding to these critiques he indicated that nations are not ideal units but he identified that “they are usually the only kinds of units available for comparison” (Hofstede, 2001, p.73).

In the face of much of this criticism, Kirkman et al. (2006) attempted a meta-analysis which supported the usefulness of the Hofstede model when examining culture worldwide. Kirkman et al. (2006) indicated that Hofstede’s framework is still used after its introduction many decades ago and also suggested that the model’s most significant deficiency was the absence of the cultural dimensions that have subsequently been incorporated by Hofstede in the updated work.

Grid-Group

Further to the above, another important cultural framework was the Grid-Group that was developed by Douglas in 1970 (Thompson et al., 1990). The group dimension indicates the degree to which a person’s life is affected and directed by the group to which he/ she belongs. When a person belongs to a group he/she immediately accepts and complies with certain constraints that the adherence to the group proclaims. This loyalty on behalf of the members is what keeps a group alive. Groups can be as simple as a club membership to a more strong form such as a religious cult (Akbar and Vujic, 2014). On the other hand, the grip dimension indicates the level of hierarchy that people in a group accept. There are two extremes when it comes to the grip dimension; the first one is zero hierarchy where all decisions are made without constraints and on an ad hoc basis and the second one is ample hierarchy and individuals are “completely locked into societally constrained actions” (Akbar and Vujic, 2014, p. 198).

The grid and group dimensions are combined to create four forms of culture; Fatalist-isolation, Hierarchist-positional, Individualist and, Egalitarian-enclave. It is suggested that this model can be considered as complementary to Hofstede’s dimensions as it

provides more depth with regards to the theoretical elucidation of cultural forms (Akbar and Vujic, 2014).

As noted at the start of this section there are many researches that deal with the notion of culture and have developed explanations and/ or dimensions. However, the above give a broad overview of what culture is and how it can be divided into dimensions. What is generally accepted by all studies is that cultures differ geographically, some more and some less, and there are components that can be used to better understand of how people think and act (Scheffknecht, 2014).

The next section concerns learning gender (or how to act as male or female within a society). Learning can be considered as part of culture and it is important for the scope of this study as it does not only affect how people act as male or female but also determines people's perceptions of gender within their culture.

2.4.1 Learning to be Male or Female

From the time a child is born gender rules begin to apply (Wilson, 2003) for example the colour of clothes and a gender-specific forename (Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991). While growing up people learn gendered ways of walking, sitting, dressing and even working as a result of the interaction with other people (especially the immediate family) and also as a consequence of the learning process that is somehow imposed at school (Rose, 1996). According to Young (1990) girls learn from an early age socially acceptable ways to behave which are indisputably more constrained than boys.

Learning to act as male or female, under society's stereotypes, comes from a variety of influence (Wilson, 2003). Television programmes and commercials often promote stereotypical gender roles for example (Furnham and Skae, 1997). Television commercials in many countries present males as authoritative central figures whereas women are presented as the users of advertised products (Wilson, 2003). In addition, women might be presented as parents, spouses, homemakers (dependent roles) and often portrayed at home while men are presented as professionals and rendered in

leisure or outdoors (Furnham and Skae, 1997). Gunter (1995) claimed that gender stereotyping in advertisements aimed at adults are reducing but Wilson (2003, p.84) maintained that “those aimed at children are as gender stereotyped as ever”.

From the time they are born, boys and girls are often raised differently especially when their life goals are concerned. Writers in the 1970s, such as Henning and Jardim (1977) argued that men are expected to work to support at least themselves. On the contrary, Henning and Jardim (1977) suggested that girls were raised with the perspective to marry someone who could provide for them and support them through life. This difference in mind-set during childhood can highly affect the adulthood and most importantly the goals and ambitions concerning work and family (ibid.). In the words of Henning and Jardim “from a very early age children fantasize about their future and, the future for a little girl inescapably has a husband in it” (1977, p. 16).

A few decades later, Misra and Panigrahi (1996) suggested that while younger people look at working women favourably, older people, both men and women, can still be hesitant towards the trend of women working outside the house. Harper and Haq (2001) found that teenage boys and girls show noteworthy differences in their occupational aspirations following a more traditional route. In addition, Hofstede (1994) argued that within any society there can be found gender subcultures henceforth, there is a men’s subculture and a women’s subculture which differ substantially. These cultural differences might be adequate in explaining the diversity of traditional gender roles (ibid.).

Many studies have indicated that “even classroom talk is discriminatory; boys take up more *verbal space* than girls and have more say in the classrooms” (Swann, 1992, p. 68). There is also suggestion that in education teachers tend to reward boys for showing independence and girls for dependence behaviour (Wilson, 2003). Earlier research on gender stereotypes (Whitehead, 1996) found that sciences were seen as masculine and arts and languages as feminine subjects. Wilson (2003) concluded that this kind of behaviour instils in girls the need to be dependent and protected by male figures in their lives; first their father and then their husband. This might be true within the scope of

Wilson's study but it's too absolute to generalise as it ignores any cultural impact or even the agency of both teachers and students.

It also seems reasonable to assert though that gender specific socialization at school and throughout childhood will influence the personality of women and men (Wilson, 2003) and perhaps this behaviour is transferred in the workplace as well. Gilligan (1982) suggested that these early influences play a vital role in the advancement of women in their personal lives and their careers.

Wilson (2003) claimed that gender socialization continues in adulthood and is mirrored in advertising such that the message prevails that women should be housewives, do not make important decisions and are dependent and in need of men. Bordo (1989), in a criticism of popular culture, pointed out that women were spending most of their time trying to improve their appearance and in the words of Wilson, in his attempt to showcase the particular stereotypes, (2003, p.86) not giving subsequent attention to the "material and political circumstances of their lives". "Society is like a gigantic prison of already constructed dimensions" (Wilson, 2003, p. 87); one enters the world already shaped by gender, class, race, ethnicity and nationality. We all live by example imitating the behaviour of our predecessors. This is how a culture is moulded and it transfers itself into the organisational realm; the workplace.

The next section focuses on organisational culture as well as the identification of gendered organisations and how they relate to different treatment of men and women in the workplace.

2.5 Organisational Culture

Organisations are like small societies in a sense that their members share common symbols, heroes, rituals and values (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Organisations have an internal culture, from now on referred to as organisational culture. When people create an organisation they inevitably borrow models and ideals which are familiar to them. The organisation constitutes a subjective entity because the employees will give

meaning to their organisational environment based on their own perception of culture (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998).

As indicated by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) the previous mentioned dimensions of [national] culture deeply affect the models that individuals have for their organisations and the meanings which are attributed through them. By this, it is suggested that organisational cultures are affected by the cultures of the country they are based in and by the cultural characteristics of their human resource, although defined differently than cultures in general. In this sense it can be implied that organisational cultures are created by the agency of its people in parallel with the culture of the country they are based in.

Organisational culture is a complex field of study around which there are many contentious issues and debates. It can be described as the personality of the organisation and it consists of the assumptions, values, and norms of the members of the organisation as well as their behaviour (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998). As early as the 1960s Blake and Mouton (1960) for example suggested a link between organisational performance and cultural characteristics. Culture cannot be distinctly expressed but everyone knows it when they sense it. Members of an organisation soon come to sense the culture of their working environment and become part of it.

It can be said that an organisational culture can be defined as consisting of basic beliefs that are formed and developed by a group internally but which are heavily influenced by the external environment and culture. This constitutes a process which can be recycled due to the fact that new members are taught by the older members how to search, think, feel, and react in reference to the above. Organisational culture is intangible and cannot be distinguished from the organisation itself. Therefore, culture being a deep and symbolic concept cannot be easily managed and can only be understood in subjective and symbolic terms (Blake and Mouton, 1960).

Deal and Kennedy (1982) defined a 'strong culture' as one which exhibits a strong fit between the organisation, its environment and its system of rules that motivate people by making them feel better about what they do. They also suggested that strong cultures have a positive effect on organisational performance. In accordance to this, people are more attached to the organisation and more involved in the organisational culture (ibid.). According to Schein (1985) culture is a learned product of group experience. He identified a three-level hierarchy for the cultural elements:

- (a) deepest level – underlying assumptions which influence people's view of the organisation
- (b) intermediate level – cultural values
- (c) surface – cultural artefacts (visible behaviour, building design features, technology).

This model views culture as something static and ignores its role in change as well as the role of symbols within the organisation.

Another definition of organisational culture was given by Sachs (1989) who identified three approaches to the notion:

- (a) Culture as an external variable – Sachs (1989) agreed with Hofstede (1980) that culture is brought into the organisation by its members that is to say organisational culture is affected by national culture. If cultural change is determined at the national level then this limits the possibility of significant cultural management or change at an organisational level.
- (b) Culture can be seen as the emotional and non-job-related aspects of informal organisational life focusing on stories, myths and legends that are circulated among the employees, as well as rituals and symbols including language.
- (c) Culture can be viewed as both formal and informal aspects of the organisation that is perspective deals with the different views that members of the organisation have of both the formal and informal activities. The concern is with representing culture as it appears to the members of the cultural group that is being examined (Sachs, 1989; Isabella, 1990).

Risto (1990) identified three approaches to the study of organisational culture. Culture as (a) the structure of social action, (b) symbols and codes exploring interpretive analysis and the meaning of language (from Goffman, 1975), and (c) the structure of social organisation where culture is thought to be reflected in the division of labour and the structure of roles and social networks, as Marx and Weber suggested (see Risto, 1990). The interpretive view suggests that culture is created and sustained through symbols and rituals with language being the prime symbolic notion (Meyerson and Martin, 1987). This school of thought focuses on the understanding of how individuals make sense of their world. It can be said that the structural view, on the other hand, focuses on how relationships are structured within the organisation and not how they are perceived by the members of the organisation.

According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) organisational structure is not only shaped by technologies and markets but also by the influences that emanate from the culture of the leader and employees of the organisation. In the defining of organisational culture three aspects play vital role, namely: (a) general relationships among employees themselves, (b) the vertical or hierarchical system of power which defines the superiors and the subordinates and (c) general beliefs of employees concerning the future, the purpose and the goals of the organisation and their role in it (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998).

Organisations do not form accidentally or spontaneously. They are created because one or more individuals perceived that the coordinated actions of a group of people can achieve more than an individual on its own (Schein, 1997). Organisational cultures can be formed spontaneously or through a period of time and will be heavily influenced either by the founder of the organisation or by the external culture. In general, organisational cultures have been shown to be pervasive and resistant to change. They assist managers to make decisions, based on a given set of norms and assumptions, without having to re-examine every detail of a certain situation. In the early 1980s organisational culture was considered to be an obstacle to change as well as a vital notion of the success or failure of the organisation (ibid.). Due to the fact though that organisations function in a rapid evolving environment, change in certain organisational procedures, including culture, is inevitable.

According to Brooks and Bate (1994) major structural changes often aim at changing the organisations' culture. Dobson (1989) identified a four-step approach to understanding cultural change:

- (a) change recruitment, promotion and redundancy policies in order to shape the composition of the workplace
- (b) re-structure the organisation so that personnel with certain qualities are given positions of power
- (c) communicate the new values
- (d) change systems in order to adjust to the new beliefs and values.

Therefore, cultural change can be achieved by a combination of personnel, structural and system changes which, in most cases, are controlled by managers. Hence, change in organisational culture is directly influenced by management. Dobson (1989) suggested that change is a 'top-down' and imposed procedure therefore, the above mentioned model can only be implemented by senior management.

Other researchers, albeit accepting that cultural change occurs, have different views on how and when changes take place. Schein (1985) saw culture as an adaptive learning process and places emphasis on the way organisations communicate their culture while being critical of the idea that cultural change can occur by a 'top-down', management-led approach. Despite this, recent surveys have shown that managers are continuing to engage in planned culture intervention. Reports indicated that managing organisational culture is one of the most popular forms of managerial intervention (Ogbonna and Harris, 2002). Organisational culture, like national culture, can and does change (ibid.).

Several management development and training activities deal with reinforcing or changing culture. For example, a company may install a customer care model that is often facilitated through training and development programs influencing at the same time performance appraisal and reward systems. Hence, certain HRM interventions can be used to change an aspect of organisational culture. According to Mills (1988) in order to be fully aware of organisational culture one needs to investigate gender in that context as it is of crucial importance however neglected by many researchers.

Further to the above, Mills (1988) indicated that it has been suggested by several researchers in the past (see Morgan, 1986; Burrell, 1984) that organisations are able to generate and preserve gender discrimination in three ways: (a) the distinction of males and females into categories of reason and emotion respectively often results in the adoption of bureaucratic processes suppressing anything relating to home and family; (b) specific organisations such as schools and sport clubs play a vital role in the process of gendering identities; and (c) organisational structures such as recruitment and promotion most of the times conform and preserve gender stereotypes. Hence, it can be implied that gender discrimination is “embedded in cultural values that permeate both organisations and the concept of organisation itself” (Mills, 1988, p.353).

Organisational cultures may be gendered or gender neutral, and this affects their whole working system. It is to this notion of gendered organisations that we now turn.

2.6 Gendered Organisation

According to Smith (1988) both traditional and critical approaches to studying organisations take as their basis the male, theoretical intellectual realm. Henceforth, gender is difficult to observe when only the masculine is present (Acker, 1991) and when organisations in that effect are considered gender-neutral. When it is acknowledged that women and men are differently affected by organisations, and the organisation by them, it is argued that “gendered attitudes and behaviour are brought into (and contaminate) essentially gender-neutral structures” (Acker, 1991, p. 49). When the pillars of the organisation were set by men the effect of the male element is inevitable. In that case men would consider this to be a neutral standpoint while women may have difficulties in adapting to the male realm.

According to Hearn and Parkin (1983, 1987), due to the fact that gender is indeed a central part of the development of identity, images and inequality, any organisational theory that does not take into account gender cannot add adequately to the comprehension of domination. Through this lens, Kanter (1977) asserted that gender differences in organisational behaviour were due to structure instead of the diverse

characteristics of men and women within the workplace. Kanter (1977) also identified that despite organisations being proclaimed as gender-neutral their structures are often dominated by masculine principles.

The idea that social structure and processes are gendered only started to emerge within the feminist discourse in the mid-80s (Acker, 1991). This view of gendered organisations (Connell, 1987; Scott, 1986) was an attempt to find a solution to the persistent problem of female subordination, the difficulties faced by the majority of women in their attempt to adjust to male standards which places them in a disadvantaged position regarding advancement in the workplace in general, which is evident “through history and across societies” (Acker, 1991, p. 51). According to Scott (1986) gender is the main way to identify relationships of power.

Contrary to Kanter’s views that inequality within organisations is a result of structure Wolff acknowledged the existence of influences outside the organisation suggesting that “women’s position in any organisation is inseparable from women’s position in society” and that “the very question of women’s role and position in organisations can only be answered by a macro-sociology which situates the organisation in the society which defines its existence, goals and values” (1977, p.20). The above imply the application of social constructionism and in the debate of structure versus culture it is suggested that the latter is a prerequisite to the former. Also, Furstenburg (1968) indicated that gender differences can be attributed to the male and female roles in the society such as women’s role as mothers.

To identify an organisation as gendered means that every aspect of work, tangible or intangible, such as “advantage, disadvantage, exploitation or control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (Acker, 1991, p. 51). Gender cannot be added to the organisational structures simply as another element of process. Moreover, it has to be regarded as a fundamental aspect of the organisation’s processes and in order to fully comprehend these processes they need to be examined through a gender lens (Connell, 1987).

According to Scott (1986), gendering can occur in at least five interacting processes:

- (a) The build-up of *imaginary* divisions along the lines of gender such as division of labour, location of physical space (i.e. places only men are allowed to visit especially religious related), power. This process also includes the creation of institutions to maintain these divisions i.e. labour markets, family, and the state.
- (b) The creation of symbols and images in order to give substance to the above mentioned divisions either by reinforcing or by opposing them.
- (c) In-between and within gender interactions i.e. men with women, men with men and women with women, including patterns that endorse power relations. For example, men are considered to be the ‘actors’ and women offer emotional support (see also Hochschild, 1983).
- (d) Introduction of gendered aspects of individual identity within the organisation which are inevitably affected by the three above mentioned processes. For instance, choice of appropriate occupation, the use of language, clothing and presentation of self either as male or as female within the organisation (see also Reskin and Roos, 1987).
- (e) Creation and comprehension of socially based structures. Gender is obviously a core element within family and society in general but less obviously important within organisations. However, gender is very important concerning the construction of structures within the organisations affecting organisational logic as well as the underlying assumptions and practices (see also Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980).

Further to the above, and according to Britton (1998), one can identify a gendered organisation when there is social inequality between men and women.

Similarly, Martin (1981, p.145-146) suggested that “the position of women in labour markets and employing organisations reflects their position in the broader society. Subordinated inside the patriarchal family, women find themselves subordinates in economic and organisational spheres as well... Since paid work in modern societies is, with few exceptions, conducted in the context of formal organisations, a fundamental change in the fate of women at work... will require change in the family and

educational systems, and in the institutional arrangements around religion, welfare, law, politics and government as well”.

On the other hand, Wells (1973) noted that the reason women are found at the bottom of the organisations is the structure of the power instead of the gendered characteristics meaning that women entered the workforce later than men so it is only natural that organisational structures are man-made. Acker and Houten (1991) based on other researchers indicated that gender differences in organisational settings can be attributed to three structural issues (a) preference in recruiting women into dependent and passive job posts, (b) preference in recruiting women who are obedient/ conformists, and (c) the use of control mechanisms for women in organisations which strengthen the related mechanisms in the society.

In the process of investigating gender inequalities within organisations and societies in general it is very important to investigate also men and male culture. Disappearing men from the research on gender equality is like disappearing ‘whiteness’ from the work on race relations (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Fine et al., 1997). As Holvino (2001, p.94) stated “the potential for change will be limited unless the dominant side of power dynamic is understood and theorised as well as the subordinate dimension of the relationship”. Also, as pointed out by Britton (1998) organisational structure, processes and actors are always interlinked with the social realm hence, the latter should be analysed accordingly in order to make sense of the organisations. As West (1982) noted a few years earlier that changes in organisational structures is not enough to transform women’s experience in a man’s world; interactions as well as organisational language, which is also largely man-made, need also be converted (Spender, 1980). Therefore, this study will not only investigate the perceptions and experiences of women but also those of men both in the workplace and the society. The next chapter explores this further and goes on to detail the theoretical issues upon which the analysis of this study will be based bringing into surface the difficulties women are faced with in the workplace.

CHAPTER 3

Theorising Gender and Workplace

3.1 Introduction

‘Equality in morals means this: things that are alike should be treated alike’ (Aristotle, in Bury, 1926). The above quote could be applied to organisations especially when dealing with equality issues within the scope of gender, race, age, disabilities etc. Gender equality in particular in organisations has been discussed in equality literature for decades (Barnard, 2000). This chapter focuses on the investigation of women’s place in the workplace and the obstacles they are faced with before the recruitment stage, while working and throughout their careers. More specifically, a critical analysis will investigate concepts such as gendered jobs, wage gap, glass ceiling as well as a discussion on working mothers and women’s networking and mentoring within the workplace.

3.2 Gendered Jobs (Horizontal Segregation)

It has been argued by Ely et al. (2008) that in modern economies specific occupations have been identified either as ‘female jobs’ or as ‘male jobs’ such as female nurses and male doctors, female secretaries and male engineers. This separation has been identified by Price (2007) and other researchers as horizontal segregation. Horizontal segregation, stated Wilson (2003, p. 16), “occurs where men and women are most commonly working in different types of occupation” for example the predominance of women in secretarial jobs and the same for men in occupations dealing with computers and engineering. This horizontal occupation segregation is mainly maintained by the continuous recruitment of men and women to different jobs. As indicated by several researches gendered segregation of jobs is pervasive and plays a vital role when investigating gender and labour markets (Jacobsen, 1994; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993).

This distinction between male and female jobs can be said that it derives from culture where there is a clear division of labour both in the family and in society which is

transferred in the workplace as well so men get the prestigious, well paid jobs while women are left with the rest in such a way that everything seems to be socially constructed. This situation was explicitly described by Marx and Engels many years ago by noting that “the division of labour in which [social] contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, simultaneously implies the distribution, and indeed the unequal distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property, the nucleus, the first form of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family... is the first form of property... [and] corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists, who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others” (1976, p. 46).

According to statistical information gathered by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in 2001 nine out of ten employees in the construction industry were men (EOC, 2001). Moreover, according to Wilson (2003) women are more expected to be employed in the professions such as teachers, nurses or librarians whilst the professions such as doctors, lawyers and accountants are occupied by men. Furthermore, women are found in routine office work or cleaning more often than men although less likely to be encountered in skilled manual work such as drivers of heavy duty vehicles, maintenance managers or warehouse keepers (EOC, 2001). According to a research by Davidson and Burke (2004) China and Russia are the countries, among those researched, with the least occupational segregation but women are still found to be working in large percentages in clerical and lower-manual work. On the other hand, women in Russia dominate occupations such as economists, doctors and engineers notwithstanding that these occupations share a lower status in Russia than in countries where these are dominated by men (Davidson and Burke, 2004).

When it comes to the European Union, according to the *Gender segregation in the labour market* report it has been indicated that segregation in terms of the IP index (Karmel and MacLachlan index) is still high reaching 25.3 per cent for horizontal segregation (European Commission, 2009). According to the same report the four most high-segregation countries are Estonia, Slovakia, Latvia and Finland and the countries

with the lowest rates in segregation are Greece, Romania, Malta and Italy (ibid.). Further to these, according to Catalyst (2013) a male dominated occupation contains 25 per cent or less women with one of the most male dominated occupations in Canada and the U.S. in 2011 being that of construction with 11.2 per cent women in Canada and 9 per cent women in the U.S. On the other hand, the most female dominated occupation in the said countries was secretaries with 97.9 per cent women in Canada in 2006 and 96.1 per cent women in the U.S. in 2010 (ibid.).

According to Wilson (2003), and as indicated earlier in this Section, women are more expected to be employed in professions such as teaching or nursing whilst professions such as medicine and law are dominated by men. Furthermore, women are found in routine office work or cleaning more often than men and are least likely to be encountered in skilled manual work such as drivers of heavy duty vehicles, maintenance managers or warehouse keepers (EOC, 2001). The suggested reasons for this variation in the employment trends amongst women and men are several and contentious. What is clear is that both structural influences can be involved, at least to some degree. In the words of Heilman (2012, p. 115), “people can be disadvantaged (or advantaged) in how they are viewed not because of what they are like or what they have done, but because of the gender group to which they belong”. That is to say that women’s employment may be affected by the expectations adhered to them deriving from the very fact that they are female. Biernat and Kobrynowicz (1997) also suggested that the perceived unfitness of women, especially in male dominated jobs, can act as hindrance to their progression in the workplace.

There have been arguments that men and women, exercising their agency, choose different types of jobs however, due to gender differences in the society (Subith et al., 1989) or stereotypes deriving from culture (Correll, 2004). In addition, there is also research that focuses on the preferences and biases on behalf of the employer during the hiring procedure (structure) that are in favour of men or women for certain types of jobs (see Reskin and Roos, 1990). These will be investigated within the scope of this study.

3.3 Wage Gap

Several researchers (see for example Anderson et al., 2010, Booysen and Nkomo, 2010, Kolb et al., 1998, Fletcher, 1998) attribute workplace differences between men and women to discriminatory practices within the workplace against women. Quoting neoclassical economists, labour market discrimination lays in the differentiation in employees' remuneration when they have equivalent productivity (Figart, 1997). That is to say that discrimination exists when for equal amount of work there is unequal pay; the larger the gap the larger the discrimination. Treiman and Hartmann (1981) were among the first researchers to identify that the female percentage in a given job type was negatively related to wages; the more the women in a certain job the less their remuneration, and tried to find ways to overcome this phenomenon of gender discrimination. In other words, the researchers found that albeit women employees were more numerous than men, the mean of men's wages was higher than the respective mean for women. Two types of gender discrimination are suggested here; direct discrimination which indicates that where men and women do the same job they have different remuneration; and indirect discrimination in that women are employed in lower paid jobs than men, the so-called female jobs⁶. This discrimination against women can be attributed either to the agency of the employer; he/ she decides that women should be remunerated less or due to the structure of the organisation that might favour the progression of men over women both in salary increase and promotions.

According to Gregory (2003) in 1985, in the US, the average income of women was 68 per cent of that of men. In 1999 it had risen to 77 per cent. At this rate, Gregory claimed that pay equality in the US, between men and women, will be achieved around 2040 (ibid.). Based on a survey, which was conducted in 1993 by the Colorado Women's Bar Association in the US, the average income of female lawyers was only 59 per cent of that of male lawyers. Wage gap between men and women during their working years has also had effects on their pensions; "Because of a lifetime history of lower pay, women retirees earn less than one-half the pension income of men" (Gregory, 2003, p.7). Gregory (2003) through his research indicated that due to the fact that women were constantly remunerated at lower rates than their male counterparts the gap between male and female pensions was even greater than the wage gap.

⁶ Horizontal segregation discussed in Section 3.2

Davidson and Burke (2004) found that the pay gap still persisted in every single country at the start of the 21st century. For example, in Poland and Canada women's wages in 2004 were 80 per cent of that of men. Likewise, in Norway and Russia the wage gap had been stable for the last decades at around 35 per cent despite the European Union's strict legislation on equality (ibid.). The smallest wage gap, around 15.5 per cent, could be found at that time in Ireland but even there it had been estimated that it will take around 4 decades to close (ibid.). In Greece between the 1960s and early 1980s women's wages were 33 per cent less than their male counterparts (Kanellopoulos and Mavromaras, 2002) while in 1985 it reduced to 22 per cent due to a bargaining that led to a 40 per cent increase of the national minimum wage (Close, 2002). In a more recent report of the European Commission (2014) it has been indicated that the gender wage gap within the European Union in 2012 varied from 6.1 per cent in Malta to 30 per cent in Estonia while the wage gap in Cyprus was 16.2 per cent.

These variations appear structural, but some legal commentators contended that the reason that women are paid less or that they do not advance in their workplace is due to their personal choices and not because of the existence of gender discrimination (see for example Furchtgott-Roth and Stolba, 1999). This agency contestation relies on the argument that opportunities for promotion are not so great for women because of the assumption that women will choose not to advance at the same rate as men. This may be because they are less motivated by remuneration and/or promotion than men or due to their obligation in domestic life and childcare which inevitably are time-consuming. It is also argued by Furchtgott-Roth and Stolba (1999) that women who plan to have children consciously select occupations which provide them with job flexibility but lower compensation and in effect women's salaries are seen as secondary within the family household. However, the seemingly rational choice of women to work less hours due to motherhood, or other reasons, might not be entirely free and based on their agency but rather it could be culturally driven and/ or affected by the lack of structures to help them in this dual role. This is further explained in Section 3.6.

3.4 Glass Ceiling (Vertical Segregation)

In addition to horizontal segregation, mentioned above, another division can also be identified which can be found across vertical lines (Price, 2007). While women have increased their representation in management they only account for 30 per cent of all managerial jobs across European countries (Kirton and Green, 2005). This barrier is labelled *glass ceiling* and is a concept popularised in the 1980s which, according to Morrison and Von Glinow (1990), is used to describe a *wall* so subtle that although transparent it is so concrete that it prevents women, and minorities, from advancing in higher managerial positions.

The term glass ceiling is used to describe the development barriers for disadvantaged racial minorities, as well as women, and its focus has been expanded to include all promotional opportunities and not solely those pertaining to senior management positions. The concept of *glass ceiling* was first introduced in a Wall Street Journal article in 1986 (Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986). The article was about the description of the invisible barriers women were faced with as they approach high corporate executive positions. The glass ceiling is not a barrier faced by individuals based on their inability to handle higher managerial positions. It is a blockage, according to Morrison et al. (1992, p. 124) towards women as a group “who are kept from advancing higher because they are women”. The same applies to other minority groups (Powell, 2000). However, it can be found at different levels in different companies or organisations.

Powell (1999) suggested that even when women are educated and have the necessary experience they can still encounter a glass ceiling. The failure to advance women in senior positions, both in public and private sectors in all developed countries, can be identified in several surveys and statistical evidence (Adler and Izraeli, 1988; Davidson and Cooper, 1993). In Wirth’s (2001, p. 26) words, “women’s interest in professional and managerial work and the predicted shortages of highly qualified managers have not ...resulted in women obtaining senior executive positions in significant numbers”. It can be suggested that this failure to advance women in high ranked positions is attributed to the structure of the organisations that do not equip women to climb the organisational ladder. However, the non-progression of women to the upper level of the

organisation can also be due to the cultural norms and role of women as mothers which requires them to devote more time for the family instead of a career.

In 1995, women comprised less than 5 per cent of senior management in the UK and the US while in many other countries, including Australia, it was close to only 2 per cent (Sinclair, 1995). In 2010, women lead in only 2 per cent of Fortune 500 companies and only in 5 companies which are listed on the Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 stock index (The Economist, 2010). Women, in 2009, accounted for only 4 per cent of the presidents and 10 per cent of the members of the decision making bodies in the largest organisations within the member states of the European Union (Eagly and Sczesny, 2009). In Finland, despite the fact that almost half of the workforce is women up to 2009 they held only a small percentage of managerial positions and even less positions in top-line management (Valinaki et al., 2009). Even though a few years ago 30 per cent of Finish managers were women (Statistics Finland, 2007) just 7-8 per cent were CEOs (Kotiranta et al., 2007). In a more recent report released by the European Commission (2015) it is shown that women in leadership positions within the European Union in 2014 varied from 2.7 per cent in Malta to 32.4 per cent in France while in Cyprus it was 9.3 per cent.

Similarly, in the USA, taking into account the increasing rate of corporate positions held by women it has been calculated that by 2020 women will occupy more working positions than men but men will still hold about 75 per cent of high ranked positions referred to in Fortune 500 companies (Gregory, 2003). According to Gregory (2003, p.1) in spite of the fact that women, nowadays, can engage in high professional, academic, and corporate positions the infamous glass ceiling still seems to be having an effect on “the advancement of large segments of the female workforce”.

The next section moves on to discuss mentoring and networking within the workplace and how these can add to the advancement of women in organisations.

3.5 Networking and Mentoring

Schwartz (1992) suggested women should be hired and aided on their way to the top of the managerial ladder. The reason is to fully take advantage of the talented population which cannot be achieved by excluding women from high ranked positions (Davidson and Burke, 2004). Adding to that Schwartz (1992) indicated that by hiring and retaining talented women in the workplace one provides female role models (mentors) for younger high-potential women and also guarantees that all levels of the executive pyramid are filled with capable officials: “the recruitment, hiring and development of managerial women are increasingly seen as a bottom-line issue related to corporate success” (Davidson and Burke, 2004, p. 2).

According to Desvaux et al. (2008) some companies in the past years have successfully increased hiring, retention, and promotion of female executives. The initiatives used to achieve this goal include avoiding bias when it comes to HR policies against women or part-time workers, encouraging mentoring and networking, establishing targets for diversity, and introducing family-friendly policies (ibid.).

Organisational career development initiatives, such as mentoring and networking, have served as a vehicle to women on their way to progressing within the workplace (Linehan and Walsh, 2001; Vinnicombe, Singh and Kumra, 2004; Hersby et al., 2009). Researchers agree that networking is very important and widely recognised in assisting employees with their advancement in the workplace (Buchanan, 2008; Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2008; Morgan and Davidson, 2008) and furthermore, during the past decades, in the UK, there has been an increase in the number of formalized mentoring schemes and career development networks for professional women either within their discipline or across professional sectors (Vinnicombe et al., 2004).

The traditional definition of mentoring suggests that an individual who is knowledgeable and well experienced (the mentor) advises, supports and guides a less experienced but with prospects individual (the mentee) with the aim of assisting the latter's climb to the top of the organisational ladder (Hunt and Michael, 1983; Ragins, 1999).

Similarly, networking can be used to mitigate collective disadvantages as well as advancing individual careers (Hersby et al., 2009). Morrison et al. (1987) acknowledged the importance of networking for women as it can provide them with the necessary tools and support within the organisation which might act as leverage in breaking the glass ceiling. In the 1980s Heald (1983, p. 170) asserted “women have regarded what they perceive as the old boy network with a jaundiced eye. They cannot, apparently, join it, and they cannot beat it by taking it on on their own. The solution they decided lay in countering with networks of their own”. Indeed, women have formed their own networks, within society and organisations, and they can serve both as an “individualistic strategy for career enhancement and as a collective strategy in which networking becomes a vehicle for improving the status of women within organisations” (Hersby et al., 2009, p. 416).

Mentoring and networking programmes have proved very helpful regarding the progression of women in the workplace. Through mentoring, women have been encouraged to seek out new positions more confidently as they were guided and supported by already established members of the organisation (Desvaux et al., 2008). An internal research at HP (Hewlett Packard) has shown that women apply for a job only if they are 100 per cent sure that they meet the role description while men do so when they feel they meet at least 60 per cent of the listed criteria (ibid.). Adding to the above a similar research at Lloyds TSB concluded that although women are more likely to meet or exceed performance expectations by about 8 per cent they are hesitant in applying for a promotion. Therefore, the organisation introduced a mentoring policy in order to encourage “talented women to move up, making sure that they receive the necessary training, and developing succession plan that include them” (Desvaux et al., 2008, p. 4). These efforts have led to the increase of the percentage of managerial positions held by women from 15 per cent in 1998 to 39 per cent in 2007 (Desvaux et al., 2008). The success of this initiative shows, at some extent, the importance of mentoring with regards to the development and progression of women in the workplace.

Additionally, there is some evidence of an increase in the numbers of employees who are involved in professional development networks; a survey among British professional women found that over 40 per cent of the participants in the survey were at

the time, or have previously been, members of a professional network (McCarthy, 2004). However, as Hersby et al. argued (2009, p. 428) it is important that these initiatives of mentoring and networking “do not simply pay lip service to aspirations of gender equality within the workplace, but that they are a practical career development tool within a toolbox of initiatives addressing existing inequalities”.

The next section discusses literature on working mothers specifically and how this group is treated within the working environment.

3.6 Working Mothers

According to Barnard (2000), many women are not able to equally compete with men in the workplace, especially in terms of promotion due to their employers' perception who view them as prospective mothers. A recent study (PWC, 2011) which was conducted in Cyprus indicated that when the participants were asked whether they would hire a man or a woman for a managerial position nobody's answer was 'a woman' and a 16.4 per cent answered 'a man'. The rest either did not give an answer or they replied 'I don't know'. When the participants were asked to explain why they would not hire a woman the main reason that was given was women's role as mothers and their obligations within the household which would not allow them adequate time to devote to their careers (ibid.). This perception can also be supported by Hakim (2000, p. 5) who suggested that “family-friendly policies cannot remove the conflict between two time consuming and demanding activities” (work – family) implying that women eventually would need to choose between the two.

Further to the above, people within the organisation might engage with the perception that women who are aspired to a career are somehow violating cultural norms (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). This may be particularly pertinent for women who are mothers, as it has been shown that women who hold characteristics solely attributed to their gender, such as motherhood, are evaluated less positively than their male counterparts or even females who are not mothers of dependent children (Heilman and Okimoto, 2007). As noted by Hearn and Parkin (1983) certain groups of people such as mothers are more discriminated against. Despite the fact that legislation for gender

equality has been in place for several years now it can, and many times is, circumvented by people or organisations in order to avoid the trouble of a potential mother who would require a maternity leave (ibid).

Barnard (2000) suggested that some women may prefer to be engaged in part-time jobs since a full-time job would not allow them to fulfil their duties as mothers. If a woman chooses to have children then she would typically require maternity leave⁷. Extended maternity leave varies in European countries from 2 to 6 months⁸. During this time women will not be able to advance within their workplace i.e. attend seminars, practice their skills or develop new ones, work on their projects. Despite the fact that the extended maternity leave is not compulsory only a small percentage of women choose not to take advantage of the weeks entitled. On the contrary, only a few men take up on their parental leave. Moss (2011) indicated that only 3 per cent of fathers in Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland and Poland take parental leave. These give their male counterparts an immediate advantage. Consequently the limited, formal notion of equality can be of use only to the minority of women who are able to conform to the male stereotype but cannot reach or correct underlying structural impediments (Fredman, 1992). It could be argued that in this case mothers are being discriminated against and not women in general. In addition, Fredman (1992) also noted that equal treatment of individuals who are not equal in a social basis might cause further inequalities. That is to say that pregnancy should be taken into account when forming equality programs. Albeit, maternity leave is a benefit and allows women a career break after having their child the structure of most organisation does not offer policies for a smooth return of mothers in the workplace. This might be a reason that women choose (agency) to work less hours or even switch to part-time schemes. However, this choice cannot be considered a free one but rather constrained due to the inadequacy of structural policies to assist mothers.

⁷ There is also a compulsory maternity leave, within the European Union, of two weeks which should be taken after giving birth. For Cyprus a period of two weeks before the week of confinement, the week of confinement and six weeks after is compulsory. In total women in Cyprus are entitled to 16 weeks paid maternity leave (The Maternity Protection Law – No.100(I)/2007).

⁸http://www.apesma.asn.au/women/maternity_leave_around_the_world.asp#Europe

According to Wilson (2003) in spite of the fact that women make up the majority of part-time workers does not necessarily mean that they prefer this option. In the words of Wilson (2003, p. 14) “for many it is a matter of compelled circumstance, like domestic commitments, not a matter of preference” and as long as women retain main responsibility of the household as well as taking care of children, in the absence of childcare facilities or incapability of paying such, and elderly there will always be a limit as to how many hours they can devote into the workplace (Wilson, 2003). Moreover, another reason people engage in part-time job is because they cannot find a full-time one (Walsh, 1999). In order to eliminate the situation where women are the ones responsible for childcare, and also to give men the opportunity to stay home with their children, parental leave was introduced in some Nordic countries, for example Estonia⁹, which provides the family, whichever of the parents, the possibility to stay home with the children up until they reach three years of age. Both parental and maternity leave in Estonia are funded by general taxation.

According to Davidson and Burke (2004) women need to achieve work-life balance in order to stay and advance in the workplace. The researchers indicated that organisations should introduce family-friendly policies such as flexible work arrangements, offer support for work-family initiatives and commit to diversity programmes (ibid.). A survey conducted by the Institute of Directors (Personnel Today, 1992, p. 4) indicated that 30 per cent of female directors attribute women’s poor opportunities in advancement to male attitude. It was also shown by the survey that women seek positive action not positive discrimination for example provision for workplace nurseries. In another study it was shown that childcare facilities in the workplace are found to be of great importance in encouraging women to enter the world of business and management (Davidson and Burke, 2004).

Taking into account the above Davidson and Burke (2004) concluded that women with children are faced with double discrimination; as women and as mothers. The introduction of family-friendly policies in the organisations is of utmost importance towards the equality of men and women in the workplace through managing diversity (ibid.). Apart from the family-friendly policies within the organisations gender equality

⁹http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Country_notes/2014/Estonia.pdf

in the workplace was tried to be safeguarded through the introduction of several laws and directives which are briefly discussed in the following section.

3.7 Legislation on Gender Discrimination

Important steps have been made to the fulfilment of gender equality legislation with the introduction of Directive 86/613/EEC on Equal Treatment for men and women carrying out self-employment activity-including agriculture-, 1989 Social Action Program which led to Pregnancy Directive 92/857/EC, and finally SPA annexed to the Maastricht Treaty which led to Directive 96/34/EC on Parental Leave. The introduction of the above directives indicated that men and women must be treated equally, even though they are different in some aspects that are determined by their gender (pregnancy for women, body structure; possibility for women not being able to handle heavy work). This is reflected also in the academic literature on gender.

Legally, gender discrimination is defined as “treating individuals differently in their employment specifically because an individual is a woman or a man” (www.workplacfairness.org). In other words, gender discrimination is the different treatment towards a person exactly because of this person’s sex. Discriminatory practices can occur in every stage of ones working life; hiring process, negotiations about salary, job classification, benefits (health insurance, bonuses), promotion issues and even when firing is concerned (Barnard, 2000). Gender inequality is, most of the times, experienced by women although there are also a few instances where men are reported to have been subject to gender discrimination (Luthar and Luthar, 2002). Important steps forward have been made in the US and in the European Union, by introducing anti-discrimination laws and directives respectively. Some other industrialised but developing countries and some Asian ones, like Japan, still lack gender equality legislation/ regulatory framework in the workplace (Luthar and Luthar, 2002). Despite these, according to Gregory (2003), writing in the US context, social and cultural factors have a substantial contribution to the triggering of gender discrimination in society, which is still transferred in the workplace.

Gregory (2003, p.5) suggested that almost every working woman is faced with some kind of gender discrimination in their attempt to advance in their working environment whether it is in the form of “glass ceiling or cement ceiling or ordinary brick walls”. In addition, Tangri and Hayes (1997) indicated that even well-educated and high-experienced women are faced with obstacles in their advancement and/ or application of the organisational power, given to them by their job position. For example, women in the European Union hold more than one third of working positions and are more likely to be recruited in atypical jobs¹⁰, especially part-time jobs, and are mostly affected by long-term unemployment due to motherhood and family (Barnard, 2004).

Despite the fact that Employment Law has been introduced fairly recently (in 1998), in the EU Equality law has achieved most of the economic and social objectives originally hoped for, unlike other areas that are still in a premature stage. The importance of equal opportunities is highlighted in the ‘European Social Model¹¹’ which indicated the vision of the European Commission in creating “values of democracy and individual rights, free collective bargaining, the market economy, equality of opportunity for all and social welfare and solidarity” (Barnard, 2000, p.197). Ellis (1998) suggested that the focus on gender equality has served both political and economic realms. According to Lapidus and Figart (1994), by addressing wage discrimination (shrinking the wage gap) the implementation of comparable worth would also reduce poverty among women workers by approximately 40 per cent. On the other hand, the political advantages include that gender equality provides a platform, by which the Community can demonstrate its commitment to social progress (Barnard, 2000).

The purpose of gender equality legislation is to correct or eliminate the effect of specific distortions which advantage or disadvantage certain activities (as stated in the Spaak Report¹²). Article 141 of the EU Treaty (ex 119) stresses the notion of equal pay for

¹⁰ Jobs that do not correspond to the norm in terms of stability or length of work i.e. contract base.

¹¹The ‘European Social Model’ is a vision of society that combines sustainable economic growth with ever-improving living and working conditions. This implies full employment, good quality jobs, equal opportunities, social protection for all, social inclusion, and involving citizens in the decisions that affect them.

¹² See Hildebrand (2009). The Spaak report or Brussels Report on the General Common Market, was the report drafted by the Spaak Committee in 1956. The Intergovernmental Committee, headed by Paul-Henri Spaak presented its definitive report on 21 April 1956 to the six Governments of the Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community. The report formed the cornerstone of the Intergovernmental

equal work and for work of equal value. Furthermore it states that *the Council shall adopt measures to ensure the application of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, including the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value*. Cockburn (1991) indicated that women and men are not the same but are undeniably equal and should be treated as such. In Cockburn's (1991, p. 10) words "we can also be the same and different from each other. What we are seeking is not in fact *equality*, but *equivalence*, not *sameness*, for individual women and men, but *parity* for women as a sex, or for groups of women in their specificity".

Despite international action at the legislative level Davidson and Burke (2004, p.11) noted that "gender equality legislation alone, without sufficient clout or sanctions (as well as a lack of changes in societal attitudes), has limited effect on change to the status quo" (Davidson and Burke, 2004, p. 11). As a part of the EU, Cyprus is subject to the broad legislative environment analysed earlier. It is also the location of a specific, highly traditional, national culture. As the focus of this study is on gender and organisations in Cyprus it is imperative to provide an overview of the case of Cyprus. This will be realised in the next chapter where historical facts, economy and the place of women in the society and the workplace will be discussed so as to better understand the situation with regard to gender issues.

Conference on the Common Market and Euratom at Val Duchesse in 1956 and led to the signature, on March 25, 1957, of the Treaties of Rome establishing a European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom).

CHAPTER 4

The Cyprus Case

4.1 Introduction

As Mallinson (2005, p.1) stated from the 1960s until the point of his work, Cypriot people have witnessed “continuous diplomatic and political wrangling, intercommunal fighting, United Nations involvement, threats of war”, the coup against influential leader Archbishop Makarios, two Turkish invasions, and abortive attempts to solve the Cyprus problem, events that inevitably affected the lives of Cypriots, men and women. This chapter discusses the status of specifically Cypriot women in society as well as within Cyprus-based organisations. It starts with an introduction of the most important historical events that occurred since 1960, the year of the declaration of the independence of the Republic of Cyprus. As noted earlier, it is important to explore the historical and socioeconomic background of the country under investigation so as to better understand the position of women in the society and the workplace.

4.2 A glance at the past – Historical Facts

Cyprus, due to its strategic geographical position at the crossroad of three continents has through the ages been under suppression by other nations, which used the island as a commercial station (see Chronology Index below). Cyprus has always been considered to be a Greek island hence Cypriot culture is strongly attached to Greek culture. In 1570-71 the Turks conquered the island and cut it off from the rest of Europe for several hundred years, until 1878 when the island was subjugated by the British (Smith, 2001). Despite the fact that Cyprus is an island and should have been affected by Renaissance and other movements, as through commerce travelled not only goods but also ideas, which would have affected gender inequality in a positive way, this did not happen. As the island was always under the conquest of a nation it can only be assumed that men were dealing with commerce and women were ‘protected’ in the house, away from the conquerors, setting the basis of patriarchy.

Chronology Index

1571: Ottoman Turks capture Cyprus.

1878: Ottomans lease Cyprus to Britain.

1914: Britain annexes Cyprus as a British colony.

1931: Greek-Cypriot extremists burn down Government House.

1950: Election of Makarios III as Archbishop.

1955: Beginning of the EOKA struggle against British colonizers. Greek-Cypriots were fighting for *enosis* –union with Greece whilst, Turkish-Cypriots wanted *Taksim* –partition of the island between Greece and Turkey. The EOKA campaign ends in 1959.

1960: Declaration of Independence which is celebrated on 1 October although it was signed in August of the same year. A constitution is given to Cypriots that was composed by Britain, Greece and Turkey. The constitution was based on three treaties: the Treaty of Guarantee, the Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Establishment.

1963: Archbishop Makarios introduces his “Thirteen Point Plan” with the intention of amending the constitution. Civil war was declared on 21 December when the Turkish government refused to amend 13 points of the constitution. Paramilitary organizations were established in both communities: TMT for the Turkish-Cypriots and EOKA B’ for the Greek-Cypriots.

1974: General Grivas dies. On the 15th July a coup d’etat against Makarios bursts out. On 20 July the first Turkish invasion took place followed by a second one on 14 August.

1977: Death of Archbishop Makarios.

1983: Declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) on 15 November. TRNC failed to gain diplomatic recognition except from Turkey.

1990: Application of the Republic of Cyprus to join the European Union.

2002: Presentation of the first Annan Plan to the two communities.

2003: Opening of borders through the buffer zone. The Republic of Cyprus signs EU accession treaty.

2004: Referendum on the 5th Annan Plan on 24 April. The Republic of Cyprus joins the EU on 1 May.

Between 1955 and 1959 conflicts occurred in Cyprus. These conflicts were divided into two facets; one was the Greek-Cypriot struggle against British rule and for *Enosis* (unification) with Greece and the other was intercommunal conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Crawshaw, 1978; Coyle, 1983). The Turkish-Cypriots demanded *Taksim* or partition of the island between Turkey and Greece (Patrick, 1976; Kyle 1984). On 18th August¹³ 1960 the independence of the island was signed. However, the connection between Greek-Cypriots and motherland Greece was still strong due to the common language and religion that they share. Greek-Cypriots and Greeks share common language and ethnic affinity (Andrain, 1971). These cultural similarities have inevitably led to the political alliance of the two countries. In addition, it might be safe to speculate that cultural-based research in one of these countries could be applicable to the other as well. On the other hand, Turkish-Cypriots were more close to and dependent on Turkey, in economic and political terms but also for cultural reasons such as language, religion, national anthem and flag. In this effect, cultural influences in Cyprus might derive from the Turkish culture as well as the Greek one.

¹³Celebrated on the 1st October.

Dixon suggests that “except in name, Cypriots are neither Turks nor Greeks; neither they are an amalgam of these two races” (1879, pp. 19-20). He explicitly indicates that “in neither faces nor figure, in neither speech nor genus has the Cypriot any resemblance to either Turk or Greek” (ibid.). It might be true that Cypriots do not share external characteristics with either Greeks or Turks, but neither a face nor a figure indicate the cultural identity of a person. In that sense, Greek-Cypriots are as much Greeks as those who inhabit in the motherland Greece. Greek-Cypriots and Greeks share the same language, religion, symbols and most importantly history; factors that when put together create one persons’ identity. In addition, Turkish-Cypriots are also culturally attached to their motherland Turkey, albeit they lack of a shared historical background which makes their actual bonding weaker. It can only be assumed that Cypriot culture was affected by the cultures of all the nations that conquered the island over the years and especially Greece and Turkey, having the longest presence and being in closer proximity. In effect, gender specific roles within Cypriot society were shaped by the said roles in Greece and Turkey. This is further discussed in Section 4.4.

In Cyprus, apart from Turkish Cypriots there are also other minorities such as Maronites, Latines and British but this study deals exclusively with Greek Cypriots as they comprise the majority of the population and access to Turkish Cypriots, due to the political situation, would not have been easy.

4.3 A glance at the past – Economic Facts

4.3.1 Before 1960s

At first, Turkish and Greek Cypriots were mostly occupied in agriculture and shared the same living standards and thus “inhabited the same socioeconomic niche” (Morag, 2004, p.608). However, as modernization of the economy occurred during the end of the Ottoman rule and the beginning of the British rule, around 1881, urbanization of the island was occurring (ibid.). Turkish-Cypriots tended to occupy the ‘administrative apparatus’ (Couloubis, 1983, p. 27) of the island and in the security departments such as the army and police. On the other hand, Greek-Cypriots dominated commerce, small industry and professions. Large percentages of Greek-Cypriots also occupied service, sales and transport sectors a fact that led to the urbanization of the latter, thus posing

them as the socio-economic elite of the island (Bryant, 2001; Morag, 2004). By the mid-1950s the Cypriot economy was metamorphosed to an entrepreneurial export oriented prosperous society with a very high standard of living. This was possible due to the combination of the strategic geographical position of the island¹⁴, skilled manpower and healthy agricultural and commercial sectors (Morag, 2004).

4.3.2 From October 1960 to July 1974

After the declaration of Independence and the formation of the Cypriot state in 1960, socioeconomic differences between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots increased with the latter being economically and politically underdeveloped Morag (2004). Thus, the capital and hence the economy of Cyprus was in the hands of the Greek-Cypriot community. It was estimated that “whereas in 1961, the economic condition of Turkish-Cypriots was 20 per cent lower than that of Greek-Cypriots, by 1973, it was 50 per cent lower” (Markides, 1977, p. 31). The socioeconomic situation of Greek-Cypriots was constantly improving until 1974 when the island was faced with a coup and two successive Turkish invasions (Morag, 2004).

4.3.3 From the de facto partition onwards

The Turkish invasions led to partitioning of 37 per cent of the island and people were faced with a great economic depression. Nowadays, the Greek-Cypriot community has managed to build a wealthy economy in contrast with the Turkish-Cypriot community whose economy mostly depends on Turkey. The Republic of Cyprus is now a full member of the EU since 2004 and is enjoying all the economic advantages membership involves.

However, it is worth mentioning that in 2011 a severe economic crisis hit the island and Cyprus was “cut off from international markets” (Zenios, 2013, p. 3). This crisis has a serious effect on the unemployment rate which rose from 3.5 per cent, which was stable since the country’s “recovery from the 1974 Turkish invasion and until the start of the

¹⁴Crossroad of Europe, Asia and Middle East.

current crisis” (Zenios, 2013, p. 6), to 15.6 per cent in April 2015¹⁵. The present research, (online survey and interviews) was conducted before the outburst of the economic crisis in 2013 which might have affected the situation of the participants in the study.

Apart from the political and economic situation of the island during the above mentioned periods one can identify a gender division within the society, which can be associated with patriarchy¹⁶; a system characterized by male dominance (Cockburn, 2004). All these affected the position of Cypriot women in the society and this is going to be discussed in the following section.

4.4 Women in the Society of Cyprus

Taking into account the roots of Cypriot women either Greek or Turkish one can identify, in either case, gender inequality (Cockburn, 2004). On the one hand, the “classical Greece is the epitome of patriarchy” as indicated by Cockburn (2004, p. 43) adding that the Byzantine and Frankish Christian regimes that followed the Hellenism of the first millennium BC were no less misogynist than any other regime. On the other hand, the Ottoman legacy ascribed to Turkish Cypriots was an “extreme case of a militarized imperialist, and polygamous, male power system” (Cockburn, 2004, p. 43).

Up until the late days of British rule Cypriots were mainly occupied in rural activities and common to non-urbanisation, and according to Cockburn (2004, p.49) traditional family values placed many constraints on women. By 1960 the gender line was deeply rooted; the natural place to find a man was the coffee shop while women were settled at home (Loizos, 1981). Cockburn (2004) stated that in Cyprus it was, and in most cases still is, considered an insult for a man to do house chores and wear an apron. Apart from a small percentage, Cypriot people were poor at that time and an even smaller percentage of women had “a wage or a salary at their own disposal” (Cockburn, 2004, p. 49); women were primarily occupied in the production of goods and services that

¹⁵ www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat

¹⁶ Patriarchy comes from the Greek word *pateras* which means father and indicates the subordination of all family members to the male/ father.

could be used within the home while they depended on the man of the household (the father or the husband) for income (Cockburn, 2004; Anthias, 1992).

Inequality was sewn into the culture via religion (Pyrgos, 1993), legislation (Cockburn, 2004) and education. In 1911 girls who were attending elementary school were only half in numbers compared to boys and men were more likely than women to be literate by up to three times (Cockburn, 2004). This has had a knock-on effect on employment opportunities for females; according to the Cyprus Social Research Centre (1975) in 1946 only 7 per cent of women were employed full-time while another 13 per cent were in part-time employment. Tradition also played a very important role in women's life in Cyprus. Value ascribed to women was most often associated with marriage, child-bearing and child-rearing (Cockburn, 2004; Anthias, 1992). Until 1955 (as in many countries), women who were married were not allowed to work.

This gender division seems to be also embedded within the structures of the educational system. Up until the beginning of the 21st century children's books in elementary schools in Cyprus had a clear division of labour according to gender¹⁷. For example, female figures were depicted in the kitchen cooking or cleaning while the male figures were seen in jobs such as doctors or engineers. Also, young girls were shown to play with dolls while boys with balls or cars. It is only in the recent years that this has changed and books were rewritten in an attempt to promote diversity. It is not in the researcher's knowledge whether this was the case in other countries as well. In essence, girls and boys were educated according to these stereotypes which reinforced the way they were raised within their families.

Similar effects were found in public life (Pyrgos, 1993). Currently, out of 56 members of the House of Parliament only six are women, which only comprise 9 per cent of total¹⁸. In the new Cypriot government that was instated on the 1st March 2013 there is only one woman holding a Minister's position.

¹⁷ The books were provided by the Greek government therefore the same situation was evident in Greece as well.

¹⁸ www.parliament.cy

Cypriot women formally entered the workforce after the disaster of 1974. The depressed economy provided opportunities to Cypriot women and as Cockburn (2004, p. 78) claimed “the economic effects of the war were experienced by women in a way that was gender-specific”. According to Cockburn (2004) only a small percentage of women were in paid employment before 1974 while quite a few contributed to the households’ income by producing products at home, as well as by producing and selling artefacts. After 1974 women were called to contribute cash to the household and many women worked at factories. Cockburn’s (2004) research on Cyprus also indicated that most women were pleased, despite the reasons that led them into the workforce, to be working for the first time as it gave them a sense of fulfilment and made them feel important. As Stavrou (1997, p. 77) pointed out the contribution of women both in paid labour and in household chores was of utmost importance in the completion of the “economic miracle” which was the revival of the Cypriot economy after the hardship of the war.

4.5 Cypriot Women in the Workplace

The establishment of Cypriot women in the workforce was not easy especially taking into account the highly patriarchal Cypriot society (Loizos, 1981) and the place of women within the family (Cockburn, 2004; Loizos, 1981). As it is indicated by Cockburn’s (2004) study women were merely occupied in low-paid, low-esteemed jobs and these jobs ended up perceived as female jobs such as nurses and secretaries. Cyprus’s accession in the EU has developed female equality further (ibid.). “The EU has given women a language in which to assert their rights, but implementation is another matter. As in the rest of Europe, women in Cyprus are still far from equal with men” (Cockburn, 2004, p. 112).

Recent research¹⁹, in Cyprus, corroborates the impact of horizontal segregation²⁰ in Cypriot society. CYMAR²¹ (2010) concluded that the majority of both men (72 per cent) and women (61 per cent) employees in Cyprus believe that there are certain occupations that best suit the one or the other gender consequently they acknowledge

¹⁹ The research was conducted prior to the economic crisis which inevitably affected the status quo of the Cypriot workforce.

²⁰ See Ely et al. (2008).

²¹ www.cymar.com.cy

the existence of the so called male and female jobs. The same credence, as shown in the graph below (GRAPH 1), was found also among employers and general managers; 86 per cent of men and 94 per cent of women managers believe that there are certain jobs that either men or women are best suited for (CYMAR, 2010).

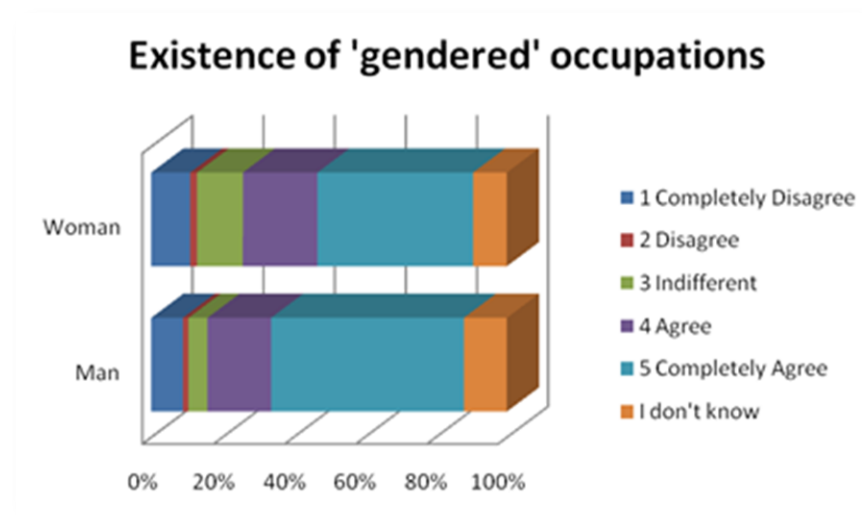


Chart 1 – Existence of 'gendered' occupations

CYMAR (2010)

Further, this research found that 53 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women employers/ general managers admit to have taken into account the gender of the candidate before making the decision to hire someone (ibid.). Therefore, consciously or unconsciously both men and women appear to act discriminatorily against either men or women, when it comes to hiring. It is likely that societal stereotypes play a role here. For example, it is uncommon to hire a man for a secretarial position not only for the reason that employers might be sceptical towards that decision but also because men, including Cypriot men, would most probably not apply for this type of position (Cockburn, 2004).

In addition to the above the majority of employees sampled in the CYMAR study believe that men overwhelm women in several characteristics such as physical strength, technical abilities, time availability, and ease in mobility (CYMAR, 2010). According to the non-profit organisation expanding opportunities for women and organisations

Catalyst²² (1998) employers make negative assumptions about women and their abilities. The last two characteristics that are mentioned in the CYMAR study, time availability and ease in mobility are directly related to domestic life of Cypriots. The trend for Cypriot women is to hold responsibility for the household (cooking, cleaning etc) and for taking care of the children (pick them up from school, help them study etc) hence, men have more time to devote to work (time availability) and can more easily take business trips either domestic or abroad (ease in mobility)²³. Catalyst (1998) also added that women are faced with cultural hindrance where the work environment values long working hours over actual performance and/ or provides minimal support for work-family initiatives and limited dedication to managing diversity.

Up to date there has been little work on gender discrimination faced by women in Cyprus. There have only been a few surveys on women's occupations which have been a good source of statistical evidence. One of these surveys was conducted by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus, in 2004, and is named 'Panorama of Working Women in Cyprus 2000-2003'²⁴. This survey, which was conducted between 2000 and 2003, explored the situation in Cyprus by comparing the percentage of working men to working women in various aspects like education and work experience.

According to the survey, working women in Cyprus have increased from 53 per cent in 2000 to 60.2 per cent in 2003, fulfilling the goal set by the European Union that working women should have reached 60 per cent by 2010. The respective percentage for working male population was 78.6 per cent in 2000 and 78.8 per cent in 2003. The augmentative tendency for working women in Cyprus is rather obvious while the respective percentage for men remains stable. Despite this increase in working women the male percentage was still much higher, in 2003. Many women choose or are socially directed ²⁵(i.e. driven by cultured trends) to become housewives.

²² Catalyst was founded in 1962 and is the leading non-profit organisation expanding opportunities for women and business. www.catalyst.org

²³ See Cockburn (2004).

²⁴ www.hrdauth.org.cy

²⁵ Driven by cultural trends.

The age mean of working Cypriot women in 2003 was 38.7 years while the respective number for men was 41.8 years (Human Resource Development Authority, 2000-2003). This might indicate that women work for fewer years than men. Equally, it is indicated that younger generations are experiencing less diversity of work experience by gender. As far as the education level is concerned, the percentage of working women increases accordingly to higher education. The highest percentage of working women is found among those who hold a bachelors or a master's degree reaching 86.1 per cent in 2003. Despite that, the HRDA (2000-2003) survey indicates, in every educational level the working percentage of men is higher than that of women.

There is also a good percentage of working women who are occupied in family businesses without getting paid (Human Resource Development Authority, 2000-2003). The age mean for this type of occupation for women was 49.3 years in 2003 while the respective percentage for men was 61.8 years (*ibid.*). This, according to HRDA (2000-2003) indicates that men were probably employed elsewhere for a long time and at an older age joined the family business and offered their services for free. When it comes to women working in family businesses, without remuneration, 53.1 per cent had either none or just elementary education (*ibid.*).

Another survey (Labour Force Survey, 2015) that was conducted by the Statistical Service of Cyprus indicated the huge difference in the number of female and male workers in specific occupations supporting the existence of horizontal segregation in Cyprus (TABLE 1). Further to this, it has been noted by the Statistical Service of Cyprus that in 2014 there were 11.818 males who were classified under Legislators and Managers while there were only 2.477 females under this category which denotes vertical segregation²⁶ in Cyprus (Labour Force Survey, 2014). It is also shown that the sectors women do have significant representation in are characterized as service based and non-knowledge (*ibid.*). Stavrou (1997, p. 69) indicated that “the majority of Cypriot working women are particularly likely to be subject to male authority” which results in their exclusion of high ranked positions even in occupations that are predominantly female.

²⁶ See Price (2007).

Table 1

Employees by economic activity and gender in the 1st quarter of 2015²⁷		
Sector	Female	Male
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	4.095	11.188
Mining and Quarrying	261	172
Manufacturing	8.531	20.458
Electricity, Gas, Water supply	691	3.434
Construction	1.900	22.748
Wholesale, Retail Trade, Repairs	28.749	27.782
Hotels and Restaurants	9.582	9.754
Transport, Storage, Communication	4.330	7.724
Financial and Insurance Activities	9.569	7.741
Real Estate Activities	557	319
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	14.593	7.721
Administrative and Support Service Activities	3.502	2.604
Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security	12.167	15.506
Education	19.771	7.173
Human Health and Social Work Activities	11.820	4.229
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1.975	1.969
Other Service Activities	2.556	2.520
Activities of Households	18.704	654
Activities of Extra-territorial Organizations and Bodies	602	722

According to the Statistical Service of Cyprus for the year 2009-2010²⁸ 18.2 per cent of female students followed Teacher Training & Education Fields while the respective

²⁷Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistical Service of Cyprus.

percentage for males was only 6.6 per cent. When it comes to the Business & Administration Fields the percentage of female students reached 24 per cent while the one of male students 28.8 per cent. However, when it comes to Engineers & Engineering Trades the percentage of female students was only 2.6 per cent while the respective percentage of male students was 18.1 per cent. It seems that females are still reluctant in following the engineering section while only a small percentage of males follow the education fields.

The same survey indicated that in 2010 even though the majority of teaching and management personnel in pre-primary (99.1 per cent), primary (81.8 per cent) and secondary (63 per cent) education are women at the tertiary level the pattern changes; the majority of teaching and management personnel (59.1 per cent) is men. Further to these, this survey noted that the main reasons women prefer part-time jobs are the inability to find a full time job (28 per cent), and/ or personal/ family reasons (34 per cent). A significant proportion of women (22 per cent) stated that they chose a part time job so as to be able to take care of children or elderly relatives (women being the primary caregivers). Considering the wage gap this survey identified that it has decreased over the years from 33 per cent in 1994 to 21 per cent in 2010 however, it is still there.

Another study, concerning working women in Cyprus, conducted by PWC (2011) indicated that in 2010 49.1 per cent of Cypriot based organisations (private and public) did not have a single woman on their board of directors, 32.7 per cent had just one woman, 7.3 per cent had two, 5.5 per cent had three and only 3.6 per cent had seven women on their board. Additionally, according to the Statistical Service of Cyprus (2012) the proportion of women Members of the Parliament has gradually increased during the last years from 5.4 per cent in 1991 to 14.3 per cent in 2006. However, in 2011 this proportion decreased to 10.7 per cent.

²⁸[http://www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/D95240D3A523C89BC2257A9800307B94/\\$file/Potrait_of_Women_in_Cyprus-2012-151012.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/D95240D3A523C89BC2257A9800307B94/$file/Potrait_of_Women_in_Cyprus-2012-151012.pdf?OpenElement)

Further to these, women in Cyprus are also faced with the problem of childcare. Childcare facilities (kindergartens) in Cyprus are only open until mid-afternoon and do not have working hours that conform to those of private companies. Also, schools close at 13:35 (elementary schools at 13:00) and do not offer the possibility for childcare until later in the afternoon²⁹.

The studies discussed above (CYMAR, 2010; Human Resource Development Authority, 2004; Statistical Service of Cyprus, 2014; Statistical Service of Cyprus, 2015; Statistical Service of Cyprus, 2012; PWC, 2011) clearly show that rates of employment and employment equality are improving in Cyprus but there remain large anomalies. For example, why do so few women, compared to men, hold managerial or board positions? Does Cypriot culture have any impact on this gender inequality? These issues that concern Cypriot society will be further investigated within the scope of this study.

4.6 Research Questions

In response to the gaps in the literature and particularly in the Cyprus context, as explored throughout the reviews of the background and literature, the following research questions are raised in this study:

- RQ1: Do people living in Cyprus perceive gender inequalities in the society?
- RQ2: Do people living in Cyprus perceive gender inequalities in the workplace?
- RQ3: Is motherhood perceived as an impediment to a woman's progression/career?
- RQ4: Do family-friendly policies exist within organisations in Cyprus and if so, do people perceive they serve towards the elimination of gender inequalities?
- RQ5: How important is networking perceived to be in the progression in the workplace? Do women find networking harder than men?
- RQ6: Is having a mentor in the workplace considered important and is it perceived harder for women to get a mentor?
- RQ7: Is family perceived to have an impact on women's career choices?

²⁹http://www.moec.gov.cy/dde/orologio_nipiagogeiou.html (the link is in Greek)

The following chapter details the approach taken and the methodology applied to address these questions in the empirical part of this study.

CHAPTER 5

Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodology which has been used for this study discussing the rationale, advantages and disadvantages of the chosen method as well as identifying other methods of research. Emphasis is given to social constructionism upon which the study will be based. Furthermore, since this study is exploratory the use of inductive (qualitative) approach was considered appropriate. In addition, the issue of reflexivity is raised which explores the role the researcher plays in his/ her own research and the relationship between the researcher and the participant. The chapter will identify the research methods used and discuss the implementation of the research itself such as access to organizations, data collection, analysis as well as acknowledging reflexivity with regard to the needs of this specific study.

According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 108) “the research philosophy you adopt contains important assumptions about the way in which you view the world”. Hence, in the following section the notions of ontological and epistemological paradigms are explained and their role in this study discussed. Further to that, the research approach adopted is introduced and details on how the research was conducted are given.

5.2 Philosophical Position

Johnson and Clark (2006) indicated that importance does not lie so much on whether research should be philosophically informed, that is to say if each philosophical position is explained in depth, but rather on whether a researcher would be able to defend the philosophical choices made for his/ her research. After all, research methodology serves as the vehicle which brings together philosophical ideas and actual research findings and through which the research objectives are achieved (Wass and Wells, 1994). Slife and Williams (1995) suggested that despite the fact that philosophical positions remain mostly hidden in research, they still have a large influence on it so they have to be identified. The ontological and epistemological underpinnings of both deductive and inductive approaches are considered below.

5.2.1 Ontological and Epistemological Positions

Positivism is associated with the philosophical standpoint of the natural scientist (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 113). According to Remenyi et al. (1998, p. 32) positivist researchers prefer “working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalizations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists” (1998, p. 32). Therefore, positivism proposes that only observable phenomena can lead to the production of data which can be trustworthy.

Another element that is interconnected with positivism is the fact that the “research is undertaken, as far as possible, in a value-free way” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 114). That is to say that the researcher is somehow distanced from the subject he/ she is investigating as well as from the participants in the research (Remenyi et al., 1998). This traditional form of research is rejected for the purposes of this study as it is impossible to have a single, external and objective reality (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988) when it comes to the investigation of human and cultural perceptions, the main focus of this research.

Epistemology is concerned with what constitutes acceptable knowledge in the field of research and researchers are divided into two categories; the “resources” researcher and the “feelings” researcher (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 113). The resources researcher is related to the *positivist philosophy* which is focused on the development of knowledge and not normally applied to human research due to the fact that reasons, motivations etc are not researchable with positivist approaches. The feelings researcher is associated with the *interpretivist philosophy* (ibid.) while the aim of the research is to make sense and interpret human behavior instead of generalizing results. For the interpretivist researcher it is essential to comprehend the reasons, motives and feelings underneath actions (Hudson and Ozame, 1988).

Wass and Wells (1994) posited that the aim of social science research is to make sense of social behaviour. Epistemological assumptions can be distinguished with regard to what a researcher believes to be effective knowledge concerning human activity

(Hussey and Hussey, 1997) and engage in the process of revealing this human nature through research while ontological assumptions refer to the nature of human action.

Ontology is concerned with what reality **is**. Researchers therefore are committed to finding “the way the world operates” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110). Two main aspects of ontology which will be discussed here are objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism indicates that “social entities exist in reality external to social actors” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110) therefore the researcher is merely an observer of the world’s reality. On the other hand, subjectivism suggests that “social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors” (Saunders et al., 2009, 111). Hence, social phenomena can be understood by observing people’s attitudes and experiences. It is also indicated that this is a continual process as “social phenomena are in a constant state of revision” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 111).

According to Remenyi et al. (1998, p. 35) it is important to identify “the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them”. This notion is directly associated with social constructionism and derives from the interpretivist philosophy (see Mertens, 1998) indicating that it is of great importance to investigate subjectivity in the values which motivate the actions of social actors so that the researcher will be able to make sense of these actions (Saunders et al., 2009). Social constructionism represents the philosophy that reality is socially constructed. This indicates that individuals, or social actors, might perceive different situations in different or varying ways due to their own subjectivity in the interpretation of certain events (ibid.). These differing interpretations and perceptions affect people's interaction with others and the society.

Ontological assumptions can be divided into two categories with regard to the researcher’s view of the world; the first one considers the world to be objective and external and the second sees it [the world] as socially constructed and in order to make sense of it one should examine the behaviour (perceptions, attitudes etc) of human actors (Wass and Wells, 1994). This latter position is adopted for the purposes of this study.

With regard to organizational culture the debate of objectivism versus subjectivism can be linked to the debate between theoretical and practical approaches. According to Smircich (1983) objectivists tend to view organizational culture as something that the organisation ‘has’ whilst subjectivists view organizational culture as something the organisation ‘is’ as an outcome of a constant social interaction (Saunders et al., 2009; Crotty, 1998). Management theory is oriented towards objectivism in the study of organizational culture and suggests that it is something the organisation ‘has’ and can be changed in order to suit the needs of the management. Subjectivism would argue that this viewpoint is very simplistic and that culture is “created and re-created through a complex array of phenomena which include social interactions and physical factors” combined with rituals and myths (Saunders et al., 2009, p.111). The subjectivism view is adopted for the purposes of this study as it is suggested that the organizational culture is interlinked with the national culture and is indeed a dynamic outcome of social interaction.

In addition to the above, researchers engaged with social constructionism are interested in the interaction among individuals both in their personal lives and workplace (Creswell, 2009). The researcher’s goal is “to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Further, Steedman (2000) suggested that the majority of things already known and efforts toward knowledge are driven towards the exploration of human nature as opposed to scientific phenomena. Additionally, Berger and Luckmann (1991) noted that subjective reality can be maintained and reconstructed through conversation as subjective reality consists of conceptions that can be easily shared with others. Therefore, it can be argued that these exact conceptions are taken for granted by a given society, and its people, so their meaning is established and they do not have to be re-invented every time they are used.

5.2.1.1 Social Constructionism and Culture

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966, p.33) “everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world”. That is to say that each person’s reality is different within one’s mind and is perceived differently when compared to the reality of someone else’s. Adding to the above Kuhn (1962/ 1970, p. 113) indicated that “what a man sees depends both upon what he looks

at and also upon what his previous visual – conceptual experience has taught him to see”. Therefore, it can be claimed that, society is socially constructed and perceptions are passed from generation to generation through culture.

Mallon (2013) suggested that the basis for social constructionism lies in the notion that some objects are a result or are driven by social and/ or cultural factors and also that these aforementioned objects are, have been, or at some point will be under our control. The notion of construction suggests that human traits, like emotions, and human kinds (i.e. groups of people with sharing traits) are not a product of biology or nature but rather of culture.

Some commentators on constructionism (see Hacking, 1999; Mallon, 2004) have suggested that certain claims have been made that social causes serve as the basis for constructing or selecting representations³⁰ with specific meanings which prevail over others. For example, Laqueur (1990) suggested that sex is ‘made up’ and by that he implied that the theories of sex are constructed when certain meanings prevail over others. Hence, sex is socially constructed therefore gender differences are socially constructed as well.

Butler (1990, p. 136) explicitly noted “that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality...in other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core”. By this it is indicated that gender differences lie in the social role of the person and also by reference over time to other people occupying that role. Therefore, women look at older women, for example their mothers or grandmothers, to gain an insight of how they should act. Further to the above, it is suggested by Steele (2010) that when a person is considered as a member of a group then that person will act as it is expected of him/ her as a member of that particular group. For example, with regards to this particular study, this would mean

³⁰ Representations are the route of our thoughts and the vehicle with which we observe and make sense of the world around us (Mallon, 2013).

that if women in Cyprus are not expected to excel in the workplace then they will probably not do so.

The use of social constructionism as the philosophical framework for the purposes of this study was rather inevitable. It is obvious that when investigating people, their experiences and perceptions, the use of interpretivism approach, as opposed to positivism, would be more appropriate as each person's view of him/ her self and of the world is subjective. The researcher also considered the adaption of critical realism but was rejected due to the fact that this theory views entities as independent of others' perceptions. The use of archival research was also considered but this would not allow people to express their own thoughts and views and the results would rely entirely on the researcher's perceptions.

After providing a rationale of the philosophical framework the next section engages in more detail with the research approach focusing on the inductive approach on which this study was based.

5.3 Research Approaches

In the previous section the different philosophical stances of the research were discussed. This section discusses research approaches and analyses the different types of research design and data collection techniques. The two approaches to research are the deductive approach, in which the researcher develops a certain hypothesis and designs a research strategy in order to test this hypothesis, and the inductive approach, in which the researcher first collects the data and then develops a theory based on the information collected (Saunders et al., 2009).

Creswell (2002) stated there are a number of criteria that can be examined in order for the researcher to choose the proper method for his/ her research. The most important element is the nature of the research topic in a sense that when there is a wealth of literature on a specific subject then the deductive method is more appropriate (ibid.). On the contrary, when the research is on a new topic on which there is little existing

knowledge then the inductive approach might be more appropriate in order to generate data.

As stated earlier, the theoretical framework adopted for this study is social constructionism which suggests that individuals aim in making sense of the world they live and work (Creswell, 2009). The researcher relies on participants' perceptions and views of the world that surrounds them so the more able to discover emergent information the better the results as the participant has the time and space to express him/herself and the researcher is able to listen and observe (ibid.). The use of inductive approach is more appropriate for the purposes of this study. The next section will provide more discussion on each approach and briefly state the possible ways of conducting research.

5.3.1 Deductive Approach

The deductive approach is all about testing a theory and it involves firstly the development of such a theory which is then subjected to rigorous testing (Saunders et al., 2009). As per Collins and Hussey (2003) the deductive approach can serve in the natural sciences where the basis of explanation can be identified in the laws, the expectancy of certain phenomena can be endorsed in order to predict their manifestation and permit them to be controlled. The ontological assumption of this approach suggests that reality exists irrespective of individuals or whether one is aware of this reality or not. The epistemological assumption is that valid knowledge can be considered only for the things that can be observed and where subjectivity does not interfere (Wass and Wells, 1994). Under the deductive approach, the world is considered to be external and real, with respect to the researcher, therefore highly structured positivist research methods can be used in order to analyze social reality.

For the current research specifically, gender and cultural background play a vital role on a person's aspiration and in turn inevitably affect organizations (Schein, 1996). Respectively, it can be suggested that organizational culture affects a person's professional life as well as the organisation itself. Therefore, taking into account the above, it can be said that people cannot be researched irrespective of, or without

taking into account, their social reality. In order to understand any social situation a researcher must take into account the perceptions and experiences of the social actors involved. Furthermore, a researcher must take into account his/ her own perceptions and experiences and acknowledge their impact on the research's results. This is referred as reflexivity and it will be discussed later in this chapter (Section 5.5.4).

5.3.2 Inductive Approach

The inductive approach is all about building a theory and in this case theory will follow data collection (Saunders et al., 2009). Researchers adopting this approach are more likely to employ qualitative data and use a variety of methods to collect it so as to maintain multiple perspectives of phenomena (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Under the inductive approach reality is seen as internal to social actors, therefore, both the researcher and the actors under investigation can affect the research and its outcome (Creswell, 2009).

When conducting research under the inductive approach the researcher shapes/ proposes a theory after investigation of the relationships between social actors or variables of a certain study (Ghauri et al., 1995). In addition, Smith (1983) argued that it was impossible to separate the researcher from his/ her own research and also suggested that under the inductive paradigm what exists in the world is what the researcher perceives. Therefore, it is very important for a researcher to acknowledge his/ her own impact on the research.

5.3.3 The Current Study

Taking into account the above it is rather clear that the deductive approach would not have been useful for this study due to the need to understand the perceptions and experiences of the participants and also take into account their social and cultural background. The inductive approach is the methodology adopted for this study as it is in line with the theoretical framework of agency, structure and culture which implies that people are active agents, each with its own perceptions and experiences.

The previous sections engaged with an examination of ontological and epistemological paradigms within the research methodology and also an explanation was given regarding the use of qualitative research for the scope of this study. Moving on, the research design and its implementation will be discussed.

5.4 Formulating the Research Design

The research design is very important as it is the means which will be used in answering the central research question (Saunders et al., 2009). It should be comprised of (a) clear objectives deriving from the research question, (b) specific source from which the data will be collected, (c) acknowledgement of the constraints of the research and (d) discussion of ethical issues (ibid.). Every decision made concerning the above elements should be clearly explained and the justification should be able to reflect the central research question and should always be consistent with the research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009; Creswell, 2009).

Three types of research design are briefly discussed below; (a) exploratory studies, (b) descriptive studies and (c) explanatory studies. The research method adopted for this study is a mixture of all three.

(a) Exploratory Studies

According to Robson (2002, p.59) “an exploratory study is a valuable means of finding out what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in new light”. Saunders et al. (2009) identified three main ways of conducting exploratory research; (a) literature search, (b) interviewing specialists on the given subject, (c) using focus group interviews. The main advantage of this kind of research is the fact that it is “flexible and adaptable to change” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 140). When conducting exploratory research a researcher should be able to change the direction of the study if necessary. Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991) argued that the focus of research should start broad and as the research progresses it becomes narrower.

(b) Descriptive Studies

Robson pointed out that the purpose of descriptive research is “to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations” and information is collected without changing

the environment (2002, p. 59). Saunders et al. (2009) suggest that it is essential for the researcher to have a clear idea of the different circumstances in which the data collection will occur prior to the collection taking place. Descriptive studies are used to provide information or characteristics of a particular group or define relationships between subjects.

(c) Explanatory Studies

Explanatory research is about studying a problem or a situation in order to identify and explain the relationships between people or variables under investigation and as Saunders et al. (2009, p.140) noted “studies that establish causal relationships between variables may be termed explanatory research”.

5.4.1 Research Strategies

This section involves the identification of several research strategies such as experiment, survey, case study, action research, ethnography, archival research and interview which are briefly discussed below. According to Yin (2003) each one of these strategies can be used in all three types of research, exploratory, descriptive or explanatory.

(a) Experiment

Experiment is a form of study that is common in natural sciences although it is used in some social sciences such as psychology (Saunders et al., 2009). Hakim (2000) indicated that the purpose of an experiment is to explore causal links and identify whether a change in one variable causes an alteration in another variable which is dependent to the first one.

(b) Survey

Survey is a form of study mainly linked with the deductive approach and is widely used in social sciences research in an attempt to answer to questions such as who, what, where, how much and how many (Saunders et al., 2009). Hence, it is used in the scope of exploratory and descriptive research allowing the collection of quantitative data which can be analyzed by using “descriptive and inferential statistics” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 144). Surveys are used frequently as they serve to collect large amounts of data

with minimum cost (Creswell, 2009; Saunders et al., 2009). The data collected are standardized and easy to compare.

(c) Case Study

A case study according to Robson (2002, p. 178) is “an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. A case study can be used in exploring existing theories and also to challenge an established one and perhaps offer a basis for new research questions. A negative element of case studies according to Yin (2003) is that there is no clear line distinguishing the phenomena under investigation and the context within which the investigation takes place.

(d) Ethnography

Ethnography derives from the field of anthropology and is often associated with the inductive approach (Saunders et al., 2009). The main goal of this research type is to describe and explain the social world from the perspective of the people who are being investigated; reflecting the world through subjects’ eyes (ibid.). This type of research is time-consuming often taking place over an extended time of period so as for the researcher to get familiar with the subjects and their environment. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) indicated, the purpose of ethnographic research is to allow people to express their own opinion and analyze the perception of cultural issues from their point of view.

(d) Archival Research

Archival research is basically a selection of secondary data and the analysis is based on these administrative records and documents. Bryman (1989) indicated that although the term ‘archival’ suggests historical documentation, more recent data can be used in the research. Most of the times the data used in archival research have been collected for a different purpose but can serve in the analysis of other research studies (Hakim, 2000).

(e) Interviews

Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. They can be used for all types of research, including within survey, case study and ethnographic studies. Depending on the aims and approach of the research, interviews can take several forms.

- Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are based on a pre-prepared questionnaire with identical questions for every participant in the research (Saunders et al., 2009; Creswell, 2009). The questions are read out to the participants and the responses are recorded usually in pre-coded forms. It is important for the researcher to maintain his/ her objectivity and try to read the questions in the same tone and exactly as written to every participant. Structured interviews are used in gathering measurable data and this is why they are also referred to as “quantitative research interviews” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 320).

- Semi-Structured Interviews

In semi-structured interviews the researcher holds a list of themes and questions that need to be covered throughout the interview but it allows for variations among the participants. The researcher has the freedom to decide which questions are best suited for each participant and where the emphasis should be given as long as the questions and the answers respectively remain within the scope of the research (Saunders et al., 2009). The order of the questions can also be altered according to how the interview progresses. This type of interview should be audio recorded and the researcher should also take notes in order to have a clear record of the answers and participants’ expression during the interview, as the answers are not reported on a pre-prepared form (ibid.).

- Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews are used in order to explore a general area of interest. There is no pre-prepared list of questions thus the researcher needs to have a clear view on where the interview should go and should be able to guide the participant in the right direction (Saunders et al., 2009). In unstructured interviews participants are encouraged to talk freely about anything related to the research topic which is important to them (Creswell, 2009). This allows for information to emerge that the researcher may not have anticipated in advance. Kyriacou (2000) argued that the higher the level of rapport built during the interviews the more the chances the interviews will be successful. It is important that participants speak freely so that the researcher can understand and portray their views with accuracy.

After briefly discussing the possible research strategies the next section will deal with those that were chosen for the purposes of this study.

5.5 The Study

5.5.1 The Samples

For the purposes of this study a two-step qualitative approach was taken; step 1: an online survey with both closed and open-ended questions delivered to Cypriot adults in an attempt to provide some baseline/ background information about culture and gender in Cyprus. The online survey served as a first step, a starting point, in order to acknowledge the perception of the general working population in Cyprus with regards to gender inequalities both in the workplace and in society. Further to that it was used to identify possible differences between the perception of the general population and that of groups of people chosen for the interviews. In terms of the online survey the sample was formed with the method of snowballing and it started as a convenience sample. The link to the survey was sent to personal contacts via email and respondents were asked to complete and forward.

Step 2 of the study was comprised of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. It was clear that the participants should have the opportunity to express their thoughts and experiences with minimal constraints. As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, the theoretical framework adopted for this study is based on the assumption that there is interaction between structure, agency and culture. Since there is little existing research on gender issues on Cypriot organisations it was clear that the use of the inductive approach would be more appropriate for the purposes of this study. The interviews were conducted with specific, preselected employment groups. These were chartered accountants from the BIG Four companies in Cyprus and academics working at the University of Cyprus. In terms of the interviews the sample was formed by people who were willing and available to participate in the study. These people were approached through personal networking. It can be said that this was a convenience sample too. In both cases non-probability sampling procedures were used. The reasons these groups of people were chosen were the following; (a) the entry requirements for both men and women are the same, (b) starting salary for both men and women is the same, (c) these

occupations attract both male and female candidates, (d) there is a representation of both public (University of Cyprus) and private (BIG Four) sectors. The reason these four firms were chosen is because they are all international companies, offering the same kind of services and in addition the requirements for employing someone are similar for all four of them. These sectors were chosen so as to eliminate possible discrimination at entry level so as to investigate the reasons of the non-progression of women working in Cyprus after they've joined their organisation, both in the private and public sectors.

Further, it is important to recognize that the subjects under investigation, in this case men and women working in Cyprus, are social beings acting within social structures and institutions and as such can affect and be affected by these same structures. Since people are not identical entities they should not be treated as such and also their environment, living and working, cannot be ignored while examining their perceptions and experiences. Each person has unique characteristics such as gender and cultural background which inevitably affect their lives within the society, according to the specific culture, as well as their careers within their organization, always in accordance with national and organizational culture. Thus the use of the inductive approach is most appropriate.

As mentioned above, there are two main constituents of the primary research; the online survey which served to gain knowledge with regards to the perception of the general working population in Cyprus; and the semi-structured, in-depth interviews which focused on the perception of the specific groups of chartered accountants within the BIG Four (Deloitte, KPMG, PwC, Ernst & Young) companies in Cyprus and academics working at the University of Cyprus.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The use of audio recorder was essential so as to engage with what the participants were saying, and create a dialogue and pick-up on issues that might not have been anticipated. Without the audio recorder it would be very hard to follow the conversation and at the same time make detailed notes of what the participants were saying. All the participants agreed to have the interview audio recorded.

Prior to the interview it was explained that the research was confidential and anonymous and the reasons for using the audio recorder. Interviews were conducted in Greek and transcribed into Greek and English.

5.5.2 Operation of the Study

Step 1: Online Survey

The survey was conducted on an online basis through SurveyMonkey for a period of one month (18th June – 17th July 2013). The link was sent via email to the researcher's personal contacts who were asked to answer and forward to their colleagues and contacts. Access to participants for this step of the research was fairly easy as the survey was sent via email and it did not require more than 5 minutes to complete. The number of the participants was 245 (the number of the recipients of the survey is unknown) out of which 144 were women (59%) and 101 were men (41%).

Step 2: Semi-structured, in-depth Interviews

Contact was made with some of the researcher's contacts working at BIG Four companies and the University of Cyprus prior to formally contacting organisations requesting access to conduct the research. The reason was to gather information about approaching the research fieldwork. Additionally, contact was made with Cyprus-based branches of Deloitte, KPMG, PwC and Ernst & Young. Formal letters were sent to the HR Manager requesting access to conduct the research and also to be given names and contact details of 10 chartered accountants (5 men, 5 women) from each company. However, gaining access was not straight forward; one company replied and said they would be willing to help but did not make any arrangements, another company rejected the request and the remaining two companies never replied. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) indicated gaining access has always been a severe problem in research.

Consequently personal contacts were used to gain access to participants in these firms. Lists of people who would be willing to help with the research were provided and participants were contacted directly and interviews arranged. As in the case of the online survey snowballing, convenience sampling, (Mason, 1996) was also applied here meaning that participants that had already been interviewed encouraged other people to participate.

In total 29 individuals were interviewed, 13 men and 16 women, (See Table II below for demographics of each participant). Numbers, according to the order the participants were interviewed, were used to substitute the participants' real names, in order to afford anonymity for example 'Female 6, Academic, late 40s'. Participants felt more relaxed when they were assured by the researcher that anonymity would be ensured.

Table 2: Demographics of Participants

Participant's Number	Gender	Profession	Age	Marital Status
1	Male	Accountant/ Partner	Late 40s	Married with children
2	Male	Accountant/ Partner	Late 40s	Married with children
3	Female	Accountant/ Supervising Senior	Late 20s	Single
4	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single
5	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single
6	Female	Academic/ Associate Professor	Late 40s	Married with children
7	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	In a relationship
8	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single
9	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	In a relationship

10	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Married with child on the way
11	Male	Academic/ Professor	Late 40s	In a relationship
12	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Early 30s	Single
13	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single
14	Male	Academic/ Associate Professor	Late 30s	Married with children
15	Female	Academic/ Visiting Lecturer	Mid 30s	Married with child on the way
16	Male	Accountant/ Manager	Mid 30s	Single
17	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Mid 30s	Married with children
18	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single
19	Male	Accountant/ Supervising Senior	Late 20s	In a relationship
20	Male	Accountant/ Manager	Early 30s	In a relationship
21	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single
22	Female	Accountant/ Manager	Mid 30s	Married with children
23	Female	Accountant/	Late 20s	Engaged with

		Senior Associate		child on the way
24	Male	Accountant/ Associate	Late 20s	Engaged
25	Female	Accountant/ Senior Manager	Mid 30s	Married with children
26	Female	Accountant/ Senior Manager	Mid 40s	Married with children
27	Female	Academic/ Assistant Professor	Mid 40s	Married with children
28	Male	Academic/ Associate Professor	Mid 50s	Married with children
29	Female	Academic/ Assistant Professor	Early 40s	Married with children

The next section deals with the data analysis process for both steps of the research.

5.5.3 Data Analysis

When analyzing the data in qualitative research there is definitely not a clear path a researcher should follow and some researchers acknowledge this process “as peeling back the layers of an onion” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183). Data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process and it involves data collection, interpreting these data and writing up reports; these actions can occur simultaneously (Creswell, 2009; Rossman and Rallis, 1998). Mason (2002, p.147) indicated that a core process of data analysis is sorting the collected information and he suggested three categories for doing so; “cross-sectional and categorical indexing; non-cross-sectional data organization; use of diagrams and charts”.

For the scope of this study the analysis started during the interviews while observing the participants' facial expressions and body language. These "protocols" (Creswell, 2009, p. 181) were then recorded in a diary in order to be cross-referenced with the transcripts at a later stage. The data analysis used for the purposes of this study was based on a "linear, hierarchical approach building from the bottom to the top" (Creswell, 2009, p. 185) and the steps included in this method are; (a) organisation of data (transcription, notes etc), (b) reading all the data, (c) dividing the data into themes, (d) grouping similar themes together from all available data, (e) making sense of the data and creating a narrative. This sequence was used for both steps of the study although more focus was given to the data analysis of the interviews also taking into account Mason (2002, p. 173) who proposed that researchers dealing with qualitative data should focus on creating an argument. That is to say to construct "a representation, or a line of reasoning or analysis" that will make sense and reflect back to the people for whom the argument was built. Also, Mason (2002) indicated that the researcher needs to be able to effectively support his/ her arguments in order to make them convincing to others.

Step 1: Online Survey

The survey was conducted through an online based engine called SurveyMonkey. This way the descriptive data of the likert scaled questions was extracted immediately from the engine. Therefore, the use of a statistical programme, like SPSS, was not necessary. Open ended questions were included in the online survey. To analyze these, responses were extracted, translated into English and then divided into themes.

Step 2: Semi-structured, in-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted in Greek, and transcribed in both Greek and English. Also, the notes from the researcher's diary were included in this stage. Analysis included the identification of the most common themes, their categorization based on decoding/ making sense of the meanings in respondents' narratives. Specifically a template approach was used which consisted of (a) categorization of themes, (b) coding of the information and (c) qualitative interpretation of the information (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher considered the use of computer software packages such as *ethnograph*. However, it was decided not to use a software package as it would be very impersonal and could not depict people's expressions, body language or feelings. Computer software packages might be useful in reducing the burden of the researcher and time required for the analysis however, they cannot in any case replace human sensitivity (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). For these reasons also, a journal was kept and anything that was considered important after each interview was recorded. Facial expressions, body language and feelings of the participants were all recorded and this helped later on at the analysis stage. This is something that a software package would not be able to grasp. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue in favor of keeping a journal not only to record body language, expressions and thoughts but also for the more practical reason of avoiding the danger of forgetting something important. The use of "reflecting notes" is also suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p.121).

The next section deals with reflexivity which is the position of the researcher and its possible effect on the results of the study.

5.5.4 Reflexivity

This section deals with the possible effect the researcher might have on the results of this study. As Kyriacou (2000) indicated, the demographics and psychological situation of both the researcher and participants in research play a vital role in the creation of rapport and hence in the accuracy of the results. Kyriacou (2000) also suggested any researcher should try to eliminate the hierarchical differences between the researcher and interviewees in order to achieve rapport and connection which promotes accurate reporting of respondent perceptions.

According to Thomas (1923) when humans describe a situation as real, it is real to them. In effect, and with regard to research, the beliefs and experiences of a researcher might be reflected on his/ her research. This notion is termed reflexivity. According to Denzin (1997, p. 27) the problem lies in the fact that "our subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others". Therefore, we need to be able to acknowledge that our role as social researchers is fundamental to the world surrounding us and as Denzin

noted “[r]epresentation ... is always self-presentation ... the Other’s presence is directly connected to the writer’s self-presence in the text” (Denzin, 1997, p. 503).

Researchers in several disciplines acknowledged the importance of reflexivity as one of the main themes to be discussed within the research framework (DeVault, 1990; Olesen, 1994). Although it might be true that the cultural background of a researcher can affect the research itself as well as the interpretation of the findings (Haraway, 1988) this is not necessarily a bad thing. Kamenou (2002) cited the work of Davidson’s (1997) in which it was shown that black women preferred to be interviewed by other black women, as opposed to white ones, due to the fact that they felt black women could better relate to their own experiences and that they were better understood. One could argue the opposite also of course; according to Kitzinger et al. (1996) better knowledge can be gained by a researcher who does not necessarily share the same understandings as the participants in the study or have personal experience on the matter under research. Further, it was also indicated by Kamenou (2007, p. 2004) that a researcher with no direct relation to the study or the participants might be able to provide an “alternative insight into an area”.

It is vital within every study for the researcher to be able to acknowledge whether he/she was in any way biased towards the subject or the participants. For this study therefore there is the need to acknowledge that the researcher is a white, Cypriot female investigating white, Cypriot females and males. Thus it may be the case that the researcher could sympathize to a greater extent with women’s experiences than with men’s. As a Cypriot woman, it could be argued that the researcher was not only interested but also affected by Cypriot culture as it affects gender. Engagement with the literature provided some objectivity and reduced the risk of biased analysis by the researcher. Additionally, the first step of the study was designed to exclude the researcher from the participants, although, analysis of the open-ended questions would still be affected by potential reflexivity bias.

On the other hand, being a Cypriot working female investigating other Cypriot working females could be advantageous as respondents might be more open as they would feel

the researcher could relate to and understand their point of view. Indeed, rapport was good in all interviews with women. The interviews with men conversely were at the beginning a bit hesitant and defensive. As the interviews progressed they became more relaxed and open. Edwards (1993) indicated that this sharing between the researcher and the participants in the study is very common. Graham (1983) also suggested that this two-way communication that is formed is very important so as to eliminate the hierarchy which brings the participant in a disadvantaged position.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the research methodology in general and explained the one used for the purposes of this study. Further to that, the research design was explicitly analyzed along with the sampling procedure and access to the participants who took part in the study. The final section focused on reflexivity which identified the role of the researcher in the study and how it might have affected the results of the analysis.

The two following chapters deal with the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 6

Findings - Society

6.1 Introduction

This, and the following, chapter present the findings of this research deriving from the semi-structured interviews and supported, when possible, from the results of the online survey. The findings are presented according to the research questions and are divided into two main categories; society (Chapter 6) and workplace (Chapter 7). The answers of the participants lead to the identification of the emerging themes and entail those issues that were raised by the majority, or all, of the participants in the study.

6.2 Perception of Gender Inequality in the Society

This section deals with the findings mainly based on the participants' answers on research question 1 'Do people living in Cyprus perceive gender inequalities in the society?'

According to the answers of the participants there seems to be a clear distinction of gender roles in the Cypriot culture in particular relating to a traditional patriarchy. In this sense inequality and the division of gender roles are the norm and are likely to be also embedded in education through school books and the role of the teacher.

This was also identified through the online survey. To the question 'Do you perceive different treatment of men and women in society?', 78 per cent of the participants responded 'yes'. The percentage was even larger within women which reached 84 per cent of the 144 women. Also, within the age group 21-30 years (84 per cent) and among professionals/ academics (83 per cent).

The conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that women and men younger and more educated perceive different treatment of men and women in society. When asked to give examples of this difference in treatment from their own experience/ observation the majority of the respondents identified gender discrimination in the workplace and gave examples of pay gap, glass ceiling, underestimation of women in the workplace and hidden discrimination against working mothers and also indicated that women bear the burden of the household and childcare albeit the fact that they are also employed full-time. The following are typical examples of this:

“Less pay for same jobs, employers reluctant to entrust women with certain tasks that demand 'responsibility' according to their judgment and prefer men, political positions have almost no women in important posts.” (R32, Female, online survey).

“Promotions, sexism, sports, politics, limitations in the role of women due to maternity, not willingness to hire women due to the prospect of becoming pregnant.” (R54, Male, online survey).

When it comes to the interviews, the participants in the study were asked directly whether they perceived gender inequalities/ discrimination in Cypriot society. The majority of the participants suggested the existence of gender discrimination and the assumed superiority of men in Cypriot society in general as well as within the household. Some of them however feel that it is normal for women to have the responsibility of the household and did not perceive this as gender discrimination, instead as distinction between roles denoting the strong effect of culture. The following quotes illustrate this:

“I don't think there is gender discrimination in the society in Cyprus. At least there is not as much as it used to be. I haven't observed any gender discrimination. It is a matter of perception. It depends on the experiences of each person. I think it is normal for women to have the burden of the household

and childcare. It is best for the children to grow up with their mother. This cannot be divided between the parents.” (Male 2, Accountant, mid 40s).

“I believe there is gender discrimination in Cypriot society in general... I believe that in a family the burden for the household and childcare falls on women. For example if I ask my partner to do the vacuum or iron the clothes he will respond ‘don’t even think about it’. This might depend on the character of the man and how he was raised. It is difficult to change your perceptions when you are 30.” (Female 4, Accountant, late 20s).

Further to that, most of the participants indicated the difference in how parents raise their children according to their gender. The below quotes suggest just that:

“I believe that there is gender discrimination in the society in general. This starts from the family and how parents treat their children. They are more protective of their daughters. Parents care more about what people are going to say about their daughters than their sons.” (Female 5, Accountant, late 20s).

“Boys are also spoiled by the fact that we let them get away with a lot of things. This is not just the mother’s fault. For example, a recent incident in a school where after a party a few boys got drunk and killed a chicken and made fun of the situation. There were no girls in the group and generally violence is a male phenomenon. It is either that we teach our boys to be violent or that we tolerate them being violent. The worst part though is that the boys’ fathers intervened so that their children would not be penalised. I think that the society would not be so tolerant with girls in a similar situation.” (Female 27, Academic, mid 40s).

“I believe that the primary responsibility for shaping the personality is the family. Because children until 10-11 years old have as a primary reference their family and then enter their friends and school. [...] If a child comes from school

and has questions then it depends on the parents how are going to answer the questions and what they are going to say in addition. If you explain to your child that is not necessarily the girl who holds the doll and the boy who holds the car but it could be the other way around then you can influence at that age.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

It was also suggested by some of the participants in the study that formal education, through school, can be of great importance in shaping gender roles proclaiming the effect of culture on structure. In particular, higher education was seen as a catalyst towards gender equality. The below quotes are indicative:

“I think that things are more difficult for women in rural areas. Women there mostly stay at home; they might not even get to go to universities to study. This fades out in the younger generation and the more educated the people are. Theoretically as time passes by this discrepancy will improve but this follows the logic that all people are going to be educated which this might not be the case. I think education is important.” (Female 8, Accountant, late 20s).

“My father is more educated than my mother. He also has a PhD so they were very supportive when I decided to follow an academic career. They never pressured me to get married and have children. I think it is very different when your parents are educated. Their perception is very different. I think that they expected me to do a PhD as I was a good student when I was younger. They both had high expectation regarding my education.” (Female 27, Academic, mid 40s).

Further to the above, it was suggested by most participants that studying, living or even travelling abroad could broaden people’s horizons and especially when it comes to gender equality issues:

“In order for things to change it is good to be in contact with people from other cultures as well. We need to change the way we raise our boys.” (Female 27, Academic, mid 40s).

“If you have experiences from abroad you become more open-minded.” (Male 1, Accountant, late 40s).

More specifically, there was some assertion by a couple of more participants that when men live abroad learn to take care of themselves, they are more willing and able to be involved with the household when they have their own families and in a way reinforcing their agency:

“I think that if I studied abroad I would be more willing and able to help around the house. It is important to live on your own.” (Male 9, Accountant, late 20s).

“When I was younger I considered these to be female jobs but not anymore. This changed when I went abroad to study and I learnt to do everything on my own. I think it is very important for someone to study abroad away from his/ her parents so he/ she can become independent.” (Male 12, Accountant, early 30s).

More broadly, on a more societal level, some participants identified the valorisation of men in politics as suggested by the below quotes:

“...Also we see successfully people or people in politics who are all men. And also women are to blame for this since most of them say that they don’t want to or that they can’t do this or that. All these prove that there is great segregation bias in Cyprus.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

“I think there is gender discrimination in Cyprus. In the workplace and when it comes to politics there are only a few women. There is the glass ceiling. I think in Cyprus we are a few steps behind other countries when it comes to gender equality. We are not there yet. I don’t know why, it depends on the case.” (Female 8, Accountant, late 20s).

This is also supported by the online survey:

“Woman is perceived not capable of doing a man’s work, we have no female presidents.” (R37, Female, online survey).

“There is limited involvement and recognition of women in politics.” (R87, Male, online survey).

Finally, some participants identified general gender discrimination in Cypriot society as the following quotes illustrate:

“I think there is gender discrimination when it comes to the Cypriot society. The networking, the ‘who-you-know’ (to koumpariliki) is between men. It is a man’s world. It is the men who form the rules of the game.” (Male 1, Accountant, late 40s).

“Women are treated as inferior in CY society," you are a woman you can't possibly do this".” (R30, Female, online survey).

In general, all participants in the study, male or female, seem to perceive gender inequalities in Cypriot society. Men are notably disproportionately represented in society especially when it comes to politics, and women are ‘supposed’ to be the

primary caregivers for the children and are expected to also be responsible for the household. The prevailing of culture over both agency and structure is evident.

6.3 Family

This section deals with the importance of family in women's lives and career choices based on the answers on research question 7 'Is family perceived to have an impact on women's career choices?'

Family seems to play a vital role both in the private and work life of the participants. The researcher asked a series of questions in the interviews to identify the perception of accountants and academics regarding the impact of family on career choices and career progression. More specifically it was discussed how parents and close family of participants have affected choices with regards to studies and job orientation. Additionally, the impact of participants' own families (partners, husbands, and wives) was investigated including availability of support (physically and emotionally) for their career choices and their aspirations for progression within the workplace.

This section is divided into two sub-sections namely (a) Family; the family the participants have created (partners, children etc) and (b) Childhood; the participants' parents and relatives while they were growing up.

(a) Family (participants' children etc): The primary data taken from the interviews with regards to the impact the participants' own families have on their career choices and on their aspirations for progression within the workplace are presented. The answers are focused on the division of labor within the household with regards to the different chores around the house as well as childcare. Items investigated include how chores are divided between the couple, if they have outside help and if the participants perceive some jobs to be gender specific.

The participants were first asked to identify their living situation for example whether they were residing alone, with a partner or with their parents and whether they had children. The answers, as expected, varied mostly according to the age of the respondent with 11 of the participants single and living with parents or alone; 5 of the participants married or in a partnership; and 13 of the participants married with children. After that they were asked to identify who was responsible for the household chores and childcare, when there were children in the couple.

What it became clear throughout the interviews was that the household chores, apart from the ones that require physical strength, were considered female ones. Men did not deal with tasks such as cleaning, vacuuming, washing the clothes, ironing or cooking. Even when women were employed full time they were still considered responsible for the household chores. If they had a busy work schedule they often had help from parents (mainly the mother) or outside help. In only a limited number of cases the man was willing to contribute within the household. A male accountant suggests that there is balance around the house although he admitted that his wife has more responsibilities:

“I have been married for a year and I live with my wife and we are now expecting a child. I am responsible for the garden, the garbage and folding the clothes. Everything else is done by my wife. I think there is balance in the house. My wife does a bit more than me but this is because she gets home earlier at around 4.” (Male 10, Accountant, late 20s).

However, the majority of the participants, both male and female, indicated that women are responsible for the household chores regardless of the man’s job suggesting the strong effect of culture. An accountant indicates that his wife is solely responsible for the household chores despite the fact that she has also a full-time job. Additionally, a female accountant who still lives with her parents notes that her mother is basically responsible for everything around the house:

“I live with my parents and I have two older brothers. My mother is responsible for the household and also was responsible for us when we were growing up. My mother is also working full time in a semi-governmental organisation.” (Female 3, Accountant, late 20s).

It is evident throughout the interviews that mostly women (wives and mothers) are responsible for the household chores despite the fact that they might also have a full time job. This is also supported by the online survey, with examples as below:

“Women in Cyprus are responsible for the household and for raising the children.” (R33, Female, online survey).

“Within the household women take over most of the burden of the household chores and childcare.” (R245, Female, online survey).

The above mentioned issue is evident amongst different generations. This is a pattern that is related to the social culture and is common in most cultures. One participant attributes this to the way boys and girls are raised:

“What I see, now that I have children myself, is that we treat our girls and our boys differently. You observe this in the playground, at the park [...] Girls learn from a young age to be organised and prepared while boys don’t learn to do anything on their own. It is not a personality issue, it is a gender issue. Parents and the society in general, spoil the boys.” (Female 27, Academic, mid 40s).

A female academic also noted that mothers tend to spoil their boys in such a way that do not *allow* them to do anything around the house:

“First time I was at his parents’ house I noticed that after finishing the dinner he didn’t pick up his plate and I asked why because I was used to a different behaviour when we were living together in the USA. When he finally picked up his plate his grandmother told him not to. She wanted to spoil him and he was not supposed to do anything around the house.” (Female 29, Academic, early 40s).

The inference is that women must devote themselves to two roles when they have careers; work and domestic life. There was some evidence of mitigating the dual roles by buying in help. For example a female academic notes:

“Regarding the household, we outsourced. Still, unfortunately, during the weekends I was responsible for everything. We didn’t have in-house help. We have now for the first time. The difference is huge. I should have done it years ago.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

Further to the household chores women are also responsible for childcare especially during the early years of a child. This is also something that is embedded in the Cypriot society as elsewhere. With a cultural tradition of extended family support, it is common in Cyprus for children to be raised by their retired grandparents. The evidence in the present study bears this out:

“This also depends on how dynamic is a woman and how much support has from her family. Maybe the grandparents can help by taking care of the children while the mother is at work [...]” (Male 2, Accountant, mid 40s).

“I live with my parents and my brother. My mother is responsible for the household. While we were growing up our grandmother took care of us while our parents were at work. My father did not help around the house.” (Male 9, Accountant, late 20s).

“My mother was responsible for the household and she had help from my grandmother regarding childcare.” (Male 13, Accountant, late 20s).

Further to the above, when the grandparents are not in a position to help with the children then the mother sometimes needs to stay at home:

“My mother started working when I was 12. When we were growing up she was at home. This was because there was no one else to take care of us so my mother had to stay at home. She started working because we needed the second income. Even when she started working she was still responsible for the household and for raising me and my brothers. My father did not help at all.” (Female 5, Accountant, late 20s).

The findings suggest that the behaviour of people as adults is in turn influenced by the way they are raised by their parents. On the other hand, there was also some evidence that when parents raise their children equally and showcase a division of labour within their household then the children will follow these footsteps:

“I believe that the way my parents were sharing the workload helped me to shape my personality. If my mother was responsible for everything, as it happens in Cyprus, then I might act differently with my own family. I never felt a division of labour when I was growing up. We all contributed within the household.” (Female 17, Accountant, mid 30s).

“I believe that my parents raised us in a very equal way and I learnt to do things on my own and not to depend on them. We all had responsibilities around the house and did not expect everything from my mum.” (Male 19, Accountant, late 20s).

“While I was growing up my mother was working while my father was at home. I wasn’t raised in a traditional family. My father was a house-husband. He had a part-time job and he was already retired and he was more available. They have 17 years difference with my mother. Although my mother was at home by 13:00 my father was responsible for the cooking and other jobs around the house. This is why I recognise the discrepancies in the society because this is not what I lived. If you live and grow into a traditional family and you are not educated or informed enough regarding gender discrimination then you cannot understand some things because you grow up with them.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

“There was a balance around the house and we also had help from my grandmother. I am positive that because my father helped around the house this is the reason that I have grown to be like that and I want to help my wife.” (Male 10, Accountant, late 20s).

Further to the above family, which is a core element of culture, plays an important role on the career choices of the children as indicated by the participants in the study. This aspect is examined in the following section.

(b) Childhood: The impact of parents on participants’ career choices as well as the development of their character with regards to gender equality issues was investigated. The answers are focused on the support the participants had from their parents while making choices regarding their studies and also the division of labour between their parents while they were growing up.

The participants were asked if they had support from their parents in terms of career choice. The majority of the interview participants indicated that they had support from their parents regarding their studies despite their gender. The following quotes are indicative:

“I love my job and I wanted to become a chartered accountant since I was 12 years old. My parents were very supportive of my choice. My father even pushed me towards this direction.” (Female 4, Accountant, late 20s).

“When I was doing my masters in the USA I decided to follow an academic career. Before that I just never thought that I would follow this career path. By discussing with several people, and with my husband, and exploring the different options I said that this was a nice option for me and I would like to pursue it. My parents were supportive of my choice.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

However, there are some participants whose parents pushed them differently or prevented them from following their dreams. A female and a male accountant provide examples:

“When I was younger I wanted to become a dancer but it would be difficult for me to find a job so I decided to become an accountant at the age of 18. My parents were not supportive of my choice to become a dancer and they pushed me towards the direction I eventually chose. I used to regret my choice but not anymore.” (Female 7, Accountant, late 20s).

“I decided to become an accountant at 22. I had pressure from my parents to follow this career due to the work prospects and monetary rewards. If I could go back in time I would consider all my options carefully so I would be sure of my choice.” (Male 9, Accountant, late 20s).

Through the participants’ answers it is suggested that people take into account their parents’ exhortations and advices when choosing a career path. The importance of

family within Cypriot society is implied throughout the participants' answers and it is also indicated that the agency of parents prevails over the agency of children.

"I was raised in a traditional family where my father was working and my mother was at home. My parents wanted me to become an elementary teacher so I would be at home by noon and be able to raise a family. They have always pressured me to get married and have children. However, after a certain age I decided to follow what I wanted for myself." (Female 26, Accountant, mid 40s).

"I don't know if it would be difficult for a woman who was raised in a traditional family to follow a career. It would depend on the mother actually. If the mother regretted staying at home and was always jealous of other women who were working then she might push her daughter towards that direction. For example my mother-in-law she was a housewife and was always dependant on her husband financially and I know she didn't like it." (Female 27, Academic, mid 40s).

In addition to the above, the researcher investigated the impact of the family structure on the shaping of the participants' role models and stereotypes and more specifically when it comes to the position of women within the family and in society in general. The below testimony is indicative:

"My mother was working after I was 12 years old because we needed the extra income. She was still responsible for the household and raising the children." (Male 2, Accountant, mid 40s).

It appears typical that women of older generations often were only employed if there was a need for extra income in the household. However, even if women were employed they were still responsible for the household and the primary caregivers for the children.

This seems firmly embedded in Cypriot culture although this phenomenon can be found elsewhere as well:

“While I was growing up both my parents were working. My mother came home a bit earlier than my father. My mother was responsible for the household and she had help from my grandmother regarding childcare. I think that she never asked help from my father. I don’t know how she could cope and she never complained that she didn’t have help. She believed that it was her responsibility.” (Male 13, Accountant, late 20s).

It is shown throughout the interview data that the participants seem to be affected by the family model they were raised in. If their mother was working and was relatively independent and the father was involved in the everyday chores then this is what they consider to be the norm. On the other hand if the mother was feeling subordinate and the father was not at all helpful or involved then this is the role model they adopt for their own lives. At the same time though, there is evidence in the data of some women rejecting the lifestyles of their parents. For example, a female accountant notes that:

“While I was growing up the main responsibility for the household and for me was on my mother. My mother was a housewife... I think my mother chose to stay at home. She was working for a short period of time but then she chose to stay at home. It was entirely her choice and she is happy with this although I don’t agree with her choice.” (Female 7, Accountant, late 20s).

6.4 Motherhood

This section deals with the investigation of motherhood as an impediment to workplace progression for women as per the answers on research question 3 ‘Is motherhood perceived as an impediment to a woman’s progression/ career?’

The participants in the online survey were asked if they perceive gender to be a factor in career development/ progression and 53 per cent of the participants responded ‘yes’. When asked to give examples most of the respondents (80 per cent of those who gave examples) focused on the fact that women are excluded from promotion opportunities and certain types of jobs due to their choice (or even potential) of motherhood. Apart from social and cultural expectations, there are also practical issues associated with motherhood that might act as impediments in a woman’s career.

On the one hand there is the issue of the paid maternity leave³¹ which lasts for 16 weeks in Cyprus. Maternity leave is meant to help women by excusing them from work and it is considered a benefit in modern nations. However, there was some evidence of expectation amongst employers that women should not take it, or at least not all of it, and that they will be able to perform optimally even if they just had a baby. It seems that organisations are not respecting or engaging in the spirit of legislation designed to support women in workplace. A female academic admitted that she did not take on the whole of maternity leave she was allowed because she was feeling pressure to prove herself. Specifically she mentioned:

“I didn’t take on all my maternity leave. On paper I took it but I didn’t use it, not even for working from home. I was at the office. I was here until the last minute I gave birth and shortly after I gave birth I returned. I was breast feeding and I brought the pump at work to remove the milk! There is pressure on women to work more and prove themselves. Not all men have this mentality. But it doesn’t take more than a small group of people to poison the atmosphere. There is also a group of people who remain silent. They just go along. There is pressure towards women.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

This is also supported by another female academic:

³¹ Maternity rights are secured through the “Maternity Protection Law” (No 100(1)/1997, as last amended by Law No 64(I)/2002)

“Now we have the maternity leave on paper and it seems like something important but out of the 3 women in our department none of us has actually taken it. We took it on paper but we were actually at home working. This is expected by women to do it.” (Female 27, Academic, mid 40s).

There were no examples like this amongst the accountant participants. The mother-accountants who were interviewed had taken on the whole of their entitled maternity leave. However, maternity leave was seen by some of the accountancy participants to be detrimental to careers, as the following quotes illustrate:

“When a woman takes on a maternity leave it is very hard to catch up with everyone else when she returns to work. There are women in my company who stayed behind after a maternity leave. First of all you lose contact with your clients for 4 months and someone else is building a relationship with them.” (Male 20, Accountant, early 30s).

“Women are expected to have time off for maternity leave or children's sickness etc and thus men are preferred for promotions for higher positions.” (R93, Male, online survey).

“However, a pregnancy can stall a woman's career for about a year so she will miss out on her chance for promotion. Next year around she will have to compete with the next intakes as well.” (Male 12, Accountant, early 30s).

There was also evidence that women in accountancy feel the pressure to prove themselves and they cannot always do it from their homes. They often have to be physically there in order to gain face-time. For example, the below quote indicates that women might feel that it is normal to stay behind at work even if they have children at home:

“Definitely motherhood has affected me. But I believe that opportunities are given to everyone equally. If you can work the same hours as everyone else then you will progress. If you cannot work the same hours then you cannot have the same benefits. You have to deliver the work at the timeframe that is given to you. They don’t really care if you are a working mother. The manager treats both men and women equally.” (Female 17, Accountant, mid 30s).

Participants in this study indicated that some women are keen to devote themselves to their families and so might want to spend less time in their workplace after having a child. This is supported by the below quotes:

“I also believe that some women do not progress by choice. Because our job is very demanding and requires long hours and overtimes so I believe that a woman who is ready to get married and have children maybe she won’t be interested in seeking a career.” (Female 3, Accountant, late 20s).

“Women seem to disappear from the upper levels mostly due to the fact that they cannot handle the pressure or because they choose to have a family.” (Male 12, Accountant, early 30s).

Notwithstanding, there is also the belief, among the participants, that this choice of women to devote themselves to their families is not a free one, not a consequence of their agency, but instead it derives from cultural norms:

“I believe that Cypriot culture drives women to choose family over their careers. If a woman chooses to follow a career people might judge her for this. I definitely believe that a man is capable to raise a baby if he has to but I think that this perception that women should be at home and men should be the breadwinners derives from our culture.” (Female 3, Accountant, late 20s).

“Women have the tendency to leave the company when they get married and have children. They cannot stand the long hours and the work pressure. Unless you are a career woman but this is rare in Cyprus. Women who want to follow a career they either stay single or they have to be able to take care of everything. I think that a woman decides to leave her job when she becomes a mother because there is pressure from home (from her husband) and because she feels that she cannot cope.” (Male 10, Accountant, late 20s).

This is reinforced by the below quote of a female participant in the research who is not originally from Cyprus, and so observes Cypriot culture as an outsider.

“I feel that I have put my career on hold due to my children. I try to have a balance between work and family. I don’t think that raising the children is a woman’s job but this is the way Cypriot men are raised. Because of the way they are raised they don’t feel they are capable of more, regarding childcare.” (Female 17, Accountant, mid 30s).

Moreover, participants report that some women switch jobs or work fewer hours or even withdraw from paid employment due to the fact that they do not have help raising the children either from their family or due to lack of structured support (e.g. limited hours of childcare facilities). The below quotes are indicative:

“Women who have left the organisation were all mothers. When a mother does not have help from her family then she seeks for a job with less working hours.” (Female 17, Accountant, mid 30s).

“We don’t have the same percentage of men and women managers but this is mostly due to societal norms. For example I have met talented women who didn’t want to work so many hours once they have had their children. Some

women refused the promotion and even changed jobs to work for a bank or the government which means less working hours.” (Male 16, Accountant, mid 30s).

Contrary to that reported of women, there was no evidence of men having to slowdown or stop work because of childcare. However, the accountancy firms, involved in this study, have introduced a flexible mother scheme. This scheme allows mothers, for as long as their children are under 18, to work fewer hours and they are remunerated accordingly. This scheme is only valid for mothers and not for fathers. By taking advantage of this scheme, women work fewer hours. Despite the intention of this policy as a support mechanism, the evidence from this study suggest again, that organizational and cultural influences render it a ‘marker’ of motherhood, and often a disadvantage since contemporary work practices and norms do not suit part-time hours. The below quotes are indicative:

“If a woman takes on the mother scheme she will not be able to compete with everyone else. She will always be a step behind. It is the nature of the job that requires physical presence. If you are not there you cannot compete and you cannot be reliable if you always leave on time. There are very strict deadlines in our line of work and also there are emergencies.” (Female 5, Accountant, late 20s).

“We have mother scheme which enables women to get off work earlier at around 3. However, if a woman takes on the mother scheme will not have the same opportunities for promotion as everyone else. When we have a deadline due we sometimes need to stay late at night to work. This cannot be easy for women with children unless they have help from their husbands or their mothers.” (Male 12, Accountant, early 30s).

Thus, although this policy has been introduced to support working mothers in their dual role, in fact in practice, as a consequence of the industry and organizational cultures, women are stigmatized as mothers who work fewer hours and are less committed to

their jobs. Also, women might be considered less professional than men due to their role as mothers as indicated by the online survey:

“When a woman employee requested permission to be absent for 2 hours from work because her kid was ill, although the permission was granted she was told that “that is why women are not professionals, because they run after their kids all the time”.” (R21, Female, online survey).

This chapter presented the results of the study by revisiting the research questions identified earlier with regards to the society. The next chapter deals with the presentation of the findings which are referred to the workplace as per the identified research questions.

CHAPTER 7

Findings - Workplace

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this research which are associated with the workplace and derive from the semi-structured interviews and supported, when possible, from the results of the online survey. The emerging themes deriving from this, and the previous, chapter will be analyzed in the Discussion Chapter that follows.

7.2 Perception of Gender Inequality in the Workplace

This section deals with the identification of the perception of the participants in the study of the existence of the glass ceiling and other forms of gender inequality in the workplace based on the answers on research question 2 ‘Do people living in Cyprus perceive gender inequalities in the workplace?’

The participants in the online survey did not identify to a large degree gender inequalities in their own workplace. To the question ‘Do you perceive different treatment of men and women in your workplace?’ only 38 per cent of the participants responded ‘yes’. Despite this, when asked to give specific examples regarding different treatment between men and women in the workplace most of the respondents identified what can broadly be described as a glass ceiling and the ‘nature’ of women. Specifically, comments such as ‘men are preferred for high-ranked positions’; ‘women are not trusted within the workplace’; and ‘women are considered to be softer’ were common.

Interview data revealed further. Interview participants were asked to identify how many women were at the top level of their organisations (Partner level for accountants and Professor level for academics). Accountants were not able to say with certainty how

many women Partners were there in their organisation or their department. Academics on the other hand were able to give an immediate and accurate reply.

According to the participants in accountancy firms the percentage of women Partners, in their organisations, barely reaches 10 per cent. When it comes to the academia there is only one woman as a Professor, the highest level in academia, in the three departments of the University of Cyprus that have been involved in the study. The reasons for the existence of this discrepancy are not exactly the same for the two professions under study, accountants and academics; although motherhood was seen to play an important part in each sector.

When it comes to the accountants, participants did not identify any overt or direct discrimination against women which would result to their non-progression. Instead, both male and female accountants suggested that women, using their agency, choose not to get promoted or choose to leave the company at some point because they want to devote themselves to their families. The following quotes are indicative:

“Due to the fact that our line of work is very competitive and demanding most of the women choose to change careers and not progress at the Partner level. This happens due to family obligations. Fortunately or unfortunately in Cyprus the burden of raising the family falls on the shoulders of the mother.” (Male 1, Accountant/ Partner, late 40s).

“I believe that women are capable to be promoted. I also believe that some women do not progress by choice. Because our job is very demanding and requires long hours and overtimes so I believe that a woman who is ready to get married and have children maybe she won’t be interested in seeking a career.” (Female 3, Accountant, mid 20s).

“I don’t think I will go any further with this company. I don’t want to be working extra hours anymore. Now that I have the baby and that I feel my efforts were not appreciated I leave on time.” (Female 25, Accountant, mid 30s).

There is the perception, among some of the participants from the accountancy profession, that women leave the organizational ladder to devote themselves to their families. It is believed that women choose to leave a demanding job with long working hours to find something else which will give them more free time to enable them to spend time with their children. The reasons for lack of advancement for women in academia are somewhat different, although along the same lines. There is the perception by the male participants, that women would have children and would want to stay at home. The difference in this case is that the women in this sample did not report this perception. For example, one female academic stated:

“...promotions are dependent on perceptions. And definitely, I can sign for it, that there is the perception that a woman cannot get promoted at the same pace as a man when she has a family. This is a perception. Perhaps this woman works ten times more than a man colleague but there is the perception ‘4 kids and you want to get promoted?’ Or ‘are you going to have a second child?’ – These are comments that women at the University have received from senior male colleagues which was like an advice. When it comes to men having a family is not considered an impediment to their careers because there is the belief that the wife will be responsible for children. This perception is very strong.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

Adding to the above a male academic also suggested that women are stricter towards other women than men are. He specifically says:

“I don’t know why women do not make it at the end. Most of the times the committee decides to recruit men. The recruitment committee is most of the times comprised of men but there are also women. I believe that the procedure is

done objectively. I have to add that when there is a woman in the committee she is stricter against other women! I don't know why this happens, I cannot explain it." (Male 11, Academic, late 40s).

Similar evidence emerged from the online survey. Several participants (around 30 per cent) noted that women are perceived as potential mothers therefore employers do not invest in them:

"Yes only in the fact that prospective employers might think that because you're a woman and are likely to get pregnant they might not invest as much in you." (R51, Female, online survey).

"Men are more trusted in the workplace due to the fact that they have less family responsibilities and also due to the stereotype that men are better managers than women." (R54, Male, online survey).

Another male academic identifies the problem in the perception of the existence of gendered jobs. He implies that the field of marketing was considered a 'male' one and that is why women did not choose to follow this path in earlier years and as a consequence there is a lack of female professors in this particular area. However, he suggests that things are indeed changing and more women are interested. Specifically he indicates that:

"In general most academics in this field (marketing) are men so the pool of women you can choose from is smaller. This happens at an international level and not just in Cyprus. Usually the best professors are based in the USA and the UK and out of personal experience I see that there are more women academics at younger ages. During the last few years women academics have started to cover the lost ground. Nowadays there are quite a few women academics of younger ages. Perhaps in the past due to social circumstances the role of

woman was different and this might be the reason why that not many women reached to the point to have an academic career in marketing.” (Male 14, Academic, late 30s).

Amongst the sample similar expressions that there are female and male occupations/ fields (gendered jobs) were made. One female academic attributes this to culture and education:

“Everything starts from the fact that we have connected education with gender. For example mathematics is considered to be male and anything that has to do with linguistics is considered female. No matter how good a woman can be in science she will not choose this field of study easily. A girl might have the same grades as a boy in high school but she will probably not choose to follow science or engineering. Boys who follow biology, medicine or something of a similar nature might have lower grades than girls who did not choose to follow these fields.” (Female 29, Academic, early 40s).

There was also some evidence of direct discriminatory experience among the data. In particular, one female academic described a very difficult situation she had during her first evaluation for promotion at the University when she was interviewed by 5 men who were, in this case, not supportive of women being in academia:

“The external members not only treated me horribly but they treated me in a diminishing and sexist way. The comments they gave me were really improper for a professional environment... He afterwards told me that if I wanted to progress I had to “stop these feminist shit, when you are tenured you can have your feminist wet dream but for now I think you should stick to what your seniors are telling you”.” (Female 27, Academic, mid 40s).

More generally, quotes such as the following describe a workplace culture perceived to disadvantage women:

“High level positions are usually taken by men. This may be the case as women do not have the time needed (due to raising of children and care of family) to give the necessary effort on their work.” (R26, Female, online survey).

“Director's associates are preferably men. Women are not trusted, no matter how well they do their jobs, as much as men are.” (R32, Female, online survey).

Thus, findings for RQ2 suggest that people in Cyprus, male and female, do perceive gender discrimination in the workplace, including the accounting and academic professions and this largely appears to relate to attitudes and norms in Cypriot culture.

7.3 Family-Friendly Policies

This section investigates the existence of family-friendly policies in organisations in Cyprus and also the perception of the participants on whether the latter serve towards the elimination of gender inequalities based on the answers on research question 4 ‘Do family-friendly policies exist within organisations in Cyprus and if so, do people perceive they serve towards the elimination of gender inequalities?’

Further to the mothers’ scheme mentioned in Section 6.4, interview participants were asked to identify family friendly policies that are in place within their organisation. Most of them could not identify immediately what a family friendly policy is and after the researcher gave examples such as flexible working hours or working from home they indicated the situation within their organisation. Due to the very different nature of the jobs, academics and accountants were not faced with the same issues.

The nature of an academic's job is flexible by some default. Academics can have the flexibility to arrange the time of their classes (teaching) and research can be done from home. The only time they might have to be present at the University is when they have to attend staff meetings or when they have visiting hours for students. Henceforth, it is easier for them to have work-life balance albeit the fact they might take some of their work at home. A male academic indicates:

"I think that the University has family friendly policies in place. I am not a family man to have a personal knowledge. The working hours are very flexible and despite the fact that each academic has many duties you can schedule your time in such a way that will be convenient for you. This flexibility is very important." (Male 11, Academic, late 40s).

Indeed, there is flexibility in this profession however women still feel the pressure to prove themselves. A female academic notes that:

"Generally, the working time for the academics is very flexible. However, there is the misperception that if you are not physically at the office you are not producing work. So this face time is important. You might be at the office and play games at the computer or do online shopping (there is this perception for women that they do online shopping at work) but if they see you it means that you are working!" (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

On the other hand, when it comes to accountants they do not share the same flexibility with academics and they might not have any flexibility at all. As it is indicated by the participants, the nature of the job does not allow for working from home nor flexible hours, apart from the mother scheme mentioned above. A male accountant indicates that:

“No working from home is allowed. You need to be physically present at the office and with the clients. Projects are handled by a team so you need to work with our colleagues on a daily basis. This is something that women might not like so this maybe one reason that they choose to leave.” (Male 1, Accountant, late 40s).

A female accountant on the other hand identifies lack of knowledge regarding the existence of family friendly policies but she also notes there is some flexibility. This seems informally arranged and not necessarily consistent between employees though:

“I haven’t checked if the organisation has family friendly policies but I know women with children, secretaries, who have flexible working hours and they are allowed to work less hours. I don’t know if this applies for women who are auditors. I know we have maternity leave. We can work from home but it is not very easy because we have to use the computer system of the company due to the nature of the job. This could be improved.” (Female 7, Accountant, late 20s).

It is evident, throughout the interviews, for both professions that even if someone could work from home or take on a flexible hour scheme he/ she would not have done so. This is due to the fact that both jobs are very demanding for both men and women and if they have goals for a career they would not have risked it.

In general, family friendly policies are not well established in the organisations in this study even in international firms. There is some evidence that lack of family-friendly policies (structure) in the organisations studied is mitigated by trusted family involvement (culture). The following interviewees attribute this to the culture in Cyprus:

“There are no childcare facilities in Deloitte. It is too much of a responsibility to have that within the company’s premises. However no other company has these

facilities. It is a matter of culture – people in Cyprus do not demand for these kinds of facilities. It is very difficult for both parents to have a career – the one must take a step backwards to take care of the family.” (Male 1, Accountant, late 40s).

“We don’t have childcare facilities although I think that would be useful but I don’t know if this is doable in Cyprus.” (Female 8, Accountant, late 20s).

“We don’t have childcare facilities. This is something that mostly works abroad because they don’t have help from the grandparents.” (Male 10, Accountant, late 20s).

These interviewees clearly view lack of formal childcare as a consequence of Cypriot culture where extended family is expected to take childcare responsibilities for working parents. Thus they claim there is no demand for formal childcare. Elsewhere though, including in situations where extended family is not available, the cost of formal childcare is seen as prohibitive. Thus, some participants indicated that people should be given an allowance for childcare as a major problem in Cyprus is the high cost of living:

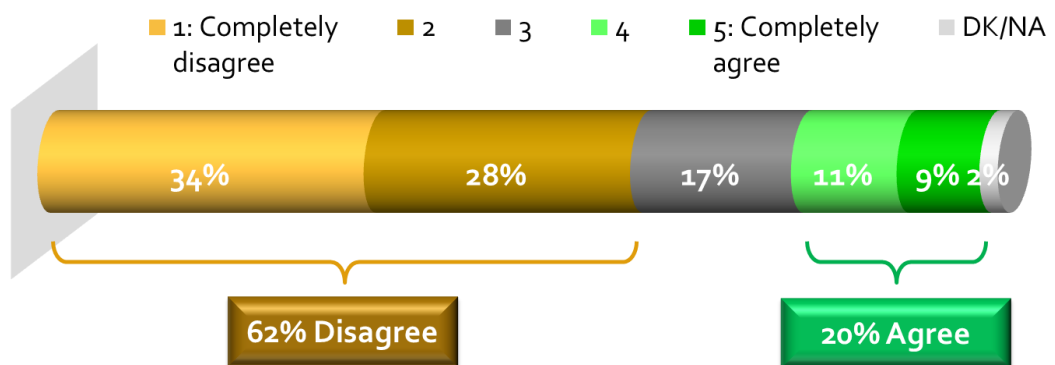
“Generally speaking it is important to have childcare facilities nearby because it saves you time. However, we live in Cyprus and we always use our car and the distances are not that long. Having in mind these facts I think that it would be more helpful to people to be given an allowance instead. In Cyprus the biggest problem is not the distance but the cost.” (Female 15, Academic, mid 30s).

Generally, it seems that motherhood, as also indicated in Section 6.4, can stall or even stop a woman’s career based on the findings of this research, and both structural issues and culture seem to have influence.

7.4 Networking

This section deals with the perception of participants on the importance of networking in the workplace and its absence's impact on women based on the answers in research question 5 'How important is networking perceived to be in the progression in the workplace? Do women find networking harder than men?'

The participants in the online survey were asked to state their agreement to the statement 'Men are better at networking for work' on a likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The majority of the respondents (62 per cent) do not believe that men are better at networking for work. However, a substantial percentage of 17 per cent have not expressed an opinion. In general, the participants in the online survey did not perceive any differences in networking between men and women.



The accounting and academic participants in the semi-structured interviews were asked to identify the importance of networking in the workplace without specifying the nature of the networking; i.e. whether it was networking with clients, collaborators or colleagues. Some of the more senior accountants acknowledged the importance of networking.

“Networking is important for our work both between employees and with clients. Employees should develop friendly relations with each other so that they can work better together. Also networking with clients is very important. We usually take clients out for dinner or for drinks. Regarding the employees we have some formal events such as Christmas parties.” (Male 2, Accountant, late 40s).

“Networking is very important for our work. It is always helpful to know people.” (Male 1, Accountant, late 40s) .

Academics seem to fully realise the importance of networking not only in Cyprus but especially abroad. The following quotes are indicative:

“Networking is very important for our work both with colleagues and outside the University. With networking people get to know you and who you are and this way it is easier to gain acceptance and appreciation. Definitely you have to network with well-established colleagues abroad, especially if you want to have a career. So you have to attend conferences and talk to people so they can get to know you.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

“Networking is extremely important for my work. If two academics have articles for submission that are both of the same value the one who has better relations with the publishers and has good reputations among colleagues will get published much easier. Therefore networking is very important. You should have good relations with other academics in the fields, with journal editors, people on editorial review boards.” (Male 14, Academic, late 30s).

In terms of access to networking opportunities and activities there is some evidence of disadvantage for women particularly in the accounting profession, though it is found in both professions under study either internally (among colleagues) or externally (with clients and collaborators). For example, the following quotes from male accountants are indicative:

“...we can arrange to go out with only specific people, who are only men. We don't have close relations with other women at our level and it is easier to talk

to other men about anything. Women are different – they are more ‘cold’.”
(Male 9, Accountant, late 20s).

“However, we only organize these outings with other men. It is more difficult to organize something with women as well. You cannot talk about everything with women. It is easier when it is only men. It is difficult at this stage to approach all the women and get them to join us but to be honest we don’t really want to try.”
(Male 10, Accountant, late 20s).

It is also suggested, by a few participants that women are excluded from certain activities that are not considered female such as football. More specifically it is stated that:

“We usually arrange dinners with colleagues or watch or play football matches. When we arrange to go for dinner women colleagues join us as well. However, when we arrange something football related it is only for men. Especially when we play football they will definitely not come.” (Male 12, Accountant, early 30s).

“Men sometimes play football or basketball. I am sure that women wouldn’t want to play football.” (Male 16, Accountant, mid 30s).

While this doesn’t directly exclude women, as the following female accountant’s testimony illustrates, in practice, it does promote another layer of exclusion from important networking opportunities:

“Networking is extremely important especially in Cyprus. For example, we have a box at the stadium in Nicosia to watch football matches because much of the networking happens during while watching football. Women are excluded from this due to societal norms. Even if a woman is interested in going men would not

feel that comfortable with a woman present. Abroad there are no such things. It is easier for women to network at a professional level.” (Female 26, Accountant, mid 40s).

The above is also supported by the online survey, for example:

“Client entertainment in my industry is very much focussed around traditionally "male-oriented" events (e.g. sports events, drinks at the pubs etc).” (R24, Female, online survey).

There is some evidence that other aspects of the prevailing culture affect networking for women. The below quotes illustrate a suggested or implied impropriety associated with mixed sex networking:

“A woman can be easily misunderstood due to cultural and societal norms if seen with a man after work while this would be normal for a man.” (Male 1, Accountant, late 40s).

“Women are more reserved especially when dealing with male clients. I think that women might feel that they would be misunderstood within the society if they are seen with male clients.” (Female 23, Accountant, late 20s).

In addition, as a consequence of cultural roles, some of the participants identified a lack of time for networking in the same way as men do:

“Also, due to our culture where men are superior to women it provides men with this superiority syndrome so it makes it easier for them to talk to people while women are more restrained and more self-conscious at least in our culture.

Women will think twice before talking to someone, how they will be perceived. Definitely men have more time to do it than women who have families. A typical Cypriot man would definitely have more time to network.” (Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

“When it comes to the workplace I think there is gender discrimination in Cyprus. We are still a closed society. Networking is still very important in order to do business and it is something done between men. It is a man’s world. Women have not yet been able to form their networks as opposed to men and this is one of the reasons that women do not progress at the upper levels of their organisation.” (Female 26, Accountant, mid 40s).

So it appears from this evidence that (a) women are hesitant to be seen with a man in public, even if it is professional, because they might be negatively judged due to societal stereotypes and (b) due to the cultural norms that women are responsible for domestic life and therefore have dual roles of work and family, there is less time for networking or travel abroad for conferences or other activities. In fact, mothers in particular seem to be excluded from networking activities especially when travelling abroad is involved:

“Networking is more difficult for mothers.” (Female 4, Accountant, late 20s).

“Another good way of networking is to take on sabbatical leave and go to another university and work with other academics abroad. However, this is hard especially when you have family obligations. This would be even harder for a woman I guess.... It is easier for a man to leave his family for some time than for a woman to visit other universities in other countries.” (Male 14, Academic, late 30s).

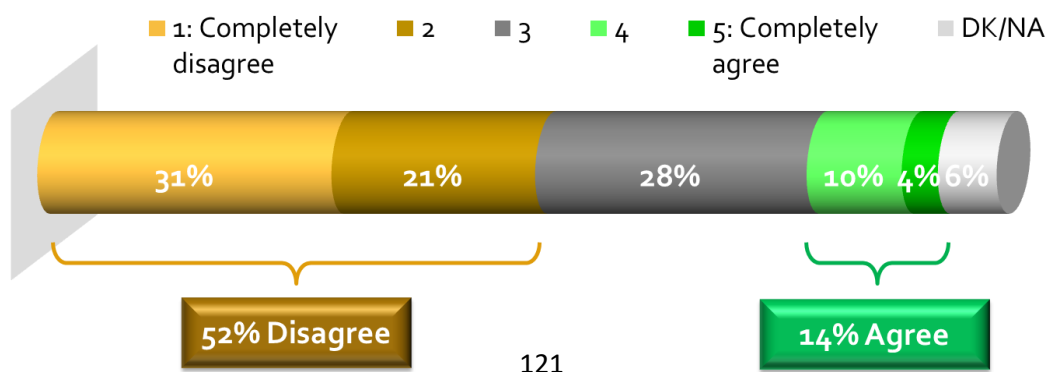
“This can be done by attending seminars abroad or by just keeping in touch. You need to be able, financially, to travel. This is definitely harder for women. Men are in a more advantaged position when it comes to networking.” (Male 28, Academic, mid 50s).

The importance of networking in the advancement within the workplace has been identified by the majority of the participants and women’s opportunities to network are regarded by most participants in this study, male and female, to be limited compared with men’s. Further, most participants acknowledge that alongside reduced opportunities to network, in some organisations there is also direct exclusion of women from networking activities.

7.5 Mentoring

This section deals with the perception of the participants on the importance of having a mentor in the workplace based on the answers on research question 6 ‘Is having a mentor in the workplace considered important and is it perceived harder for women to get a mentor?’

When it comes to the online survey the participants were asked to state their level of agreement to the statement ‘Women find it harder to get a mentor’ on a likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The majority of the respondents disagree with the statement (52 per cent) while a large percentage (28 per cent) have not expressed an opinion.



The participants in the interviews were asked to identify whether there was a mentoring scheme in place within their workplace. The researcher then asked the participants to explain how this mentoring scheme works, if indeed there was one, and if it was of any help to them. A distinction between the experiences of the accountants and academics in this study became apparent.

It is evident through the interviews that accountants are not aware of any importance of mentoring and in some cases show a lack of understanding as to what mentoring is all about. On paper, though, all accountants were assigned a mentor when they were hired. Most junior staff believes that mentoring is about guiding students who come to their organisations for internships during the summer.

There was also a group of accountants who acknowledge the existence of a mentoring scheme only for the first 3 years, until the accountant is awarded the ACCA accreditation. Even where participants knew of the mentoring scheme some noted that they would rather talk to their managers for work related issues. A male accountant notes that:

“We have mentoring scheme at the company; each employee has his/ her mentor. Personally I never used the scheme. I still have my mentor but I never had the need to talk to him. I usually talk to my friends or my manager if there is something bothering me. It is important to have someone to talk to though.”
(Male 10, Accountant, late 20s).

Further, a few participants noted that the mentoring scheme is not used properly or at all:

“We have mentoring scheme in the company. Each new employee is assigned a mentor who is either a Manager or a Director. However I believe that most people do not feel comfortable speaking with their mentor. I haven’t heard of a

lot of people actually using the mentor scheme.” (Female 3, Accountant, late 20s).

“We used to have a mentoring scheme where each employee was assigned a coach. After a while we realised that the system was not working because it ended up being something standard so it was abolished. At the moment we only have a reviewer for each employee.” (Female 26, Accountant, mid 40s).

It is evident throughout the interviews that accountants are not aware of the importance of mentoring or how it might be useful. They acknowledge the importance of having someone to talk to but they seem to restrict it to work related issues. There does not seem to be a distinction between men and women in this case so it may be that mentoring issues do not really affect the progression of the female accountants in this study.

On the other hand, when it comes to the academics, they acknowledge the importance of mentoring and how a mentoring scheme should work although there is no such scheme in place in the University. However, several academics choose to act as mentors to younger colleagues on a non-formal basis. A male academic indicates:

“We don’t have mentoring scheme at the level we should. It is done informally and not in a very effective way. We should make it formal and it is not difficult to be done if there is the will. It also depends on the initiatives of the president of each department. When I was a lecturer I didn’t have a mentor and I believe that if I did it would have been helpful in some occasions.” (Male 11, Academic, late 40s).

The problem for women academics is even deeper especially for those women who were the first, and sometimes the only, woman in a certain department. One female academic related her experience at some length, identifying that some of the problems

she encountered might have been made much easier with a good mentor. She relates her story thus:

“There is no mentoring scheme at the University. However, mentoring is done in an unofficial way. When I first came at the University I was the first woman in the department and there was no one who could mentor me given my work. I could have mentoring at more broad issues. Not only I had no mentoring but I experienced professional harassment from certain people. It was clear that my publications were good but there were two people who were clearly harassing me that they were junk (and even worse language was used). These people were at a much higher level than me... It would be very helpful if we could establish a mentoring scheme. Personally I try to do it with younger colleagues. In order to establish a mentoring scheme it has to be approved by the University and it would take a lot of time and effort. Mentoring is not embedded into our culture.”
(Female 6, Academic, late 40s).

It is clear by the answers of the participants that mentoring is not embedded into Cypriot culture and it is not, at least properly, used in organisations (structure). In addition, it is not something that employees seem to consider to be of great importance and do not feel that they are missing out on anything. Mentoring seems to be done on an informal basis amongst academics perhaps due to the nature of the job. In general it cannot be said that women are affected by the absence of mentoring schemes with regards to their career path due to the fact that men experience the same absence. The extent to which women, relative to men, might benefit from mentoring might constitute an argument for the relatively greater potential importance to women though.

Chapters 6 and 7 presented the results of the study by revisiting the research questions identified earlier in Chapter 4. The next chapter analyses the main findings of the research, based on the emerging themes deriving from the findings, and identifies its contribution.

CHAPTER 8

Discussion

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter the main findings of this research are discussed and are related back to the literature and the theoretical framework. The focus of this study was based on the effect of agency, structure and culture on the perception of gender inequality in Cyprus and also on the interconnection of these three dimensions when investigating women's progression in the workplace in accordance with the aims and objectives of this research outlined in the Introduction. In effect, an analysis of the findings within the scope of the research's methodology is attempted acknowledging the importance of agency, structure and culture and their interconnection in the progression (or non-progression) of women in the workplace.

Several themes have emerged from this research and through these the study contributes to the area of gender equality in Cyprus and are investigated under the prism of agency, structure and culture. The emerging themes, identified by the findings of the research (see Chapters 6 and 7), that can be implicated in the non-progression of women in the workplace are; education, motherhood, family and networking. These themes are being investigated through the agency, structure and culture lens. Further to these, there is an emerging perception of the existence of the glass ceiling (vertical segregation) in the organisations in Cyprus which was identified by the majority of the participants in both the online survey and the interviews.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 the aim of this study was to explore gender issues in organisations in Cyprus through the investigation of women's and men's experiences and perceptions. This section is divided into sub-sections according to the emerging themes in order to be critically analyzed and connected to the literature. Further to that the dimensions of the theoretical framework of agency, structure and culture are incorporated throughout the analysis.

It has been identified by the findings of this research, both through the online survey and interviews, that the majority of the participants do not perceive that women are faced with overt/ direct discrimination in the workplace but rather suggest that the latter do not progress to the top levels of their organisation due to cultural norms, stereotypes and unsupportive workplace infrastructure. Cypriot culture appears to affect both the structures and the agency of people and is embedded in their everyday life as well as in their long-term habits and aspirations.

Through the answers of the participants in the interviews, in addition to their body language and facial expressions observed by the researcher, the respondents were divided into two categories; traditional and non-traditional thinkers (see Table 3). Traditional thinkers are the ones who abide by the rules and norms of patriarchy which denote that women are the primary caregivers for the children and that building a career is not as important for women as for men. Non-traditional thinkers, on the other hand, are the ones who have ‘escaped’ this patriarchal regime and acknowledge both the importance of men sharing the burden of household chores and child-care and the need, and right, of women to progress in their workplace and follow a career. This identification might give a deeper understanding of the findings of this research.

Table 3

Participant's Number	Gender	Profession	Age	Marital Status	Way of thinking
1	Male	Accountant/ Partner	Late 40s	Married with children	Traditional
2	Male	Accountant/ Partner	Late 40s	Married with children	Traditional
3	Female	Accountant/ Supervising Senior	Late 20s	Single	Traditional
4	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single	Non- traditional

5	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single	Non- traditional
6	Female	Academic/ Associate Professor	Late 40s	Married with children	Non- traditional
7	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	In a relationship	Traditional
8	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single	Non- traditional
9	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	In a relationship	Traditional
10	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Married with child on the way	Non- traditional (border line)
11	Male	Academic/ Professor	Late 40s	In a relationship	Non- traditional
12	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Early 30s	Single	Non- traditional
13	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single	Non- traditional
14	Male	Academic/ Associate Professor	Late 30s	Married with children	Non- traditional
15	Female	Academic/ Visiting Lecturer	Mid 30s	Married with child on the way	Non- traditional
16	Male	Accountant/ Manager	Mid 30s	Single	Non- traditional

17	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Mid 30s	Married with children	Non- traditional
18	Female	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single	Traditional
19	Male	Accountant/ Supervising Senior	Late 20s	In a relationship	Non- traditional
20	Male	Accountant/ Manager	Early 30s	In a relationship	Non- traditional
21	Male	Accountant/ Assistant Manager	Late 20s	Single	Non- traditional
22	Female	Accountant/ Manager	Mid 30s	Married with children	Traditional
23	Female	Accountant/ Senior Associate	Late 20s	Engaged with child on the way	Non- traditional
24	Male	Accountant/ Associate	Late 20s	Engaged	Traditional
25	Female	Accountant/ Senior Manager	Mid 30s	Married with children	Traditional (border line)
26	Female	Accountant/ Senior Manager	Mid 40s	Married with children	Non- traditional
27	Female	Academic/ Assistant Professor	Mid 40s	Married with children	Non- traditional
28	Male	Academic/ Associate Professor	Mid 50s	Married with children	Non- traditional
29	Female	Academic/ Assistant Professor	Early 40s	Married with children	Non- traditional

The next section engages in the importance of family in the lives and decisions of Cypriot people as identified by the findings of this research.

8.2 Family

Family is a main constituent of most cultures (see Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000; Hogdetts and Luthans, 2002) and as it is suggested by the findings of this research it plays a vital role in the formation of each person's character and also on its aspirations and progression in life. It is indicated by the research that the way people are raised affects their choices in life. As Lewis (2006) suggested one can predict people's lives and professional paths just by observing their cultural background. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) every group of people who share the same culture has its distinct way of thinking and acting indicating that culture derives from the social environment rather than the inherited genes.

As noted in Section 4.4 Cypriot culture is a highly patriarchal one (Loizos, 1981) and children are raised in this context. Boys are raised differently than girls (see Wilson, 2003; Young, 1996). Although things have changed dramatically since the 1960s women are still raised to be the prime caregivers and in a way to serve the males (fathers, husbands, sons) of the family. This can be linked to Hofstede's Masculinity dimension (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). This has been indicated by all the participants in the study who have suggested that Cypriot society expects women to be the primary caregivers for children and men to be the breadwinners. As indicated in Chapter 4 the vast majority of women in Cyprus entered the paid workforce only by necessity after the Turkish invasion in 1974. This contradicts Hakim (1995) who suggested that female employment has not increased but rather part-timers switched to full-time (Myth 4). This obviously is not the case in Cyprus. Women in Cyprus only entered the workforce when there was a need for a second income in the household. Prior to that, women were housewives, which implied being the primary caregivers, taking care of the household chores and by some cases working at the family business for free (Cockburn, 2004). This role of women continued even after they entered the workforce therefore, girls were still 'educated' by their mothers on how to take care of their family and the household indicating the strong cultural norms that pass from one

generation to another (Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000) and that gender specific roles are determined from the time a person is born (Lewis, 2006; Young, 1990).

Thus, as supported by the findings of this research, girls in Cyprus learn from a young age that they are different from boys and they continue to this trend when they are adults. Children learn to distinguish gender roles and what is, and what is not, acceptable for their own gender (Wilson, 2003). Learning to be male or female is embedded within a culture and is not learned through formal education. It is mostly by observation and by adhering to societal norms (Rose, 1996; Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991). This gender segregation within Cypriot society is identified by all the participants in this study and it suggests the influence of culture on the agency of people. Gender specific roles in the Cypriot society are constructed in such a way that girls are destined to become mothers and boys to protect the family. This can be observed throughout the history of the island; men were always the ones working and protecting the women from the conquerors and women were at home raising the children and protecting/ preserving their legacy. This gender division is also embedded in the religion (Christian Orthodox regime) which imposes many constraints on women for example there are places in the church that entrance of women is prohibited.

Further, according to the findings of this research, family plays a vital role in the career choice of children in two ways: (a) parents sometimes pressure children to follow a career according to their gender for example boys to become doctors or engineers and girls to become teachers, (b) there is also pressure towards girls to follow a not so demanding career as they would have families at some point and they would have to stay at home. The former is an indication of the existence of gendered jobs or horizontal segregation as has been identified by several researchers (Price, 2007; Wilson, 2003). This segregation is evidenced in Cypriot culture, as elsewhere, and has been 'inherited' through generations by directing boys and girls to different directions. Also, as indicated by a number of participants in the research, girls in Cyprus, and elsewhere, are pushed towards certain professions such as elementary teachers, working for the government or bank clerks due to the fact that they are not so demanding in terms of working hours and are considered by Cypriots, safe jobs. These are important factors for a woman in Cyprus as she eventually may have a family and would feel pressure to stay

at home more (according to societal norms) to raise the children. This can be associated with Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance dimension which proclaims that people avoid taking risks and have low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Participants in this research were aware of the existence of gendered jobs in Cyprus as well as the prevalence of this situation as it is advocated by parents, especially amongst older generations.

It is noteworthy that a female participant indicated that she wanted to become a dancer but her parents pushed her towards accountancy as it is considered a safer choice when it comes to finding a job in Cyprus. This is a residual of the war which created syndromes of insecurity among the people and ever since Cypriots are very cautious; the people who experienced the invasion want their children to be educated and follow a secure career (governmental job, bank clerk etc) in case something bad happens.

In general, it is indicated by the findings of the research that family plays a vital role on how people are raised and what aspirations they have in life. Family is the core of Cypriot culture and it may be that the influence of family and tradition play a greater role in shaping opportunities (or lack of them), than elsewhere. It is shown that people, both male and female, have their parents as their first role models and in effect, unless they have stronger influences, they will follow their footsteps when it comes to gender roles within the family and the role of women in the society in general. Hence, it is suggested that culture prevails over agency in this case and that the agency of parents prevails of the agency of children.

The following section acknowledges the role of education in the shaping of people's personalities.

8.3 Education

As it has been identified by the findings of the research, a number of participants indicated that education plays an important role in shaping people's perceptions

regarding gender equality. As has been suggested by researchers and supported by the findings of this research, inequality is embedded into Cypriot culture through religion, legislation and education (Pyrgos, 1993; Cockburn, 2004). It has been indicated by the findings that there is a clear distinction of gender roles within the Cypriot society and this derives from both informal education (family) which is embedded in the culture (Lewis, 2006) and, formal education (schools) which is a part of the structural system of the society (see Section 4.4). In Cyprus, as indicated by the findings of this research, boys and girls are raised in a way to follow specific paths in life; women to be the primary caregivers and men to be the primary breadwinners. Therefore, gender roles are shaped from the time a child is born and are a result of cultural norms which are transferred from one generation to another (see Lewis, 2006; Hodgetts and Luthans, 2002; Wilson, 2003). This way pressure is applied to both male and females to excel in their specific gender roles.

It is suggested through the answers of the participants that children may learn from a young age how to behave according to their gender and as indicated by Mills and Murgatroyd (1991) children from the day they are born are ascribed to gender-specific colours (i.e. pink is for girls) and forenames (see Section 2.2.1). At a later stage and after interacting with other people (immediate family) they learn how to walk, talk, sit and work (Rose, 1996). This has been identified within this research as well. For example, children observe how their parents behave within the house and they imitate according to their gender. If the mother is seen cooking and cleaning then this is considered to be the norm for girls. If the father is seen as coming home late and working all day long then this is considered to be the norm for boys. This of course can be applied vice versa as well. This socialization continues throughout adulthood as well so people can be affected by the behaviour of other people in their close environment and the stereotypes that prevail within the society as also indicated by Wilson (2003). None of this is exclusive to Cyprus of course, but the findings of this research suggest that learning to be male or female derives not only from the family but also from school. This supports other studies which suggest that boys are treated differently than girls within the classroom (Swann, 1992; Mills, 1988) and also that boys are pushed towards 'masculine' subjects such as mathematics all over the world (Wilson, 2003) and in effect choose 'male' professions. These gender roles were also depicted in the school

books in Cyprus and it was only two decades ago that the elementary school books became more equality oriented.

Further to these, gender specific roles are depicted almost everywhere. For example, in toy stores there are girls' sections which are pink and mostly contain dolls and boys' sections which are blue and mostly contain cars and weapons. Another example is during the class of gymnastics at school boys play football and girls are taught traditional dances.

Moreover, things have started to improve both in the educational system (schools) and within the family structures and it is suggested by the findings of this research that tertiary education has played a vital role towards this change. This change in perceptions can be partly supported by Misra and Panigrahi (1996) who noted that younger generations view working women favourably as opposed to olden people, both male and female. It has been indicated through the answers of the participants that those highly educated participants are sensitive to gender equality issues. This suggests that equality may improve generation on generation when education and knowledge on gender equality develops. This is supported by the literature suggesting that culture is not something static and can evolve through time (Hodgetts and Luthans, 2002). In this research it has been indicated that when the parents are educated, they want their children to be educated as well and may be less likely to apply pressure on their daughters to get married and have children. On the other hand, as suggested by some of the comments of participants, if parents are not well educated, or when the family resides in rural areas, pressure is applied on women to get married and have a family of their own and not so much importance is given to their education and career path.

Interestingly the majority of the participants noted that it is important to study or work abroad, and they stress two main reasons. Firstly, individuals get to socialize with people from different cultures and broaden their horizons with regards to the gender roles within the family and the society (see Wilson, 2003). Secondly, men get a chance to take care of themselves and learn how to cook, clean, do the laundry etc. and this might eventually lead them to participate more around the house and appreciate the

work that is done by women (mothers, wives) once they have their own families. In this sense, agency might be able to prevail over culture.

To sum up it is identified by the findings of the research that, like elsewhere, education is an important factor when it comes to gender equality within Cypriot society. Also, it is suggested by some participants that teachers should treat both boys and girls the same way and help them identify their true possibilities and not be restricted by their ascribed gender roles. This is also supported by the literature (see Wilson, 2003; Whitehead, 1996). Furthermore, it is indicated that when people get further education and socialize with people from different cultures they become more sensitive when it comes to gender issues. Therefore, this can be one step forward towards changing the patriarchal Cypriot culture by using the agency of the people and the structures of the formal educational system.

The next subsection discusses motherhood and how it can affect women's lives both in the society and in the workplace.

8.4 Motherhood

As identified by the findings of this research motherhood is the main impediment towards women's progression to the top of the organisational ladder. This finding is in accordance with the literature which indicates that women are not able to equally compete with men in the workplace due to their choice for motherhood or because of the perceptions of employers who think that a mother would not be devoted to her work (Barnard, 2000). This finding contradicts Hakim (1995) in her view that childcare is not the main barrier to women's progression in the workplace (Myth 1). This research indicates that not only childcare constitutes the main barrier to workplace progression for women in Cyprus but also the possibility of motherhood can hinder a woman's progression depending on her employer's perceptions.

As Heilman (2012) indicated people can be treated differently not because of what they are like or what they have done but because of the characteristics of their gender group (see also Lewis, 2006). It is also suggested that the position of women in the society is reflected in their workplace as well (Martin, 1981). This is evident through the findings of this research as well. Further to this, the findings indicated the specific reasons why motherhood is considered an obstacle to women's progression in Cyprus. These reasons fall under three categories as also indicated in Section 7.2; agency; women by choice leave their careers to devote themselves to their families (see Hakim, 1996), culture; women leave their careers to take care of their children due to cultural and societal norms that proclaim women to be the primary caregivers (see Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), and structure; the lack of childcare facilities and the inadequacy of family-friendly policies and the organisational culture that is based on male models (gendered organisations) make it harder for women to follow a career (see Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Mills, 1988; Smith, 1988; Acker, 1991).

The main reason that motherhood prevents women from progressing to the top of the organisational ladder, according to the findings of this research, is the cultural norms that women are the primary caregivers and hence they choose, or are forced, to spend less time on their careers or even abandon their profession. The identification of this specific role of women in Cyprus is also supported by the literature (see Cockburn, 2004; Loizos, 1981). According to the findings there are two types of women that adhere to this cultural norm; (a) the ones that feel it is their obligation to take care of their children and so choose not to progress further in order to devote themselves to their families applying their agency (see Hakim, 1996) and (b) the ones who might not feel so strongly about it but still follow the cultural norms of the Cypriot society which proclaims the male-breadwinner and the female-caregiver stereotypes incorporating the factor of culture (see Lewis, 2006; Hodgetts and Luthans, 2002). The lack of appropriate structures (childcare facilities and family-friendly policies) might affect both of the above mentioned categories. As suggested by the literature organisational structures are directly affected by national culture therefore they are shaped according to the male working model (see Schein, 1997; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Risto, 1990; Sachs, 1989). It can be said that gender was not taken into account when forming organisational structures in Cyprus so they were based on the male-norm (see Scott, 1986; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980).

According to the participants in the research the majority of women who ‘disappear’ from the organisational ladder do not progress due to the fact that they have become mothers. In these cases either they search for a less demanding job with fewer working hours or spend less time in their current job or, leave the workplace and stay at home to raise their children. This finding is also supported by an earlier study conducted by PWC (2011). This is in accordance with Barnard (2000) who suggested that some women prefer to have a part-time job so they can also fulfil their duties as mothers. The reasons identified by the participants in this research involve: agency, the choice of women to stay at home with their children (see Hakim, 1996); culture, the stereotypes that proclaim women as the primary caregivers (see Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005); and structure, the lack of childcare facilities with extended working hours and also the policies of the organisations that are although probably well intentioned do not really assist women with their dual role as working mothers (see Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Mills, 1988; Smith, 1988).

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this research support Hakim’s Preference Theory (Hakim, 1996; 2000) when it comes to women’s life choices. As suggested by this theory the majority of women choose to combine these two elements, work and family while only a small percentage chooses career over family and an equal percentage chooses the reverse (*ibid.*). This appears to be broadly the conclusion that derives from the findings of this research. As identified by the participants a very small percentage of women make it to the top of the organisational ladder, the vast majority remain at middle management combining work with family and another small percentage, as suggested by the participants, stays exclusively at home to raise their children. This finding is consistent with the results of other surveys on Cyprus (see CYMAR, 2010). However, the question whether these choices are made freely or are culturally driven arises. It is suggested that Cypriot culture is so embedded in the people that they are not in a position to make free choices that are not culturally driven, or at least affected (see Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Hodgetts and Luthans, 2002; Lewis, 2006; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).

It has been suggested by several participants that the need of women to devote themselves to their families, especially when they have children, derives from the norms

of the Cypriot culture which position women as the primary, or even the sole, caregivers for children and men as the breadwinners. This was clearly identified by two female participants who are not originally from Cyprus (they are married to Cypriot men) and are in a position to observe the situation more objectively. Although, this was an observation of two people and cannot be generalized it does serve as an indication of the situation. Further support on this issue is found in the work of Cockburn (2004).

Further to this, as suggested by the findings, gender-specific stereotypes negatively affect not only women but men as well. For example, a male participant specifically indicated that he would not have a problem to stay at home as a house-husband but he would never do so as everyone would make fun of him. Not following gender specific roles in Cyprus might be even more difficult for men than women.

Apart from the cultural aspects there are also, as mentioned earlier, certain structural obstacles that mothers are faced with. First of all there is the issue of maternity leave. As noted in Section 3.6 women in Cyprus are entitled to 16 weeks paid maternity leave out of which two weeks should be taken prior to giving birth³². As indicated by the findings of this research, and supported by Barnard (2000), the maternity leave period is considered a lost one for women as they stay at home, and away from the workplace, for about four months. During leave they would not have developed work-related practice. Thus it is inappropriate to expect women to return after prolonged leave and be able to just pick up where they left off. So rather than women having to adhere to male standards (Acker, 1991) consideration of the circumstances of returning mothers is required. Hence, a change in organisational culture in order to make it more gender neutral might be necessary (see Brooks and Bate, 1994; Dobson, 1989; Kanter, 1977). It is shown, through this study, that in order to progress within the workplace one needs to put on extra hours and work really hard and to comply with the male stereotype (see Acker, 1991; Hearn and Parkin, 1983, 1987). This goes for both men and women. However, it is acknowledged by all the participants that this is almost impossible for women with children. This situation however is acknowledged in other professions and other countries as well (see Section 3.6). The industries and organisational structures do

³²[http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/dl.nsf/0/79F179BCC37D879FC225762E002B20FA/\\$file/Guide%20on%20Pregnancy%20and%20Equality%20in%20the%20Workplace%20%E2%80%93%20Revised%20edition%202011.pdf](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/dl.nsf/0/79F179BCC37D879FC225762E002B20FA/$file/Guide%20on%20Pregnancy%20and%20Equality%20in%20the%20Workplace%20%E2%80%93%20Revised%20edition%202011.pdf)

not support women (and especially women with families) to be excellent and this leads to a potential limitation for both women and organisations. Although, this situation might derive from cultural and societal norms organisations need to find a way to address this through a change in organizational culture as mentioned above. As Kanter (1977) suggested it is the structure of the organisation that does not allow men and women to equally compete.

It has been identified, by the majority of the participants in the research, that women not only miss out on important things while they are away on maternity leave but they are also having difficulties in adjusting when they return. Although family-friendly policies, like flexible working hours or the mothers' scheme, are in place they seem to have the reverse outcome and mothers are perceived by some employees as less willing and able to invest in their job. This is also supported by Hearn and Parkin (1983) who noted that women, as possible mothers, are considered as a hassle by a number of employers. This is clearly a challenge for the organisations to adjust and/ or reform these policies in such a way so that they could be helpful to all employees, both male and female, and create more commitment on their [the employees] behalf which will have positive results for the companies as well. As Oswald et al. (2014) indicated keeping the employees happy makes them more productive. Hence, a change in organisational structures is of great importance in such a way to help both men and women to balance work and family and not just giving women the opportunity of staying home with their children without any mechanism to help them upon their return.

It is shown by the replies of the interviewees that the academic women who have participated in this research have somehow adapted to the male working model as also identified by Smith (1988) and Acker (1991). All of them admitted that while they took their maternity leave on paper they did not actually use it, instead working from home and returning early to the workplace. They said they could not afford being away for four months. These women have devoted many years and much effort to their careers and seemed loathe to jeopardize that investment. This is in accordance with the work of Fredman (1992) who noted that only women who can conform to the male stereotype can take advantage of the possibilities given to them at the workplace. This also contradicts Hakim (1995) who noted that women have higher rates of absenteeism and

lower employment stability (Myth 5). Cypriot women in academia not only do not have high rates of absenteeism but at times gave up on their right to maternity leave and returned to work almost immediately after giving birth. This denotes their full commitment to their careers and that they have somehow ‘escaped’ the gender stereotypes that mothers should stay at home raising their children.

It has been suggested by some participants in the research that a compulsory paternity leave should be given to men who become fathers. This way both fathers and mothers would have responsibility of their new-born and men could appreciate the difficulties women are faced with when they return to the workplace after the maternity leave. Another suggestion is the introduction of parental leave which is currently applicable in some Nordic countries (see Section 3.6). This way, both the parents can stay home for the whole, or some of the period, provided by the parental leave. This measure might encourage more men to spend more time with, and feel the responsibility of, their children. Additionally, it might give the opportunity to women to better combine work with family. Fredman (1992) also indicated that specific gender characteristics must be taken into account when forming equality programs. The importance of helpful family-friendly policies as a means of helping women progress in the workplace was also noted by Wilson (2003) and Davidson and Burke (2004).

Adding to the above, women, as indicated by the participants in the research, are also faced with the problem of childcare (see Section 4.5). Further to that, the absence of childcare facilities within the workplace has been identified by the accountants. The participants in the research indicated that it would be helpful for women to be able to leave their children close to their workplace and especially during working hours in the evening. The University has recently built a kindergarten within its premises and the employees, as indicated by the participants in this research, find it very helpful. This is in accordance with Davidson and Burke (2004) who suggested that organisations should provide family-oriented initiatives and commit to diversity programs in order to support their employees to have a work-life balance.

As suggested by a number of participants in this research, if one of the parents is not a teacher, bank clerk or works for the government³³ then the couple will face problems with childcare during the afternoon. What usually happens in Cyprus, as also indicated by the participants, is that grandparents take care of the children during the afternoon. In this respect Cypriot culture can be characterized of high collective according to Hofstede's dimensions due to the fact that family members, in this case the grandparents, take care of other members of the group (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). In the case that the grandparents are not able to help and the couple cannot afford to hire a nanny then the mother would be the one to leave her career by switching jobs or becoming a housewife to take care of the children as indicated by the participants in this study. This is in accordance with Wilson (2003) who noted that in the absence of a support system (parents, childcare facilities etc) the amount of time a woman can devote to her workplace is limited. It is worth mentioning that for Cypriots family is very important. Family members always rely on each other and in many cases children build their houses next to their parents.

Thus, in Cyprus there seems to be an opportunity to develop childcare facilities that adhere to the modern way of life in the 21st century where both parents are full-time employed and need to have a safe place for their children. This would allow both parents to follow a career as well, if they want to.

To sum up this subsection it has been identified by the findings of the research that women are faced with great difficulties once they become mothers. The cultural norms that promote women as the primary caregivers combined with the absence of structures to support them at work makes it really difficult for women to progress to the top of the organisational ladder. Therefore, the agency of women is of minor importance in this case. What prevail are the effect of culture and gender roles that proclaim women as the primary caregivers and also the lack of structure to assist women in their dual role.

The following section deals with the existence of the glass ceiling and the obstacles women are faced with on their way to the top of the organizational ladder.

³³Working hours for these jobs in Cyprus are 7:30 (8:30) – 15:00 (16:00)

8.5 Glass Ceiling

It is suggested throughout the study, both from the participants of the online survey and the semi-structured interviews that women in Cyprus, as in all other parts of the world, are faced with a glass ceiling on their way to the top of the organizational ladder. This corroborates the work of Powell (1999) who asserts that women are faced with the glass ceiling on their way to the top of the organisational ladder even if they are highly educated and experienced as is the case in the two professions sampled in this research. This is identified also in Adler and Izraeli (1988) and Davidson and Cooper (1993).

According to the perception of some of the participants in the study, the glass ceiling is not real in the sense that no-one is preventing women from progressing within the workplace but rather it is by choice that are not reaching the top. In other words, it is suggested that women, exercising their agency, choose to leave their careers (change job, switch to part-time or even stay at home) in order to devote themselves to their families. This was suggested by both male and female participants and is in accordance with Hakim's Preference Theory (1996, 2000). Is it though a real choice or are women's choices, in the scope of this research, driven by cultural norms or/ and organisational and industry structures? As some participants indicated a woman leaving her career might seem as a personal choice but it is rather driven by cultural norms proclaiming women as the primary caregivers for the children (effect of culture) and due to the lack of helpful childcare facilities or family-friendly policies (effect of structure) these women are somehow 'forced' to abandon their careers. This can be linked to the basic definition of culture which suggests that the latter determines the social behaviour of people (see Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000; Hodgetts and Luthans, 2002).

The findings of this research indicate that women 'disappear' from a level upwards within the organisations involved. The reason for this gendered discrepancy has not been identified as overt gender discrimination against women, but rather due to societal and cultural norms. This can be related to the group dimension (Grid-Group, see Thompson et al., 1990) which indicates that a person's life is affected by the group they belong to. The group in this case is Cypriot women and the societal norms they adhere to are passed from one generation to another (Hodgetts and Luthans, 2002). As

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) suggested the elements that prevail in a national culture affect the activities and structures of the organisation in a sense that everything is socially constructed. Therefore, the behaviour of people within a certain culture can be transferred in their working environment.

The first reason identified for the non-progression of women seems to be their need (internal or external) to devote themselves to their families and so they *choose* not to progress further or they even make career changes in order to have more flexibility and/or free time. This finding can be related to Hakim's Preference Theory (1996, 2000, 2003b) which indicates that women do not progress to the top of their organisations due to their own agency. This perception is found among participants with different marital statuses; women with children, men and even women who have not become mothers yet. Further to this, Cypriot culture does not seem to support or expect women to be managers. This is more of an unwritten rule (high context culture) of Cypriot culture proclaiming women to be caregivers and men to be breadwinners hence, potentially reach the top of the organisational ladder (Hall and Hall, 1987). Further, this can also be associated to Lewis' (2006) multi-active culture which suggests that priority is given to family instead of professional development.

However, the choice for non-progression, most of the times is driven by cultural and societal norms and lack of supportive infrastructure. Women in most cases feel obliged to take care of the children, as this is the norm in Cypriot society, and if they do not have help from their parents they are compelled to devote less time to their work and more time to their family. The idea that these women might embrace the responsibility to be the primary caregivers can refer back to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) who suggested that human behaviour is partly shaped by the culture. In addition, as Lewis (2006) suggested a person's life, both personal and professional can be defined by his/her cultural background and is also affected by the group to which they belong, in this case the group of Cypriot women, and their actions are constrained by societal norms (see Thompson et al., 1990; Akbar and Vujic, 2014). The possible reasons, deriving from the findings of the research, for the non-progression of women in the workplace will be further analysed in the following sections.

Overall, there is the perception, amongst participants from the accountancy profession, that men and women share the same opportunities within the workplace and women, exercising their agency, do not progress by choice relating back to Hakim's (1996) Preference Theory. There is also the perception that once a woman becomes a mother she needs to devote more time to her family/ children which will remove time and focus from her career. This perception is in accordance with the notion of gendered organisations, as explained in Section 2.6, implying that women cannot cope in a male-made organisation and also that the place of women in the workplace reflects their position in society (Martin, 1981, 1998). That is to say that women are considered as the primary caregivers in the society so this is the way they are perceived in the workplace as well. These perceptions are shared by both men and women. Therefore, there has not been an indication of direct gender discrimination when it comes to glass ceiling in the accountancy profession. However, there is a clear implication, by both accountants and academics in this study, that cultural norms about the role of women are transferred in the workplace. It can be suggested that organizational culture is affected by the national culture its human resource adheres to (see Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Sachs, 1989) and that gendered aspects of individual identity are transferred to the organisations making them gender (male) – specific (see Scott, 1986; Reskin and Roos, 1987).

According to some academics participating in this research, the slow progression of women in academia could be attributed to the fact that women in Cyprus pursued PhD's only in the more recent years therefore the pool of women in the area was not as numerous as was for men. This can be referred back to the work of Wells (1973) who noted that women are found at the bottom of organisations as they enter the workforce at a later stage than men. Also, the notion of gendered occupations (Ely et al., 2008) was raised in a sense that women did not follow technical or managerial studies but rather they used to prefer education or sociology as women are perceived to offer emotional support (see Hochschild, 1983). The latter seems to be due to pressure or suggestions by their parents and/ or teachers attributed to the broader influence of culture both on the agency of people and the structures of the educational system. This was discussed in Section 8.3.

In general, it seems that, according to the findings of this research, most women in Cyprus leave their career path at some point in order to devote themselves to their families facing a glass ceiling which can be attributed to culture; the norms that suggest women should be the primary caregivers to children, to structure; the absence of childcare facilities, both private and public, and the inadequacy of organisations to help women smoothly return from a maternity leave or even provide helpful family friendly policies, and to agency; the internal need of women to devote themselves to the raising of their children.

The next subsection analyses the importance of networking and mentoring for the progression in the workplace and how the women in this research report to being excluded from networking activities and the absence of formal mentoring programs from the organisations involved in this research.

8.6 Networking and Mentoring

Networking, in the scope of this research, has been identified as one of the most important aspects relating to progression in the workplace. As identified by many researchers, and noted in Section 3.5, networking serves as a vehicle to employees' progression (Linehan and Walsh, 2001; Vinnicombe, Singh and Kumra, 2004; Morgan and Davidson, 2008). Further to that, it has been suggested by Morrison et al. (1987) that networking might serve women in combating the glass ceiling. However, the findings of this research suggest that women in Cyprus are still excluded, intentionally or unintentionally, from professional networking activities. Three main reasons have emerged with regards to this exclusion and are mostly related to cultural norms and the agency of men.

First of all, as found in Heald (1983) women in this sample are excluded from networking activities of a male nature i.e. going to football matches either to play or to watch. These activities are organised by men and women are not invited. According to the participants, men, using their agency, intentionally exclude women from these activities due to the fact that they believe that they won't fit in or/ and because they feel

that women will not be interested. A female accountant noted that the company she works for rents a box at a stadium and all the men go there to watch the matches and close some deals with customers. She indicated that even if she was invited she would not fit in and everyone would feel awkward. A conclusion that can be drawn by the replies of the participants is that women are being excluded from networking activities without even knowing that they are. Men organise activities that women are not even informed about especially when it comes to watching football matches. It has also been indicated that football is considered to be a male sport and this is something that applies to other countries as well. Men and women have been raised in such a way so that they even divide sports into male and female. This is in accordance with cultural norms (see Lewis, 2006; Hodgetts and Luthans, 2002; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005) and also with the process of learning to be male or female (see Wilson, 2003; Young, 1990).

In other cases, as indicated by the findings of this research, women also withdraw themselves from networking opportunities due to cultural norms that render it inappropriate for a woman to be socializing with a man (a client and not a friend). This difference in socialization norms between men and women in Cyprus can also be supported by Loizos (1981) and Cockburn (2004). Therefore, women using their agency, which in this case is inevitably affected by culture, exclude themselves from networking activities. A woman in Cyprus, as indicated by the participants in this study, can be easily misunderstood when seen in public with men. Although, this was identified by only a few participants in this research it is a reality that Cypriot women might be faced with and in the words of Cockburn (2004, p. 49) “traditional family values placed many constraints on women”.

Additionally, women are often excluded from business networking when travel or time away from home is required, due to their family obligations once they have become mothers. It has been pointed out in this study that it is very difficult for mothers to travel abroad for networking activities such as attending seminars or meeting clients. They are faced with the difficulty of where to leave their children when the husband is unable or unwilling to take care of them. This can also be linked back to Section 8.4 on Motherhood (see Davidson and Burke, 2004; Wilson; 2003). Further to that, it has also been indicated by a few participants that it is culturally acceptable and optimum for a

man to travel abroad for work (meeting clients, closing deals, attending seminars) but for a woman is quite uncommon. This has been identified by both men and women who participated in this research in both academia and accountancy professions. This also suggests the strong effect of culture over people's agency.

In general, as has been identified by the findings of this research women are being, intentionally or not, excluded from networking and wide business activities. It seems that cultural norms are the main issue. These findings are in accordance with the literature from previous research indicating that women cannot either break or join men's networks and that it is in their best interest to create their own (Hersby et al., 2009). However, even if women form their own networks they will still be faced with difficulties due to their family obligations and lack of structures to support them in their role as mothers.

Surprisingly enough, it has been identified by the findings of this research that most people in Cyprus do not acknowledge the importance of mentoring in the advancement and progression within the workplace and in effect the organisational structures do not give emphasis on this pillar. As indicated by the participants, in the accountancy profession, mentoring is believed to be the guidance new employees have by more senior ones up until they are familiarised with the nature of the job. On the other hand, participants in the academia although they acknowledged the importance of mentoring in their professional lives and that especially women need a mentor to help them progress (Schwartz, 1992) noted that a mentoring scheme is not offered by the University and any mentoring is done partially and unofficially and depends on the agency and willingness of each senior member of the faculty.

Albeit the fact that the absence of mentoring schemes affects both male and female employees it could be said that women are more disadvantaged by this absence since, as mentioned in Section 3.5, they are the ones who could benefit more from a potential mentor (see Schwartz, 1992; Davidson and Burke, 2004). As suggested by the findings of this research mentoring may help women disproportionately since they seem to have more to gain in terms of navigating organizational structures and culture and

networking in particular. As suggested by researchers mentoring can serve as a vehicle to women on their way to development and progression within the workplace (Linehan and Walsh, 2001; Vinnicombe, Singh and Kumra, 2004). It seems that mentoring is not embedded in the Cypriot culture and in effect is not mirrored in organisational structures. The agency of each person is important in this aspect and also the willingness of senior employees to guide and help younger/ junior people develop their skills and reach their full potential within the workplace.

8.7 Agency, Structure and Culture

As discussed in Section 3.2.1 the theoretical framework chosen for this study incorporates the notions of agency, structure and culture suggesting their interrelation and co-existence within a given society. Notwithstanding, the findings of the research suggest a connection between agency and structure in the Cypriot society and workplace, both having as their basis the national culture. That is to say that neither agency nor structure is independent of culture. It is suggested that decisions and actions might have been completely different if the cultural background was altered somehow.

For example, it has been noted by some participants, as mentioned in Section 6.3, that they have made a free choice concerning their studies and their career path suggesting that they were not forced by their parents towards a specific direction exercising their agency. However, as also discussed in Section 6.3, gender roles are shaped from a young age through the family and school transmitting into the child what is appropriate or optimum, and what is not, for boys and girls. Therefore, there is the illusion of a completely free choice since the choices are actually limited by cultural norms that are entrenched into structure as well (formal education). Hence, it can be argued that gender roles are socially constructed and follow individuals throughout their personal and professional lives.

Further to the above, some participants mentioned that they wished to follow a different career path but their parents opposed to that (see Section 6.3). This shows that the agency of the parents is stronger than that of the children. However, this also derives

from cultural norms proclaiming the respect to the eldest and that the institution of family is to be cherished.

Agency is also acknowledged in networking where men choose to exclude women due to their gender specific roles and also women themselves are encountered with obstacles when trying to network, especially abroad, mostly due to their family obligations. Moreover, agency, in both these instances, can be directly associated with gender specific roles deriving from culture.

Further, women's agency can be observed in their distancing from the workplace/ career once they become mothers. However, this choice might be a free one for some of the women, deriving from their internal need to devote themselves to raising their children, but in most of the cases, according to the findings of this research, the reasons are either the lack of structure to help them cope with this dual role or even deeper; the stereotypes entrenched in the culture proclaiming that women are the primary caregivers for the children.

On the other hand, as indicated by the findings of this research, structure, through formal education, also plays an important role in shaping people's view of gender and in a way guiding their personal and professional lives. As noted in Section 2.4.1 gender roles are partly shaped in school where boys and girls are directed towards 'masculine' or 'feminine' subjects and/ or activities for example football and science for boys. Henceforth, people's career choices are subconsciously driven by the structure of formal education which is in turn shaped by the cultural norms. This interaction between the three dimensions is in accordance with Evetts (2000) as indicated in Section 2.3 and it might be responsible for the creation and preservation of the so-called gendered jobs.

When it comes to structure within the workplace it appears that family friendly policies, which aim in aiding families to have work-life balance, are in place but they are shaped according to cultural norms which imply that women are the primary child-carers. For example, women are entitled to four months paid maternity leave while there is no

provision for parental leave and men are only allowed one week of non-paid paternity leave. Further, there is no provision for a smooth return of mothers in the workplace.

In general, there is evidence from the findings of this research that both agency and structure are deeply affected by culture therefore cultural norms are carried by the people through their personal and professional lives. Women in Cyprus, especially among the older generations, are seen as somehow subordinate to men and even if nowadays it is accepted for women to enter the workforce they are still considered as the primary caregivers for the children and for being responsible for the household. Consequently, the status/ place of women in the society is transferred directly or indirectly in the workplace as well. Hence, according to the findings there is interrelation between agency and structure and both have as their basis national culture. This interrelation can be partly depicted in the below diagram (Diagram 1).

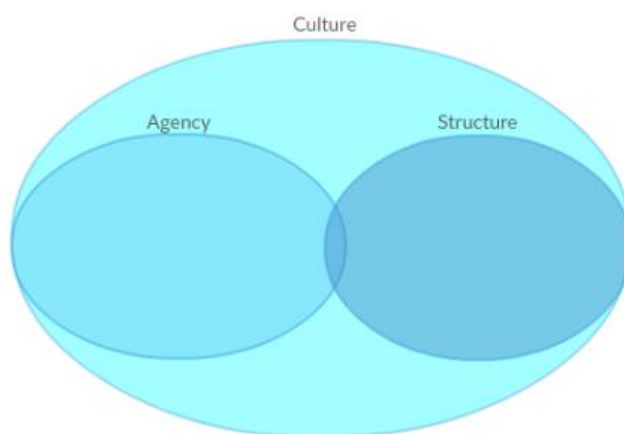


Diagram 1: Agency, Structure and Culture

The above diagram, which derived from the findings of this research, suggests that agency, structure and culture are interconnected and that culture is the basis for the ‘construction’ of the other two elements however, a possible change in culture can only be triggered by a change in agency and/ or structure. A change in one element leads to the shaping of, or change in, the other two. This diagram can be described as interconnected wheels; a movement in one wheel can trigger the movement in the others as well. An example of this interconnection could be the introduction of compulsory

paternity leave (change in structure) which might resolve to women sharing the burden of childcare, especially during the first months, and not having the ‘need’ to switch jobs or leave work earlier (agency) which might result in the change in the gender – specific roles in the society in a way that women would not be seen as the sole caregivers for children (culture).

8.8 Conclusion

The conclusion that can be extracted by the findings of this research is that women are faced with impediments on their way to the top of the organisational ladder. This is mainly due to Cypriot culture which is highly patriarchal and is embedded into peoples’ lives and minds. There is a clear distinction of gender roles in the society and this also affects structural norms and people’s agency. Although phenomenically people make free choices most of the times these are culturally driven. Nevertheless, some participants indicated that women do not progress in the workplace by choice so that they can devote themselves to their families especially once they become mothers. There is also the belief that there is gender equality within the workplaces in Cyprus and that it is up to women to prove themselves and progress. However, these latter points of view have likely not taken into account the cultural norms the society is built on and that this same culture affects both the structures and the agency of the people.

Women from a young age learn what is acceptable, and what is not, with regards to gender roles. They are pushed from a young age to follow specific areas of study, to find specific jobs in the future. They are nowadays ‘entitled’ to a full-time paid job but they are also responsible for the household and childcare. The findings of this research include that participants identify an unrealistic expectation that a woman can work at the same pace after becoming a mother within this cultural context. Additionally women are excluded from several networking activities. It is evident that Cypriot culture is very strong and prevails over structural norms (for example equality legislation and directives from the EU) and people’s agency.

It is implied by the findings that everything is socially constructed and that Cypriot culture affects, or favours, gender inequality in society in general. Further, it is indicated that organisations have failed to manage successfully family-friendly policies that are in place and in some cases they have had the reverse results than those aimed at in that they have penalised women who have become mothers. Gender roles within Cypriot society are so clearly marked that even most women feel that they should be the main caregivers and also take over on more household chores. Therefore, being left behind at the workplace seems inevitable and acceptable.

This chapter is followed by the conclusion which summarises the thesis and revisits the research objectives. It also deals with the limitations of this research and the way forward.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research questions are revisited in order to discuss the findings of the study and relate these findings back to the literature and research methodology. The methodology of this study was based on the effect of agency, structure and culture on the perception of gender inequality in Cyprus and also on the interconnection of these three dimensions when investigating women's progression in the workplace. Several themes have emerged through this research and by these this study contributes to the areas of culture and gender equality in Cyprus.

The aim of this study was to examine the perception of Cypriot men and women with regards to gender inequalities in the workplace and the society and the objectives of this research were to:

- (a) Explore issues around culture in Cyprus and in organisations and its impact on employees
- (b) Investigate whether employees in organisations in Cyprus perceive gender inequalities in the workplace/ careers
- (c) Explore the impact of family, in particular motherhood, on the experience of work for professional women in Cyprus
- (d) Explore ways organisations support equality in the workplace in Cyprus

These objectives have been met in full and it has been indicated that participants in this research perceive gender inequalities both in the workplace and the Cypriot society in general and that these inequalities have their roots in Cypriot culture and the gender roles embedded in it. A serious effort towards the elimination of gender inequalities was identified within the organisations under investigation without, though, remarkable results.

The next sections take up with the contribution of the study as well as an analysis connecting the findings of the research with existing literature. Further to that, a critical review of the research is attempted. A brief summary of the previous chapters is outlined in the following section.

9.2 Summary of Previous Chapters

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study outlining the aims and objectives. The aim of this study was to explore gender issues in organisations in Cyprus exploring women's and men's experiences and perceptions. Also, the study aimed at exploring the impact of Cypriot culture on the perceptions of men and women with regard to gender inequality. The chapter also discussed briefly the current situation with regards to working women.

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical framework of agency, structure and culture. The interrelation between the three was investigated and it was suggested that culture is the basis for the other two; agency and structure. Further, organisational culture and the notion of gendered organisations were introduced.

The study moved on to the investigation of women's place in the workplace in Chapter 3. It was identified that women are faced with hindrances through their professional lives leading to gender inequality in several aspects. Specifically, the chapter dealt with issues of gendered jobs, wage gap, glass ceiling, networking and mentoring, and working mothers.

Chapter 4 identified the most important historical facts that affected Cyprus and its people from the declaration of Independence (1960) onwards and investigated the position of women in the society as well as their place in the workplace by summarizing some statistical evidence. Further, the research questions were introduced.

The study continued with the analysis of the methodological framework in Chapter 5. It was claimed that society is socially constructed and that perceptions are passed from generation to generation through culture. Hence, the methodology adopted for this study, which was interlinked with the research framework of agency, structure and culture, was social constructionism. The chapter concluded with the acknowledgment of the role of the researcher in the study in the reflexivity section.

The thesis then progressed to the presentation of the findings of both online survey and semi-structured interviews in Chapters 6 and 7 followed by their analysis in Chapter 8. The findings were presented according to the research questions but the analysis was done based on the emerging themes namely glass ceiling, family, education, motherhood, mentoring and networking. The discussion of these emerging themes was connected to the theoretical framework of agency, structure and culture.

9.3 Contribution of the Thesis

By adopting a qualitative methodology the participants were given visibility in a previously under-researched area in Cyprus. Apart from various statistical surveys the broader area of gender in the workplace in Cyprus was not investigated deeply and still needs further researching.

This study was mainly based on the investigation, through semi-structured interviews, of women in the workplace coming from the academia and the accountancy profession. However, there was a preparatory online survey in which people (both men and women over 18) from various professions participated. The findings of this study cannot be overgeneralized but they can serve as a good database for further research especially through the emerging themes that were identified. Research with Cypriot women in other professions, or in non-professional employment, would be revealing.

This study contributed a great deal to the identification of the main difficulties women in Cyprus are faced with in the workplace as well as the obstacles with regards to their non-progression to the top of the organisational ladder. Of course, women in other

professions or with different educational and socioeconomic backgrounds might be faced with different kinds of problems and further investigation is required. The following section presents the main findings of this study.

9.3.1 Main findings

This study identified that there is indeed gender inequality both in the workplace and in the society in Cyprus. This was strongly indicated by the participants in both the online survey and interviews. It has been suggested by the participants that women in the Cypriot society are considered somewhat inferior to men due to the prevailing patriarchy.

Women are perceived, by both men and women, to be responsible for the household and childcare (also elderly care when applicable) and men are perceived as the breadwinners. These gender roles are entrenched in the culture so people from the day they are born learn to behave accordingly. This dual role of women (career-woman and mother) has proven to be one of the major obstacles the latter are faced with on their way to the top, according to the findings of this study. Despite the fact that women might have a full-time job and aim for a career they are still the main caregivers for the children. Hence, if they don't have help from family or access to full childcare facilities it is difficult for them to have a career as well especially if it requires long working hours and travelling abroad.

It seems that men and women learn gender specific behaviour within their families, by observing and imitating their parents (culture), and through formal education/ schools (structure). The findings indicated that boys and girls are treated differently and are directed towards different professions creating this way gendered jobs. This makes it even harder for women to advance in a male dominant profession. The findings also indicated that women in Cyprus are also faced with other problems in the workplace such as the absence of mentoring schemes or the inability to network the way men do. The latter can also be partly attributed to the dual role of women.

When gender equality in Cyprus is concerned things have improved significantly during the past few decades especially after the 1970s when women formally entered the workplace (prior to that some women were engaged in family businesses without being remunerated). Women are equally educated as men and capable in advancing to the top levels of every organisation/ sector. Nevertheless, it seems that women enter the workplace ‘game’ and play under male rules. Organisations were formed long before women entered the workforce thus the structures that are in place did not take into account the role and needs of a parent since men were never, with only a fringe of exceptions, responsible for childcare. Several attempts have been made towards gender equality taking into account the dual role of women, with the introduction of family-friendly policies such as maternity leave, moreover they appear not to be adequate and in some cases stigmatise women instead of helping them.

It can be argued that in order to achieve gender equality in Cyprus the culture needs to change first followed by a change in structures and a reinforcement of women’s agency. Again, the three notions comprising the theoretical framework, agency, structure and culture, are shown to be interlinked. A few suggestions deriving from the findings of the study in order to take a step forward towards gender equality are:

- (a) Make changes in the educational system; provide equality programs/ classes, rewrite books based on the notion of gender equality
- (b) Train new parents on how to treat their boys and girls equally
- (c) Train young couples on how to share the burden of household chores
- (d) Introduce compulsory paid paternity leave so that both parents can share childcare especially during the first months
- (e) Somehow (through public or private organisations) provide childcare facilities with extended working hours to accommodate as many working people as possible
- (f) Organisations should introduce mentoring and talent management programmes and policies in order to help women progress
- (g) Family-friendly policies within organisations should be revised and implemented in such a way to aid people and not stigmatise them
- (h) Managers should encourage and initiate networking activities for women

The above are only some suggestions deriving from the results of the study and of course before implementing anything further research need to be conducted.

The chapter moves on to a critical evaluation of this study.

9.4 Critical Assessment - Limitations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the place of women in the workplace in Cyprus. It has been identified early on that it would be rather impossible to investigate all working women in every sector therefore specific sectors were selected. Under this spectrum the areas of accountancy (chartered accountants) and academia were chosen. The selection was done in such a way in order to eliminate gender inequality at the entrance/ recruitment level due to the fact that requirements and starting salaries are the same for everyone and also these areas attract approximately the same number of male and female candidates.

In effect, the findings of this research are mainly based on the fields of accountancy and academia hence might not reflect the experiences and perceptions of people, both men and women, from other professions. Nevertheless, prior to the conduction of the semi-structured interviews an online survey was carried out among the general working population (people over 18 years old) in Cyprus which served as an indication of the important issues that both men and women in Cyprus are faced with in their workplace and the society in general. This online survey functioned as complimentary to the interviews.

The sample of the online survey (245 participants) is considered sufficient taking into account the general population of Cyprus (approximately 700 thousands). However, the fact that it was an online survey and each participant was hidden behind the anonymity of his/ her computer the researcher was not able to have any control on the replies and on whether the information given were correct/ truthful. Further, the researcher did not have any control over the demographics of the sample as the method used was snowballing. Also, the number of people who received the link to the online survey is unknown.

When it comes to the sample for the interviews (29 interviewees) albeit it is considered adequate it could have been increased if the researcher had more time and if there weren't so many obstacles with regards to the communication with the participants. At first, a formal letter was sent to the HR Departments of the BIG Four companies asking them for permission to interview 10 of their chartered accountants (5 men and 5 women). Out of the four companies approached one gave a negative reply, one gave a positive reply but did not follow through with the communication and the rest did not even respond. Therefore, the researcher was obliged to use personal contacts in order to gain access to the participants. On the other hand, personalised letters were sent to academics and again some of them did not even reply. Personal contacts were used in this case as well. The sample was not random but rather a convenience one and this might have affected at a small degree the results of the research.

With regards to the results of the research (especially the semi-structured interviews) these might have been affected unintentionally by the researcher due to the personal interrelation in the Cypriot society, being a female Cypriot residing in Cyprus, and her personal experience with the Cyprus working environments (reflexivity). However, a serious attempt was made to remain impartial and objective throughout the interviews and during the analysis phase.

It is also worth mentioning that the research (online survey and semi-structured interviews) was conducted prior to the outburst of the severe economic crisis that hit the island. The said economic crisis might have affected the socio-economic situation of the participants and a follow-up research might be enlightening.

The next section outlines possible areas for future research with regards to the investigation of the place of women in the workplace and the society.

9.5 Further Research

In the light of better exploring gender issues in the workplace and the society further studies could and should be carried out. A few suggestions are the following:

(a) Extension of the Study

Application of this study to other professions as well and investigate both male-dominated sectors and jobs that do not require higher education at the entry level. This proposed study might be able to fill the gaps of the present research.

(b) Comparative Study

It would be interesting to apply and compare this research to other countries perhaps starting with the European Union where the legislative framework on gender equality lies on the same principles. This way, common issues might arise and proposals might be sent to the appropriate bodies for the introduction of new directives and/ or formal implementation of old ones.

(c) Longitudinal Study

It would also be useful to follow the career paths of a few women over a number of years. Their experiences and progression opportunities could be examined in detail perhaps relating each woman's career path with the experiences as a child under the broader area of national culture.

The study now moves on to the final conclusion of the chapter and this thesis where some final views are presented.

9.6 Conclusion

The initiation of this research derived from the researchers' personal interest in the position of women in the Cypriot society as well as gender inequality in the workplace. However, beyond the personal interest the area of gender equality in Cyprus was under-researched with only a number of statistical surveys in place. The idea was to investigate in depth the reasons why women in Cyprus do not progress equally to men in the workplace. The results indicate that the reasons are deeper and more complex than just the stereotypical notion of women being discriminated against.

It has been identified, through both the online survey and the semi-structured interviews that women do not progress in the workplace not because they are being directly discriminated against but due to their gender specific roles defined by the national culture. The three dimensions of the theoretical framework are interacting and dependent on each other however, the influence of culture on both agency and structure is evident. On the one hand, people seem to exercise their agency however the national culture is deeply entrenched in it. Likewise, structures that shape both the society and the workplace have been introduced by individuals whom their decisions and actions are rooted in the cultural norms.

Women in the Cypriot society are seen as somewhat inferior to men, especially when it comes to career prospects, and also as the primary, and most of the times as the sole, caregivers for the children. Henceforth, women, from a young age, are being directed towards specific professions, are being educated within the house how to take care of the family, and later on they are being excluded from men's networks and left to balance between career, personal life and family. It has been shown that agency and structure do not affect women's life and career paths as much as culture does. It can be said that everything is socially constructed and women are faced with a lot of internal and external pressure to follow their gender specific characteristic. In other words, it has been identified through this research, that in order for a woman to make it to the top of the organisational ladder and also have a family she needs to be a super-woman.

This study has shed light to a previously under-researched area in Cyprus. This thesis therefore, provided useful information with regards to the way women in Cyprus are seen and also the reasons for their non-progression to the top of the organisational ladder. However, there is need for more work within the broader area of gender equality in Cyprus and elsewhere in order to improve the position of women both in the workplace and the society in general.

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APPENDIX I

Letter to BIG 4

c/o Human Resource Manager

Dear Sir/ Madame,

my name is Maria Socratous and I am currently doing my PhD in Management with Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. The thesis focuses in exploring whether Cypriot culture has any impact on how employees perceive gender discrimination in the workplace.

The reason I am writing is to ask permission to interview 10 accountants from your firm (5 men – 5 women who will be chosen randomly).

I remain at your disposal for further clarification.

Looking forward to your positive response.

Yours Sincerely,

Maria Socratous

Tel. 99059957

Email. msokratous@gmail.com

Letter to Academics

Personalized letters to academics within the Department of Economics & Business Administration (University of Cyprus)

Dear Dr..../ Prof.....,

my name is Maria Socratous and I am a former student of the University of Cyprus (BSc Marketing/ Management). I am currently doing my PhD in Management with Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. The thesis focuses in exploring whether Cypriot culture has any impact on how employees perceive gender discrimination in the workplace.

The reason I am writing is to ask you to participate in the research. I will be conducting semi-structured interviews which will take around 45 minutes each. The interview can be conducted at a place of your convenience.

I remain at your disposal for further clarification.

Looking forward to your positive response.

Yours Sincerely,

Maria Socratous

Tel. 99059957

Email. msokratous@gmail.com

Consent Form



LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: The impact of Cypriot culture on the perception of men and women regarding gender issues within their organisations

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Maria Socratous (PhD cand.) from the Department of Management and Languages at the Heriot Watt University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Maria Socratous, Ph.D. (Researcher) at 99059957, or ms421@hw.ac.uk.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In this study I am exploring the perceptions of men and women regarding gender issues in their workplace and the impact Cypriot culture has on these perceptions.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study you would need to be interviewed by the researcher (in-depth interviews). Each interview will last around 45 minutes and the conversation will be audio recorded.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and anonymous and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Any reports of this study made available to participants or sent to a scientific journal for publication will contain anonymous information that reflects group results and not information about specific individuals. When in need of quotations, nicknames will be used so as to retain anonymity of the participants. Data will be retained for a period of 5 years post publication in a secure place, after which time it will be disposed of in a secure manner (delete audio recording and recycle any written data).

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time and ask the researcher to stop. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this study if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

Once the research is complete a brief report explaining the findings from this study will be available for those interested. You may request the report via email at ms421@hw.ac.uk.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Maria Socratous, Ph.D. cand.

Department of Management and Languages

Heriot Watt University

Interview Questions

Demographics

Gender: F..... M.....

Age Group: 21 – 30.....

31 – 40.....

41 – 50.....

51 – 60

61 – 70.....

Employed: Full Time..... Part Time.....

Job Title:.....

Years in present position: less than a year.....

1 – 5.....

6 – 10.....

11 – 15.....

16 – 20.....

More than 20.....

Marital Status: Single.....

Single with children.....

Married/ Spouse.....

Married with children.....

Workplace

1. Talk to me a bit about your work.
 - a. What do you do every day?
 - b. What are your main responsibilities?
 - c. Who do you report to?
 - d. How often are you being evaluated?
 - e. Do you feel there is potential for development/ promotion within your organisation?
2. How many men and women are in your line of work within your organisation?
 - a. Do you feel men and women are treated equally within your organisation?
 - b. Do you feel men and women have the same opportunities for promotion/ development?
 - c. Are you aware of any family-friendly policies within your organisation (flexible hours, working from home)?
 - d. Are there any child-care facilities within your organisation?
 - e. Do you feel that working mothers within your organisation are in a disadvantaged position than everyone else?
3. Do you feel networking is important for your job?
 - a. Do you feel that men are better than women at networking for work?
4. Do you feel mentoring is important?
 - a. Do you have a mentor?
 - b. Has it helped you?

Family

1. Talk to me a bit about you family.
 - a. Do you have children?
 - b. Who takes care of them?
 - c. Did you take on maternity/ paternity leave when they were born?
 - d. Has this affected your job?
2. Who is responsible for the household (cooking, cleaning)?
 - a. Do you have outside help?
3. Do you feel that family responsibilities have affected your job in any way?
4. Does your spouse support your career choices?

Childhood

1. When did you decide to become an accountant/ academic?
 - a. Did you have any other dreams while growing up?
2. Did you have support by your parents?
 - a. Did they support your decision or did they have other plans/ dreams for you?
3. Tell me a few things about your childhood.
 - a. Where did you grow up?
 - b. How many members were there in your family? Did your sisters/ brother have the same opportunities for education?
4. Was your mother working while you were growing up?
 - a. Who was responsible for the household?
 - b. Who was responsible for raising the children?
5. If you could do everything over what would you change?

Society

1. Do you feel that there is gender discrimination in the Cypriot society in general?
 - a. In what areas?
2. Do you feel that women are in a more disadvantaged position than men when it comes to household responsibilities?
3. Do you feel that motherhood affects women's progression in their workplace?
4. Do you feel that women stay at home to raise their family by choice or are they socially/ culturally driven?
5. Do you feel that social/ cultural norms should change/ evolve in any way?