A Struggle for Independence: Attitudes and Practices of the Women of Cyprus

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Abstract

The thesis is concerned with women's attitudes and practices in Cyprus. Through interviews with urban, middle-class women, concentration is paid on their more 'personal' experiences of family life, marriage, motherhood, morality, and sexuality, through 'entering their homes'. This work analyses the conflicts and contradictions experienced by these women and explores their *struggle between feminist praxis and feminist theory.* It examines the dilemmas and difficulties they have been facing in a culture where they are often expected to be silent and passive, and the identities which they have formed; the paradoxes that have been created in these women's lives because of this; and, the conflict between who they are and, if allowed, who they would like to be. This ethical question arising from knowing what they want, but being too afraid to go out and get it, and the guilt associated with it will also be examined, as will the fight between their emotions and the reality of their existence, the distance between their lives and their dreams. Like many other feminists, I have consciously decided to do research which is central to my own experience, as a woman. I have decided to tell the story of my own struggle.

Part I, 'The House's Façade' (Chapters One to Three) first introduces the research undertaken and then analyses the methodological and theoretical concerns related to feminist research in general and how these, if so, apply to this work in particular. It describes the steps followed and the methods used for the research. Then, it examines the position of women in Cypriot society as recorded by outside sources, official records, and the law. It looks at the history and contemporary lives of women on the island and discusses what is 'known' about them in relation to the workforce, religion, citizenship, sexuality, and morality. Part II, 'Inside the Front Door' (Chapters Four to Seven) concentrates on the fieldwork that has been carried out and gives an in-depth analysis of women's attitudes and practices on the island. Further, it deals with the images and definitions that women themselves have given about their position in Cypriot society, and their attitudes concerning the family, marriage, sexuality, and morality. It explores the meanings that these women attach to concepts such as 'feminism', 'patriarchy', and 'gender equality'. Part III, 'Concluding Thoughts' (Chapter Eight) discusses the conclusions that arise from the work undertaken.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the women who kindly accepted to be interviewed and generously gave me their invaluable help, shared their feelings with me, and made this work possible. My thanks also to my supervisor, for the most part, Jacqui Halson, whose encouragement, understanding, attention, and knowledge guided me throughout this long and difficult process. She has been a guide and a friend and for that, I am very grateful. My warmest thanks to my other supervisor, Miri Song, without whom I would never actually have finished this piece of work. She has helped me immensely to get motivated and organised, and put ideas and thoughts into perspective and eventually, on paper.

Thanks to my family who supported me throughout this difficult process and especially to Despo for helping out in every way possible. Also thanks to Christia who has been there for me at all times; our conversations have been invaluable in my developing and evaluating thoughts and ideas. Special thanks to Oliver, for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself; for encouraging me; for being a friend and a devoted partner.

Without their help, this work would have been an impossible task. Of course, I take full responsibility for any errors in this work.

Contents

"To be ourselves causes to be exiled by many others, and yet to comply with what others want causes us to be exiled from ourselves. It is a tormenting tension and it must be borne, but the choice is clear."

Clarissa Pinkola Estes,
"Women who Run with the Wolves:
Contacting the Power of the Wild Woman",
Rider, 1992.

Part One

Women in Cyprus: The House's Façade

Chapter I
Introduction:
Discovering Women in Cyprus

> *"I have been thinking that the social moulds civilisation fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star-patterns."*[1]

1. Images of Cyprus

Cyprus is said to be the island of Aphrodite, the ancient Goddess of love and beauty. This message is emphasised by postcards and tourist information leaflets given to millions of tourists from all over the world; the name 'Venus', or 'Aphrodite', is used in advertising campaigns for wine, for restaurants, and as brand names for various consumer goods and products. Cyprus (*I Kipros*) is female, and so is its Goddess. Its name is exploited commercially, as is the island.

A number of articles and books, of political, social, or journalistic nature describe Cyprus as the *raped island*, the *oppressed beauty of the Mediterranean sea* or, the *victimised beauty,* due to its continual invasion by foreign rulers - all explained by the island's size and strategic geographical location. Therefore, Cyprus has been invaded, raped, and oppressed, just as many women in the world have been. It is relatively insignificant in world politics. It is financially and militarily dependent on bigger, more powerful states. It is always under threat due to its geographical location and the expansionist tendencies of its neighbours. Cyprus could be a woman. It is discouraged from having an independent voice but nevertheless struggles to exist and be accounted for. This is not a personal claim. Rather, it is a constant complaint by its people and by the almost all-male government. Its leaders are men, and as this thesis illustrates, its social system patriarchal, its overall approach to the people, sexist.

Nevertheless, a parallel has never been drawn between the two - the country and its feminine image - by these authoritative rulers. Ironically, the same rulers who voice these apparent inequalities over Cyprus' international position, are the same rulers who are still far from ensuring women's equality and safety through the socio-political and legal systems. They are the same rulers who hand out government application forms for posts in the civil service on which one's father's name and occupation must be stated along with other information, but nothing concerning the mother. For example, on my identity card, acquired at the age of twelve, there is the name and surname of my father and following that, the name and maiden surname of my mother. As a naive young woman I concluded from the above and thousands of other examples, that as a person, I belonged first to the state, then to my father and then to my mother who in turn belonged to her father- I assumed that he, in turn belonged to his father. It did not occur to me at the time that I could actually be a person in my own right and actually have *sovereignty over* myself. It did occur to me though that if I ever had to go through childbirth, I would expect such documents to be primarily concerned with me. Consequently, my identity card has always been a symbol of conflict between women and the state, for me.[2]

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[1] Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, Macmillan, The New Wessex Edition, 1974 (First edition published in 1869).

[2] "Christian names were, by traditional custom, those of the grandparents, the first son being called after the husband's father, the first daughter after the husband's mother, the second son and daughter after the mother's parents. Thus the parents of a male child were assured, in the event of his having any children at all, of the perpetuation of at least one of their Christian names, and, if the child was a son, of the name it its entirety." Juliet du Boulay, 'The Meaning of Dowry: Changing Values in Rural Greece', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, May 1983, p.251-2. In my case, I

When I was at high school, all the female students had to take the home economics class. We were taught how to cook, make cakes, sew dresses, and embroider, in order to grow up 'and be proper women, able to look after our house, our husbands, and our families.' These were the constant and repeated sentiments of my high school home economics female teacher. The male students had to take carpentry and learn other practical skills necessary for 'men'. Therefore, when a young boy -age thirteen- asked to take home economics classes, as he loved cooking, the school authorities refused to allow him, despite the fact that carpentry and home economics classes took place - 'conveniently' - at the same time. In fact, the boy was laughed at and talked about by other students and teachers. I was one of those students although I recall feeling that I *had to* laugh but did not really know the reason why.

I am a Cypriot woman. I was born in Cyprus and I have spent a big part of my life here. I have also had the opportunity to live abroad, study abroad and experience different cultures and ideas. I am a Cypriot woman and because of that I feel the need to understand the conflicts in my society, and people's attitudes. I feel the need to understand why I am always placed second, or I am non-existent in any given list.

1.1. Behind the Scenes

When I first decided to carry out research on women in Cyprus in 1994, I discussed my initial ideas with a distinguished –within the Greek Cypriot world- social scientist. I was not completely sure about my area of concentration at that point and apart from some very general essays on 'women's issues' during my Bachelor's and Master's degrees, I was relatively unaware of any of the methodological, theoretical, epistemological, or ontological arguments of feminism. I was, nevertheless, very sensitive to women's issues by that point. The male social scientist in question was carrying out an extensive study during that period concerning Cypriot people and he kindly showed me some of the findings - a detailed statistical outline of results, not analysed by that point. For most questions, he had separated percentages of both men and women but for some, the answers were general.

We started discussing percentages and numbers for a while until I realised that to me, they meant absolutely nothing, concerning people's actual attitudes, especially those of women. I expressed my concern and questioned the method used for such a topic. He explained in detail how such surveys are aimed at identifying certain trends, that they take into consideration a certain percentage of respondents that might have not 'told the truth' and that they have everything worked out: there existed few possibilities for mistakes. Having looked at the answers given by women, I felt that those percentages showed a totally superficial 'reality' of how I, as a Cypriot woman, conceived it. I therefore asked naïve questions on what truth was, whether it was possible to have more than one type of 'truth' -at which point he laughed kindly-, or how someone could read through numbers and answers consisting of 'yes' and 'no' to understand people's attitudes and life experiences. To my knowledge and experience, most people and especially women in this country would find it difficult and uncomfortable to answer questions on topics such as morality, sexuality, and religion, with a simple yes or no. Opinions are not clear cut especially since the changes in the socio-political level have been very influential on people. Furthermore, the 'closed society system' of a small Mediterranean society makes people more unwilling to respond to questions given by 'strangers', as

am the first daughter so I have my grandmother's name (on my father's side) whereas my younger sister bears the name of my grandmother on my mother's side. There traditions are followed by the majority of the people; in cases were the parents wish to give their children other names, conflict is often stirred within the family.

this might jeopardise their 'good name' in society.[3] Unease would be felt at the presence of a social scientist trying to find out their 'real' opinions and feelings on social and personal matters, since the likelihood of having some indirect relationship with, or knowledge of the person is quite high.

I expressed many of my concerns, asked numerous questions, and remarked on the research. The lecturer became defensive and gave me a long and detailed speech on methodology, arguing that qualitative data meant nothing to 'real' researchers and that it was invalid. Totally against recent and not-so-recent methodological debates in sociology and anthropology -especially ethnographic and phenomenological work, he warned me not to engage in 'this type of research' as no university would accept my proposal to carry out research using 'such methods', and 'would I go out for dinner to discuss it?' I left his office unsure about myself and puzzled by his defensive attitude, and thought extensively about it later on.

A few months later I met with my ex-tutor from university, who found everything I was presenting as 'perfectly legitimate concerns' and urged me to write a proposal. I was grateful to her for her support and her belief in me, as I was myself generally unsure about 'being able to make it'. I felt I didn't have 'what it takes' (I had imagined this implying aggression, rigid commitment to work on specific hours, fixed ideas about methodology and a lot more; it was later that I realised things did not have to be like this) to do a PhD. I was accepted to carry out postgraduate research on those same grounds and questions that the man mentioned above had looked down on me. I decided to study women in Cyprus, as they are a group almost completely ignored by academics. I wanted to look into what these women think, how they perceive their position in society, their attitudes about the family, sexuality, morality, gender, their dilemmas and eventual practices concerning the above. Obvious questions on how to deal with differences in terms of class, age, marital status and so on arose in the process. That was the beginning of a series of contradictions that I was about to face later.

Since then I have come a long way. Nevertheless, after having explored some of the literature related to the field,[4] there remain numerous dilemmas and unresolved issues; further, I find arguments from different perspectives to be of equal importance.[5] My social and personal experiences as a woman, as an academic, and as a Cypriot urge me to find a 'place' within feminism where I feel comfortable. Sandra Harding argues that this is what might be needed:

> "New social groups - such as feminists who are seeking to bridge a gap between their own social experience and the available theoretical frameworks - are more likely to hone in on 'subjugated knowledge' about the world than are groups whose experience more comfortably fits familiar conceptual schemes."[6]

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[3] See the argument by Michael Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanisation in Cyprus; A Study of Nicosia,* Nicosia, 1981, p.40.

[4] See, for example, S. Harding (ed.), *Feminism and Methodology,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987; H. Roberts, *Doing Feminist Research,* London: Routledge, 1981; L. Stanley and S.Wise, *Breaking Out; Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research,* London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1983; D. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987; M. Eichler, *The Double Standard; A Feminist Critique of Feminist Social Science,* London: Croom Helm, 1980; A. Bryman, *Quality and Quantity in Social Research,* London; Unwin Hyman, 1988; M. Hammersley, *The Dilemma Of Qualitative Method: Herbert Blumer and the Chicago Tradition,* London: Routledge, 1989.

[5] These arguments are discussed extensively in Chapter Two.

[6] Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism,* Open University Press, p.28.

In fact, writing three years later, Caroline Ramazanoglu explains how it is gradually getting more difficult to "identify boundaries between schools as feminists struggle to learn from each other and to bridge our differences."[7] It is precisely this openness, flexibility and adaptability of feminism, and especially its contradictions, that I find most fascinating and relevant within the context of Cyprus. In this study, feminism is adopted as an ideological framework, which is used in order to explore middle-class women's attitudes and practices in urban Cyprus.

1.2. Influences On Cyprus

> *"Contemporary Greek selves are fashioned precisely through the explorations of the tensions of being, yet at the same time not being, 'western' or 'European' (Herzefeld, 1987). This ambiguity is historically and materially grounded... Greeks sometimes ruefully describe their country as 'neither first-world nor third-world but second-and-a half-world."*[8]

> *"A race advancing from the East must start with Cyprus... A race advancing on the West must start with Cyprus... When Egypt and Syria were of first value to the West, Cyprus was of first rate value to the West. Genoa and Venice, struggling for the trade of India, fought for Cyprus and enjoyed supremacy in the land by turns. After a new route by sea was found to India, Egypt and Syria declined in value to the Western Nations. Cyprus was the forgotten; but the opening of the Suez Canal has suddenly restored her to her ancient pride of place."* [9]

Cyprus is a place full of contradictions. It is at the crossroads of Africa, Asia, and Europe and it is the cultural blend of all three continents. It is also influenced by Greece and the Hellenic civilisation, Turkey and Anatolia, Britain and colonialism/imperialism, Islam and Orthodoxy; and, by all the invaders of the last five millions years.[10] Its unique position, its size and greatly diverse history of peoples throughout the centuries have had an immense and irreversible impact on Cypriot life and social structure as it stands today. At the same time, Cyprus has been a very isolated place and it is only very recently that further access to the means of communication and transportation has began to change this situation. This uniqueness expresses itself in an extraordinary blend of the 'East' with the 'West', an internalisation of opposing values, contradicting moralities, and a complex perception of the people's identity and culture. Similar to Cypriot culture in this respect, "the Greek culture has an essentially masculine character... [that] exhibits certain peculiarities which can easily confuse the

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[7] Caroline Ramazonoglu, *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression,* Routledge, 1989, p.10.

[8] Jane K. Cowan, 'Being a Feminist in Contemporary Greece; Similarity and Difference Reconsidered', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practicing Feminism; Identity, Difference, Power,* Routledge, 1996, p.62-63.

[9] Hepworth Dixon W., *British Cyprus,* 1887; cited in L. Durell, *Bitter Lemons,* Faber & Faber, 1957.

[10] See, for example, D. Alastos, *Cyprus In History,* Zeno, 1956; Sir D. Hunt (ed.), *Footprints in Cyprus,* Trigraph: London, 1990; Sir G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus: Volume I-IV,* Cambridge University Press, 1948 - 52; S. Panteli, *A New History of Cyprus: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day,* East-West Publications, London and the Hague, 1984; L. Durell, *Bitter Lemons,* Faber & Faber, 1957; see also for contemporary political history, Oliver P. Richmond, *Mediating in Cyprus: The Cypriot Communities and the UN,* London: Frank Cass, 1998, pp.67-86.

social scientist who approaches them with a western theoretical apparatus."[11] Different approaches are therefore necessary to accommodate for the current emphasis on Western or Middle-Eastern perspectives and masculine perspectives; this thesis aims to develop some of these approaches and look for women's unexplored perspectives and discourses.

An exploration of women's perspectives does not necessitate the generalisation of the universality of feminist ways of knowing which are here considered as inherently perspectival and culture-bound. Feminism is a universal, general theory of the oppression of women by men; thus, although feminists disagree on the uniformity of women's oppression, "without some element of universality there can be no feminism."[12] Nevertheless, while reading the vast amount of literature on feminist concerns, I was confronted with extreme isolation as the 'different contexts' of women in 'my world' were not included since feminists are now beginning to realise the implications and heterogeneity 'of the condition of being a woman.'[13] Cypriot women do not appear to fit into the Euroamerican feminist writings. Neither are they a part of Third World feminism or Middle Eastern (mostly Islamic-concentrated) analyses of the situation of women. Cypriot women have been under the influence of various rulers and invaders[14] and this has resulted in both insecurity and immense confusion concerning their identities, values, and belief systems. It was as recently as 1960 that Cyprus achieved independence and, afterwards. a number of political problems resulted in the Turkish invasion of 1974, and created even further imbalance in the workings of the society in terms of the formation of social structure and collective identity. Understanding the uniqueness and peculiarities of these women's situation and attempting to explain it are necessary steps toward women's self-development and their struggle to acquire a voice. The available academic literature in Cyprus on women, by women, for women, has been practically non-existent up to the present time and this research hopes to provide a small contribution towards this neglected[15] but important topic. In fact, this paper offers some knowledge concerning all these women throughout the world who have not had the chance to voice their experiences yet.

In *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir discusses the chauvinism and patriarchy of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations.[16] Pericles' famous "the best woman is she of whom men speak the least" sums up the ancient Greek attitudes towards women, who were treated like slaves and not persons in their own right.[17] I was first initiated to the ancient Greek world at school, though mythology and then through the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, Aristophanes and so on. Nevertheless, it was not until some years later that I was first introduced to my first 'classic' feminist literature, where the Great Philosophers were analysed from a different perspective. I therefore questioned for the first time, Plato's 'challenge' of the traditional sex roles and his implications of equal opportunities for both sexes. In the *Republic,* he says that

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[11] Ceasar V. Mavratsas, 'The Greek and Greek-Cypriot Economic Ethos: A Sociocultural Analysis', in *The Cyprus Review,* Vol.4, Fall 1992, No.2, p.35, footnote 25.

[12] Caroline Ramazonoglu, *Op.Cit.*, p.22.

[13] Liz Stanley & Sue Wise, 'Method, Methodology, and Epistemology in Feminist Research Processes', in Liz Stanley (ed.) *Feminist Praxis; Research, Theory & Epistemology in Feminist Sociology,* Routledge, 1990.

[14] The Cyprus case is very complex, as the men have always been under foreign domination as well. The Cypriot women have thus been oppressed by both dominant leaders of the state and dominated leaders of the society and the family unit.

[15] The actual fact that this is an almost total lack of academic publications on women is, in itself, an important indicator of the current dominant attitudes and perceptions on the island.

[16] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Penguin Modern Classics, 1972, Chapter 3, Book 1.

[17] Alastos, *Op.Cit.*, p.93.

> "...there is no practice of a city's governors which belongs to woman because she's woman, or to man because he's man; but the natures are scattered alike among both animals; and woman participates according to nature in all practices, and man in all, but in all of them woman is weaker than man."

The woman is weaker than the man is. The Hellenic and Roman civilisations with their extraordinary 'advancements' in every sphere of life have been intensely taught to Greek Cypriots in the twentieth century and have managed to keep alive the 'tradition of patriarchy' to present day. Thus the initial question for this thesis concerned the kinds of attitudes, self-images, and eventually practices which could be expected from the -Greek Cypriot- majority of women on this island, whose lives have been based on the image of females which dominates this literature. The Greek nationalism and ultimate obsession and pride with their past and their historical and religious background has led only to an inability to look at historical changes and social phenomena from different angles. Ultimately, women in Cyprus are 'trapped' by these conceptions. The issue of whether Cypriot people should in fact consider themselves Greek (or whether this is important to Cypriots)[18] is another issue with political connotations and opposing ideas,[19] thus it is discussed later on in this thesis. Nevertheless, the point is that the intense twentieth-century socio-political affiliation with the Greek civilisation on the part of the Greek Cypriot community exists and so does the awe towards the 'omnipresent ancestors,' which the educational system and literature strongly support: "more conspicuously than in most societies, Greek Cypriots look at the past whenever they want to explain and justify present conceptions, political positions and actions related to their identity."[20] Therefore, it could be argued that Greek Cypriot women have been the victims of double marginalization through both male domination within Cyprus, and the Greek cultural hegemony. Although the cultural affiliation of Greek Cypriots and Greeks is clear and obvious, sociological and anthropological work concerning Greece has been conveniently and directly applied on Cyprus; this is not however "just a problem in relation to the development of feminist research, but is also a political problem in that it contributes to a degree of alienation from feminism"[21] in Greece.

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[18] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* Verso, 1983, for a discussion of nationalism, ethnic myth and 'imagined communities'. For example, he argues that "the formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept - in the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender - vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, 'Greek' nationality is sui generis", p.5. Chandra Mohanty finds this idea of imagined community as useful since is leads us away from essentialist notions of Third World feminist struggles –in this case, "suggesting political rather than biological or cultural bases for alliance." Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Introduction – Cartographies of Struggle, Third World Women, and the Politics of Feminism' in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Loudres Torres (eds.), *Third World Feminism and the Politics of Feminism,* Indiana University Press, 1991, p.4.

[19] For example, "Cypriots may be divided, on the one hand, between the different categories of Greek or Turkish under the sway of colonialism and right-wing nationalism. But they may be beginning to reinvent themselves as a Cypriot people that can encompass both Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the pursuit of a solution to the Cyprus problem." Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle,* Routledge, 1992, p.9.

[20] Nikos A. Stamatakis, 'History and Nationalism: The Cultural Reconstruction of the Modern Greek Cypriot Identity', *The Cyprus Review,* Vol.3, No.1, 1991, p.59.

[21] Ester Breitenbach, Alice Brown & Fiona Myers, 'Understanding Women in Scotland', *Feminist Review,* No.58, Spring 1998, p.44.

Throughout the long and complex history of the Cypriot people, women have clearly been subjects to strong and contradictory influences, partly through the various symbols they have and still identify with. There exist, primarily, the 'feminine' traits of morality, purity, patience, passivity, empathy, nurture, and unselfishness, through the symbol of Virgin Mary, for whom hundreds of churches are dedicated in Cyprus. Further, there is the beautiful, sensual, erotic, and divine Aphrodite,[22] who was legendarily born by the coast of Paphos. Also, there is the image of the moral, hidden, modest, intuitive, submissive, and voiceless symbol of the Middle-Eastern Veiled Woman. Further, immediately after 1974, the symbol became an "anguished black-clothed woman, her face tormented and her clothes ragged"[23] which represented Cyprus "as a woman mourning for her loss and the reality that actual women faced, whose sons and other family had been killed and whose homes were abandoned in the war."[24] Faintly (and not surprisingly so), there are also the pictures of the strong, powerful, energetic the Regina of Cyprus.[25] Women are confronted with and influenced by these images, and the messages they portray, on an everyday basis. It is these same images about women that men hold as well, and reinforce in order to fit their interpretations and needs.

1.3. Writings On Cyprus

> *"A consistent feature of writing on women in Scotland is a lamentation of the fact that there is so little work on the subject. It would indeed be true to say that many studies of Scottish society, history and culture have been gender blind, and that it is only recently that this is beginning to be remedied through the development of feminist analysis."*[26]

Similarly, little has been written on society in Cyprus and even less on women on the island. This study has set out to challenge the existing literature on Cypriot women using a feminist perspective. In order for this piece of research to be carried out, I concentrate on the primary sources, which I gathered during my fieldwork, especially on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with twenty-five Cypriot women. Apart from the international literature on the given field, however, I also used official statistics, government publications, and the limited amount of reports of social scientists that have carried out research on Cyprus. Academic interest during the twentieth century has concentrated on either the complex ethnic and political situation, especially the post-colonial period, or on traditional archaeology and history. Consequently, the nature of the culture and the Cypriot social structure has been largely ignored by social scientists. Some rare exceptions have been the work by Mylona *et al.*, Markides, Attalides, Loizos, and more recently Roussou, and Argyrou.[27] Women's lives and experiences, though, have hardly been mentioned, with the exceptions

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[22] See, for example, Colin Thurbon, *Journey Into Cyprus,* Penguin, 1975.

[23] Floya Anthias, 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', in Nira Yuval-Davis & Floya Anthias, *Woman- Nation- State,* Macmillan, 1989, p.155.

[24] *Ibid.*, p.155.

[25] See Chapter Three, for a brief discussion on Regina.

[26] Esther Breitenbach, Alice Brown, & Fiona Myers, *Op.Cit.*, p.44.

[27] Michael Attalides, *Cyprus Reviewed,* Nicosia: The Jus Cypri Association, 1977; Michael Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanisation in Cyprus - A Study of Nicosia,* Nicosia: Social Research Centre, 1981; K.C. Markides, E. Nikita, & E. Rangou, *Lysi: Social Change in a Cypriot Village,* Nicosia, 1978; K.C. Markides, *The Rise and Fall of the Cyprus Republic,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977; Lia Mylona, Costas Paschalis, Eleni Kalava, Niki Pastalidou, & Athos Erotokriotou, *The Cypriot Woman,* Psycho-Sociological Research Group, Cyprus, 1986 (Published in Greek in 1982); Vassos Argyrou, *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The*

of Maria Roussou's unpublished doctoral thesis, and the work by Floya Anthias. Women are less of a priority in face of the political problem, archaeology, and the 'Arts'. Therefore, this thesis investigates a hitherto untouched area.

However, secondary sources were undoubtedly useful for my work both in terms of the information provided and as guides for general attitudes among the 'educated elite' on the island. I turn to these studies first. It is important to explain here that although literature on women from Greece is more extensive and detailed,[28] it does not always apply in the case of Cyprus, as Cypriot women constitute a different group and society. The cultural and historical relationship between Greece and Cyprus does indeed exist but it has been heavily politicised, especially in this century. Cyprus is a separate state, with both common histories with Greece and a very different history at the same time. It consists of a large Greek Cypriot community, a smaller Turkish Cypriot community, and Maronite and Armenian minorities. Basing my work only on studies on Greek women would immediately undermine the particular lives of women in Cyprus and the influence that women from various ethnic groups on the island have had on one another. Further, as explained in detail in Chapter Three, women in Cyprus as a group throughout history has been exposed to a very different set of social experiences. The feminist work and the work on women in Greece have proven to be a very useful tool in this work, and thus extensive reference is made to it throughout this thesis, but cannot provide the basis for it. Throughout the thesis, commonalities have been identified between the experiences of Greek and Greek Cypriot women. Most commonalties were found among rural women, though, until the recent past. The socio-political changes of the last two decades in both countries have created remarkable differences especially amongst the urban population.

The work in this thesis studies Greek Cypriot women, even though two Turkish Cypriot women were also interviewed. This is a conscious ideological and political decision. Due to lack of access to the 'other' community,[29] the Turkish Cypriot people in the occupied North, I was only able to concentrate on official statistics and my own fieldwork on Greek Cypriot women; however, the reason lies in inaccessibility and political constraints rather than personal beliefs. My interviews with the two Turkish Cypriot women (which were difficult to achieve) took place not in order to summarise the condition of women in the North (about whom little is known), but rather to indicate a further, difficult problem experienced by women because of the political and geographical division. Further, these interviews serve to point out the importance of referring to Cypriot people as the residents of this country, rather than just Greek Cypriots. However, often when people on the south of the island say 'Cypriots,'[30] they imply only the Greek Cypriots. Nevertheless, Turkish Cypriots

Wedding as Symbolic Struggle, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Maria Roussou, *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences,* University of London, Institute of Education, March 1985 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis).

[28] See for example, P. Loizos and E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991; J. Dubisch, 'The Domestic Power of Women in a Greek Island Village', *Studies in European Society,* 1 (1): 23-33, 1974; E. Friedl, *Vasilika: A Village in Modern Greece.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962; E. Stamiris, 'The Women's Movement in Greece', *New Left Review,* 158:98-112; J. Dubisch (ed.) *Gender and Power in Rural Greece,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.

[29] Of course it has only been recently that the Turkish Cypriot community has been recognized as such (at least in political terms), as opposed to a minority. Similar to Anthias, there also exist great difficulties in "gaining access to information in respect of the Turkish-Cypriot sector, as little published work is available in English, the author does not speak Turkish and, as a Greek Cypriot faces difficulties in entering the Turkish-Cypriot sector." *Op.Cit.,* 1989, p.165, footnote 1.

[30] Some people would refute this claim.

are also 'Cypriot' people; after the early 1960s though, their experiences changed sharply compared to the experiences of the Greek Cypriots. Generalising about the two communities together would be misleading in some respects. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, all statistical references in this thesis after 1974 refer to the people resident in the non-occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus -the southern part of the island- and not the occupied North. The same is valid for all other references in this piece of work, unless otherwise stated.[31]

Eden argued that "the Cyprus problem has always been an international one."[32] The Cyprus problem is a complex, political one; this is reflected in and reflects the social structure itself, and in the complexity of carrying out social research. Cyprus is currently going through a much discussed transitional period, an 'economic miracle', a 'recovery from the war', an intense shift towards 'westernisation' and so on by social analysts.[33] Christodoulou, for example, explains that until the middle of the twentieth century, the economy in Cyprus was predominantly agrarian, and that "the transformation into a high-income service economy"[34] was *compressed* into thirty to forty years. People are thus receivers of all these changes taking place, this being obvious in the sharp changes in social statistics. For example, the total divorce rate rose to 144 per thousand marriages in 1996, from 42 per thousand in 1980.[35] Women are caught in the middle of this change and are openly used to serve the economic and political purposes of the authorities. This becomes apparent in the studies having been carried out by social scientists on the island.

In the first published study concerning 'women in Cyprus,' *'The Cypriot Woman'*. Lia Mylona asks about the extent to which 'the Cypriot woman has been liberated mentally.'[36] Mylona, together with the other members of the Psycho-sociological Research Group examine and analyse the way that the Cypriot woman "thinks, reacts and feels in certain fundamental aspects of life such as marriage, the role of the married woman in the family, equal rights, politics, relations with the opposite sex, sex, religion, problems, pleasures and aspirations."[37] The writers provide a pioneering and interesting yet sometimes misleading analysis of women's attitudes on the island. They prepared a questionnaire, which includes questions such as 'Is marriage the most significant event in a woman's life?' 'If a woman does not marry is she regarded as a failure?' 'Do you feel comfortable in the presence of men?' ' Is it right for a woman to have a sexual life before marriage (when it is accompanied by an emotional bond?)', 'would you consider it humiliating for your husband if he earned less money than you?' and so on. They make rather general and 'unproblematic' statements such as 'Cypriot women base the necessity of marriage on religious and moral principles: cohabitation outside wedlock is considered immoral and sinful';[38] the concept of social pressure and stigma is not fully addressed in their work. Further, they ask "what does the Cypriot woman say,

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[31] Further explanation on the particular topic can be found in various chapters in this thesis. Also see Appendix VI, for an understanding of the parties' political position on the Cyprus issue.

[32] Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs: Full Circle*, London: Cassel, 1960, p.401.

[33] It should be pointed out here that I am referring to the non-occupied, internationally recognized southern part of the island.

[34] Demetrios Christodoulou, 'Life Chances in Cyprus; Occupational and Social Structures and Mobility viewed in Perspective', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol.7, No.1, pp.7-33, Spring 1995, p.11. He also adds that Cyprus has never become a manufacturing nation, p.12.

[35] Department of Statistics and Research: *Demographic Report 1996*, Republic of Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, Population Statistics, Series II, Report No.34, 1997.

[36] Lia Mylona et.al., *The Cypriot Woman*, 1982, p.1.

[37] *Ibid.*, p.1.

[38] *Ibid.*, p.14.

though, to the extreme feminist stand 'if women governed countries, the world would be better.'"[39] Or, "the remnants of the patriarchal way of life which continue to exercise an influence, mainly among the older and less educated women"[40] and "it cannot be stated as yet that she has been completely liberated from traditional moral taboos."[41] The attitudes of the researchers themselves, as in all studies, are clear in their work; nevertheless, this is not discussed or recognised and thus, it tends to somewhat negate the value of their study, in terms of the feminist work that I am engaging in. In fact, it tends to reinforce the sexist attitudes inherent in Cypriot society. Consequently, the feminist methodological, and epistemological approaches I am using in this thesis substantially develop and, where appropriate, modify their findings.

Markides, Rangou and Nikita conducted a fascinating study where they explore the processes of urbanism and modernity in rural Cyprus during the critical months preceding the invasion in 1974. Their study concentrates on the 'total institutional order of a Cypriot village at a period when the entire island was undergoing profound social, political and economical upheaval,'[42] and explains that the roles played by both men and women in the "Lysi family are not fundamentally different to their counterparts in other Mediterranean societies."[43] The authors explain that the woman's role in the village studied, is

> "...domestic and expressive. She has the responsibility for everything that pertains to the everyday activities of the household, such as cleaning the house, cooking, shopping, looking after the children and the domestic animals ... (Her) role can also extend to services that she may offer to the agricultural and sheep-raising activities of the family ... Her expressive role is also governed by certain moral imperatives such as obedience, respect and submission to her husband."[44]

They also point to the idea that a study of values and moral principles of Cypriot society cannot be considered outside the framework of Greek Orthodoxy. As a result of my fieldwork and extensive observation, and as argued in Chapter Four of this thesis, I suggest that the same argument is valid today; however, the phenomenon is more prevalent in rural rather than urban settings. Revealingly, the authors briefly discuss male and female public as opposed to private behaviour, adultery and fidelity, parenthood, courtship and marriage, the pre-marital socialisation of women, and the system of dowry. These are also themes that are analysed in further detail in this thesis. The study on Lysi is useful for this work, as it provides an indication of the important themes that arise within the private sphere of the home and the family. However, like almost every other study I have come across on Cyprus, information about women, is 'additional' and this might imply a page, or in the best of cases, a chapter of a book. This could be interpreted as a microcosm, as a reflection of the patriarchal society as a whole. Further, the study concerns a rural community and cannot be used to generalise about the whole of the island and especially urban communities.[45] However, it provides some useful insights since there is a little information on women and the rural culture, but it does not contribute in terms of the methods deployed, or the methodological, epistemological, and ontological questions which this study is concerned with.

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[39] *Ibid.*, p.103.

[40] *Ibid.*, p.129.

[41] *Ibid.*, p.119.

[42] K. Markides, E. Nikita, & E. Rangou, *Lysi: Social Change in a Cypriot Village*, Nicosia, 1978, Forward.

[43] *Ibid.*, p.85.

[44] *Ibid.*, p.85-86.

[45] This is further discussed throughout the thesis.

In an important regional study conducted to look at the impact of urbanisation on urban and rural areas of Cyprus, *Social Change and Urbanisation in Cyprus,* Michael Attalides uses Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus as the focus in order to describe social change on the island. In his attempt to analyse migration and stratification he uses four class divisions, in which housewives for example, are conveniently excluded.[46] In fact, women are almost completely ignored in his study, as only 'heads of households' were interviewed. "The 826 households surveyed were found to contain 3302 individuals who besides the 816 heads of households were 727 wives living with their husbands."[47] In his work, he regularly refers to men as 'individuals' and women are simply not included: "it is rare for individuals to come to Nicosia as married men who have left their family behind in the village."[48] Further, he states that "women are frequently more attached to traditional patterns than their husbands are and this may hinder the husband's upward status mobility."[49] Attalides's study is both very informative and useful, but only as far as men are concerned, and therefore does not provide a balanced picture of Cyprus in the 1980s.

In *The Greek Gift,*[50] the social anthropologist Peter Loizos studies mainly political leadership in a small Cypriot village. Women are scarcely mentioned in his study, with an exception on the chapter on work, where Loizos covers status factors in work by women in less than two pages. Later on, in a very interesting and widely cited study of Cypriot refugees, *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot Refugees,* he comments on this omission, arguing that,

> "...women were almost invisible and quite inaudible in The Greek Gift, even though I was better placed than most male field workers to explore their situation, for I had kinswomen with whom I conversed. The explanation for this omission is, of course, one of 'male bias' - not mine alone, but also that of the men of Argaki, who made it clear to me that the kind of kinsman they wanted was the kind who spent his time with other men. The difficulty with one's own biases is becoming aware of them, and in 1968 it did not occur to me that in a study of politics the relative absence of women was in itself a challenging problem. By 1975 my ears were open to the sirens of women's studies, and I hope that Argaki's women are now both more prominent and in better voice."[51]

In this work, there are more extensive references to women, which provide very useful information but once more, knowledge about women is secondary and added to that about men and it is only indirectly and remotely related to my study.

More recently, in 1991, Loizos together with Papataxiarchis[52] published a collection of papers on gender and kinship in modern Greece, where the construction of sexual identity is explored, and its complexity and diversity is demonstrated. Most of the authors provide insightful discussions on women that can be usefully applied in the case of Cyprus, and are used in this piece

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[46] For example, he says, "the excluded respondents were 9 who were unemployed, 54 who were retired, and 19 who were housewives." Michael Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanization in Cyprus; A Study of Nicosia,* Cyprus 1981, p.173.

[47] *Ibid.*, p.143.

[48] *Ibid.*, p.146.

[49] *Ibid.*, p.11-12.

[50] Peter Loizos, *The Greek Gift: Politics in a Cypriot Village,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975.

[51] Peter Loizos, *The Heart Brown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot Refugees,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981, p.194 (Appendix I).

[52] Peter Loizos & Evthymios Papataxiarchis, *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece,* Princeton University Press, 1991.

of work. The discussions by Jill Dubisch on kinship and religion, Jane K. Cowan on gendered sociability, and Loizos and Papataxiarchis on gender and sexuality have been particularly useful in this study. Nevertheless, as stated above, due to the different set of experiences -historical, cultural, social- of women here as a group, they can provide guidelines for this study but not the basis of it.

Social anthropologist Vassos Argyrou (1997) uses the cultural celebration of weddings in Cyprus to explore how "societies, like individuals, become subjects in Foucault's sense of the term, that is, how they tie themselves to a particular identity and submit in this way to other, more powerful societies."[53] Argyrou poses important questions about "such ubiquitous notions as the West and the politics of globalizing processes like Westernisation"[54] and argues that Greek Cypriots express, "enact, and inadvertently reproduce a historical experience of symbolic domination - the recognition that their cultural identity is inferior to that of the countries of Western Europe and North America."[55] Argyrou's study is interesting and comprehensive. The analysis of his questions and problems associated with being an Cypriot academic studying people in the island, has helped me considerably with my own experiences of isolation as a researcher and a social scientist, and I identified with a number of the points he makes in his work. He argues, for example, that "I was a stranger among friends and a friend among strangers, not too close but not too distant either - the predicament of the 'native' anthropologist (or is it an advantage?)."[56] I found many of his observations helpful, especially the chapter on 'The Dialectics for Symbolic Domination' which explores the 'antagonism between men and women', and the way in which Cypriots constitute themselves as Western subjects. Argyrou argues that "through the notion of modernity Cypriots express, enact, and inadvertently reproduce a historical relation of domination that ties them to the West."[57]

Nevertheless, the study was clearly carried out by a man; a Cypriot man. Some of the quotations he uses from the people he interviewed or had contact with, are not quotations that I would have been able to use. They are sexist comments from men, talking about women to other men,[58] and thus I would not get to hear them directly, especially if one were aware of the work I am involved in. Questions of both methodology and epistemology rise from this type of experience, especially in terms of whether feminist work should be carried out only by women. These concerns are dealt with in Chapter Two. I am a Cypriot academic, like Argyrou, working within the sphere of the social sciences in Cyprus, but above all, I am a woman, and I am carrying out feminist work. I would not use or accept comments such as "a young blond",[59] and "the mother was wearing what seemed to be her Sunday best ... thus exposing the rounded belly so characteristic of middle-aged, village, and working-class women"[60] which I find, carry certain implications and create overgeneralisations and thus unnecessary stereotypes.

Overall, the limited amount of literature on Cyprus in general, and on women in particular, has created many difficulties for my work. Despite the vast number of publications on, for, and by

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[53] Vassos Argyrou, *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle,* Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.1; see also Michael Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977,* edited by Colin Cordon, New York: Panthcon, 1980.

[54] Argyrou, *Op.Cit.*, p.2.

[55] *Ibid.*, p.2.

[56] *Ibid.*, p.23.

[57] *Ibid.*, p.171.

[58] *Ibid.*, see for example pages 174-175.

[59] *Ibid.*, p.175.

[60] *Ibid.*, p.144.

women in other countries, which I have studied, I found the task of describing women's experiences on the island and the complexities of the formation of their identities, very difficult. In a sense, this problem, together with the complete isolation resulting from being a part-time, doctoral student with a full time job, doing *feminist* research in Cyprus, being unable to discuss this work, or give drafts of it to other people to read, I have felt on numerous occasions, that I am faced with an impossible task. The thesis is essentially an exploratory piece of research with the inherent limitations that this implies. However, the strong, personal and political conviction that what I am dealing with is important, has given me the energy to do this work.

2. Themes and Questions

I find describing the many different realities of women's experiences in Cyprus an incredibly complex concept. The intense transitional period in Cypriot society[61] means that there is a vast number of people who follow 'traditional' values and morality, found commonly in Mediterranean. Christian Orthodox/Islamist, and small-island societies.[62] At the same time, there is a large number of people who oppose these attitudes and beliefs and reject past modes of thinking and practices. Both categories face stressful dilemmas on an everyday basis. Broadly speaking, the first category is 'trapped' into the 'known', the 'old fashioned' and the 'non progressive' world of the small island and the latter is destined to be criticised and looked down upon for the changes towards a 'western mode of morality (or immorality)'.[63] There is a struggle between the sought after, 'Western/European standards' and the 'good-old Cypriot', 'moral' way of thinking and going about things.

Further, there is the rise of a feminist consciousness amongst certain groups of women.[64] There is a growing sexual revolution among some women, but at the same time, other women of the same age and class groups talk about the gift of virginity and family honour[65] and how this should be safeguarded only for the husband. There are sharply contrasting views. There are old women in black, whose granddaughters live under the same roof and marry at sixteen to fulfil their purpose in life and be good mothers and 'proper' wives, and who look after the house and go to church; and then, other granddaughters who study abroad, have numerous sexual experiences and look forward to a career and an independent life:

> "There seems no longer to be anything in common between the life of the young girl who rides a motorised bike where she likes, goes to the lyceum, the university or her work, goes

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[61] Discussed extensively in the thesis, especially in Chapter Three and Part II.

[62] See Markides et al., *Lysi: Social Change in a Cypriot Village.* Nicosia, 1978; J.G. Peristianis, *Honour and Shame: the Values of Mediterranean Society,* The University of Chicago Press, 1966; J.K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964.

[63] These are the expressions and phrases used in the island by the people themselves. Accusations from members of one category to the other, vary from '*ise telia piso pou ton kosmo*', literary meaning 'you are totally behind the world', to the sad realization '*then eginamen akoma evropaioi*' , 'we have not become Europeans yet'. See discussion on notions of Westernisation by Argyrou, *Op.Cit.* Also Chapter Eight in this thesis.

[64] This will be supported and discussed throughout the thesis, especially in Chapter Six.

[65] See extensive analysis on honour in J.G. Peristianis (ed.), *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965.

> out in evening with friends, collects amorous conquests, and the restraint her mother or grandmother experienced at the same age. *But we must look beyond appearances.*"[66]

These women share the same cultural heritage, history, language and religion. And they live next door to each other, or sometimes in the same house.[67] In Cyprus, there are little more than half a million people and intense differences in morality. An interviewee told me that "In Cyprus, you get all sorts of people, in *extremes*. It's like the weather. It varies from –5 to 45 degrees. Every year. It is like that, you know."[68] Is it like that?

There are also great discrepancies in terms of the rural and urban female population, especially the women in Nicosia, not only in terms of lifestyles but also in terms of attitudes. However, despite the apparent contradictions of opinions and attitudes, my research and long-term observation have led me to conclude that the actual practices of women seem to be strikingly similar. The oppressive nature of patriarchy on the island, combined with a number of socio-political factors which are explored throughout the thesis, dominate all aspects of life for women who seem to have been unable until present day, to escape. Some struggle more than others, but diversity of lifestyles is minimal. Individuality is not well tolerated on the island, and encouragement of critical thinking and freedom of expression, through the educational system, for example, is scarce and limited.[69]

My research indicates that feminism in Cyprus, even for the self-admitted feminists, is generally not conceived as a way of being and experiencing the world (*praxis*), but rather as an active participation in public life and a keen interest for changes in the law rather than in attitudes. Many of them/us live lives that are different to their/our feminist ideologies and would rather suffer in silence rather than get a divorce. Many of them/us are shocked if a woman chooses to say that she has had an abortion, that she has been sexually harassed, or that she prefers to live with someone rather than get married. Many will gossip[70] at the implication of a woman having been raped and indirectly, rather than directly, put the blame on the victim.[71] Many support cohabitation rather than marriage, but very few live with their partners without immediate wedding plans and engagement. Many support the idea of sexual experiences for women 'before marriage', but some condemn women who have a number of sexual partners and secretly (or openly) look up to men for the same reason. In the closed society of Cyprus, conformity is only sought and respected but also demanded and made 'necessary' for the survival of women.

The extremes of attitudes and experiences of women were intensified after the war of 1974.[72] Women experienced a devastating change of their pre-existing patterns of social structure and organisation and have been forced into forming new ones. One hundred and sixty four thousand Greek Cypriot refugees had to leave the invaded north side of the island and settle in the south

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[66] Anne-Marie Quastana and Sylvia Casanova, 'Women and Corsican Identity', in Monique Gadant, *Women of the Mediterranean,* Zed Books, 1986, p.158-9, my italics.

[67] The Cypriot family is further discussed in Chapter Four.

[68] *Personal Conversation with Author,* Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

[69] See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Penguin, 1993, for a discussion on the 'culture of silence'.

[70] For a brief discussion on feminism and 'gossiping', see Evelyne Accad, 'Sexuality and Sexual Politics; Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary Women in the Middle East', in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Lourdes Torres (eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism.* Indiana University Press, 1991, p.241-2. See also extensive discussion in Chapter Six of this work.

[71] See Chapter Seven, Interview with Melanie (Case Study Three).

[72] See Chapter Three.

together with the thirty five thousand non-refugees. Twenty-five thousand Turkish Cypriots were forced to migrate from the South to the North. A number of family ties were cut and people were left without homes and land; women were also left without husbands, and there are still 1619 men missing on the Greek Cypriot side and others on the Turkish Cypriot side. Consequently, new social relationships had to be formed and, with the mourning and loss, adjustments had to be made. In a report commissioned by the Cyprus Committee for the International Women's Year to assess the status and role of the Cypriot woman, Papadopoulos writes: "it is plainly evident that the Cypriot woman's share of the incidences of the invasion has been, in some respects, heavier than that of man, and in a programme of reconstruction her part of task and toil will be specially absorbing."[73] This thesis explores the 'tasks' of women in Cyprus in the 1990s, as they themselves interpret them and the way they act upon these interpretations.

2.1. Defining the Thesis and Myself

The main concern of the thesis is these 'missing' women's attitudes and practices. Through interviews with middle-class women (some of whom are interested in 'women's issues') who reside in Nicosia, concentration is paid on their experiences of family life, marriage, motherhood, morality, and sexuality, through 'entering their homes'. Discussion is devoted firstly on ways in which the socio-political, economical, and legal systems treat women; later, an analysis of women's attitudes concerning the above follows. Most importantly, the commonalities, differences, and contradictions of women's attitudes and practices are explored. Finally, gender awareness, feminist consciousness, identity and opinion are discussed.

Initially, I was interested in studying attitudes, but eventually I became involved in trying to capture the ways and the extent to which these women, if so, are influenced, limited, restricted and controlled by their environment into specific patterns of behaviour and practices. As the feminist movement in Cyprus is still in embryonic form, I chose an 'elite' group of women who can afford certain time, money, and have had the opportunity to be exposed to feminist ideas. Some of these women are openly and actively involved in "women's issues" and/or work for the community, and/or identify themselves as feminists.[74] As most studies concerning Cyprus until now concentrate on rural communities and urbanisation, people in cities, and especially women, have been totally neglected as 'subjects for research'. The social anthropological fascination with 'studying the natives' has left little or no information on half of the population in Cyprus, especially the lives of middle-class women in urban settings.[75] My initial assumption was that since the women mentioned above were regarded as somewhat 'privileged' by society in general (due to their class, education, financial situation, place of residency, and opportunities) and other women in particular, they would also be less restricted by patriarchy (in terms of class, for example), and more likely to express feminist beliefs and practices.[76] However, no information existed on the lives, attitudes, and experiences of

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[73] Cyprus Research Centre, *Cypriot Woman: Rise and Downfall,* Nicosia, 1975, p.2.

[74] See Sample Analysis in Appendix.

[75] For an interesting discussion on anthropology and the woman as a 'native', look at Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Introduction – Cartographics of Struggle, Third World Women, and the Politics of Feminism,' in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Loudres Torres (eds.), *Third World Feminism and the Politics of Feminism,* Indiana University Press, 1991, pp.31-32.

[76] "...These women, clearly are privileged in relation to others: their education, work experience and family incomes enable them to exercise their own discretion in various areas of their lives to a greater extent than can most women", Diana Woodward & Lynne Chisholm, 'The Expert's View? The Sociological Analysis of Graduates' Occupational and Domestic Roles', in Helen Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research,* Routledge, 1981, p.181; see also Joyce Pettigrew, 'Reminiscences of

these women, and my aim became to find out who they were, what they thought, and eventually, what they did.[77]

In this thesis I set out to study attitudes and practices through twenty-five semi-structured, in-depth interviews with women and (participant) observation. I prepared a set of thirty-nine questions[78] based on what I had studied about Cypriot women and the particular topics I was mostly interested in exploring. More specifically, I concentrated on the 'private' sphere of the family and the home, with questions on marriage, family, motherhood, sexuality, and morality. Concentrating on the private sphere does not imply the exclusion of the public sphere. Rather, the latter is reflected on the former, and vice versa. Thus, the thesis studies the private and the public sphere in conjunction with one another.

As a 'pilot' study, I gave the questionnaire to a friend in order to discuss her reflections on it. Then, I had a female colleague ask me the questions, which I answered as I would during an interview. Being a Cypriot woman, and answering the questions to another woman I did not know well, was a very useful exercise as it gave me some insight into the situation which I would be putting my interviewees. Later, I administered the questionnaire/interview to a woman who was involved with research work in the past and who gave me valuable feedback. Some of the initial questions were, afterwards, changed, or erased altogether. The twenty-five 'subjects' for the interviews were women I had met in various groups, associations and organisations which were directly or indirectly related to 'women's issues', and women I was introduced to by acquaintances and friends, and who 'fitted' the description of my sample; that is, women were selected through snowballing.[79] Similar to Ryan, even though I had a clear idea of who I wanted to interview, "some modifications were adopted during the course of the research"[80] since, some of the potential interviewees were unable to participate in the end or, in the case of Turkish Cypriot women, were unable to meet me at the 'Green Line' (due to the fact that the Turkish Cypriot authorities would not grant them permission). In Appendix IV, a list of the interviewees with a brief profile on each one is given, as well as a description of the setting of the interview. In general, they were all middle class women who lived in the capital of Cyprus, Nicosia. I am using 'middle class' in a broad sense to point to a combination of their level of education, financial security, standard of living, and in most cases occupation. Their ages were nineteen to forty-five. Twenty-one of them were Greek Cypriot, two were Turkish Cypriot, one was Armenian, and one was a Maronite[81]. Eleven of them were

Fieldwork Among the Sikhs', Helen Roberts, *Op.Cit.*, for a related discussion on the reasons for choosing to study the 'powerful' rather than the 'powerless'.

[77] See relevant arguments in Cynthia Enloe, *Making Feminist Sense of International Politics: Bananas, Beaches, and Bases,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989: "By portraying all women in Third World societies as sewing jeans, not buying jeans, as prostitutes, not as social workers and activists, we again under-estimate the complex relationships it takes to sustain the current international political system" p. 199.

[78] See Appendix III.

[79] "The researcher identifies one or more individuals from the population of interest. After they have been interviewed, they are used as informants to identify other members of the population, who are themselves used as informants, and so on. This is useful approach when there is difficulty in identifying members of the population." Colin Robson, *Real World Research; A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers,* ' Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p.142.

[80] Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement, Ideology, and Activism,* New York: Routledge, 1992, p.6.

[81] The Turkish Cypriot women were interviewed in English, since my first language is Greek, and theirs is Turkish. On certain instances they found it uncomfortable since they "did not know how to explain it in English." There are obvious limitations in this type of interviewing (see, for example,

involved in voluntary work or associations and groups that deal with women's problems and rights. The rest did not express a particular interest in women's issues. Some of them were married; others single, engaged, or cohabiting. I have heard, known, or read about an extremely small minority of women who cohabit with their partners. One of the women was cohabiting without being engaged during my fieldwork.[82] There was no divorced woman in the sample; however, throughout the fieldwork, the experiences of a middle-class, divorced woman with the church and her ex-husband were recorded and explored.[83]

In many ways, I fit the description of my interviewees in that I am a middle-class, educated woman, and I live in Nicosia. I have always lived in urban, middle-class areas, even though there are elements of working class in my background that for a long time I despised and wanted to escape. I was raised in a conservative, 'right-wing' setting with little money and firm ideas about morality. As an adolescent, I felt (and was) restricted and oppressed by a strongly patriarchal household and community; influenced by western media and the dominant ideology, I always kept saying how I wanted to 'get out of Cyprus'. Due to a large financial burden on the part of my parents, both of whom are civil servants. I studied in the United Kingdom as both an undergraduate and a postgraduate sociology student. There, I consciously interacted with people of various cultures and interests. Upon my return to Cyprus, and very affected by my experiences as a student abroad and my initiation into feminist ideas, I found coping with the lifestyle in Cyprus very difficult. The last ten years have witnessed an intense transformation and change in society, evident in every sphere of life. In the four years I was away, I felt I had returned to a different place, and I was shocked. The place had changed and I had changed. As a woman, and a feminist, I have faced difficulties and have struggled with the contradictions in my everyday life and experiences in Cyprus, since my return. I have drawn information and conclusions for my work, primarily through the twenty-five semi-structured, in-depth interviews I carried out, but also through intense (participant) observation in many organisations, associations, and groups in which, together with some of my interviewees, I have been involved. Most importantly, I have gained invaluable, important experiences for my personal life and academic research in this country.

Firstly, I was a volunteer at the centre of the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence from October 1994, that is, before I started working on my thesis, until December 1997. After a ten-week training period on basic counselling skills, my responsibilities lay in answering telephone calls on a twenty-four-hour 'emergency' line on a weekly basis. I received numerous telephone calls every week and every case was different. At the same time, almost every case was the same in that abused women, psychologically and physically, cried for help. Help would frequently be provided either through 'talking' or through more direct and active measures, such as giving advice to the caller on her rights in legal and civil terms, accompanying her to the police, to the court, and, in the 'worst of cases', to the hospital.

I was also one of the 'founding' members of the Association for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace. The term sexual harassment was rarely used – if ever- in Cyprus, and it was not recognised as a social problem or even phenomenon. One of the members of the group. who was also a Member of Parliament discussed the issue at the parliament, was laughed at and

relevant discussion on the relationships between the researcher and the researched, and how these are shaped by ethnic differences, in Miri Song & David Parker, 'Commonality, Difference, and the Dynamics of Disclosure in in-Depth Interviewing', *Sociology*, May 1995); however, I felt that the exclusion of Turkish Cypriot women from the thesis though would have been worse (in terms of the political and social implications it would carry). This is further discussed in the thesis.

[82] When Aspasia mentioned this woman, she referred to her as someone who was 'engaged for a very long time.' The process, meaning and implications of engagement is explained later in the thesis, in Chapter Four, as it constitutes an important 'rite of passage' in Cyprus.

[83] See Chapter Four.

ignored. One male MP publicly claimed that "it is women who harass men." When other members of the initial group and I talked about it in the Fall of 1996, we were also faced with sarcasm and laughter. I recall being told on numerous occasions how "only the *gomenes [good-looking, 'sexy', sometimes promiscuous and 'provocative' women]* and those asking for it get harassed. In fact, they are not really harassed but complimented, in a way."

Further, due to my active interest in women's issues, my counselling training, and my position as a lecturer of sociology at a college in Cyprus, I became part of an informal counselling/support group for students who often approached me with personal problems. The majority have been women and the problems have varied from stress about exams to sexual abuse within the home. All the students I have contacted in this context are aware of my involvement in 'feminist research on women in Cyprus'; on some occasions I have asked them –where I have felt it was appropriate- whether I could use what they say 'for my study'. I found discussions with these students both rewarding, where I could be of assistance, and helpful for my work.

Finally, I have been involved in a Bicommunal Women's Group. I am a member of a peace movement and bicommunal activities in Cyprus, whose purpose is to bring the two communities, which are currently divided, together. I am a member of the Bicommunal Women's Group, who meet about once a month (as from February 1998, no meetings have taken place due to the Turkish Cypriot leader who will not allow Turkish Cypriots to attend these meetings at the buffer zone) due to both their interests in peace and women's issues. Most of these women call themselves feminists and some do not. I have regularly attended the meetings because of my personal ideological and political conviction in the work that is being done, but also for my work. All the women in the group are aware of the academic work I am involved in, and four of them expressed a keen interest in it.

In conclusion, during the period of my fieldwork and research, I was actively involved in various aspects of society which directly relate to the issues this work is concerned with; I have gained invaluable primary experience from the women I interacted with. The challenge exists in trying to describe, analyse and explore the data I have gathered as both an insider and an outsider at the same time. The biggest difficulty rises in trying to discuss the manifest and the latent, and in clarifying who, the women in my sample, speak for, as I share a lot of common social characteristics with them. By drawing a picture of my identity in terms of sex, race, class, and ideology, I am pointing to a conscious recognition that this can and does affect my 'findings' in this thesis.[84] As a researcher carrying out this piece of work, I explain and *explore* throughout this work both my involvement in the specific women's groups and my choice of the particular women involved in the interviews. If part of this study is argued by some to be a research of myself, then by acknowledging explicitly my 'subject position,' I also demonstrate a 'strong objectivity.'[85] If, further, coming to conclusions is treated as a social process, it can be demonstrated that interpretation is a political and unstable process between the lives of the researchers and those of the researched. "Interpretation needs somehow to unite a passion for 'truth' with explicit rules of research method that can make some conclusions stronger than others."[86] Indeed, some truths can be argued to be less partial than others, something that I am hoping to demonstrate throughout the thesis.

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[84] Liz Stanley & Sue Wise, *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*, London: Routledge, 1993, p.228.

[85] Nickie Charles, 'Feminist Practices: Identity, Difference, Power', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practicing Feminism: Identity, Difference, Power*, Routledge, 1996, p.30.

[86] Janet Holland & Caroline Ramazanoglu, 'Coming to Conclusions: Power and Interpretation in Researching Young Women's Sexuality' in Mary Maynard and June Purvis (eds.), *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*, London: Taylor and Francis, 1994, p.127.

3. Summarising the Thesis

This thesis is essentially an exploratory study. An inductive rather than a deductive approach is adopted, aiming towards the interpretation of observation; thus, although feminist epistemology and methodology are used, a particular hypothesis is not tested. Rather, an application and critique to already developed feminist perspectives is offered. The field of women's studies within the academic sphere in Cyprus has very recently emerged and the existing literature is very limited. A number of articles or small-scale surveys have taken place and those concentrate on the position of women in Cyprus in terms of paid labour, educational level, and legal status. However, in this present work, I am carrying out research on the attitudes and practices of Cypriot women in the 1990s. This topic has not been researched before although there are rare instances of studies concentrating on women in the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities. Further, the feminist perspective -as opposed to traditional anthropological and sociological approaches- adopted for this work challenges the existing limited literature on the field. This is undoubtedly a new area within the sphere of sociological work on Cyprus and a number of academics in Cyprus and abroad have welcomed my interest on the specific topic.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out the "urgency and necessity to rethink feminist praxis and theory within a cross-cultural, international framework."[87] It is this *struggle between feminist praxis and feminist theory*[88] that I will be looking at, not in terms of what individual women have done throughout the generations, but rather, the everyday struggle that women in Cyprus have in order to survive in a place where they have constantly been denied a voice and opportunities throughout the ages. This thesis examines the dilemmas and difficulties they have faced in a society where they are expected to be passive, and the identities which they have formed; the paradoxes that have been created in these women's lives because of it; and the conflict between who they are and, if allowed, who they would like to be. This ethical question arising from knowing what they want but being too afraid to go out and get it, and the guilt associated with it will be also examined, as will be the fight between their emotions and the reality of their existence, the distance between their lives and their dreams.

This work is separated into three parts. The first part, "Women in Cyprus – The House's Facade" introduces the research undertaken and the position of women in Cypriot society as recorded by other writers, given by official sources, and formed by institutions. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study, its objectives, and the problems associated with these. Chapter Two analyses the methodological and theoretical concerns related to feminist research in general, and how these, if so, apply to this work in particular. It describes the steps followed and the methods used for the research. Chapter Three looks at the history and contemporary lives of women on the island and explores what is officially (and publicly) 'known' about them in relation to both the private and the public spheres.

The second part, 'Attitudes of Women in Cyprus – Through the Front Door', concentrates on the fieldwork that has been carried out and gives an in-depth analysis of women's attitudes and practices on the island. It analyses the data gathered after the field work and, thus, deals with the images and definitions that women themselves have given about their position in Cypriot society and

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[87] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Introduction – Cartographies of Struggle, Third World Women, and the Politics of Feminism,' in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Loudres Torres (eds.), *Third World Feminism and the Politics of Feminism,* Indiana University Press, 1991, p.39.

[88] See discussion by Laurie A. Rhodebeck, 'The Structure of Men's and Women's Feminist Orientations; Feminist Identity and Feminist Opinion', in *Gender and Society, Vol.10 No.4, August 1996,* pp. 386-403; also, Nickie Charles, 'Feminist Practices: Identity, Difference, Power', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland, *Op.Cit.,* 1996.

the meanings that they attach to concepts such as 'women', 'feminism', 'liberation', and 'gender equality.' In particular, Chapter Four analyses women's understanding and experience of family and marriage, and questions associated with both. Chapter Five looks at issues of morality and sexuality. Chapter Six analyses women's definitions and attitudes on gender relations, feminism, egalitarianism, and patriarchy. The practices of these women are explored in depth. Chapter Seven concentrates on three case studies in particular to put further support to the arguments presented in the study.

Finally, the third part, 'Concluding Thoughts' discusses the conclusions that arise from the work undertaken. The findings of this thesis are mixed: modernity and tradition have produced conflicting forces of continuity and change. Further, three levels of contradictions have been identified in this thesis: first, the contradiction between the conflicting images and messages presented to women in Cypriot society; second, the inherent contradictions between women's attitudes and practices in patriarchal structures; and, finally, the diverse *kinds* of contradictions among urban, middle-class women in the sample themselves, and whose experiences and interpretations of gender relations and patriarchy vary immensely. Furthermore, some women's experience of pressure to conform is so strong as to prevent them from expressing their beliefs and act upon them. In fact, it has become imperative for Cypriot women to negotiate between the two in order to tread a fine line between agency and oppression and that this is a very problematic place to be.

Chapter II
Feminist Research in Cyprus: Methodological and Theoretical Guidelines

1. Introduction

This chapter deals with important methodological and theoretical questions of feminist research and my personal concerns about various feminist issues. Thus, it provides the framework for this thesis by addressing the significant debates within the literature, which are related to the identification, assimilation, understanding, and explanation of the dominant trends which my research identifies, through its examination of the attitudes and practices of women in Cyprus. I start by discussing some of the dominant questions in epistemological, methodological, and theoretical debates, with an emphasis on whether we should be carrying out research on, by and for women. I explore the use of qualitative methods in feminist research with concentration on interviewing and I address the issues of objectivity, subjectivity, and power relations in my work.

Feminism has challenged the universality of male accounts inherent in Enlightenment thinking and the view of science that results from it. According to the basic idea of the Enlightenment and its thinkers, a universal foundation for 'objective' knowledge could only materialise through reason. The power attributed to reason has allowed social (and natural) scientists to have a strong hold over the objects of their research through positivism and rationalism. Since feminism is itself a cultural product of a particular historical period,[1] just like the Enlightenment, it appeared at a time when these ideas proved incomplete and unable to satisfy certain groups of people, in order to challenge existing modes of thinking. Feminism itself does not have a universally agreed-upon definition; it is so diverse that it can be very difficult to describe. All interpretations of feminism, however, agree with the same basic assertion that men oppress women and that something ought to be done about it in order to create a 'better' world. In fact, defining feminism is a 'question of taking a political stance'[2] about women's common experiences of oppression (even though such a statement does not imply that they share the same experiences)[3] and thus challenges much that is taken for granted as natural, normal, and desirable in the world. Therefore, feminism is about what we experience, how we think about this experience, and what we do about it in terms of a socio-political struggle.[4]

New-wave feminism has evolved substantially since the 1970s when notions of the universality of terms such as 'sisterhood' and 'woman' dominated feminist thinking. It has redefined and emphasised the very general subordination of women to men and turned it into a political issue in many new ways.[5] A notable number of new concepts have made their appearance and stimulated vivid debates amongst feminists themselves but also anti/non-feminists: essentialism, social constructionism, feminist method, methodology, epistemology, ontology, empiricism, standpoint theory, postmodernism, relativism, objectivity/subjectivity, contradiction, deconstruction, discourse; the list is lengthening. The arguments, debates, and analysis of these concepts have dominated

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[1] Caroline Ramazanoglou, *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression,* Routledge, 1989, p.21.

[2] *Ibid.*, p.7.

[3] See, for example, discussion by Jane Cowan, 'Being a Feminist in Contemporary Greece; Similarity and Difference Reconsidered', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practicing Feminism; Identity, Difference, Power,* Routledge, 1996.

[4] The question of whether feminist research should be a political movement is discussed later in this chapter.

[5] Ramazonoglu, *Op.Cit.*

current feminist work and literature. What follows is an overview of *some* of the main points feminists have contributed in recent scholarly work, as "feminist ideas do constitute a body of social theory and any effective connection between feminism and women's liberation needs a convincing social theory."[6] The social theory of feminism has taken up the extremely difficult task of helping people to share a dream of a better world and has introduced new ways of thinking which were not possible/allowed before. Consequently, women's diverse voices have encountered considerable problems in making themselves heard and have raised fundamental problems of explanation. It is to these diverse ways of interpreting the world that I turn to next in order to understand how these apply in the case of women in Cyprus.

2. Feminist Theory

There exist certain 'classic' theoretical feminist positions concerning the understanding of women's subordination and ways to achieve emancipation. This does not imply that all feminist perspectives can be included in these categories, or that these categories are rigid and distinct. Rather, this is simply a way of categorising feminist thought for the sake of analysis and explanation. The categories (according to many feminists) are liberal (Reformist),[7] radical (revolutionary),[8] and Marxist feminism.[9] One could also argue for Third World / (post) colonial feminism, socialist,[10] psychoanalytic,[11] existentialist,[12] post-modern feminism,[13] and so on. The

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[6] *Ibid.*, p.43.

[7] See Betty Friedan, *The Feminist Mystique,* New York: Dell, 1974; Elaine Showalter, *Women's Liberation and Literature,* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971; Mary Woolstoncraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (ed.) Carol H.Poston, New York: W. W. Norton, 1975; John Stuart Mill & Harriet Taylor Mill, *Essays on Sex Equality,* Alice S. Rossi (ed.), Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970.

[8] See Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex,* New York: Bantam Books, 1970; Andrea Dowrkin, *Right-Wing Women,* New York; Coward-McCann, 1983; Ann Oakely, *Woman's Work: The Housewife, Past and Present,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1974; Marilyn French, *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals,* New York: Summit Books, 1985; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics,* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970; Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape,* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975.

[9] See Michele Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis,* London: Verso. 1980; Teresa Amott & Julie Mattaei, 'Comparable Worth, Incomparable Pay', *Radical America,* 18(5), September-October 1984, pp.21-28.; Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness. Man's World,* Baltimore, Md: Penguin Books, 1973; Kate Young, Carol Wolkowitz, & Roslyn McCullagh (eds.), *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination in International Perspective,* London: CSE Books, 1981.

[10] See Alison Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature,* Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allenheld, 1983; Heidi Hartmann, 'Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex,' in *Signs: Journal of Women in Society and Culture* 1(3), Part Two, 1976, pp. 773-776; Heidi Hartmann, 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union', in Lydia Sargent (ed.), *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism,* pp.1-41, Boston: South End Press, 1981; Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1971.

[11] See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982; Karen Horney, *Feminine Psychology,* New York: W.W. Norton, 1973; Nancy Chodorow, 'Family Structure and Feminine Personality', in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo & Louise Lamphere (eds.),

following discussion is an attempt to situate Cypriot women within some of these categories and to understand how some of the categories apply, if at all, to this study.

2.1. A Case of Liberal Feminism?

Liberal feminism has its roots in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1799), John Stuart Mill, and Harriet Taylor, all of whom argued for the same civil rights and economic opportunities for men and women.[14] It argues that the observable differences between men and women are not innate/biological, but rather a result of socialisation and gender conditioning. It is organised around campaigns for equal rights for women – that is, for women to have the same citizenship rights as men:[15] equal pay, equal choices for education, health care and work, equal civil rights. The reformist ('conservative') position of liberal feminism has been heavily criticised for failing to understand women's experiences, for not identifying the relations between the sexes as specific power relations,[16] for not challenging the use of concepts developed to explore society from a masculinist perspective. Furthermore, it has been criticised for not questioning the foundations of existing theories.[17]

In the current situation of Cyprus, I argue that liberal feminist policies can be partly linked to efforts for accession into the European Union. There have been questions raised, concerning equal rights for the two sexes, and changes in the law made, because of it (see Chapter Three for a comprehensive discussion). There is not, however, a powerful movement at this point in Cyprus that gives special emphasis to women's rights and equality. In fact, at the moment there is not even a 'women's centre' in Cyprus. Rather, some organisations have appeared (and disappeared) within the last two decades, which indirectly deal with women's most urgent concerns. In the early 1940s, the first working women's associations, which proposed effective reforms to improve the conditions of

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Women, Culture, and Society, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1974; Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism,* New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

[12] See Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1984; *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* New York: Citadel Press, 1967; *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter,* trans. James Kirkup, Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books, 1963; *The Prime of Life,* trans. Peter Green, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1965; *The Second Sex,* (trans. and ed.). H.M. Parshley, New York: Vintage Book, 1974.

[13] See Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is Not One,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985; Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985; Helene Cixous, 'Castration or Decapitation?', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 7(1), 1981, pp. 41-55.; Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medousa', in Elaine Marks & Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.), *New French Feminisms,* pp. 245-264., New York: Schocken Books, 1981; Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language,* trans. Leon Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982; Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7(1), 19181, pp.13-35.

[14] See Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* (ed.) Carol H. Poston, New York: W.W. Norton, 1975; Harriet Taylor Mill, 'Enfranchisement of Women', in John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, *Essays on Sex Equality,* (ed.) Alice S. Rossi, pp. 89-122, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970; John Stuart Mill, 'The Subjection of Women', *Ibid.,* pp. 123-242.

[15] Pamela Abbott & Claire Wallace, *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives,* Routledge, 1990, p.212-3.

[16] Sandra Harding, *Op. Cit.*, p.11.

[17] There is some debate about whether or not it should be included in the definition of feminism.

working women, were formed. Nevertheless, it was not until 1975 that the unions began to get organised in women's sections in order to secure better working conditions for women. It is interesting to stress here that this development took place directly after the war of 1974 and its detrimental consequences for women.

Three years later, an independent organisation was formed which acted as a pressure group for the government to do research on gender inequality,[18] create a department that would undertake the responsibility of dealing with women's issues (this came into effect in May 1988 and was reformed in 1994, with the National Machinery for the Advancement of Women, under the auspices of the Minister of Justice and Public Order),[19] and introduce changes in the legal system, especially in family law. This organisation was called Pancyprian Movement Equal Rights-Equal Responsibilities; it represented a dynamic and vocal group of women who were interested in women's rights and it was the foundation for a number of changes that were to take place later on. In 1980, nineteen associations founded the Cyprus Commission of Non-Governmental Organisations for the UN Decade for Women. This Commission pressurised the government into forming a Government Committee for the UN Decade for Women in which some non-governmental organisations participate. It was reformed in 1986 when it became an official governmental department under the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. In 1988, an Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence was founded to offer direct help to victims of violence, mainly women. A Centre with a Hotline run by volunteers was established later to deal with the extreme demand. Both the Association and the Centre are partly funded by the Department of Labour. A shelter is now being organised for battered women but it at this moment there is nowhere for abused women to gain refuge –due to lack of funding. According to the government, there were 332 reported assaults by husbands against their wives in 1990, 476 in 1991, 527 in 1992, and 687 in 1993; however, the Centre's figures "indicate that the rate of violence is substantially higher than the government figures indicate."[20]

Since the war of 1974, laws have been reformed[21] immensely because of pressure from all these women who have struggled to improve life for all the people in Cyprus. The lack of a women's movement in Cyprus in the 1990s is, however, a sad reality:

> "The main reason for such little progress is the reluctance of the main and biggest women's organisations ... and the women's sections of the political parties, to take on board and give priority to important women's issues like the sexual double standard and the relevant

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[18] Some government research reviewed in Chapter Three has been carried out since the late 1970s.

[19] The Machinery is composed by a number of subgroups: the Council for Women's Rights (members are representatives of women's organizations and trade unions); the National Committee (members are representatives of all government departments and NGOs); the Interministerial Committee (members are the Officers for Women's Rights, that is representatives from each ministry); the General-Secretariat (headed by the Secretary General). See Republic of Cyprus. *National Report to the Fourth World Conference on Women 8*, 1994. In Section I of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order publication (15 February 1994) concerning this government department, the actual language used is sexist. For example, the General Manager of the committee is mentioned as Ο Γενικος Διευθυντης (masculine).

[20] Joan L. Neisser, 'Lessons from the United States: a Greek Cypriot Model for Domestic Violence law', *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law*, Vol.4, Issue 1, 1996, p.213.

[21] See detailed analysis in Chapter Three. Nevertheless, the political problem with the Turks and Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus, as in most situations where there is political instability, overwhelmingly dominates social thought and practices. Thus, gradually women's position in society, like many 'other' issues, have been put aside and women have been socialized into a 'culture of silence'. See discussion by Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, 1993.

> practices of this ideology as manifested in the family and marriage in the forms of the dowry system and arranges marriage, together with issues of work, female chastity and passivity ... It has been impossible until lately for most women's organisations in Cyprus to make the link between sexual liberation and equality in the workforce. They concentrated on economic participation but change has been very slow."[22]

However, identifying the main reason for the relatively little progress concerning women's status in society as the reluctance of women's organisations to become more active, is not convincing. Rather, the reasons for this reluctance could give a deeper understanding of women's current position in Cypriot society as well as a 'meaningful' interpretation of their attitudes and practices.[23] Further, even though these women do not challenge the existing structure of specific power relations between men and women[24] or the use of concepts developed to explore society from a masculinist perspective, they have been and are responsible for most of the reforms that have improved the quality of life for women in Cyprus in general, and my life in particular.

2.2. Radicalism and Feminism in Cyprus

Radical (revolutionary) feminism is very diverse and therefore difficult to define. It identifies women's oppression -which is the most fundamental form of oppression- in every sphere as the result of universally patriarchal, thus male-dominated societies, and states that each aspect of women's lives accepted as 'natural' has to be explored and questioned. Thus, it allows for new possibilities of alternative worlds outside patriarchy. Radical feminist theorists argue that gender inequalities are the primary form of social inequality and agree that women's oppression is the deepest form of human oppression;[25] they regard sexual relations as determining the unequal power relationship that men have over women in society.

One of the first and most important radical feminist writers of the 1970s, Shulamith Firestone, states in her introduction of *The Dialectic of Sex* that 'sex class is so deep as to be invisible.'[26] Patriarchy is regarded as rooted in the biological inequality of the sexes and the materialist theory of history offered by Marx and Engels is revised, since the original class distinction is seen as that between men and women. Accused of biological determinism, Firestone identified a biological basis of women's subordination whereas more recent radical feminists (such as Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich, Andrea Dworkin, and Marilyn French)[27] have rejected these notions

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[22] Maria Roussou, *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, University of London, Institute of Education, March 1985 (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), p.329. Whether this is the 'main reason or not' is a matter which will be extensively discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

[23] See Chapter Six.

[24] "One important method of publicising the cause of women would be through the trade union movement. While both the island's left-wing and right-wing unions have women's sections, policy making is dominated by men." W.I. House, *Cypriot Women in the Labour Market, An Exploration of Myths and Reality: Women, Work and Development*, United Nations Publication; Women, Work, and Development No.10, Geneva: International Labour Office, 1985, p.134.

[25] See, for example, Alison M. Jaggar & Paula S. Rothenberg (eds.), *Feminist Frameworks*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984.

[26] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, New York: Morrow, 1974.

[27] Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1978; Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, New York: W.W.

which they regard as social constructs. They move further to celebrate women's essential difference from men and revalue nurturing aspects of femininity, which had become devalued in patriarchal society.[28] They see the category 'woman' as a political one. Radical feminists, in fact, claim that 'the personal is political' -a slogan that feminism in general has adopted (not unproblematically, though), and focus on men's control of women's sexuality and reproduction, rape, and other forms of male violence against women. Radical feminists have been criticised for their idea of 'womanculture', as it tends to overestimate its power, with claims such as the existence of nonpatriarchal economic institutions will prove too much for capitalism to withstand; for not paying enough attention to issues of race and class; for 'dooming itself forever to rebellion, for glorifying women's otherness'; for their development of an ontology which claims that the men are corrupt and women are innocent, and thus denying the individuality and the history of all men and women; and so on.[29]

It would be very difficult to draw parallels between the ideas brought forward by radical feminists and attitudes about/of women in Cyprus. In fact, in both my academic and personal experience, feminism is regarded with suspicion and most of the women who support work for women's organisations in general and/or for women's issues in particular, regard the concept of 'feminism' with extreme caution. In a culture where individual expression is treated with contempt, most of the women interviewed for this work felt that although they were 'all for women's rights and all that, I don't want to be labelled as feminist - it sounds too radical, and anyway, I am not against men!'[30] The very idea of being called a feminist, by these women who were involved in 'women's work', was associated with being a 'man hater', a 'lesbian', 'weird' or 'too radical'.[31] When once I was discussing with a female friend (who identified herself as a feminist) the view that gender is a social construction that ensures women's subordination to men, she exclaimed, 'My God, you are too much of a feminist! This sounds so radical and crazy, make sure you do not tell anyone else. OK, we should have law reforms, but do not take things into such extremes!'[32] Another interviewee explained that "you are not exactly a feminist as the term is used by us. You are not a *normal* feminist, you are radical."[33]

The only way to discuss radical feminism in the case of Cyprus would be to talk about the word 'radical' as conventionally used in this context. The only group linked with 'radical feminists', for a small number of people, is the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence, founded in 1988. As a volunteer for the centre of this association for four years, I witnessed a number of discussions on abused women by other volunteers and women somehow involved in the centre. In the whole period I have been a volunteer, two men called. One of them, called to complain that the centre encouraged women to get divorced and 'destroy their families'. 'You are all single and hate men in there. Do you think it is better for a woman to be alone? What happens within my house is none of your business,'[34] he argued. Furthermore, in a discussion concerning family law, in a sociology seminar I was conducting at the college where I work, a young woman suggested that she could not understand how a woman could claim to have been raped by her

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Norton, 1976; Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating: A Radical Look at Sexuality*, New York E.P. Dutton, 1974; Marilyn French, *Beyond Power; On Women, Men, and Morals*, New York Summit Books, 1985.

[28] Sandra Harding, *Op. Cit.*, p.13.

[29] Discussion on the critiques of radical feminism in Rosemary Tong, *Op.Cit.*, pp.127-138.

[30] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Hipparchia, June 1997.

[31] These ideas are further analysed in detail in Chapter Six of this thesis.

[32] *Private Conversation with Author*, April 1997.

[33] *Private Conversation with Author*, Discussion following interview with Sappho, June 1997.

[34] *Private Telephone Conversation with Author*, (Hotline - Center for the Prevention of Violence), July 1996.

husband. 'That is too radical for this country. It might be the law, but can you think of any woman who has sued her husband about this? It is just not the right thing to do.'[35]

In February 1997, I was asked to organise a group discussion for female students (studying to become nursery school teachers -most of them from working and lower middle class backgrounds) and some of their boyfriends/partners/fiancés, as well as a few members of the college staff. I first talked about my personal interpretations and experiences of being a Cypriot woman and, sensitive to, but also afraid of the culture, I struggled not to appear as 'the raving radical feminist my 'type is associated with', as a man from the group suggested.[36] The young women listened carefully and later made interesting comments on what I had said. Then the men began to dominate the conversation and became openly sarcastic, arguing that I had 'exaggerated' and that if women wanted to 'win the respect of men and be on equal terms with them, then they must do it gently, politely and gradually.' One man claimed that 'you cannot come here and play the victim when you have gained so much, too much recently, with the participation of women in the labour market and the changes in the legal system.' Then a female clinical psychologist in her late 20s argued that "you are wrong to blame men. In fact, when men hit women, they are the real victims and they suffer more than us, and I strongly feel for them, and it is women who choose to be hit by them." Someone else went on to explain that in Cyprus there is no violence against women because 'our streets are safe' and 'no one gets raped. Thus, there is no violence.' Domestic violence, incest, power relationships, sexual terrorism were not mentioned in the discussion, and I was 'just being radical.'[37] In Chapter Six of this thesis, I demonstrate that individual interpretations of feminism are not tolerated and freedom of expression, especially by women, is generally feared and unacceptable. In fact, the social structure in general, and the educational system in particular, ensure that there is little critical understanding and analysis of society; therefore, women are kept uniformly 'submerged'. Radicalism of any form is suppressed and eliminated. It thus becomes necessary for women's situation in Cyprus to be viewed "within its wider social context: society's structural arrangements and dominant ideologies support the status quo and exacerbate the difficulties faced by couples and women alone who seek to move outside traditional living patterns."[38] The social context is explored throughout the thesis in order to contribute toward the deeper understanding of women's lives and experiences in Cyprus.

2.3. Situating Cypriot Women within Post Colonial Theoretical Perspectives

"The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it."

John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 1859

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[35] *Private Conversation with Author,* April 1997.

[36] I am aware of the implications of this action. My culture discourages the expression of ideas that challenge the patriarchal status quo. In fact, I have on numerous occasions found myself inhibited by people wishing to ask me questions on my work and research.

[37] Myria Vassiliadou, 'Women and Men in Contemporary Cyprus' (Group Discussion) Limassol, February 1997.

[38] Diana Woodward & Lynn Chisholm, 'The Expert's View? The Sociological Analysis of Graduates' Occupational and Domestic Roles', in Helen Roberts (ed.). *Doing Feminist Research.* Routledge, 1981, p.183; see also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Penguin, 1993.

The literature reviewing the main feminist theoretical approaches[39] generally excludes Third World/(Post) Colonial feminism as a distinct feminist perspective. However, it is a useful theoretical development in the analysis of patriarchal structures in many countries and cultures throughout the world, as well as an important step to the understanding of the struggles of 'Third World' women.[40] Third World/(Post) Colonial feminism has emerged from intersections of gendered critiques of western feminist approaches and post-colonial critiques of Western epistemologies. Post-colonial feminists regard 'knowledge' as a system of power relations deployed by the West on 'the Other'. They challenge the 'nature' of women and gender inequality as characterised by Western feminists, arguing that the rest of the women in the world are ignored or made invisible. They focus on complex questions of gender in relation to the globilisation process and thus challenge the Western conceptions of sex, concentrating on the constitution of complex subjectivities. They argue that there exist multiple oppressions produced by capitalism and therefore the relations between men and women can be more complex. Further, they suggest that although 'third world women' do not constitute any 'automatic unitary group', what seems to constitute these women as "a viable oppositional alliance is a *common context of struggle* rather than colour or racial identifications."[41] Cheryl Johnson-Odim[42] argues that oppression is indeed the universal binding force for feminism but the contexts vary immensely. Feminist ways of knowing are inherently perspectival and culture-bound. The differences found in it reflect the actual social divisions that exist between women in societies rived by class and race as well as sex.

On the occasions where I had to complete formal documents as an undergraduate student in the United Kingdom, I had to identify myself with an ethnic/racial group such as 'White', 'Asian', 'African', and so on. The last category appearing on the document was that of 'Other', to include people who did not belong to these broader categories or who simply did not want/know how to define themselves. Some people can find it difficult to situate themselves in largely identified groups. because of their race, ethnicity, colour, and nationality - very much like myself (as a Greek Cypriot person, I could be white, olive-skinned, Mediterranean, Near-Eastern, Middle-Eastern, European, or Asian).[43] Parallels between this type of categorisation and feminist perspectives could be indeed be drawn in this context; I am an 'Other' in formal documents (like every woman and man in my country), but I am also an 'Other' like every woman in the wider patriarchal world. The increasing amount of feminist literature on (Post) Colonialism, the Third World, women of colour and so on, does not include some 'others', for example women in the Cypriot world. As a Greek Cypriot I am virtually absent from all these feminist categories and at the same time I do not fit in the Euroamerican feminist writings. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (a Greek Cypriot and an

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[39] For comprehensive introductions/discussions, see for example, Abbott & Wallace, *An Introduction to Sociology; Feminist Perspectives*, Routledge, 1990; Rosemary Tong, *Feminist Thought; A Comprehensive Introduction*, Routledge, 1989; Diane Richardson & Victoria Robinson (eds.), *Introducing Women's Studies*, Macmillan, 1993; Caroline Ramazanoglou, *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression*, Routledge, 1989.

[40] For a comprehensive collection of essays on the topic, see Miranda Davis (ed.), *Third World-Second Sex; Women's Struggles and National Liberation; Third World Women Speak Out*, Zed Press, 1983.

[41] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Introduction – Cartographies of Struggle, Third World Women, and the Politics of Feminism,' in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Loudres Torres (eds.). *Op.Cit.*, p.7.

[42] Cheryl Johnson-Odim, 'Common Themes, Different Contexts: Third World Women and Feminism', in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Lourdes Torres (eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, 1991.

[43] For a discussion on ethnicity, see Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries; Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle*, Routledge, 1992, p.148-155.

Israeli Jew) share this feeling of exclusion and suggest that "the notion of 'black women' as delineating the boundaries of the alternative feminist movement to white feminism leaves non-British, non-black women unaccounted for."[44] Therefore, "the assumption of women as an already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross-culturally."[45] Feminist scholarly work is practically non-existent in my country and thus, the above feminist 'neglect' becomes more obvious and very problematic, when introducing feminist research.[46] While exploring the vast amount of feminist literature, I was confronted with extreme isolation, since the 'different contexts' of women in 'my world' were not included, and since feminists are just now beginning to realise the implications and heterogeneity 'of the condition of being a woman.'[47] Having carried out the first feminist scholarly work on Cypriot women in the early 1980s, Roussou mentions that

> "...feminist theory has developed in specific social and political contexts (those of the west, or the English speaking world, and of Western European countries), and bears more relevance to the experience of women from the countries in which it was developed than to Third World Mediterranean countries, one of which is Cyprus."[48]

Indeed, the research I am engaging in aspires to contribute towards the social theory of international feminism and the elimination of 'ethnocentrism of *white* feminist theory', [49] by being committed to the "survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female."[50] This work aims to contribute to the literature and eventually social (political) change in Cyprus, and to offer some knowledge concerning all these women throughout the world who have not had the chance to voice their experiences yet, due to further lack of power and oppression – the result of a cultural colonialism?

Although women's oppression has no ethnic or racial boundaries, this oppression is not identical within those boundaries. It is thus misleading to claim that all women suffer the same oppression 'simply because we are women.'[51] That would mean that we "lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy."[52] The question then becomes whether all experiences of oppression are diverse and they should be weighted equally. It could be argued that an equalised notion of oppression allows for no basis on which feminists can act politically in ways that might change

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[44] Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Contexualizing Feminism – Gender, Ethnic, and Class Divisions', *Feminist Review*, No.15, November 1983, p.63.

[45] Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review*, No.30, Autumn 1988, p.64.

[46] Research *on* women is scarcely available but it is not, as I discuss it here, feminist work.

[47] Avtar Brah, 'Questions of Difference and International Feminism', in Jane Aaron & Sylvia Walby (eds.), *Out of the Margins: Women's Studies in the Nineties*, The Falmer Press, 1991, p.168.

[48] Roussou, 1985, p.633.

[49] Liz Stanley & Sue Wise, 'Method, Methodology and Epistemology in Feminist Research Processes', in Liz Stanley (ed.), *Feminist Praxis; Research, Theory & Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*, Routledge, 1990.

[50] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983.

[51] Audre Lorde, 'An Open Letter to Mary Dale, in Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (eds.), *This Bridge called my Back Writings by Radical Women of Colour*, New York: Kitchen Table, 1983, p.97.

[52] *Ibid.*

national boundaries and limited identities.[53] If this is the case, the question to address concerns the specific policies and ideas that ought to be used in these particular contexts. Upon discussing questions of difference, especially in terms of race and ethnicity, Mary Maynard draws attention to the amount of emphasis put on fragmentation by feminists. She suggests that overemphasis does not offer the political or intellectual support needed in order to confront the oppression with which feminism has historically been concerned. Further, she explains that this could result in the neglect of the very existence of these oppressions.[54] Feminism is a general theory of the oppression of women by men. It is a universal theory but also a contradictory one. Although feminists disagree on the uniformity of women's oppression, feminism itself cannot exist without some element of universality.[55] Questions of 'Otherness' have to be dealt with caution. It has been pointed out, for example, that there are risks associated with the 'cultural relativism' of feminists uncritically supporting practices for women in other societies that they would not support in their own. Risks are also associated with feminists' efforts to deal with 'Otherness' and distancing themselves from women's movements in the Third World: at the same time, "Third World women have distanced themselves from Western feminism on the grounds that the problems faced by women in the Third World are much more serious, material, and fundamental than the issues preoccupying women in the West."[56] I am not arguing in this thesis that the experiences of women in Cyprus are more or less serious than the experiences of women in other parts of the world, be that the West or the 'Third World'. Rather, I am suggesting that their experiences, similarly to the experiences of numerous of other women throughout the world, have been less heard and understood, and that in order for women's oppression to be over, it needs to be voiced, understood, and explained in as many of its contexts as possible. Thus, the analysis of gender without ethnicity or class and the underestimation of their interaction in society is an incomplete process. Women's oppression needs to be viewed in the context "of all oppression. We must challenge a feminist perspective to envisage a human-centred world, in which the satisfaction of human needs, justly met, is a primary goal."[57]

Jane Cowan explores the cultural specificity of ways of thinking about gender by looking at how her own and Greek women's conceptualisations of gender and analysing the questions of similarity and difference. She suggests that there are differences in the ways women conceptualise gender within the same culture; at the same time, similarities exist among women from different cultures. Concerned with the meanings women themselves attach to gender and to gender relations, she explains that women's adoption of feminism, rather than other discourses of gender, relates to their identities in terms of "age, personality, religious upbringing, political persuasion, class positions and the (negotiable) effects of dominant local codes and meanings."[58] Thus, she argues.

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[53] Anne Marie Goetz, 'Feminism and the Claim to Know: Contradictions in Feminist Approaches to Women in Development' in Rebecca Grant & Kathleen Newland (eds.), *Gender and International Relations*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, p.145.

[54] Mary Maynard, 'Race, Gender, and the Concept of Difference in Feminist Thought' in Helen Afshar & Mary Maynard (eds.), *The Dynamics of Race and Gender: Some Feminist Interventions*, Taylor & Francis, 1994, p.22.

[55] Ramazanoglu, *Op. Cit.*, p.22.

[56] Mary Maynard, 'Introduction; New frontiers in Women's Studies' in Mary Maynard & June Purvis (eds.), *New Frontiers in Women's Studies: Knowledge, Identity, & Nationalism*', Taylor & Francis, 1996, p.19.

[57] *Ibid.*, p.326.

[58] Jane K Cowan, *Op.Cit.*, p.82.

> "...only by recognising those (to me) 'similar' or 'familiar' elements in Greek feminist and gender discourses, *as well as* the different ones, have I been able to acknowledge fully the contestable and contention nature of 'Greek' gender conceptions."[59]

Cowan's analysis is of particular importance in studying the complex (feminist) identities of women in Cyprus, which derive from an equally complex socio-political, geographical, and historical context. As Chapters One and Six demonstrate, the subjects in this study and I share similarities but also differences in our attitudes and interpretations of feminist and gender discourses and recognising that has greatly contributed toward a better understanding of these discourses themselves. Thus, the interpretations of feminism, anti-feminism, and non-feminism by the women in the sample under study were found to be varied, diverse, and conflicting even within this group. The interviewees' definitions of feminism and/or other gender discourses were contradictory in terms of their eventual actions and the ways in which each woman understood the terms discussed. Situating urban, middle-class women in Cyprus, necessitates recognition of both their particular socio-political and geographical locations within a global context, and the influences and variations of these women's discourses within the local setting. For example, passivity towards collective goals and actions. conformity to existing socio-political structures, and uniform acceptance of authority are all characteristics of post-colonial discourses and therefore necessitate a particular analysis in relation to the exploration of the lives of women. An understanding of the heterogeneity and possible contrasts of working and/or rural women's experiences and, in effect, epistemologies therefore becomes necessary.

3. Questions on Methodology and Epistemology

Despite the vast amount of theoretical literature related to this work, it was the information I collected through primary sources, and especially through the interviews, that has given me a deeper understanding of other women's experiences in Cyprus. Feminism is about women's own experience and therefore, my experience 'in the field' has been invaluable. Without wishing to be labelled with a particular theoretical feminist perspective,[60] the feminist standpoint belief that women's subjugated position 'provides the possibility of more complete and less perverse understandings,' appears to be suitable for this thesis – while alternative epistemologies could apply in other works. Carrying out research without any fieldwork, within the context of the particular work I am engaging in, is similar to reading a book review without ever actually reading the book. On the other hand, experience on its own cannot solve the problem since "the sum of personal accounts does not necessarily constitute a feminist understanding of social life. Interviews with women who have been raped or assaulted will not necessarily express a theory of patriarchy."[61] A combination of theory, epistemology, and experience in the field can prove to be better tools in a quest for understanding, exploring, and eliminating patriarchal structures. It is to these concerns that I turn to next.

All feminists are interested in producing theories that will contribute towards women's understanding of their oppression and their determination to do something about it. These theories represent part of this effort by feminists to explain women's oppression. The explosion of a mass

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[59] *Ibid.*, p.83.

[60] One of the (in)direct results of labeling, for example, is that " third-world women as a group are automatically and necessarily defined as: religious (read 'not progressive'), family oriented (read 'traditional'), legal minors (read 'they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights'), illiterate (read 'ignorant'), domestic (read 'backward') and sometimes revolutionary (read 'their-country-is-in-a-state-of-war; they-must-fight').Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', in *Feminist Review, No.30, Autumn 1988*, p.80.

[61] Ramazanoglu, *Op. Cit.*, p.52.

feminist movement might have brought all these different perspectives into conflict but it has also stressed that despite the differences between us, we have interests in common. Feminist theory is indeed political; nevertheless, how can we be sure that it is the result of a progressive research programme? How can we prove that it is also scientific? Although many radical feminists have opposed 'the intellectual evaluation of feminism,' others have argued that "if you want to change the world, you have to get your theory right."[62] In fact, what characterises feminist research is its theoretical and methodological distinctiveness. Discussions of the adequacy of feminist theories have led to further arguments about the ways in which feminists undertake research. These debates in feminist methodology have themselves been intense; they have resulted in questions about ways of knowing and thus epistemological concerns.[63] The arguments stemming from the Enlightenment position give rise to a number of 'dualisms' -as many feminists have named them: knower versus known, subjectivity versus objectivity, body versus mind, emotions versus rationality. These dualisms have been a major concern of feminist thinking as they reflect the traditional 'masculine versus feminine' dichotomy. Many epistemological concerns (and controversy) have risen as to whether we ought to be carrying out research *on, by* and *for* women, an argument that assumes common interests between women and is therefore problematic. Further, Sandra Harding[64] has identified three broad categories of feminist epistemologies - feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint (which she perceives as a 'successor science'), and feminist relativism/postmodernism- that respond to these issues and challenge traditional, existing epistemologies.[65] Harding has been heavily criticised for her work and interpretation of the various epistemologies[66] and it should be recognised that many feminists, who are labelled to follow one of the three, actually combine elements of all in their work. What follows is an attempt to give a general picture of the above mentioned concerns as related to the present study in particular.

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[62] Ramazanoglu, *Op. Cit.*, p.12.

[63] Whereas 'methods' are specific sets of research practices and 'methodology' is a 'perspective' "or very broad theoretically framework ... which may or may not specify its own particular 'appropriate' research method/s or technique/s" (Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, *Op.Cit.*, 1990), epistemology is a theory of knowledge. Sandra Harding summarises the feminist questions created by traditional epistemological assumptions such as, "...who can be a knower (only men)? What tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge (only tests against men's experiences and observations?): what kinds of things can be known (can "subjective truths", ones that women -or only some women - tend to arrive at, count as knowledge?); the nature of objectivity (does it require "point-of-viewlessness"?); the appropriate relationship between the researcher and her/his research subjects (must the researcher be disinterested, dispassionate, and socially invisible to the subject?): what should be the purposes of the pursuit of knowledge (to produce information *for* men? Harding, *Op. Cit.*, 1987, p.181.

[64] Sandra Harding (ed.), *Feminism and Methodology,* Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1987; *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge; Thinking from Women's Lives,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991.

[65] "In philosophy, this concept is used technically to mean the theory of knowledge, or the theory of how it is that men come to have knowledge of the external world." Nicolas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology,* Penguin Reference, Penguin Books, Second Edition, 1984, pp.87-88. This follows that new epistemologies are needed to express a theory of how it is that *women* come to have knowledge of the external world.

[66] See, for example, Liz Stanley & Sue Wise, *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research,* London, Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1983; Liz Stanley, *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology,* London: Routledge, 1990.

3.1 Feminist Research on Women

Most work carried out by feminists is research on women. Women's world(s) have been neglected in academic work and exploring women's lives and experiences has therefore been of vital importance. Thus, work *on* women has justifiably been the ultimate focus of feminist scholars.[67] Not all work *on* women is feminist, however, and thus "the claim that research on women is conducted with a feminist perspective can be made only when the methods applied do in fact reflect women's experiences, which undoubtedly will vary ..."[68]

Feminism addresses gender discrimination, inequality, and oppression. Therefore, for the existence of all the above, the direct involvement of men is implied. Attention must thus be paid in order for feminists not to find ourselves *always* studying women's lives separately from men's,[69] but rather, to carry out any research from a feminist perspective: it is not necessary for feminist research to have individual women as its subjects.[70] Such an approach can underline "the notion that women are locked into a 'women's world' marginal to mainstream culture and integrated into society only through the mediation of men."[71] Further, feminist studies must be interested in all aspects of social structure and its participants: "any analysis of women's oppression *must* involve research on the part played by men in this."[72] In this present study I have decided to concentrate on women in my research, not because it is 'the only way of carrying out feminist research', but rather because scholarly work on women in Cyprus is a 'missing' subject. If, or when, a substantial amount of research has been carried out to fill in some of the gaps of women's experiences in Cyprus, both men and women should be included in relevant projects and studies. Women's experiences are relevant to those of men, if one is to refer to the existing patriarchal structure, since we are talking about the oppressors and the oppressed. The question is how to achieve the inclusion of men in a way that does not make women's experiences, again, only 'valid' in relation to those of men.[73]

3.2. Feminist Research by Women

After having looked at the issue of whether feminist research should be on women only, the question of whether feminist work ought to be carried out *by* women only becomes important. This dilemma has created immense interest amongst researchers and the answer is far from clear. Stanley and Wise (1983) regard

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[67] Duelli-Klein, for example, points out that research *on* women does not necessarily imply research *for* women and thus cannot claim to be feminist. Renate Duelli-Klein, 'How to Do What We Want to Do: Thoughts About Feminist Methodology', in Gloria Bowles & Renate Duelli-Klein (eds.), *Theories of Women's Studies*, Women's Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1980.

[68] *Ibid*, p.52.

[69] If a feminist decides to study men's attitudes towards patriarchy and gender discrimination, should not that count as feminist work? Does it not contribute towards social change in the feminist sense?

[70] Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*, Polity Press, 1988, p.4.

[71] Hilary Graham, 'Do Her Answers Fit His Questions? Women and the Survey Method', in Eva Gamarnikow, David H. Morgan, June Purvis & Daphne Taylorson (eds.), *The Public and the Private*, Heinemann, London, 1983, p.136.

[72] Liz Stanley & Sue Wise (eds.), *Breaking Out Again; Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*, Routledge, 1983, p.31.

[73] For an interesting discussion on considerations of gender in sociological research, see David Morgan, 'Men, Masculinity, and the Process of Sociological Enquiry', in Helen Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*, Routledge, 1981.

> "...research *by* women as absolutely fundamental to feminist research. We reject the idea that men can be feminists because we argue that what is essential to 'being feminist' is the possession of 'feminist consciousness'. And we see feminist consciousness as rooted in the concrete, practical and everyday experiences of being, and being treated as, *a woman*."[74]

For them, and many other scholars, women's experiences provide the possibility of more complete and less distorted knowledge than do men's experiences. Like other standpoint feminists, they claim that experience is a starting point to research, but "for standpoint feminists this must then be situated within the wider context of women's lives in general."[75] There are nevertheless many arguments to dispute such ideas. For example, how do we know that there is only *one* given 'truth' about women's experiences in society? How can we be sure that all experiences are equally valid and not limited? How can we assume that women of different ages, ethnic groups, colour, social class, and sexual orientation, experience and interpret oppression in the same way? A number of feminists draw comparisons of gender oppression with that of class inequality. Can we then assume that *all* women share the same feelings for oppression as the members of the proletariat share the same class-consciousness? Looking at Marxist arguments, and according to Marx, the consciousness of the proletariat represents the real picture of capitalism because it derives from the working class' oppression within the economic structure of society. Nevertheless, Marx, like Engels, was not a member of the working class but had the 'sensitivity and the insight' to see the inherent problems of capitalism. Nancy Hartsock discusses how just as Marx, in his analysis of society through the standpoint of the proletariat, managed to 'go beneath bourgeois ideology', a feminist standpoint can offer knowledge of patriarchal institutions and ideologies as 'perverse inversions of more humane social relations.'[76] Is it then possible that *all* men are unable to understand feminist arguments?[77] The answer to this 'strategic error'[78] and moral dilemma can be complex- I say moral dilemma because if we, as women, decide to totally 'exclude' men from carrying out feminist research, could we then create the ethical problem of 'behaving like men', stereotyping, and 'excluding' categories of people merely on their gender?

The vast differences and similarities of women throughout the world further complicate these dilemmas. Being a feminist, Cypriot woman and carrying out research on other Cypriot women, has been both positive and problematic. I have the (dis)advantage of the insider's knowledge of the culture and language, and I am accepted by society. I am also an outsider, because of my research interests and beliefs. I am an outsider and an insider; a stranger and a friend.[79] I share the same, basic experience of oppression and domination by men with my interviewees; but I do not share other important (for them) experiences. If we are to assume that only women can 'understand' women, how can I interview mothers, when I have never had the experience of childbirth and motherhood? At the same time, when one of my interviewees confided in detail her sexual problems with her partner

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[74] Stanley and Wise, *Op.Cit.*,p.32.

[75] Tim May, *Social Research; Issues, Methods and Process*. Open University Press, 1993.

[76] Nancy C.M. Hartsock, 'The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism', in Sandra Harding (ed.) *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues*, Indiana University Press, 1987.

[77] In the questions whether 'Are there feminist men?' only two women in my sample answered positively. The rest were either negative or very doubtful about the reasons why a man would ever claim to be feminist. The issue is further explored in Chapter Six.

[78] Sandra Harding, 'Introduction; Is There a Feminist Method', in Sandra Harding (ed.), *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues*, Indiana University Press, 1987, p.12.

[79] See Vassos Argyrou, 1996, *Op.Cit.*, and Markides, 1978, *Op.Cit.*, for a discussion on similar experiences.

with me, she said, 'you know what I mean, you are a woman. You understand. That is why I am telling you'.[80] The researcher's identity interacts in complex ways with gender in the society being studied.[81] While carrying anthropological work on women in Greece, Michael Herzfeld says that "women are not necessarily at all silent among themselves, however, and here I have to confront my own limitations as a male ethnographer with only partial access to these intimacies."[82] The particular limitations of the researcher's gender, which Herzfeld is referring to. did not occur in my experience; on the contrary, my gender contributed to my interviewees gaining trust in me.

Problematic and complex questions arose throughout the fieldwork. My identification with some of the women I interviewed but not with others created an obvious distance between myself/the researcher and some of the women/the researched. In the process of studying the 'Other' in Cypriot society, I sometimes found myself creating 'Others' in my work. The reason behind this discrepancy lay in my keen interest on feminist women's interpretation of their identity, attitudes and practices, and my stronger identification with them. Despite the similarity of my social class, positioning with that of the interviewees, ideological and educational differences made my analysis more concentrated on certain elements of the interviews. Thus, "interpretation remains an imperfect and incomplete process."[83] However, "the validity of our interpretations depends on the integrity of the interaction of our personal experiences with the power of feminist theory and the power. or lack of power. or the researched. Our conclusions should always be open to criticism."[84]

The belief that feminism has a distinctive method of conducting social research has increasingly indeed attracted criticism. Nevertheless, it is still widespread and continues to be applied since it implies more equality between the researcher and the researched and it protects the researched from being turned into a fragmented object. Moreover, the opinion and experiences of the researched are valued and considered. Second-wave feminists argue that a qualitative approach is more suitable to describing women's lives and regard quantitative research as representing the masculinist way of looking at things, and involving a separation of the researcher from the researched, emotional detachment, and the measurement of 'objectivity' based on 'alleged' value-free methods.[85] Qualitative methods (especially semi-structured or unstructured interviews) are seen as the 'female way of knowing', emphasising the subjectivity of experiences of both the researcher and the researched. This idea proved extremely important at the early stages of second wave feminism as it contributed towards feminist knowledge of various areas previously analysed from a male

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[80] *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Melanie, July 1997. See Christine L.Williams & E. Joel Heikes, 'The Importance of Researcher's Gender in the In-Depth Interview; Evidence from Two Case of Male Nurses', *Gender & Society,* Vol.7, No.2. pp.280-291, June 1993. for a discussion on gender and in-depth interviewing.

[81] Jill Dubisch, 'Gender, Kinship, and Religion: 'Reconstructing' the Anthropology of Greece.' in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.32.

[82] Michael Herzfeld, 'Silence, Submission, and Subversion: Toward a Poetics of Womanhood'. in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis, *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.95.

[83] Diane Reay, 'Insider Perspectives or Stealing the Words out of Women's Mouths: Interpretation in the Research Process', *Feminist Review,* No.53, Summer 1996, p.70.

[84] Janet Holland & Caroline Ramazanoglu, 'Coming to Conclusions: Power and Interpretation in Researching Young Women's Sexuality' in Mary Maynard & June Purvis (eds.), *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective,* London: Taylor & Francis. 1994, p.146.

[85] For a comprehensive analysis on feminist objectivity, see Kum-Kum Bhavnani, 'Tracing the Contours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity', in Helen Afshar & Mary Maynard (eds.). *The Dynamics of Race and Gender; Some Feminist Interventions,* Taylor & Francis, 1994.

perspective.[86] However, this position "gradually developed into something of an unproblematised orthodoxy against which the political correctness, or otherwise, of *all* feminist research could be judged."[87]

Feminist scholars, though, express disenchantment with the "dualisms, abstractions, and detachment of positivism, rejecting the separations between subject and object, thought and feeling, knower and known, and political and personal..."[88] Thus, in the same way that we reject these separations, we should be wary of rigidly distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative methods in terms of male and female types of research. After all, quantitative methods (especially questionnaires and surveys) have helped feminists to expand their knowledge of women's lives in various areas such as the division of labour in the workplace and pay discrimination, the extent of violence in the family and rape, and so on. Therefore, any combination and adaptation of research methods that will best serve our quest for knowledge should be sought, in order to achieve the 'best results possible'. Rather than distinguishing between the public and the private,[89] the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, women and men, when choosing our methods and methodology, we ought to adopt the methodological approach most suitable to the specific research being carried out at the time. Since unpredictability and discontinuity are characteristics of women's experiences -as they 'mediate' the demands of the public and private spheres, adaptation and flexibility (unlike traditional, rigid methods) will allow us to include in our research those social forces which influence changes in individual behaviour and attitudes.[90] When studying attitudes and practices of women, especially concerning personal lives, as the scope of this work is, it becomes suitable to use qualitative methods in order to study the particular discourses which respondents become involved in.[91] The legitimisation of these methodological and epistemological concerns is on the one hand reaffirmed (concerning this specific area of concentration) by Hilary Graham[92] and Liz Kelly, Linda Regan and Sheila Buton.[93] On the other hand, more questions arise. Discussions of the quantitative as opposed to the qualitative research methods in the social sciences led to the realisation that a feminist standpoint could be used in various methods: it is therefore not necessary that the 'scientific' model of surveys is accepted or that surveys as necessarily 'non-feminists' are rejected. [94] Although feminists have still not found a common ground of agreement on the question of validity, searching for it has been a driving force for the advancement and development of new-wave feminism. It is

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[86] Mary Maynard, 'Methods, Practice and Epistemology: The Debate about Feminism and Research', in Mary Maynard & June Purvis (eds.), *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*, Taylor & Francis, 1994; see also discussion in Chapter One of this thesis.

[87] *Ibid.*, p.12.

[88] Judith Stacey, 'Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?', in *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.11, No.1, pp.21-27, 1988, p.21.

[89] " 'Private' and 'public' do not therefore have an exact and tangible location: places remain constant while definitions of their social space change", Hilary Graham, *Op.Cit.*

[90] Galtung, *Op.Cit.*, 1967, p.157. See discussion on women acting as mediators in Chapter Six.

[91] However, qualitative studies have also been used as indications of patriarchal trends, especially in the workplace.

[92] Hilary Graham, 'Do Her Answers Fit His Questions? Women and the Survey Method', in Eva Gamarnikow et als.(eds.), *The Public and the Private*, Heinemann, London, 1983.

[93] Liz Kelly, Linda Regan & Sheila Buton, 'Defending the Indefensible? Quantitative Methods and Feminist Research', in Hilary Hinds, Ann Phoenix & Jackie Stacey (eds.), *Working Out: New Directions for Women's Studies*, Women's Studies Network (United Kingdom),The Falmer Press, 1992.

[94] Kelly et al., *Op.Cit.*, p.159.

indeed dangerous to say that certain types of methods are necessarily feminist. As feminists, we ought to try and introduce our insight and knowledge on methodology and theory about life in general to the social and natural sciences at large since feminism ought to be more than women researching women but rather be involved with all aspects of human existence.

3.2.1. Interviewing

Similar to the debates on qualitative versus quantitative methods, and the epistemological concerns that arise from those, it has been suggested that the traditional 'textbook' formal type of interviewing is not suitable to the sociological study of women and proposes her own 'recipe' for interviewing.[95] Despite the increasing number of sociologists and especially feminist writers engaged with describing in detail the process of interviewing in detail, there still seems to be little material on this important issue. I decided to carry out in-depth, semi-structured interviews since my aim was to study women's attitudes in Cyprus; I felt that the only way to get closer to women's thinking and subjective experiences of their lives would be through talking to them extensively.[96]

My experience at the Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence has been an influential factor to my clarifying of dilemmas concerning my research. I have become alert to the needs of women who called the Hotline at the centre both for confidentiality and for feeling comfortable with the volunteer who answered the telephone. Upon discussing the experiences of various volunteers, this appears to be the most important factor to the willingness of women to talk and cooperate with them for assistance. Clearly, we can not assume that a Hotline/help centre and research can be placed in the same categories for the sake of research, but we can draw certain parallels and identify common trends. For example, both the 'victim of domestic abuse' and the researched can choose whether to talk or not. Both have at times expressed that "it's great to have someone to talk to"[97] and 'demand' nothing else. They find it easier to talk to a stranger about issues they feel are too personal to discuss with anyone else, although they have friends and/or family in whom they could presumably confide to. Pamela Cotterill explains that this is so precisely because of the researcher's (or/and the volunteer's, I would argue) position as a stranger rather than a friend.[98] The circumstances of these conversations take a totally different form though. The question of whether we should be aiming at helping/ supporting/ advising the researched creates dilemmas which are clear when discussing victims who call for this precise reason.[99] The expectations of the researched, nevertheless, need to be further explored in feminist epistemological and methodological work.

Questions are raised in all kinds of research methods about the possibility of the researched (especially during an interview) 'faking' their answers; that is, instead of directly expressing their

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[95] Ann Oakley, 'Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms', in Helen Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research,* 1981.

[96] "Where languages are too diverse, where common values are toll few, where *the fear of talking to strangers is too great,* there the interview based on a standardized questionnaire calling for a few standardized answers may not be applicable. Those who venture into such situations may have to invent new modes of interviewing." D. Benney & J. Hughes, 'Of Sociology and the Interview', in M. Blumer (ed.), *Sociological Research Methods,* 2nd Edition, London; Macmillan, 1984, p.216.

[97] Janet Finch, 'It's Great to Have Someone to Talk to": The Ethics and Politics of Interviewing Women', in Colin Bell & Helen Roberts (eds.), *Social Researching: Politics, Problems, Practice,* Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

[98] Pamela Cotterill, 'Interviewing Women - Issues of Friendship, Vulnerability, and Power', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Nos.5/6, pp.593-606, 1992, p.596.

[99] The issue of the empowerment of the researched will be discussed later.

thoughts, they give socially desirable responses. When the researched are placed in a situation with which they are unfamiliar and uncomfortable, they strongly feel the "art of impression management," the need to have control over the situation and over what they are doing and saying.[100] When I first gave a draft of my questionnaire to a friend to look at and give me her opinion, that was her first reaction:

> "I hope you realise they won't tell you the truth. This is Cyprus. Do you want me to spell it out for you? What do you want, for them to tell you everything? Especially since some know you as an eccentric feminist; then, they will see you down town having a coffee and talking about them! It is not as if you can miss them! They will not believe your confidentiality things. I know you will not tell anybody, but they don't. In fact, in all these statistics they keep presenting us with in papers and articles, I do not believe any of it. What, you have someone come to your house and tell them your lifestory? For God's sake, get real. They are bound to lie."[101]

Studying Cypriot people, Attalides faced similar difficulties since many respondents found it hard to believe that 'the results would genuinely be anonymous'.[102] Carrying out interviews with women has been one of the basic problems in this research. For example, for some of the interviewees, being 'feminist' was an integral part of their identity. Irrespective of their practices and actions, some of them used the 'art of impression management' and gave what they has assumed to be desirable answers (especially since some of them know me and my general ideas concerning feminism). In this manner, they also told themselves what they wanted to hear, thus feeling more reconciled with their position, and less in conflict within a society where contradictions could give rise uncomfortable emotions. As one woman put it, "it would be like saying that my 'struggle' and efforts lead to nowhere."[103] Oakley raises additional questions on the 'validity' of feminist methodology by analysing the relationship between the researcher and the researched. She suggests that unless the interviewee feels that she is being sympathetically treated by the interviewer, then she will not accept to be studied and will not come up with the necessary information.[104]

For most feminists, questions about the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee[105] are answered with the rejection of the view that researchers can be 'objective', in the sense of being uninvolved, because as researchers they are part of what is being researched and thus feminist objectivity "means quite simply *situated knowledges.*"[106] They see it as inevitable that the researcher will get involved and this necessitates acquiring the skills for self-critique and reflexivity:

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[100] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* New York: Doubleday, 1959. Of course, this "art of impression management" is clearly evident in all social interaction but more so in times when the individual is facing new circumstances for which she/he is not prepared. At the same time, the feminist critique of 'impression management' and 'face work' discusses how difficulties experienced by subordinate groups (such as women) are underestimated in this type of analysis.

[101] *Private Conversation with Author,* April 1997.

[102] Michael Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanization In Cyprus: A Study of Nicosia.* Cyprus 1981, p.41.

[103] *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Deborah. June 1997.

[104] Oakley, *Op.Cit.,* p.33.

[105] See Duelli Klein, *Op.Cit.,* 1983; Finch, *Op.Cit.,* 1984; Oakley, *Op.Cit.,* 1981; Stanley & Wise, *Op.Cit.,* 1993.

[106] Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges; The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies 14, No.3, Fall 1988,* p.581.

> "The researcher must be constantly aware of how her values, attitudes, and perceptions are influencing the research process, from the formulation stage, to the ways in which the data are analysed and theoretically explained."[107]

Feminists reject taking a detached and objective standpoint on knowledge of the relations between women and men, or researcher and researched. Instead, they claim that " I am a constantly moving subjectivity."[108] Stanley and Wise (1983) regard objectivity as presently constructed, a sexist notion which feminists 'should leave behind' and Adrienne Rich (1979) explains that it is the term that men have introduced for their own subjectivity. The relationship of the researcher and the researched goes beyond the subjectivity/objectivity debate to issues of power. For Kum-Kum Bhavnani (1993), the researcher is in a position of relative power to the researched,

> "...a set of power relationships which are bounded by the imperatives of resource availability - can define the parameters of the theoretical framework, can control the design of the study, and can inform how the study is conducted, analysed, and written up. That is, the researcher is positioned in a particular relationship of power in relation to the researched."[109]

By virtue of her/his education and status, the researcher is placed in a powerful position in relation to the researched. However, Bhavnani analyses the 'micropolitics of the research situation', and explains how these relationships are subject to change depending on the socially ascribed characteristics of the interviewer and the interviewee, such as race, gender, age and class.[110]

In my personal experience of carrying out research, race, gender, age, and class all became evident and problematic. After having finished my graduate studies in the United Kingdom, I took part in a research project carried out by the Department of Social Policy of my university. Together with the research assistant, I went to various clinics in order to interview (by means of a structured questionnaire which we first read to them and then filled in) mothers of new-born babies and discuss their satisfaction with the health services. I was twenty-two years old at the time, and I had a Master's degree in Sociology but I was not studying for a Ph.D. like the other female research assistant; further, I had a 'foreign accent'. I was unfamiliar with the workings of clinics and the environment there, unlike the women I was interviewing. Finally, I was not a mother myself. My position as a researcher was one of constant tension, powerlessness, and weakness. My situation contradicted the belief held by Oakley, Finch,[111] and others that women's oppression and socialisation reduces social distance and encourages conversation and friendliness. I experienced racism and ageism (I was younger than most interviewees) at various instances throughout the interviews and on many occasions felt that the women were at ease with their surroundings, as opposed to me, and that gave them a sense of power which was obvious in their confident and

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[107] Pamela Abbott & Claire Wallace, *Op.Cit.*, 1990, p.207.

[108] Patti Lather, 'Feminist Perspectives on Empowering Research Methodologies', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.11, No.6, pp.569-581, 1988, p.569.

[109] Kum-Kum Bhavavni, *Op. Cit.*, p.101.

[110] See discussion by Miri Song & David Parker: "Multiple positionings and (dis)identifications, which shift during the interview process, rather than a unitary sense of identity, occur in the course of an interview". 'Commonality, Difference, and the dynamics of Disclosure in In-depth Interviewing', in *Sociology*, May 1995.

[111] Oakley, *Op.Cit.*; Janet Finch: "'It's Great to Have Someone to Talk to': The Ethics and Politics of Interviewing Women'," in Colin Bell & Helen Roberts (eds.), *Social Researching; Politics, Problems, Practice*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

relaxed attitude. This issue of power is explored by Sue Scott [112] and Pamela Cotterill; the latter explains, for example, that power is not balanced and is related to the interviewees' age and status.[113] To this, I would add - like Bhavnani, Song, and Parker, the influence of race and ethnicity. Nevertheless, it is the researcher that inevitably decides how the data will be interpreted and used, and it is the researcher that will gain knowledge through the researched (and knowledge is power).

The extent of the researcher's responsibility towards both the 'subjects' but also the readers/ students of research findings also occurred as a problematic issue during my fieldwork. When one of the women I contacted expressed her preference at coming to my house for an interview (since she lived with her parents and "we wouldn't get any privacy. Besides, it would be nice to visit you at your place"[114]), my partner looked amazed that she would be willing to drive for twenty minutes to 'get here'. So he simply asked me, 'what on earth do they get out of it'? That was a question I was able to answer after the completion of the fieldwork and the interviews. Out of the twenty-five women I interviewed, eighteen of them argued to have 'really enjoyed the interview'. Eleven of them expressed the wish to keep in touch for 'a coffee and a chat'. Two were interested in postgraduate studies (one wanted a distant learning course in education and the other in sociology) and one in an undergraduate course in psychology. After the interview, all three of them asked details on my involvement in this field of work. In the end, we agreed on my helping them register for courses. One of them changed her mind in the end. I worked with the other two in order to find courses and fill in application forms, write proposals and so on. Another woman said that she "thought I was alone in thinking about all these issues with women in this country. I am so relieved to see that you are also interested. We should get together more often for a chat, OK?"[115] I occasionally contact about half of the women I interviewed, especially those who expressed the wish to see me again. Due to a very hectic timetable and writing up my thesis, this tended to be more of a telephone call conversation but on some occasions, I visited them briefly and I have been out for a coffee with four of them.

This has been a source of intense pressure on me. Even if the troubling issue of reciprocity during the interview is resolved, complex questions remain about what happens *afterwards*. Does the researcher 'collect' knowledge and go? One must be careful when assuming that the overall power relationship between the researcher and the researched favours the latter (or the former). One of the women in the sample expressed disillusionment with the interview. After a very long talk, about her personal life, and elaborating on themes that I had not asked, she told me:

> "I am very disappointed. I came here, I accepted to be interviewed, because I am interested in women's issues. I want to do a postgraduate course on women's studies. I wanted to see what feminist methodology is all about. I come here, and all I find, is that we sit very informally, I talk, you listen, you even answer to my questions. I have not learnt anything. I do not know how you are going to use everything I said. I gave you all my time. I told you everything, as I would to a therapist. Now I am drained. Exhausted. And I feel that you know everything about me, and I know little about you. And I understood nothing about feminist research."[116]

I felt guilty and uncomfortable; I spent about one hour discussing with her what I thought about interviewing, in terms of feminist methodology, and I discussed her own interview with her. I

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[112] Sue Scott, 'The Personable and the Powerful: Gender and Status on Sociological Research', in Colin Bell & Helen Roberts (eds.) *Social Researching; Politics, Problems, Practice*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

[113] Cotterill, *Op. Cit.*, p.599.

[114] *Private Conversation with Author*, arranging interview with Theela, June 1997.

[115] *Private conversation with Author*, Interview with Lycimache, July 1997.

[116] *Private conversation with Author*, Interview with Philaenis, August 1997.

explained the things I found interesting and the reasons for that. I talked about subjectivity and reciprocity with her. I shared my thoughts about her concerns and explained my own struggle as a feminist woman in Cyprus. My interviewee left saying, "thanks, I feel better now. I have found out a bit of what I wanted to know, and you have, too, I hope."[117] However, I was left with a lot more questions.

The expectations of the researched during fieldwork need to be further addressed in feminist scholarly work in order for the research we carry out to be rewarding and emancipatory for all the partied involved. The assumption that the researcher can 'provide' reciprocity – in other words, that s/he can 'control' the existence of a hierarchical atmosphere during interviewing is dominant in feminist literature on methodology, and it has not often been challenged. Supposedly, the researcher *decides* whether to 'provide' an 'equal' relationship or not, whether s/he 'should' or not. The inevitable question then becomes whether there is *pressure* imposed on the researcher due to the nature of particular interview situations. Societal constraints in Cyprus, where everything is talked about, make women an 'easy target'.[118] They are careful about what they say and to whom. Consequently, for some of these women, the interview became a way to talk about things 'they don't normally discuss', with a woman who was interested in listening, and whom they could trust. Some asked to talk with me again, 'not in the context of an interview'. Despite my interest in these women's attitudes and practices, my research has been time-consuming. I have often experienced feelings of guilt about not contacting these women on a regular basis since I was expected to do so. I recognise that the initial 'agreement' was a 'simple' interview, but the experience, for some interviewees and for myself, was different. I am thus left with questions about whether it is always the case that 'power' lies with the researcher. Can she/he simply disappear at the end of the study, irrespective of the researched feelings? In the example concerning my experience with mothers and clinics, I disappeared at the end of the study, irrespective of *my* -the researcher's- feelings arising from the experience of racism, for example. In this present study, these feelings involve guilt.[119] Up to present day, it has been impossible to create research designs, which fully eliminate the contradictions in the relationship between the researcher and the researched.[120] More methodological and theoretical questions ought to be addressed within feminist research, as to the expectations, and power, if any, of the interviewees themselves, and how that affects the researcher her/himself.

4. Concluding Concerns - Research for Women?

This chapter has discussed the theoretical, epistemological, and methodological issues to which this thesis relates, in order to clarify existing debates and central issues of feminist research. Explorations of these as well as an analysis of the methods used in this study have been the main topics of concentration. The specific social and political contexts of the case of Cyprus have been identified and questions on the 'art of interviewing' have been raised in order to develop current arguments in feminist sociology. Since women's lives and experiences has been a neglected area of academic concentration in Cyprus, this study has set out to explore these 'missing' women's attitudes and practices, using the feminist methodologies and adhering to the feminist epistemological concerns dealt with in this chapter.

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[117] *Private conversation with Author*, Interview with Philaenis, August 1997.

[118] See Chapter Six.

[119] As women, both the interviewees and myself have been socialized into expecting to continuously receive and give large supplies of affection, support, and sympathy. Failure to do so, often leads into feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

[120] Joan Acker, Kate Barry & Joke Esseveld, 'Objectivity and Truth: Problems in Doing Feminist Research', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.6, No.4, pp.423-435, 1983, p.434.

Nevertheless, the question often addressed when carrying out feminist research -especially in societies and cultures where this is a newly established practice, like in the case of Cyprus- concerns the extent to which the subject area is studied politically. This concern with the relationship between theory and practice, and the conviction that academic feminism should be (although sometimes it appears not to be) related to feminist political practice, have been central in feminist work. Helen Roberts, for example, explores the question of separating the intellectual from the practical and the political and asks whether we do research for ourselves, for our professional colleagues or for and with the subjects of our research."[121] Should feminist concerns be studied politically? Should feminist methodologies aspire towards social change?

> "Isn't bias the major consequence of taking one's research questions from the lives of a particular social group -especially when that group is women? Since feminism is fundamentally a political movement, aren't its claims biased by its politics? If men disagree with women's claims, why should women's claims ever be considered preferable to men's?"[122]

These are current, problematic questions, which feminists are trying to resolve and understand. The answer for most (if not all) feminists is clear and much has been written to support their arguments[123] as well as to criticise them.[124] Different explanations and answers have been given by the different schools of feminist thought and thus different strategies of feminist political practice have been applied. Feminist empiricists, for example, believe that if we strictly adhered to existing methodological methods of conducting scientific research, then sexist and androcentric biases, as well as 'bad science', would be eliminated. They argue that traditional methodological assumptions are not simply the result of individual biases but rather of wider andocentric culture. It is therefore important to create social movements, such as the women's movement, to create new, enlarged ways of looking at the world. Feminist standpoint theorists similarly realise that the production of knowledge is a politically engaging activity. They argue that "women's knowledge emerges from a struggle against men and the attempt to reknowledge the distorted knowledge produce by men which is used to control and subordinate women."[125]

Feminists are criticised for using our work to promote our politics.[126] Nevertheless, gender relations are directly related to the issue of power and therefore feminism cannot be distinguished from the context that makes it essentially political.[127] "... An emancipatory social science must be premised upon the development of research approaches which both empower the researched and contribute to the generation of change enhancing social theory."[128] It has been suggested that, for example, how when people are committed to taking other people's work seriously, this constitutes an essentially political activity and that does not result in less professional work.[129] At the same time,

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[121] Helen Roberts, 'Women and Their Doctors: Power and Powerlessness in the Research Process', in Helen Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research,* Routledge, 1981, p.26.

[122] Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Women's Lives.* Open University Press, 1991, p.109.

[123] Sandra Harding, *Op.Cit.*; Stanely & Wise, *Op.Cit.*; Ramazonoglu, *Op.Cit.*

[124] See especially Martyn Hammersley, 'On Feminist Methodology', *Sociology,* Vol.26., No.2.,1992, pp.187-206., and other non/anti-feminists writers.

[125] Abbott & Wallace, *Op. Cit.*, p.210.

[126] Martyn Hammersley, *Op.Cit.*, p.199.

[127] See Finch, *Op.Cit.*, 1984.

[128] Patti Lather, *Op.Cit.*, p.570.

[129] Helen Roberts, *Op.Cit.*

the intention to carry out emancipatory work does not necessarily result in an emancipatory outcome.[130] It is thus important to apply in our empirical work what we discuss in our theoretical arguments. The emancipatory aim of a women's sociology will contribute both towards the better lives of the researched, but also the researchers, for "as women researchers we also have been absent and unheard within the main sociological traditions."[131] Women's academic research is closely connected with the political ideology of the women's movement; feminist epistemologies and methodologies are new ways of knowing and seeking 'truths' and since knowing is a political process, knowledge is intrinsically political.[132] When I presented part of this work at the college where I work, a colleague blatantly said to me that 'either you are doing academic work, or you are out in the streets demonstrating for your rights. You cannot do both'. I simply answered, 'Yes, you can. Or at least, I can.'[133] Feminism has shown that the world is not a monolith where rules apply to everyone at the same level. Rather there are many faces of it, which have been hidden for centuries, the most important one being that of women. The miraculous, monolithic answers of 'grand theories' to women's oppression can be quite problematic. For Stanley and Wise, "grand theory presupposes a particular kind of relationship between the individual and society, between the personal and the structural, which is in many ways alien to out understanding of feminism."[134] Similarly, 'grand theories' of gender inequality have proven to be of limited use in the case of Cyprus in general and this study in particular. Modifications, developments, and changes become necessary in order to include the realities of women in various parts of the world.

Feminism is full of contradictions and -being used to ingrained masculine discourses of thinking- I found these both horrifying and 'wrong' in the beginning. I tried to devise a solid, 'reasonable', and 'objective' answer about why women are oppressed and what can be done about it. Nevertheless, I am now wondering whether research is effectively "... 'fiction' in the sense that it views and so constructs 'reality' through the eyes of one person."[135] This gives rise to the feminist *postmodernist* question of whether a feminist science can actually exist or whether any science is destined to recreate sexist/discriminatory/androcentric ways of being in the world. Foundations of knowledge are increasingly under attack and the "God's Eye" omniscient perspective is being questioned; our overall knowledge is a partial representation of a more complex reality.[136] Based on the work by postmodern philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Jaques Lacan, Jaques Derrida, and writers such as Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous, and Luce Irigaray,[137] post-modern feminists refuse to

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[130] Joan Acker, Kate Barret & Joke Esseveld, 'Objectivity and Truth: Problems in Doing Feminist Research', in *Women's Studies International Forum 6*, pp.423-43.

[131] *Ibid.*, p.424.

[132] Caroline Ramazanoglu, 'On Feminist Methodology: Male Reason Versus Female Empowerment', in *Sociology, Vol.26, No.2, pp.207-212*, May 1992, p.210.

[133] *Private Conversation with Author*, March 1998

[134] Stanley & Wise, *Op. Cit.*, p.57.

[135] *Ibid.*, p.174.

[136] Gareth Morgan (ed.), *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Research*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA, 1983, p.389.

[137] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon (ed.). New York: Random House, 1981; Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', in *The Foucault Reader*, (ed.) P. Robinson, tran. C. Porter, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984; Jaques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: W.W. Norton, 1977; Jaques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, (ed.) Jaques-Alain Miller and trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: W. W. Norton, 1978; Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is Not One*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985; Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985; Helene Cixous, 'Castration or Decapitation?', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7(1), 1981, pp. 41-

construct one explanatory theory for women's oppression. They reject the traditional Enlightenment assumptions in the 'true self'; and, they are critical of 'grand narratives' of 'truth' and essentialist concepts such as gender identity and universal oppression. Post-modern feminists aim to replace unitary notions of women and feminine identity with 'more complex and pluralistic constructions of social identity'.[138]

> "Post-modern feminists take a 'deconstructionist approach'; in other words, they take "a critical approach toward everything, including particular ideas or social injustices as well as the structures upon which the are based, the language in which they are thought, and the systems in which they are safeguarded."[139]

Thus, they question dominant structures such as knowledge and language and their celebration of 'Otherness'. Based on Foucault, they deconstruct the subject, which they consider as discontinuous and fragmented. and argue that there is neither self-identity nor truth: "that the order within our lives and our language is an imposed, inessential, structure."[140]

Post-modern feminists have been heavily criticised for their philosophical assaults on unitary answers to patriarchy. and for being elitists and thus excluding all but the privileged few from a debate. Further, their critics argue that,

> "...it is all very well for men to deconstruct the knowing subject because it has been constructed as masculine. Women have not yet achieved this status and to deconstruct it at the very moment when feminism is claiming as active subjectivity for women has damaging implications for feminism."[141]

Despite the critiques against post-modern feminism, these philosophical developments in feminist perspectives offer women the most important liberation of all: 'freedom from oppressive thought.'[142] It is this relative freedom from oppressive thought, which has allowed me to accept and be interested in exploring contradictions. The process of bringing about social change implies exactly that: by understanding the *contradictions* inherent in women's experiences within various structures, effective political action can be devised.[143] It is precisely these contradictions within women's locations that the primary data explores in this work. In order to examine the conflicts within women's lives, I next turn to a discussion of Cypriot history, as this can provide the background information and deeper understanding of their roots.

55.; Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medousa', in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. *New French Feminisms*, pp. 245-264., New York: Schocken Books, 1981; Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*. translated by Leon Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982; Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7(1). 19181, pp.13-35.

[138] Susan Greenwood, 'Feminist Witchcraft: A Transformatory Politics', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland, *Op.Cit.*, p.111.

[139] Rosemary Tong, *Op.Cit.*, p.219.

[140] *Ibid.*, p.220.

[141] Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland, *Op.Cit.*, pp.8-9. See Nancy Hartsock. 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?', in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

[142] Tong, *Op.Cit.*. p.223. For a thorough discussion of postmodern feminism, see Linda Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism*, London: Routledge, 1990. See also Alison Assiter, *Enlightened Women: Modernist Feminism in a Postmodern Age*, London: Routledge, 1996, for a critique.

[143] Chandra Mohanty, *Op.Cit.*. 1988, p.74.

Chapter III
'Herstory': the Missing Woman of Cyprus - A Historical and Contemporary Search

1. Introduction

"In the end, it boils down to this: is one prepared to break with tradition, to be 'unhistorical' in order to make history, or not?"[1]

The first part of the title of this thesis, *A Struggle for Independence*, refers to the titles of a number of other works such as documentaries, articles, headlines, and books that are related to Cyprus. The concept of 'struggle' in Cyprus is mostly associated with the 1955-1959 revolt of the Greek Cypriot people against colonial Britain, conducted in order to gain independence through unifying the island with Greece. This idea of the struggle for independence still features prominently in everyday life. Heroes are discussed with admiration at schools, analysed in documentaries shown on television, celebrated on national days. The ideal of freedom and independence has been sought for and the people, who fought and are fighting for it, are celebrated. Women take part in this struggle, like women do all over the world; they are the background 'heroines', the hidden 'warriors', but also the worst victims of war. They are killed, captured and raped; they are abused and threatened; they are left refugees, stigmatised, widows.[2]

However, this struggle for independence in the 1950s was created by men, ordered by men and carried out by men. It was a patriarchal struggle in a patriarchal island[3] and it continued with the events of 1974 on the island. Women followed this pattern and became involved in this struggle, adjusting to the various roles assigned to them; at the same time, and similar to men, they became involved in peaceful demonstrations, in peace work, in work for the public interest. In fact, they were used by men in order to promote men's best interests. They fought the war of men and they fought against it. They became absorbed by another conflict, another struggle than the one this thesis is concerned with. They were told that the conditions of despair created by war, 'women's issues' were unimportant. They were distracted from another struggle they could have been involved in. They became less involved in the struggle for their own independence from men of the colonies, from men in uniforms, from men on the island, from invaders and from rulers. For women, this struggle for independence could have various meanings, interpretations, and truths. This chapter aims to problematize current patriarchal trends in Cyprus by allowing different epistemologies to be explored and addressed, and by questioning existing historical discourses.

1.2. Concerns on Writing Women's History

"If we continue to speak this sameness, if we speak to each other as men have spoken for centuries, as they have taught us to speak, we will fail each other. Again ... words will pass through our bodies, above our heads, disappear, make us disappear."[4]

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[1] C.G. Jung, *Aspects of the Feminine*, Ark, 1982, p.72.

[2] See Chapter Six and Eight for analysis.

[3] I use patriarchy to refer to the institutionalised domination of men in the society.

[4] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, translation Gillian Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, p.69.

In order to try to understand Cypriot women in the late 1990s and their attitudes, we have to go back in time and trace the complex antecedents of their social historical background. Histories have always tended to be stylised and have concentrated on the 'elite' and the dominant groups in any particular society. The recording of history has been very selective. In fact, the whole discourse of history is a site of power and resistance; it is written for, by, and about dominant groups in society. Historians have been so concerned with recording the passage of power and authority throughout the centuries that the outcome of their work has preserved the patriarchal structures of the societies they studied. Women have conveniently been excluded, ignored, or simply mentioned in the background of any given period:

> "Few people know about the many female rulers, philosophers, scientists, artists, writers, and inventors of the past, yet some were highly influential and many contributed to human knowledge and well-being ... Women founded a very important organisation, only to be thrust out of it and their record expunged."[5]

In '*Northanger Abbey*' Jane Austen has her heroine complain about history books being full of "the quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilence in every page: the men also good for nothing, and hardly any women at all." History is written by men (of the dominant class and race) and women have systematically been excluded as *agents of knowledge*.[6] Similarly, women have been totally 'hidden' from Cypriot history and it is only though reading between the lines of textbooks by eminent male historians that even superficial information on their existence surfaces.[7] It is therefore important to at least try to examine briefly the thousands years of history of the Cypriot people in order to understand the "Other," the woman. It is important to try to tell '*herstory*' rather than *history*. In 1972, Anna Davis motivated women to study their own history,

> "...for by showing that the role and nature changes with each society we are helping to defeat the argument 'that is how it's always been.[8] It is only through showing that a woman's role is socially constructed "and rooted in a specific historical context, rather than natural and universal, could feminism hope to argue that it was open to change."[9]

June Purvis explains how the publication of Sheila Rowbotham's book, in 1973, *Hidden From History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It,* has been followed by "an

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[5] Marilyn French, *The War Against Women,* Penguin, 1992, p.43.

[6] Sandra Harding, 'Introduction; Is there a Feminist Method?' in Sandra Harding (ed.) *Feminism and Methodology; Social Science Issues,* Indiana University Press, 1987, p.3.

[7] See also Ester Breitenbach, Alice Brown, & Fiona Myers, 'Understanding Women in Scotland', *Feminist Review,* No.58, Spring 1998, pp. 44-63, for similarities in the cases of Cyprus and Scotland. It is important to point out here that the First International Conference on women and society in ancient Cyprus took place between 20-23 March 1998. At the conference it was stressed that this was the first time that anyone tried to investigate women's lives in ancient Cyprus and how their roles changed; further, it was suggested that there exists rich amount of evidence relating to women in Cyprus all the way back to the late Stone Age and the Neolithic Period. See report in *The Cyprus Weekly.* 20-26 March 1998.

[8] Quoted in June Hannam, 'Women, History and Protest', in Diane Richardson and Victoria Robinson (eds.), *Introducing Women's Studies*, Macmillan Press, 1993, p.303.

[9] *Ibid.* p.303.

outpouring of publications making visible women's lives in the past, some of these accounts being more explicitly feminist than others."[10] The aim of telling this feminist story is to comprehend the

> "...significance of the sexes, of gender groups in the historical past. Our goal is to discover the range in sex roles and in sexual symbolism in different societies and periods, to find out what meaning they had and how they functioned to maintain the social order or to promote its change."[11]

By looking at a number of historical textbooks and the first related published article by Mary Pyrgos,[12] I wish to give a brief picture both of Cyprus and of the Cypriot people, *with a particular emphasis on women.* It is not my intention to give an extensive theoretical framework of the history of women in Cyprus; thus, the following discussion is a *descriptive* rather than theoretical/analytical account of what limited materials already exist, which aims at identifying important trends. Similar work has been done in Greece; however, for the purpose of this article, this work is not directly relevant to this study. Due to the majority of Cypriots' identification with the Greek people and culture,[13] and the lack of academic analysis until very recently, the social research covering Greece has been automatically applied to the island.[14] It is important, nevertheless, to realise that the differences in the historical experiences of the two countries result in obvious differences in attitudes and perceptions of their people. This is especially so in the case of women who had no voice in the thousands of years of history.

The analysis can indeed be criticised for not challenging the use of concepts developed to explore society from a masculinist perspective since it does not question as such existing methodology and the foundations of existing theoretical frameworks. I am well aware of the limitations of this kind of work, which does not strictly adhere to the whole philosophy, and ethos of feminism. However, I see this piece of work as an encouragement, a starting point to the development of a *feminist* perspective within the academic life in Cyprus. My emphasis on 'feminist' (simply to point out the obvious) is necessary since not all work on women is feminist and thus "the claim that research on women is conducted with a feminist perspective can be made only when the methods applied do in fact reflect women's experiences which undoubtedly will vary... "[15] Thus, this chapter could create a possible problem for some feminists as to whether it should be included in the definition of 'feminist work' but I suggest that in this particular context it is a start, and is a way of demonstrating how women are denied equal opportunities and are discriminated against and for this it should ideally be regarded as promoting positive change. It thus has political implications for the

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[10] June Purvis, 'Doing Feminist Women's History: Researching the Lives of Women in the Suffragette Movement in Edwardian England', in Mary Maynard & June Purvis (eds.) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective,* Taylor and Francis, London, 1994, p.166-7.

[11] Natalie Z. Davies, 'Women's History in Transition: The European Case', *Feminist Studies 3,* 1976, p.90.

[12] Mary Pyrgos, *The Cypriot Woman at a Glance,* 1995. Pyrgos' publication is a reference article rather than an analytical piece of work. It is not footnoted and includes no bibliography. Another, extended work of Mary Pyrgos within the same framework still remains unpublished.

[13] The Turkish Cypriot community identifies more with Turkey.

[14] Mavratsas, for example, gives a very interesting socio-cultural perspective of the Greek and Greek Cypriot economic ethos which he names the 'Hellenic' ethos, which is well justified for his analysis, but not suitable to be applied in this work.

[15] Renate Duelli-Klein, 'How to Do What We Want To Do: Thoughts About Feminist Methodology', in Gloria Bowles & Renate Duelli-Klein (eds.), *Theories of Women's Studies. Women's Studies.* University of California, Berkeley, 1980, p.52.

life of women in Cyprus and it is aimed at acknowledging and pointing out their oppression. For this reason, I consider this to be a feminist account.[16]

2. Historical Background - Early Times

> *"But who, if it comes to that, has fully realised that history is not contained in thick books but lives in our very blood?"*[17]

The first traces of life in Cyprus can be dated back to the seventh millennium BC, beginning with the Neolithic Age (7000-5300BC) and later the Chalcolithic Age (4000-2500 BC). A number of archaeological excavations have exposed a wealth of artefacts, which illustrate the various stages of the Cypriot civilisation. Nevertheless, information on the life in early Cyprus, while receiving a lot of attention, is extremely limited and even more so on the life of Cypriot women of the time and it is only certain archaeological studies that give some light. Many details of women's lives have simple been lost with the passage of time. According to Mary Pyrgos,

> "...The purpose of life of every woman at the time was to survive and propagate the species ... the figurines of pregnant women ... reinforce the view the sexuality and the rituals surrounding it played an important role in Neolithic Cyprus ...Children ... belonged to the mothers and until 8000BC are known by the name of the mother."[18]

After studying gender and mortuary rituals in Chalcolithic Cyprus, however, Diane Bolger suggests that "when viewed within the context of increasing interest of socio-cultural complexity, mortuary rituals in Cyprus during the third millennium serve as useful vehicles with which to monitor changes in gender constructs."[19] In her speech, Dr Bolger explained that Cypriot society used to be egalitarian, with very little division of labour and little evidence of social distinctions.

During the Bronze Ages - early, middle and late (2500 -1050BC) when the people from Anatolia first arrived at the island, part of the population worked in copper mines and the majority in pottery making, animal breeding, agriculture, weaving. It seems that women did most of these tasks. Further on, evidence from the period suggests that,

> "...the island had a matriarchal system which flourished in the year 2000BC ... It is a fact that a number of findings, myths and information from texts support this view. We do however encounter some elements of a patriarchal system as well. We cannot therefore claim

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[16] Similarly, Marilyn Porter argues that in the case of her exploratory study, "so few studies had been conducted and so few data had been collected that I could not know precisely what sort of material I wanted or how it would be collected. In methodological terms, I tried to build on existing methods to meet my own needs and particularly, to meet the needs of a feminist agenda. Feminism carried with it a sense of urgency and an intense desire to know, in order to change, women's experience. If the kind of failures and mistakes I have explored have speeded this process, then they must be welcome as an equal contribution to the awkward and exciting project of building feminist knowledge". Marilyn Porter, 'Second-hand Ethnography; Some Problems in Analysing a Feminist Project', in Alan Bryman & Robert G Burgess (eds.), *Analysing Qualitative Data,* Routledge, 1994, p.85.

[17] C. Jung, *Op. Cit.*, p.72.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.1-2.

[19] Diane Bolger, 'Gender and Mortuary in Chalcolithic Cyprus', CAARI International Conference, *Engendering Aphrodite; Women and Society in Ancient Cyprus.* 20-23 March 1998, Nicosia, Cyprus. Abstract of paper to be published within 1999.

> that in Cyprus existed a matriarchal system exactly opposite to the patriarchal. We can assume however, that women and men lived peacefully together and developed in parallel without oppressing each other in a society where the principle of equality of sexes still prevailed."[20]

Women of the time had a dominant presence in temples and gave their names to Cypriot cities. According to sources that seem to vary in terms of agreement, Kitium was named after the Princess Kition, the city of Paphos after the amazon Paphos, Amathus got its name from Queen Amathusia, and the current capital of Cyprus, Nicosia was named after the nymph Leucothea. For Bolger, [21] it is around this time that some evidence is found that men's and women's roles begin to diverge and separate.

During the latter part of the Bronze Age, in the twelfth century BC, the Achaens began to immigrate to Cyprus. Changes in the social structure support arguments concerning the establishment of patriarchy during the same period. There were now fewer female idols and male ones. According to information drawn especially from myths of the time, the new leadership condemned free sexual relations and imposed the importance of the virginity of a woman and her subservience to man. Monogamy was established and the tradition of succession of power, which passed from mother priestess to daughter, changed:

> "In Cyprus, though the supremacy of Zeus [father of the Gods] was accepted, the Minoan tradition of mother-goddess was continued and found its supreme expression in Aphrodite - goddess of fertility, of love both pure and carnal, and, *of course*-, beauty. Poetic fantasy wants Aphrodite born of the foam of the sea."[22]

Sacrifices made at the Temple of Aphrodite in Paphos included only male animals. The initiates of these rituals, by paying a coin, were given a lump of salt and a phallus.[23]

Moving on to the Cypro-Geometric period (1050-750BC), further numbers of Greek-speaking invaders, now armed with iron weapons, followed in the wake of the Mycenaeans. This period saw the rise of the first ancient kingdoms, which was followed by an obscure time, when there was a virtual blank in the history of the island, known as the *dark ages*. By the ninth century, a Phoenician colony was established on the island. The Phoenicians brought with them the alphabet, which was being used by the Greek-speaking settlers in less than a century.

During the Cypro-Archaic Period (750-475BC), the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and the Persians ruled Cyprus respectively. In this period, the chastity of women was promoted by these rulers and their overall position in society deteriorated even more. Any involvement in public life was unacceptable and women worked as weavers mostly but also guesthouse owners, midwives, entertainers, paid mourners, companions, prostitutes and last but certainly not least, slaves. An extraordinary succession of Near Eastern Empires marked the island during this period. Assyrian rule was replaced by that of Egypt and then that of Persia, whose domination ended when Alexander the Great, under the support of the Cypriot kings, conquered the Persian Empire. Dr Bolger suggests

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[20] The quotation in itself, recently written by one of the pioneers of the feminist movement in Cyprus, reflects Cypriot attitudes and the interpretation of the role of women in general. Matriarchy and patriarchy are not defined but are rather used unproblematically throughout Pyrgos' work to describe complex social conditions and trends.

[21] D. Bolder, *Op.Cit.*

[22] Footnoted in D. Alastos, *Cyprus In History,* Zeno, 1956, p.37., on myths surrounding Aphrodite's birth (my italics).

[23] D. Alastos, *Op.Cit.*, p.37-9.

that "by the 7th and 6th centuries, you were essentially dealing with the same kinds of social structures that we have today."[24]

This was soon to become also the end of the Cypro-Classical Period (475-325BC). Alexander gave a decisive impetus to the growth of civilisation,

> "...by the planned cities built along his route, with market places, theatres, schools, etc. By the improvement of harbours and transport and the opening up of new roads and by creating monetary unity facilitated both the movements of trade and of people. The Greek language, developed into a great instrument of expression...became the vehicle for the movement of ideas which percolated throughout the conquered regions and stabbed beyond them into surrounding barbarism." [25]

According to writings of the time, marriage continued to be regarded as the purpose of women of the period. Marriages were arranged by the father, who selected their daughters' husband -especially within the upper classes - according to their race and social class. Similar to today's patriarchal double standards, women were then excepted to remain faithful to their husbands but men were free to have mistresses. The important King of Salamis Evagoras the First and his son for example, were murdered on their way to visit their mistresses (374/373 BC). During that period, respect towards women was very low, so having children and especially sons protected women's position within society. "For this reason, all married women wanted to have children; but there is no way of knowing if the maternal instinct was highly developed."[26] During the Hellenistic Period (325-30BC) which started with the death of Alexander the Great, Cyprus became involved in struggles among his generals over the division of his empire. The Ptolemies were now in control of the island, which became part of the Hellenistic State of Egypt. As part of the Kingdom of Egypt, Cyprus became culturally and artistically oriented towards the Hellenistic world. Aphrodite remained the most important of the god(desse)s and the Great Mother Goddess continued also to be worshipped as Asterte.[27] Nevertheless, the Ptolemies maintained harems with hundreds of concubines, and encouraged "dissolution in love ... and voluptuousness and exhibitionism among the women of the ruling class."[28] According to Pyrgos, the queens of this period were dynamic and determined. "They *stood by* their king husbands *as equals*, they were worshipped like goddesses, they *fought like the men* and if necessary they even defied death."[29] She refers to Queen Axiothea, wife of Nicocles, King of Paphos as an example of a prominent woman of the period. She points out that these of course were the exception and that the majority of women had to struggle in order to survive in a world that belonged to the men. However, Alastos explains that when Ptolemy decided to murder Nicocles, the latter demanded to be heard in his defence and as he was given no hearing, he killed himself:

> "Queen Axiothea informed of her husband's death, killed her daughters to save them from falling into the hands of the enemy and persuaded the wives of the king's brothers to commit suicide with herself."[30]

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[24] D. Bolger, *Op.Cit.*

[25] D. Alastos, *Ibid.*, p.74.

[26] M. Pyrgos, *Op.Cit.*, p.20. The issue of whether the so-called 'maternal instinct' actually exists or it is a social construction is not discussed at all by Pyrgos. In fact, its existence seems to be taken for granted despite the vast amount of feminist critiques on the subject.

[27] Sir David Hunt (ed.), *Footprints in Cyprus*, Trigraph: London, 1990, p.101.

[28] M. Pyrgos, *Op.Cit.*, p.20.

[29] *Ibid.*, p.21 (my italics).

[30] D. Alastos, *Op.Cit.*, p.77.

For Pyrgos, being helpless, powerless, unable to voice an opinion, and having little choice but to commit suicide, is a sign of women's determination and dominance. Conventional definitions of power and courage dominate this account of women's history. At the same time, this woman's choice was indeed an example of how women practice agency and are victimised at the same time.[31] However, it is Alastos who seems to sum up the circumstances under which the Cypriot woman lived: " The woman was very much the household slave as in all Greece."[32]

2.1. The Romans and the Rest

In the year 30BC, Cyprus came under the Roman Empire as part of the Province of Syria, and this was the beginning of the Roman Period (30BC-AD330).[33] Roman rule in Cyprus was established in its final form in 22BC, when Octavian, now the Emperor Augustus, transferred the island to the rule of the Senate. This was a time when women walked freely in the streets (accompanied by servants the number of whom was determined by the law, depending on women's social status), attended public spectacles and visited the public baths. However, they were treated as minors by the law and only gained a certain amount of social respect upon marriage. That was the reason why their parents hurried to marry them off at a very early age. The choice of a husband for the daughter depended on the former's social class and race: as Pyrgos explains, a Roman could not marry a Cypriot, but could only live with her. As for the woman herself, again, she had no say. Pyrgos states that before the marriage ceremony, a woman had to visit the Temple of God Priapus in order to symbolically offer their virginity. Further on, divorce was easy to obtain for men, who were actually encouraged in this way to abandon their wives and keep concubines.[34] She also informs us that,

> "...in 212 AD, the Emperor Caracallus, under the guidance of his mother made all the citizens of the Empire equal. Romans and slaves now had the status of the Roman citizen. This law was a decisive one for Cypriot women ... patrician women in Cyprus participated in decision making. Apollonia, who lived in the 2nd century AD and Cornelia Nike were well known for their philanthropy. The latter was also famous for her efforts to free slaves." [35]

It was during the Roman Period, in the beginning of the third century that Paphos and other cities, particularly Salamis, suffered extensive damage from an earthquake. Cyprus, with its people stricken by poverty, war, earthquakes, draught, but also the decline of morality, was already getting ready for the advent of the new religion which was to change the history of the island and the

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[31] See Chapter Eight.

[32] *Ibid.*, p.93.

[33] It is interesting to note that the island was actually 'owned' by a woman for a short period of time. "After the birth of Caesarion, Caesar presented the island to Cleopatra and their son. After the battle of Philippi (autumn of 42 BC), Cyprus came under Mark Anthony who confirmed Cleopatra's possession of it". Hunt, *Op.Cit.*, p.112.

[34] M. Pyrgos, *Op.Cit.*, p.23.

[35] *Ibid.*, p.23-4. June Hannah explains how philanthropy has long been recognised as an arena which middle class women made their own. "As a voluntary activity, and one which required caring qualities, it was seen as a suitable outlet for women's desire to do something useful with their lives for the good of a wider community. June Hannah in 'Women History and Protest', *Introducing Women's Studies*, Diane Richardson & Victoria Robinson (eds.), Macmillan, 1993, p.316. Interestingly, it was only about half a century ago (1940) that women joined in philanthropic associations.

attitudes of its people irreversibly.[36] The Inauguration of Constantinople as capital of the Roman Empire in 330 AD marked the beginning of the Byzantine Period (330-1191AD). By that time, the majority of the inhabitants of the island had become Christians, so "the transition to the new order was effected relatively smoothly."[37] Constantine brought with him a more moral and humanitarian world than its Roman predecessor did. Based on the Christian ideals, he restricted the absolute power, which the father had over his children "and gave a new status to woman by abolishing concubines."[38] Pyrgos, nevertheless, suggests that this promotion of 'equality of the sexes' was soon to disappear and be substituted by patriarchal thinking. She argues that the Church in collaboration with the state promoted rules, which only humiliated women. It seems, thus, that Byzantine rule was full of contradictions and double standards concerning women. With the complete regulation of social life,

> "...the son had to follow his father's profession ... the law forbade parents to sell their children ... women's rights were advanced. A widow had the right to raise her own children and a wife the right of property equal to her dowry."[39]

It was nevertheless women who substituted donkeys and camels in mountainous areas as porters. Furthermore, the puritanical Byzantine society exorcised anything that the Goddess Aphrodite stood for and dancing, pleasure and enjoyment became sins.

From the middle of the seventh century until the second half of the tenth century, Cyprus was to undergo a series of invasions, beginning with the Arab invasion in 649AD under Muawiya. A successions of naval battles and raids between the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate brought Cyprus to 965 AD when the Byzantine Emperor Nicephoros Phocas was able to reoccupy Cyprus. This marked the Second Byzantine Period (965-1191AD) in Cyprus which was to witness a very rigid tax collection but also a firm government and numerous building programmes, mainly of Orthodox churches and monasteries. It was again during this period that two female role models came into existence. One was that of the Virgin Mary. She was interpreted to stand for motherhood, subservience, and morality. The other image was that of the sinful Eve - the seducer, immoral, and valueless. However, "both central female figures in the Bible, Eve as well as Mary, are associated with myths concerning the potency of the male creative force. Since the sole creative principle of the universe in the Bible is male, it is not surprising that woman, man, and the son of God, central figures in the divine plan of the universe, are all created by male forces."[40] There were thus only two realistic roles for women to choose from. They had to follow one or the other and live with the implications of their 'choice'.[41] Diversity and freedom of expression were totally denied and as Simone de Beauvoir argued, it is not "reality that dictates to society or to individuals their choice between the two opposed basic categories; in every period, in each case, society and the individual decide in accordance with their needs. Very often they project into the myth adopted by the institutions and values to which they adhere."[42] In this case, the Church promoted these images.

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[36] See Chapter Four for a discussion on the impact of religion on the lives of women in Cyprus.

[37] D. Alastos, *Op.Cit.*, p.111.

[38] *Ibid.*, p.117.

[39] Alastos, *Ibid.*, p.121.

[40] Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex; Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman's Nature*. Indiana University Press, 1993, p.126.

[41] See Chapter Six and Eight for a discussion on the contradictory images women are expose to and the consequences of these contradictions.

[42] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated by H M Pashley (ed.). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986, p.284.

Misogyny was thus encouraged. Thus, it was only through marriage and children that women felt they could gain respect within a society that constrained them into the back of the house.[43] Women of the time found strength in Christianity but also in legends such as that of Regina. Regina was the utopian third choice. The one to exist only in legends but never in reality. The ultimate dream. She was a legendary powerful woman able of almost everything. She is described in myths of the time riding her horse, building castles and palaces, defending the powerless. According to the legend, she constantly and stubbornly refused to give into Digenis' - the legendary hero who represents men and masculinity - advances. She was a 'complete' woman but also had the period's perceived masculine traits that allowed her to be anything she wanted. She represented the best of both worlds:

> "Regina is wonderfully beautiful, kind, proud, hard and heartless, a woman and a goddess, the shadow that goes past our eyes, she glances at us for a moment and then she disappears in the wind or her underground palaces. She is a queen and a demon, an amazon and a woman, she is the Regina of Cyprus."[44]

The triumph of the First crusade at the end of the eleventh century increased the prosperity of the island, which benefited from the new markets for its produce on the coast of Palestine. Nevertheless, the military decline of the Byzantine Empire became obvious by the middle of the twelfth century. Isaac Comnenus, one of the rulers of the Byzantine dynasty, took over the government of the island in 1884 and declared himself independent until 1191 when King Richard the First (the Lionheart) of England defeated him and took possession of Cyprus. Richard married Berengaria of Navarre in Limassol, where she was crowned Queen of England. It was after this that Richard sold the island to the Knights Templars for 100000 dinars. A year later, in 1192 the Templars resold Cyprus to King Richard who transferred it at the same price to Guy of Lusignan.

This marked the beginning of the Lusignan Period (1192-1489 AD) which was to last for three hundred years, impose the feudal system and maintain a regular succession of legitimate male heirs. Despite this, women played a prominent role throughout, which Hunt described as often domineering.[45] This period was crowded with historical events: numerous personalities appeared and many tragedies and conflicts took place. A complete new ecclesiastical establishment for Cyprus appeared whereby the Latin Church took over administration of the dioceses from the Greek Orthodox bishops. The Greek Orthodox Church was fanatically persecuted by the Latin Church, to which the Lusignans owed their allegiance. The Latin Church acquired great power and together with the state, they controlled society.[46] Rules and laws were again characterised by double standards.[47] Adultery, for example was condemned, but numerous evidence from stories of the time.

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[43] See Chapters Four and Five for a discussion.

[44] N.S. Spanos, *New Cypriot Mythology,* Nicosia: Cyprus, p.6. (In Greek, my translation).

[45] D. Hunt, *Op.Cit.*, p.177.

[46] M. Pyrgos, *Op.Cit.*, p.34. "The choice of groom for noble women had to be approved by the King and the Pope ... And if the appropriate groom was not found, the woman remained unmarried and often went to nunneries. Noble women had the right to refuse the groom if he was of a lower class. But there were cases where young people married against the wishes of the King and the Pope, as happened in the case of Echive d'Ibelin and in the case of Marguerite, the sister of King Peter and Apollonia of Pentayia who refused to marry those designated by the King."

[47] "In the narrow society of the Latins it was difficult to find a wife or husband outside the prohibited degrees. Significant are the words of the dispersion granted to Henry de Novaria and Mary Dagulier of Nicosia, 'pro eo quod arta et ab inimicis fidei orthodoxe circumvallata existit' and the people of the island are Greeks, they themselves are Catholics, and cannot easily find their equals outside the prohibited degrees...The same reason is given over and over again, as when dispensations were granted to Exilia ... to Guy d'Ibelin and Isabel ... and to Thomas de Montolif and Alice de S.Bertino

show how it was really accepted by society, a taken for granted fact, that only few women, such as Helena Palcologos, confronted.

Helena Palcologos was well aware of her husband's -King John II- affair with Marietta of Patras. It was, in fact, the king's mistress Marietta de Patras[48] who was the mother of James II (the Bastard), "loved and spoiled by his father when alive and his eventual successor."[49] Double standards and the Christian rulers, nevertheless, demanded that marriage and chastity remained the central concern of women's lives. Monogamy and chastity were indeed valued and respected:[50]

> "Rapists were severely punished by the Assizes. If the rapist came from the same social class as the victim and her family accepted him, he was obliged to marry her. If he was not accepted by her family, the girl became a nun and the rapist had to pay the amount necessary for her to enter the convent."[51]

... So too Pope Clement VI was told in 1348 by Philip, Archbishop of Nicosia; and owing to the remoteness of Cyprus it was not easy to obtain dispensation from the Pope. Accordingly Clement granted Philip power to give the dispensation to six couples who applied for it ... Another reason given is that the marriage would heal a family feud ... ", Sir George Hill, *A History of Cyprus: Volume III - The Frankish Period 1432-1571*, Cambridge University Press, 1948.

[48] According to Alastos, *Op. Cit.*, p.208, "Helena was alleged to have had a fight with Marietta of Patras, mistress if John II ... and to have bitten her rival's nose", footnote 2.

[49] Hunt, *Op.Cit.*, p.207.

[50] It is interesting here to mention Peter I, ruler of Cyprus as from 1358, who believed in the preaching of the Christian church and who was the 'chosen instrument' to liberate the Holy Land. It was nevertheless the same man who, despite his marriage to Eleanor of Aragon, had numerous mistresses among whom, his favourite was Joanna l'Aleman. To quote a male historian's version of the facts surrounding Eleanor's reaction to her husband's mistresses, "Joanna was eight months pregnant when Peter left for the West and the jealous Eleanor had her beaten and tortured to make her miscarry. Having failed, she sent her to a home to have the child but instructed the midwives to bring the infant to her as soon as it was born. This was done. Joanna was separated from her child and thrown into jail ... When Peter heard about this, he wrote to Eleanor, threatening on his return to do her so much violence that many will tremble ... Eleanor, obviously frightened, released Joanna from jail and shut her in a convent. She also desisted from doing harm to her other known rival, Echive de Scandelion, Peter's second mistress. Peter received other hard news. John Visconte, who was left in charge of the household, wrote to him that Queen Eleanor was unfaithful to him with the Count John de Morphou. Peter was enraged. What was sauce for the goose was most obviously not sauce for the gander! So on his return ... Joanna was taken away from the convent and installed in the Palace. The Queen was brought to trial before the Haute Cour. Conviction meant death for her and her lover. The nobles felt that to convict the Queen might bring upon Cyprus the wrath of Aragon, and in any case, such a conviction was bound to strengthen the hands of the King by the removal of two of his opponents, while the opposite would leave him saddled with the 'dishonour'of an unfaithful wife. The Queen was exonerated". Alastos, *Op.Cit.*, p.196-7.

[51] Pyrgos, *Op.Cit.*, p.34. The actual punishment of the victim by the society at large and by her family in particular is not discussed in the paper. The victim's entrance into a convent despite her will is not explored by the author. However, lack of choice and strict sexuality control is clearly a manifest form of punishment for women in patriarchal structures. Marilyn French, in *The War Against Women*, says that "punishment from beatings to imprisonment in convents to death were inflicted on girls who lost their virginity before marriage – even if they were raped, and even if by a family member", p.140.

Queen Helena Palcologos was Greek and became the second wife of King John II in 1441. According to Kleanthis Georgiades, "mostly serious developments of Cypriot history are connected with her." [52] Helena represented a symbol of national resurgence - her belonging to the Imperial family of Constantinople raised hopes for union with the Byzantium once more. She was devoutly Orthodox, well educated and spoke foreign languages fluently. She was an intellectual, famous for her energetic and ambitious nature, who went as far as to confront the Pope when she felt that she had to. Her daughter Charlotte, who also followed a pro-Hellenic policy,[53] also showed the strength of character she had inherited from her mother and reigned Cyprus for six years. The next female ruler of Cyprus, and a greatly dominant figure in the political history of the island, was Caterina Cornaro. She was the daughter of the Venetian patrician Mark Cornaro and she married James II. She remained Queen for fifteen years until 1489.

When James II and his son died in suspect circumstances in 1474, they left the Lusignan line without successor. This gave Venice, now at war with Turkey, the opportunity to intervene directly and seize the island for the defence of her eastern flank. This marked the beginning of the Venetian Period (1489-1571) which was characterised by the continual struggle of its rulers to prepare the island defences against the inevitable Ottoman invasion. It eventually took place in 1570 under the orders of Sultan Selim II. There appear to be no information about the life of women of that time apart from the fact that Caterina Cornaro died in Venice in1510, still bearing the title of Queen of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia.[54]

Cyprus's entry into the Ottoman Period (1571-1878AD) was liberation for the bulk of the Greek Orthodox population who were relieved to get out of the oppressive feudal system and the authoritative administration. Serfdom was abolished and the rights of the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church gradually restored.[55] However, there were serious and continual revolts against Ottoman rule later, mainly as a result of harsh taxation.[56] Despite this, the Church acquired increasingly political power and had the authority to solve "family and other differences amongst the Greek, Armenian, Maronite, and Latin citizens according to Cypriot Law. The family problems of Ottomans married to Cypriot women, chiefly of Latin origin, were solved by the Kadi in accordance with the Koran."[57] In general, women were not allowed to state their opinion concerning their future partners. Marriages were arranged by matchmakers. "A precondition for marriage was the dowry provided by the bride, but also a brideprice from the groom which included the building of the house. The dowry issue often caused disputes which resulted in marriages or engagements being dissolved."[58] The emphasis on

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[52] Kleanthis Georgiades, *History of Cyprus,* Nicosia, Cyprus, p.206.

[53] Stavros Panteli, *Op.Cit.,* p.19.

[54] Queen Caterina Cornaro was forced to abdicate and the Venetians formally annexed the island in 1489.

[55] D. Hunt, *Op.Cit.,* p.298.

[56] Stavros Panteli, *A New History of Cyprus; From the Earliest Times to the Present Day,* 1984. East-West Publications, London and the Hague, p.27. According to Theodore Papadopoulos, women and children were excepted, and it was only the male civilians who had to pay the taxation - *Haratsi,* as it was called. Theodore Papadopoulos, *Social and Historical Data on Population, 1570-1881,* Cyprus Research Centre, Texts and Studies of the History of Cyprus, Nicosia, 1965. Actually, men from the age of fourteen to sixty were forced to pay, depending on their financial situation. Kleanthis Georgiades, *Op.Cit.,* p.332. Pyrgos informs us that the fact that women did not pay taxes was in fact a privilege as it helped them to acquire property - their husbands registered property in their names in order to avoid taxation.

[57] M. Pyrgos, *Op.Cit.*,p.39.

[58] *Ibid.,* p.41. It is interesting here to note that the same issue for disputes between the couple exists to the present day; serious family arguments occur over the issue of the dowry which have sometimes resulted in divorce. In fact, a husband who does not demand a dowry, is nowadays regarded with

religion was strong at the time and people –women in particular- prayed, went on pilgrimages, made offerings and donated icons to the Church. The Orthodox Church was used by the Ottomans to control the Greek Cypriots. Half a century after the murder of Chil Osman, and after a series of revolts and hatred, in 1821, the High Porte brutally intervened to forestall support among Cypriots for the revolt against Ottoman rule in Greece. On the ninth of July - a historical landmark in Cypriot history, Archbishop Kyprianos was publicly hanged by the Turks, together with three other bishops.[59]

Cypriot society's immense influence by the three hundred years of Ottoman rule is still visible in the twentieth century, through social attitudes and behaviour. "Of all the periods of which there is historical record this is without doubt the unhappiest and least prosperous."[60] According to Pyrgos, despite the wealth of texts written at the time, women were nowhere mentioned during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule. She argues that their position of being somewhat freer disappeared, and that women now felt completely oppressed in every way. "Society had crushed their spirit and their activities"[61] especially due to the Islamic Law - which was directly related to the Koran - and the Byzantine Ecclesiastical Law. It was only in rural areas where there no Ottomans lived, that the Cypriot women initially continued to behave as before, but gradually their lives changed as well. Similar to other historical examples of social oppression or unrest, women were victimised more than anyone was. Christian or Ottoman, they suffered and struggled their way though the whole of the Ottoman period, hiding away[62] unable to have a voice, living a life of misery where no self-expression apart from praying was allowed.

2.2. 'Modern' Times

During the latest part of the nineteenth century, Russian encroachments on the Ottoman Empire began to alarm Britain as well as Turkey. Eventually, this resulted to the signing in 1878 of a defensive alliance between Britain and Turkey. Under the Cyprus Convention, Britain assumed administration of the island, which remained formally part of the Ottoman Empire. This marked the beginning of the British Period (1878-1960), a crucial time for both the political but also the social history of the island. From this time onward, the hope of the Greek Cypriots for unification with Greece never dimmed and this is quite important to note for the further developments on the history

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respect, as this is a sign of his personal integrity and love for "his" bride. The issue of dowry is further discussed in Chapter Four.

[59] Kleanthis Georgiades, *Op.Cit.*, p.244-5.

[60] D. Hunt, *Op.Cit.*, p.253.

[61] M. Pyrgos, *Op.Cit.*, p.39. One can not assume that this is necessarily true. In fact, as soon as the Turks invaded the island, there followed murders and disasters. On 15 September 1570, Saint Sophia Cathedral was turned into a mosque. (It is still a mosque to the present day). The most beautiful young women were sent on ships to the Sultan as a gift. Among them was Maria Synglitiki who acted, according to Kleanthis Georgiades, "in the most memorable manner of heroism in Cypriot history: in order not to remain a hostage together with the other young women, she ignited the powder magazine of the ship, which exploded taking the purest youth of Cyprus to a wet grave." Kleanthis Georgiades, *Op.Cit.*, p.229 (my translation).

[62] In fact, Ottoman women had to hide their faces when they went out, and this habit was gradually adopted by Christian women both as a sign of morality and respect, but also because of fear that if they were beautiful, or if the high officials of the Ottoman rule would take them up as mistresses against their will. It is important to note that to present day, it is customary for older women in rural areas to be seen wearing a scarf, hiding their hair. This is an especially important ritual for these women when they go to church. However, it should also be stressed that this practice is dying out with younger women not planning to follow it when they are older.

of Cyprus. The effects are strongly visible in the current social structure of the island in general, and in the position of women in particular. Pyrgos suggests that with the British rule came a new era for Cyprus. "The liberalism that blew from the West lifted Eastern despotism from the Cypriot people ... The once locked doors of the houses now opened and women, timidly at first, and later more courageously, greeted the outside world with curiosity ... they were no longer as isolated as before."[63] She points out however that this new way of life influenced in the first three decades of the British rule only the women of the upper classes, therefore the devastating minority.[64] On the other hand, life for the vast majority of lower class women who lived predominately in rural areas had not changed, partly due to major difficulties in the means of communication and transportation, but mainly because,

> "...the British colonial state established a particular form of rule through the bureaucratisation of gender and race specifically in terms of the institution of colonial service. This particular ruling apparatus made certain relations between white men in the colonial bureaucracy and 'native' men and women, and the behaviour of imperial rulers who seemed to 'rule without actually exerting power'."[65]

It was not until the outbreak of the First World War that Cyprus was actually annexed to the British Empire as before that it was leased from Turkey on payment of an annual tribute. In 1925, it was formally declared a Crown Colony. Victorian values might have been indirectly imposed on the Cypriot women in the past but by this point, the objectives of the Suffragettes were still unheard of on the island.[66] Neither women nor men received the right to vote for their rulers until 1960. Patriarchy and the consequent power relations at all levels prevailed. Western feminist researchers explain how the greatest influence on family life since the seventeenth century has been exactly the institutionalisation of women's role as mothers and housewives: women were forced to obey their fathers, their husbands, their brothers and the clergy. Their place was in the house[67] and their sole purpose was still marriage, family, and motherhood. Marital fidelity and chastity were immediately

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[63] M. Pyrgou, *Op.Cit.*, p.47.

[64] At the end of the nineteenth century the wealthy young women spoke foreign languages, were interested in music and painting; they recited Greek and French poetry, danced, dressed in the latest fashions and *behaved like Europeans*. Many studied in Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, Alexandria and Beirut". *Ibid.*, p.47, my italics. Pyrgou seems to be suggesting a positive change in the life of women under the British. In terms of prosperity, one could agree but that very same way of life also seems to have promoted further inequalities for women. In fact, the stereotyped delicate, passive upper class image of the woman who was unable to 'be out in the world' and had to be looked after and keep silent at all times was not only sought for but also rewarded with social acceptance and indeed, admiration. The latest fashions from Paris fascinated the wealthy Cypriot women who, for the first time, had access to expensive clothes and accessories -trophies given to them by men when being 'proper ladies'. They were also given by the parents to attract eligible husbands for their daughters. Ibsen's heroine in *The Doll House* but also, closer to 'home', Victorian modes of behaviour and double standards were promoted under British rule.

[65]Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Introduction – Cartographies of Struggle, Third World Women, and the Politics of Feminism,' in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Loudres Torres (eds.). *Third World Feminism and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, 1991, p.17.

[66] Nevertheless, the first female teachers appeared on the island on approximately this time.

[67] Discussing the structure of Nicosia during British rule, Attalides points out that "the necessity to segregate, especially unmarried women, is satisfied by this structure, as well as covered balconies, which are found not only in Moslem, but also in Christian houses", *Op.Cit.*, 1981, p.101.

associated with the health of the state and women had once more to bear the responsibility of it. Further, honour, and its social implications within the family, consisted a crucial value in society.

2.3. The Twentieth Century

A new phenomenon for the island arose during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Although working women constituted a striking minority at the time, social and economic changes led a number of working class young women (most of them still in their early adolescence) from rural areas moving into the cities in order to find work as domestic servants in the middle and upper class households.[68] This, in turn, led to their use by the male -middle and upper class- employers who took advantage of both their financial situation but also their fragile position as women in a society governed by men. In many cases, the wives of the abusers became aware of the situation or, worst, the young house assistants became pregnant. Consequently, they had to return to their villages and families, stigmatised and humiliated- scared for life, as no 'respectable' man would accept to marry them.[69] A woman's sole destiny was marriage, and this possibility was therefore ruined because her virtue and honour had been stained forever, and her family was stigmatised. For the unmarried woman shame directly affected parents and brothers, as her honour was almost exclusively associated with sexual modesty. It did not simply involve herself but also her immediate environment. Thus, the social pressure and personal oppression that the Cypriot woman had to deal with, have made it extremely difficult for her to revolt against the status quo that kept her in the background of society.

Any form of recreation was unacceptable for women in the villages, whose sole outing was the Sunday mass, but things were somewhat different for the wealthier minority[70] of women who lived in the cities: "apart from religious activities and visits to the baths, they were seen going for walks with their female friends or their families; they went to dances, receptions, attended the races and also exercised, rode, and played tennis."[71] Relative to previous times in history, the Greek Cypriots enjoyed increasing prosperity:

> "The Cypriot people rediscovered themselves. They sang of joy and sorrow, of love and death. This change which was welcomed by the young girls, created problems for their mothers whose responsibilities increased now and obliged them to find new ways of guarding their daughters chastity ... The change caused parents' insecurity, forcing them to marry their daughters off as soon as possible. In the first years of English rule, the usual age of marriage was 15 years. Later, girls married at about the age of eighteen and a large number of girls married in their twenties."[72]

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[68] B.J.A. Surridge, *A Survey of Rural Life in Cyprus*, Nicosia, 1930.

[69] Commenting on Surridge's survey on rural life in Cyprus, Storrs found that "though sad reading, it was to be the basis of much social legislation-as in the treatment of domestic servants- for many years", R. Storrs, *Orientations*, Nicholson & Watson, London. 1937, p.570.

[70] The Census of 1931 showed that the rural population constituted 80.5 per cent of the total. Further on, Surridge's study (see footnote 59) explains how over 25 percent of the rural population lived below the minimum level of subsistence which it had fixed, 50 percent around that level, and the rest, the wealthy, above that level. A clear indication of a vast working class as opposed to a very small middle and upper class.

[71] M. Pyrgou, *Op.Cit.*, p.48.

[72] *Ibid.*, p.48. It is interesting to note here how mothers were responsible for their daughters moral upbringing and social respectability but it was the father as a rule who had the final word on their personal life, outings, and choice of their future husband.

Nevertheless, under the Canon Law, in the first three decades of the twentieth century the minimum age for marriage was twelve for women and fourteen for men. On June 1935, however, this minimum age was increased to sixteen for both men and women.

It was during these first years of the twentieth century that the first indirect steps towards women's rights occurred. In 1905, Greek Cypriot women who paid the tax "vergi" voted in the School Committee elections since men felt that the outcome of these elections would work to their favour. Soon after the results came out, the new legislation was withdrawn, as the outcome was not that which was expected. Women were again denied the right of expression in not only matters of national importance but also educational issues, which influenced the next generations. Their reaction to this denial was indifference, which could very probably be because of their hesitation to create unrest and the consequences of such a form of expression. Until 1895, the maintenance of schools and the payment of the teaching staff were the responsibility of the community and the Church. In 1895, an Education Law was passed which regulated all relevant issues to the establishment and function of primary schools. As from that time, the extension of primary schools was rapid. In fact, "schools were very early seen by Cypriot leaders as an important vehicle for nationalist education and the existing schools rapidly multiplied."[73] The Educational Law of 1923 ensured that the full responsibility of employment, placement, transfer, payment, firing and pension of the teachers lay with the Government. More girls were thus given the opportunity to get educated but this hardly made any difference to attendance rates as parents opposed, or in the best circumstances hesitated to send their daughters to primary school. Rather, they made the young girls stay at home and prepare themselves accordingly for their future husbands (in terms of dowry but also moral standing in society). According to the 1946 Census by the British Colonial Administration, in 1901, 15558 male students enrolled in elementary school as opposed to 5373 women. Nevertheless, by the year 1943, the number of enrolments of boys rose to 32963 whereas of girls to 27398. In the years 1935 and 1952, laws were introduced which also regulated secondary education.[74] In fact, the Girls' School of Phaneromeni in Nicosia became part of the Pancyprian Gymnasium in 1935 and offered the same curriculum to women as to men.

The educational system was undergoing drastic changes not only as an expression of social reforms but also due to political unrest. During the first half of the twentieth century,

> "...one of the many problems which Britain had to face, perhaps the most perplexing was the agitation by the Greek inhabitants for the union of Cyprus with Greece. The Hellenic ideal was much older than the British occupation. Modern Panhellenism silently grew under centuries of foreign domination."[75]

In October 1931, there took place the most serious demonstration up to that point in favour of *enosis*.[76] An important role was played by the high-ranking members of the clergy, one of whom, Dionysios Kykkotis, 'proclaimed the revolution' that resulted in the burning down of the Government House. Order was restored for a very short period and resulted in the suspension of the Constitution, the deportation of ten Greek Cypriots, and the censoring of the press.

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[73] Michael Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanization in Cyprus*, Nicosia, 1981. Floya Anthias explains that the role of the British colonial rule as well as that of the Greek Orthodox church were of 'fundamental importance' to the "processes by which the 'passive' ethnicity of the two groups was converted into an active nationalist consciousness and practice." Anthias, *Op.Cit.*, 1989. p.154.

[74] K. Georgiades, *Op. Cit.*, p.257.

[75] Stavros Panteli, *Op. Cit.*, p.417. *Enosis* means union, and it was the slogan of those who wanted to join Greece.

[76] D. Hunt, *Op.Cit.*, p.273.

Despite the political suppression, social, cultural and economic activities were enhanced. Within a period of twelve years, the trade unions increased from one in 1932 to ninety in 1944.[77] Furthermore, until 1932 the leading newspaper of the island, Eleftheria, was published twice a week whereas in that year, a daily paper appeared and only some weeks later, a second one began its circulation. Within the next twenty years, there

> "...were six Greek papers, three Turkish and one English dailies, and eighteen weekly papers. Literary magazines made their appearance, the most important of which was the monthly Kypriaka Grammata ... Great advance was also made in education. There were, in 1953, fifty Greek and ten Secondary Schools, with a total of 16536 pupils, which represented an increase of over five times the number in 1930. In this the communities as such, by giving their labour free, or public-minded individuals by money donations have assisted greatly ... Parallel developments occurred in health questions ... in road communications, in water supply and afforestation, but not, as yet, in housing conditions, particularly in the rural areas."[78]

The benefit of all these advancements for women was nevertheless very small. The 1946 Census explains how at that time, 7.21 percent of the women population over the age of fourteen in Cyprus were employed full-time whereas the percentage for part-time female workers was 12.98 percent. Men, however, represented the overwhelming 86.80 percent out of a total of 154000. Women did not need any formal training or education as they worked mostly in weaving, agriculture, and dressmaking or as domestic assistants. The excuse of honour and virtue, which had been used by the parents and especially fathers, was further reinforced by the low-prestige, low-paid jobs that women had the opportunity to perform. Women had to stay at home, unless in desperate need of financial contribution in the family, and received no formal education. That was their place and that is where they were forced to stay for many more years to come. It was in 1962 that primary education became compulsory and later, in 1972, the first three years of secondary schooling became free for all citizens of the Cypriot Republic. It was not until 1963, that women acquired the right to equal pay in the public sector and that did not, of course, guarantee their equal chances of employment in the first place.

The political situation did not improve on the island during the 1940s and the idea of union with Greece resulted in most of the Greek Cypriots demonstrating to the world their desire for enosis. In 1949, an Ethnarchic Council was created under Archbishop Makarios II who urged people to take part in a national plebiscite on the issue. The plebiscite was held from 15 to 22 January 1950 in the Christian Orthodox churches and women cast votes for the first time.[79] "Out of the 224757 Greek Cypriots eligible to vote, 215108 or 95.7 per cent voted for enosis."[80] This led to the events of the 1st of April 1955 when leaflets were distributed all over Cyprus declaring that "a secret association calling itself EOKA had embarked on an armed struggle to throw off the British yoke."[81] The attack began on that day with explosions directed at first at government buildings and then at officials and Cypriots who were considered collaborators. The struggle of EOKA, who "like the IRA ... became a household name for many British..."[82] continued until 1959 under the guidance of General Georgios

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[77] *Report of the Cypriot Delegation to the Second World Trade Union Congress*. Paris 1945.

[78] D. Alastos, *Op.Cit.*, p.361-2.

[79] D. Hunt, *Op.Cit.*, p.277.

[80] According to the Census of 1946, 80.2 per cent of the people of Cyprus were Greeks, 17.9 per cent were Turkish and 1.9 other nationalities. This was the basis of the problem that led to the events of 1974 and the war.

[81] S. Panteli, *Op. Cit.*, p.265.

[82] *Ibid.*, p.265.

Grivas (known as Digenis). In the meantime, the Turkish Cypriot community on the island was contented with the given status quo and strongly opposed to being forced into unification with Greece. Their main fear was that of becoming second-class citizens since they would consist of a very small minority in the whole population of Greece. They, therefore, favoured partition of the island.

The very turbulent years of 1955-8 ended when negotiations between Athens and Ankara led to the creation of the independent Republic of Cyprus. The negotiations were concluded in Zurich in February 1959 and the republic came into being on 16 August 1960.[83] On 21 September 1960, it was admitted as the 99th memberstate of the United Nations and in 1961, it became a member of the Council of Europe. Cyprus had to renounce both enosis and partition and at the same time enforce stringent safeguards for the minority. Archbishop Makarios and Dr Fazil Kuchuk were elected President and vice-president of the Cyprus Republic. As an indirect consequence of independence, women were eligible to vote for the first time in the history of the island. "Whether Makarios owed his election to the 'housewife vote' or not, his 66.82 per cent share was due less to approval of the Zurich-London Agreements than to the belief of a majority of Greek Cypriots that in any situation the archbishop was the best man to handle their affairs."[84] Women were indeed allowed the right to vote for the first time but they were nevertheless stereotyped as the housewives whose vote could be used for the benefit of those in control: men. The independence of the Republic contributed very little to the independence of the women on the island.[85] Thus, "neither the advent of independence in the former colonies nor the legislation passed as a result of the civil rights movement was to prove immediately victorious in improving the quality of life for the overwhelming majority"[86] of women in Cyprus.

Within three years of independence, in 1963, violent intercommunal conflict started as a result of a Greek Cypriot determination to modify the constitution safeguards that had been incorporated into the agreements of 1960 in order to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority. This resulted in the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriot community from their constitutional role and position and the establishment of a 'green line' dividing the two communities in Nicosia. These borders of the enclaves and the neutral zone that divided the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot areas of the city were guarded by the British and subsequently by United Nations troops for the following ten years. The political unrest continued and the Turkish community created its own political and social structure under the administration of Dr Kutchuk. Progress towards a solution was slow and was ultimately overtaken by the actions of the Greek military junta in Greece who, in 1974, launched a suicidal coup to take control in Cyprus. Turkey took the opportunity to use the Greek coup as an excuse for 'humanitarian' action in order to protect the Turkish Cypriots. Consequently the over-extended Greek military government was humiliated and fell, and democracy returned to Greece. The consequences for Cyprus were catastrophic as the Turkish military machine

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[83] "The traces of British rule, thirty years after its end, are naturally manifold. English is an official language. The law courts and the administration are British in inspiration. The largest colony of Cypriots abroad is in Britain, not Greece, mainly concentrated in London. Of material remains, such as an archeologist of the future will unearth, the principal features will be sought in the infrastructure: bridges, dams, hospitals and the best road system in the Levant." Hunt, *Op.Cit.*, p.279.

[84] S. Panteli, *Op.Cit.*, p.331. Archbishop Makarios remained the President of the Republic until 1977 when he died from a heart attack.

[85] A rare exception to the political exclusion of women was Archbishop Makarios' decision in 1960 to appoint Ms Stella Souliotou as Minister of Justice in the cabinet.

[86] Cheryl Johnson-Odin, 'Common Themes, Different Contexts: Third World Women and Feminism', in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russon, & Loudres Torres (eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, 1991, p.316.

advanced unhindered until 37 percent of the island fell under their control. International opinion supported the initial Turkish action insofar as it served to protect the Turkish Cypriots, but condemned the brutality with which it was conducted and the invasion of half of the island in which is resulted. As a result, several thousand Greek Cypriots were killed, hundreds disappeared and are still tragically missing and about 70 percent of the island's productive capacity fell into the hands of the Turkish army. The Turkish Cypriots, who had suffered from 1964, felt themselves to be liberated. Two hundred thousand Greek Cypriots found their land invaded and themselves homeless, living in tents for the whole of the summer of 1974. Atrocities, injustice, and confusion dominated. Until today, little progress has been made in finding a solution.[87] One of the most important issues that has dominated political discourse, but also the population at large, since the Turkish invasion of 1974 has been the tragedy of the 1619 Greek Cypriots missing: these are people who were lost to war. One of the less obvious tragedies of contemporary Cyprus is the missing of Cypriot history - women.

2.4. Since the War

"We don't need to wait for a 'feminist Henry Kissinger' before we can start articulating a fresh, more realistic approach to international politics. Every time a woman explains how her government is trying to control her fears, her hopes, and her labour such a theory is being made."[88]

"The importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women lies in the fact that it adds new, substantive provisions to the other instruments which also deal with equality and non-discrimination. Article 5 recognises that, even if women's legal equality is guaranteed and special measures are taken to promote their de facto equality, another level of change is necessary for women's true equality. States should strive to remove the social, cultural and traditional patterns which perpetuate gender-role stereotypes and to create an overall framework in society that promotes the realisation of women's full rights."[89]

I now turn to the recent history of women in Cyprus, after the invasion of 1974. The social, political, economic, and emotional oppression of women is still dominant but it is reproduced through different sets of attitudes and beliefs than before. These attitudes and beliefs are gradually becoming more subtly disguised and transformed through claims such as 'equality in the law', 'women actively participating in the workforce', 'high education rates for women' and so on. However, the systematic gender inequality of patriarchy[90] in Cyprus is not over. Rather, the contemporary restructuring of gender relations, divided in the domestic and the public 'gender regime', means that,

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[87] In 1984, the Turkish Cypriot community unilaterally declared independence from the Republic of Cyprus, an act which has only been recognized by Turkey in the international community. See also Floya Anthias, 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', in Nira Yuval-Davis & Floya Anthias, *Woman- Nation- State*, Macmillan, 1989, p.150.

[88] Cynthia Enloe, *Making Feminist Sense of International Politics: Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, p.201.

[89] United Nations, *Discrimination Against Women: The Convention and the Committee*, Geneva: World Campaign for Human Rights, Fact Sheet No.22, November 1994. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Law No. 57 of 1983.

[90] Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, Routledge, 1997, p.6.

> "...the domestic gender regime is based upon household production as the main structure and site of women's work activity and the exploitation of her labour and sexuality and upon the exclusion of women from the public. The public gender regime is based, not on excluding women from the public, but on the segregation of and subordination of women within the structures of paid employment and the state, as well as within culture, sexuality and violence."[91]

This part of the chapter aims to demonstrate that gender inequality is the norm; however, the forms it takes have now become more complex and harder to identify in everyday life than ever before. The 'gender regime' is obvious in all social institutions, especially in 'compact formal organisations like schools', but also in other, 'diffuse institutions' like the state, which 'arms men and disarms women.'[92] Describing the 'public gender regime' through state policies in the case of Cyprus is a useful way to gain knowledge and insight into the 'domestic gender regime' and into the more personal lives of Cypriot women. The activities and attempts of socio-political institutions to control female (sexual) behaviour and practices are thus presented in the following analysis.[93]

In a thorough discussion on women and war, Janna Thompson argues that social changes, which promote women's development of social concerns of their own and their entry in large numbers into all spheres of political life, "will help to alter the nature of social organisations and make them less prone to hatred and violence."[94] I would argue that in the case of Cyprus this has not been the case, to the present day. The war has had an irrevocable impact on the lives and gender relations of most Cypriot people. They have been living in a divided country since 1974. The island has been divided into two ethnically autonomous zones – Greek and Turkish. A 'Green Line' separates the economically prosperous and internationally recognised south from the relatively poor, unrecognised north. The Green Line is a heavily militarised de facto border – a cease-fire line. Political insecurity, fear of violence, and potential war are issues that the people have to live with on an everyday basis. Propaganda and hatred for the 'other side' figure dominantly in both communities. Additional difficulties have had to be dealt with by women, especially refugee women of all socio-economic backgrounds from both communities; they were left homeless, widows, raped, abused, harassed, single mothers, wives of missing husbands. "Gender discrimination is neither the sole nor perhaps the primary locus of the oppression"[95]of women in this country; ethnic conflict, living under the constant threat of war, membership in ethnic minority groups, political instability and, financial insecurity, provide additional oppressive burdens.

However, due to the social patriarchal patterns, which dominated the period before 1974, the same women who constituted a large percentage of the population of the island, had few sources to deal with all their problems and oppression. They had no financial sources, less formal education than their partners, and were brought up to fully depend on them. With the events of 1974, everything changed and women had to cope with this change 'there and then'. They have made enormous efforts and they are adjusting to all these new patterns, the sudden reversal of trends, and

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[91] *Ibid.*, p.6.

[92] R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power; Society, the Person, and Sexual politics*, Polity Press, 1987. See Chapter Six, on gender regimes and the gender order, especially pp.125-132.

[93] See also Part Two of this thesis.

[94] Janna Thompson, 'Women and War', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.14, Nos.1/2, pp.63-75, 1991, p.74.

[95] Cheryl Johnson-Odin, 'Common Themes, Different Contexts; Third World Women and Feminism', in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russon, & Loudres Torres (eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, 1991, p.315.

the rapid social, technological and financial changes.[96] According to Roussou, these changes up to 1980, however, were superficial with respect to women's position in Cypriot society: "the traditional social structures continue to endure even through major upheavals."[97] Official statistics as well as the data analysis from the fieldwork undertaken for the present study indicate to similar ideas.

The last three decades have witnessed an increase in the number of women in paid employment and education, "though this is tempered by the variable ways in which women are involved, for instance, the poor conditions of the nearly half of working women who work part-time and by the tenacity of occupational and industrial segregation."[98] Women in Cyprus are not as confined into the sphere of the home as they used to be until the recent past. Since they acquired political citizenship with the formation of the Cyprus Republic in 1960 (this was not achieved through women's group struggle or a feminist movement, but rather it was something 'given' to them by the authorities – similar to other ex-colonies throughout the world)[99] with access to voting, greater access to the labour market and education at all levels, they appear in public life. However, they are segregated into unequal positions to those of the men.[100]

The general rate of female labour force participation in Cyprus has only grown from 40.8 percent in 1960 to 42.8 percent in 1984. According to official statistics, in 1981 there were 12200 women working in paid-labour, or the 18 percent of the paid population, whereas in 1994 the number increased to 111300, that is, the 38,5 percent of the paid population. In 1990, the unemployment rate in Cyprus was only 1.8 percent. For men, it was 1.4 percent whereas for women it was 2.5 percent.[101] In general, young people aged 20-29 and women are more affected by unemployment than other categories.[102] Thus, in 1987, the unemployment rate for men aged 20-24 was 3.3 percent whereas for women it was 8.1 percent, and for men aged 25-29 it was 3.6 percent as

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[96] "During 1974 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Greek Cypriots fell by as much as 17 per cent and unemployment rose from 1 per cent in the pre-war period to over 20 per cent immediately after the war. By 1976, however, the depression was over and the next few years saw such remarkable growth that, by 1982, real GDP exceeded the 1973 level by almost 25 per cent. As a result of the 1974 events and the subsequent period of very intense growth, which in 1976 and 1977 exceeded 14 per cent and in 1978 and 1979 reached 8 per cent and 9 per cent respectively, there has been a dramatic transformation of the underlying structure of the economy." Employment and earnings opportunities for Cypriot women were therefore significantly influenced. W.J. House, *Cypriot Women in the Labour Market, An Exploration of Myths and Reality: Women, Work and Development*, United Nations Publication; Women, Work, and Development No.10, Geneva: International Labour Office, 1985, p.7.

[97] Maria Roussou, *Op.Cit.*, 1985, p.620.

[98] Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, London: Routledge, 1997, p.2.

[99] "Many Third World countries granted formal suffrage to women at the same time as men, at the point of national independence. The histories of Third World democratic practices are thus very different from those in the First World, where men's and women's suffrage were typically separated by several decades." Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, London: Routledge, 1997, p.185.

[100] In order to make sense of the following discussion on women's status in Greek Cypriot society for the last three decades, one ought to be aware of the small (in world terms) size of the population. It is, therefore, useful to mention that the mid-year population of Cyprus (the non-occupied part) is estimated at 702.1 thousand in 1990 compared with 626.6 in 1980, 614.6 in 1970 and 573.6 thousand in 1960. Department of Statistics and Research, *Social Indicators*, Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, 1991.

[101] *Ibid.*, Table 33, p.142.

[102] *Ibid.*, p.14.

opposed to 6.8 percent for women. In 1990, the rates for men aged 20-24 were 1.4 percent and for women 4.1 percent and for men aged 25-29 was 1.7 percent as opposed to 4.1 percent for women.[103]

In a study set to explore the underlying functioning of the labour market in Cyprus as a means to population, education, and employment planning, International Labour Organisation (ILO) expert William House reported that there was an apparent wage discrimination against women, since they received significantly lower returns to age and education than men:

> "Female earnings' profiles peak much earlier than their male counterparts and are notably flat. On-the-job accumulation of human capital appears severely limited for women, partly perhaps because of breaks in their work experience due to marriage and family responsibilities, and partly because of the kinds of occupations in which they are concentrated, where the scope for learning is minimal ... The almost horizontal earnings profile for primary school females is especially striking, as is the long declining segment for graduate women."[104]

House found this to be partly due to the occupational structure of female employment whereby women crowd into jobs with fewer opportunities to accumulate human capital. He urged for more research to be carried out in order for the mechanism of career choice and work experience of women to be explored, and explained that special attention needed to be paid into the incursions family responsibilities made on women's job opportunities.

Related to women's employment status, a report on the contribution of women to the family income found that younger women recorded higher contributions to the total family earnings than older women do. More specifically, women under the age of 36 earn about one third of the total household wages, whereas women aged 36 to 55 earn about 25 percent of the total house hold earnings. Women aged 18-25 contribute the highest rate of 39,6 percent in comparison to 33,3 percent for women 26-35. According to the report, one of the reasons for the above findings is that "these women are generally married and have children so that they already face more family responsibilities than 18-25 year-olds. This implies that their engagement in employment is less than that of the 18-25 year olds."[105] The second reason given is the remuneration differential between women and men, which is smaller in younger ages than in older ages since men tend to move upwards in the working careers at a faster rate than women. After some years of working experience. the differences in remuneration grow larger. Further, the 'feminisation of poverty' in Cyprus is evident in this report:

> "For all Cyprus, the overall female-male ratio is 0,5 which implies that women contribute half of the corresponding income of men to their families. However, when the ration in the 10 deciles is examined ... women in the lowest income group of households contribute

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[103] *Ibid.*, Table 10, pp.74-75.

[104] William House, *Labour Market Segmentation and Sex Discrimination in Cyprus: Some Empirical Evidence*, Department of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Finance, 1985. p.5. In another study, House points out that "women are very much aware of being the subject of pay discrimination in the labour market. Of the 36 per cent of the sample who claimed that men were engaged in similar work at their office or factory almost one-half felt that men were paid more than women were. Significant numbers also voiced complaints that men were promoted more often and obtained better jobs." W.J. House, *Discrimination and Segregation of Women Workers in Cyprus*. Republic of Cyprus: Department of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Finance, (ILO/UNFPA, Population, Employment Planning and Labour Force Mobility Study, CYP/77/POI, Report No.17). p.79.

[105] Department of Statistics and Research, *The Contribution of Women to the Family Income 1991*. Nicosia: Ministry of Finance, 1997, p.14.

> substantially more than their male counterparts. ... The first two deciles are the only cases where female contributions exceed the corresponding income earned by men. The explanation to this phenomenon lies in the fact that these two deciles include a large number of female-headed households in which women are the sole earners. ... Given that female contributions are significantly higher than men's and yet these households are located in the lowest income brackets, the effect of female income on the level of living of these households is considerably high. In the absence of female contributions in these households, their families would face serious survival problems."[106]

Although women's inferior position within capitalist systems becomes clear in the case of Cyprus, the 'survival problems' of women within these impoverished families and the causes of these are ignored by the report. The Equal Pay for Men and Women for Work of Equal Value Law of 1989 (Law No. 158 of 1989) has contributed towards the improvement of this significant gap between the remuneration rates of the two sexes. However, despite a certain level of 'improvement' in the differential between male and female salaries (males received 46.4 percent higher rates of pay in 1995 from 49,5 percent in 1994), clearly women still receive on average much lower salaries than their male counterparts in the major occupation groups.[107]

Regarding the employment status of women, Demetriades questioned the extent to which women find compatibility between work other than their traditional housekeeping duties, such as cleaning, cooking, and child-rearing, and the *vital events of marriage and having a family?*"[108] According to the findings of the survey, there was a clear occupational segregation by gender, and that the dual roles of women in the home and at work imposed severe time-constraints on them. Thus, measures were proposed in order to increase female labour participation, such as "improving conditions of work and taking measures to alleviate the problems faced by working mothers and the conflicting impact between the women's dual role as mother and employee."[109] The dual role was taken for granted and no measures were proposed in order for that 'dual role' to change, but rather to secure that it remained unchallenged. The contradictory messages that women received in Cypriot society where taken for granted and were not criticised. The fact that "the declared twin goals of the Cyprus government, to raise fertility and female participation, are in conflict under the existing social and institutional arrangements"[110] was identified by House who also suggested that this conflict became less intense when there was another inactive *woman* present in the household, who was able to serve as " a substitute for the working mother."[111] Part of the problem was related to the fact that children of school age (especially primary school) leave school earlier (at about 12.30 in the afternoon) than parents leave work and were often left unattended for long periods.[112] The 'other', 'inactive' woman remains unquestioned; one woman substitutes another woman in her role as a

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[106] *Ibid.*, p.20

[107] Department of Statistics and Research: *Labour Statistics 1995*, Republic of Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, Labour Statistics, Series II, Report No.14, 1996, pp. 26-7.

[108] E.I. Demetriades, *Tapping the Female Labour Reserve in Cyprus and Government Perspectives on Utilisation of Research for Women's and Population Issues in Cyprus*, Nicosia: Department of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Finance, 1984, p.2, my italics.

[109] *Ibid.*, p.5.

[110] W.J. House, *Patterns and Determinants of Female Labour Force Participation in Cyprus*, Nicosia: Department of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Finance, 1981, p.36.

[111] W.J. House: *Discrimination and Segregation of Women Workers in Cyprus*, Republic of Cyprus: Department of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Finance. (ILO/UNFPA, Population, Employment Planning and Labour Force Mobility Study, CYP/77/POI, Report No.17), p.73.

[112] *Ibid.*, p.75.

homemaker and carer of children. Similarly, in the 'Survey on Inactive Women', "prompted from the shortage of labour experienced in certain labour intensive exporting industries which employ mainly women,"[113] women expressed their reasons for not working as being the care of children, the distance between the place of work and the place of residence and a "general reluctance to work."[114] Forty-seven percent of these 'inactive' women expressed a wish to work, as long as the distance between the place of work and the place of residence was short, if they received reasonable remuneration, and if there was an availability of kindergarten/day-nursery facilities, preferably at the place of their residence. At present, few inadequate facilities exist to alleviate these women's burdens.

It appears that several of the women mentioned above not only act as unpaid homemakers, but also as unpaid workers in the 'conventional' sense. In a census set out to determine the structure and economic characteristics of the private services (community, social, recreational, and personal) in Cyprus, it was reported that 20107 persons were employed in this sector in 1989. Out of this number, 9201 people were employed in personal and household services, 2534 in recreational, 8207 in social and community services, and 165 in sanitary services. It is interesting to look at some of the examples that indicate to the clear occupational segregation by gender on the island. For example, in the social and related community services, 1095 of the working proprietors were men and 618 were women. Thus, three men owned kindergartens, as opposed to 121 women. Further, 125 men owned automobile driving schools, as opposed to no women. One hundred and six men were working proprietors of private clinics, as opposed to one woman. Not surprisingly then, most of the census's full-time unpaid family members as opposed to working proprietors of the above mentioned services were women. Thus, in the medical, dental and other health services, where 861 of the working proprietors were men and 210 women, one man was a full-time unpaid worker (family member) as opposed to 47 women. In the social and related community services, seven men were unpaid family members, as opposed to 61 women. In the recreational and cultural services, and more specifically in video clubs, 126 working proprietors were men and 222 were women. Nevertheless, no men were full-time, unpaid workers, but 14 women were.[115]

Further, official statistics confirm that the pattern of the under-representation of women in professional and managerial occupations (except traditional 'women's jobs' such as paramedics and teaching) is dominant in the case of Cyprus. Women are over-represented in occupations in the sales and service sectors, especially as secretaries, clerks, shop assistants, and cleaners. It is interesting to look at the language[116] used by William House to explain occupational segregation. He explains that.

> "...women *choose* to enter occupations which do not reward work experience, but equally, do not penalise their discontinuities in the labour market. Hence, they *exclude themselves* from occupations requiring expensive and lengthy periods of general training for the professions. Meanwhile, they are also excluded from firm-specific training programmes for executive positions by employers who bear the cost of such training and perceive high turnover rates for women."[117]

Male directors (or, *all* the directors during that period) in 1960 constituted 0.7 percent of the employed population whereas the percentage for 1992 was 2,8 percent. However, in 1960 there were

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[113] E.I. Demetraides, *Op.Cit.*, p.1.

[114] *Ibid.*, p.2.

[115] Department of Statistics and Research, *Census of Community, Social, and Personal Services.* Nicosia: Ministry of Finance, 1989, pp.63-65.

[116] Active versus passive voice.

[117] W.J. House, *Labour Market Segmentation: Evidence from Cyprus,* Department of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Finance, Cyprus, 1982, p.8, my italics.

no women directors. By 1992, they were a mere 0.3 percent of the employed population.[118] According to a research on women managers in Cyprus conducted by the Centre of Research and Development of Intercollege, women's participation in the decision making sector has increased with the "*appearance* of the woman-manager in Cypriot society. Thus, from a decision receiver, women – even though the percentages are low- participate actively in management and decision making."[119] A woman interviewed for the study explained that "in our profession, doing public relations work is very difficult. Finding clients can be very difficult. Men can go to pubs together, play tennis etc. A woman would be 'misunderstood' if she did the same. It's a matter of attitude in Cypriot society."[120] The study concluded that the professional and managerial development of a woman did not necessarily provide her 'real independence',[121] and offered a number of practical recommendations - which would not necessarily challenge patriarchal structures- in order to 'improve' the situation.

Prejudice and discrimination are obvious in all the statistical evidence illustrated above: they affect the lives of women in Cyprus and they affect their health. Based on data collected from the 1989 Health Survey covering urban and rural households in the government controlled areas of Cyprus, a study was conducted by the Department of Statistics and Research of the Ministry of Finance,[122] which set out to examine the female population and the extent to which employment affects their health and vice- versa. It was found that even though there was no difference in the reported prevalence of diseases, working women visited physicians less frequently than non-working women; the former group tended to rate their health as 'good' more often than the latter group. "The traditional feminine role ... allows, and even encourages weakness and vulnerability to emotional and physical problems ... Unemployment was a significant factor in symptom reporting" and seeking medical care.[123] Furthermore, in the study it was observed that hospitalisation due to obstetric reasons was significantly more common in non-working women aged 15-34 than in working women of the same age group. Furthermore, female technicians/associated professionals and clerks tended to be more likely than others to have spent one day in hospital in the year precious to the study, whereas craft workers and elementary workers were less likely to have been hospitalised.[124] In women, employees were more likely than both employers/self-employed and unpaid family workers to rate their health as 'good'. Female manual workers reported the highest incidences of arthritis and lumbago; this is possibly related to the fact that these women tended to be rural, unpaid family workers, and likely to work 45 or more hours a week. Women in the manual occupations were

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[118] Centre for Research and Development, *Women Managers in Cyprus,* Intercollege, Nicosia, January 1997, p.19-20.

[119] *Ibid.*, p.1 (my translation and italics).

[120] *Ibid.*, p.66. The meaning of *pareksigo* (to 'misunderstand', to 'misexplain', is further explored in Chapter Six.

[121] *Ibid.*, p.66.

[122] Department of Statistics and Research, *Women, Employment, and Health in Cyprus,* Republic of Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, Research Papers and Reports, Series II, Report No.23, 1992.

[123] Linda Brannon, *Gender; Psychological Perspectives,* Allyn & Bacon, 1996, p.354.

[124] "Among 25-44 year old women, clerks were the most likely of all to have taken sick-leave in the past four weeks (20%), significantly more than legislators/senior professionals (9.7%), service/sales workers (9.6%) and elementary workers (11.8%). The greatest work responsibility of legislators/senior professionals might be the factor inhibiting this group from taking as much sick leave as clerks take. Also the likelihood of clerks being paid by the employer for sick leave in comparison to either service/sales workers or elementary workers may partly explain the above statistics. Women, in any case, were less likely than men to be paid for sick-leave but the sex difference was greatest for the lower status occupations." *Ibid.*,p. VII.

significantly more likely than their male colleagues to report suffering from a chronic disease.[125] The Health Survey of 1989 demonstrates that overall, the pervasive nature of gender discourse favours men: patriarchy makes some women sick, and poorer women even sicker.[126]

2.4.1. Institutionalised Inequalities.

> *"The current legal framework of international human rights serves as an obstacle to women because its definition of universal human rights has not adequately taken into account these and other realities in most women's lives. Many of the issues of immediate and central concern to the protection of women's right to life and dignity have not been defined as issues of human rights. Accordingly, the dominant human rights institutions and bodies have not generally addressed women's particular concerns as human rights. Further, the current human rights framework, cast as it is in terms of individual rights, offers little redress where there is pervasive and structural denial of rights, which is often the case where women are concerned."* [127]

> *"The feminist movement has brilliantly succeeded in removing discriminatory laws from the codes of most industrialised nations; but men now use more sophisticated techniques to exclude women. Few make sweeping statements of female inferiority, but men continue to act as if only men mattered."*[128]

It is not the aim of this chapter to explore whether Cyprus is an 'industrialised nation'; similar to Greeks, Cypriots see themselves as a 'two-and-a-half World country', depending on the situation.[129] They vary from Europeans, to Third World citizens, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean people. Rather, it is the workings of this country and their effect on women, which are a central concern of this thesis. As a woman, and as an academic, I am aware of, and directly experience, the sophisticated and not-so-sophisticated techniques that men use in order to exclude women in Cyprus. Further, similar to Marilyn French, I know that men in this country, both in positions of public authority and not, act as if only men mattered.

During the Ottoman times in Cyprus, the Ottoman Civil Code included a provision under which the testimony of a man could only be outweighed by the testimony of two women.[130] There has

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[125] *Ibid.*, pp. III – VII.

[126] In Greek Macedonia, the husband actually has the right to grant permission to his wife in order for her to become Anastenarissa, that is, to become involved in a ritual system of psychotherapy that is often effective in treating illness. If she is granted permission, she can dance in public and be cured. Otherwise, "she will not be cured but will remain ill indefinitely." Loring M. Danforth, 'The Resolution of Conflict Through Song in Greek Ritual Therapy', in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.109.

[127] United Nations, *General Assembly Report Submitted to the United nations by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to the World Conference on Human Rights* (A/Conf.157/PC/61/Add.17), New York: Author, 20 April 1993.

[128] Marilyn French, *Op. Cit.*, 1992, p. 17.

[129] Jane Cowan, 'Being a Feminist in Contemporary Greece; Similarity and Difference Reconsidered', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland, *Practising Feminism: Identity, Difference, Power*, Routledge, 1996.

[130] Criton G. Tornarites, *The Legal Equality of the Sexes*, Nicosia, 1980, p.4.

been an accelerated change in the legal view of women since then, mostly influenced by an aspired European Union membership, the signing of a number of United Nations conventions, and a growing awareness by few public figures of the injustice inflicted upon women in Cyprus. The Equal Pay for Men and Women for Work of Equal Value Law of 1989 (Law No. 158 of 1989),[131] the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law (Law No.47 (1)), and other new legislative measures, are among efforts to change legislation to bring Cyprus in line with internationally accepted standards. For example, the right to legal equality was enforced in an exceptional and highly publicised court case (Case No.32/93 of the Industrial Dispute Tribunal) where a Church-controlled Broadcasting Station fired a woman on the grounds that she was pregnant without being married. The woman was awarded damages after the case was examined in the light of the termination of Employment Law and the Protection of Maternity Law; the latter makes no distinctions between married and unmarried women with regard to the persons entitled to maternity leave and other benefits.

Historically, women have internationally been marginalised in interpretations of equal legislation and the human rights standard setting, which has privileged men's experiences by focusing on the primarily male-occupied and defined public domain.[132] Distinctions are further made among women themselves. According to the Social Security Legislation in Cyprus, marriage grant, maternity grant, and maternity allowance are benefits provided especially to women under this legislation, which otherwise treats men and women on an equal basis. Nevertheless, the scheme does not cover women who are self-employed or unpaid family workers in agriculture,

> "...because of administrative problems. Thus, a large number of women, accounting for about 28% of the total number of economically active women are left out of the scope of the scheme. The Social Insurance Council decided recently to incorporate a certain section of these women in the Scheme, namely, the unmarried daughters of farmers who are over 35 years old."[133]

'Administrative problems' becomes an obstacle in "the provision of welfare, ... the provision of an infrastructure which enables people to be guaranteed a minimum of provision of necessities"[134] with which social citizenship is bound. In Cyprus, the welfare state benefits only *some* women who

> "...receive more in benefits than they pay out in taxes, and, ... it does constitute an alternative to the private patriarch albeit a public one ... The welfare state has socialised some forms of previously privatised domestic labour, through schools, nurseries, hospitals and other forms of publicly provided care, albeit at levels which do not satisfy women's demands."[135]

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[131] The Bill on Equal Pay for Men and Women for Work of Equal Value was submitted to the House of Representative by one of the political parties. In October 1987, the Council of Ministers ratified ILO Convention 100 on equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value (Law No.313 of 1987). William House, Dora Kyriakides & Olympia Stylianou, *The Changing Status of Female Workers in Cyprus*, Department of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Finance (UNFPA/ILO Project CYP/85/P01 "Population and Human Resources in the Context of Development Planning"), Report No.4, 1987, p.9.

[132] Stanlie M. James, 'Challenging Patriarchal Privilege Through the Development of International Human Rights', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.17, No.6, pp.563-578, 1994, p.576.

[133] *Ibid.*, p.4.

[134] S. Walby, *Op.Cit.*, 1997, p.176.

[135] *Ibid.*, p.179.

Most of the existing legal discrimination against women reflects the patriarchal view of the inevitability of the traditional structure of the family, the 'weak female nature', and women's 'need' for dependency on men. Women's lives are governed by patriarchal national, social, and cultural norms. According to the National Report to the Fourth World Conference on Women, from 1960-77, the Foreign Service included no women in its members. By 1994, just over ten percent "of the diplomatic staff of the ministry were women and currently out of a total of ten departments, two – or twenty percent- are headed by women diplomats."[136] In 1998, there were six female ambassadors: "women may be sorely absent from political life in Cyprus, but they are right at the top of the country's diplomatic service, with *a ground-breaking government decision to appoint two women ambassadors* to Washington and Beijing."[137] Further, in 1980 and 1985, women held none of the 120 high government positions.[138] By 1992, there were four women in the 128 high government positions. In 1994, there were two women out of fifty-five members of parliament, that is 3.6 percent and in 1996, three women were elected to Parliament. Further, there was only one woman in government, that is one minister out or eleven (9.1 percent). With the formation of the re-elected government of 1998, there are no women ministers.[139] Crucial decisions concerning the definition and implementation of national plans and projects are in the hands of men only; the results and inevitable consequences of these, however, affect the whole population and especially women.[140]

The problems of women cannot be dealt with, unless there are placed within the context of systematic change. The common and convenient trend of 'including' women in development simply results in short-term, separate projects, "compartmentalised within development programmes, and the continued absence of women from priority development projects."[141] Dr Baksh-Soodeen -one of two Commonwealth experts on women's rights who visited Cyprus in order to complete a study on how to raise the level of government ministries' awareness concerning sex inequality- pointed out that "three women deputies out of 56 is an extremely low percentage, especially for a country wanting to enter the EU where percentages range from 30-50% ... The Commonwealth has a target for a minimum of 30% by the year 2005 –for that to happen in Cyprus a whole lot of things need to be done."[142] Further, the Commonwealth experts found that "there has been a single person in each

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[136] Joan L. Neisser, 'Lessons from the United States: a Greek Cypriot Model for Domestic Violence Law', *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law*, Vol.4, Issue 1, 1996, p.206.

[137] The Cyprus Mail, 'Women Fly the Flag in Cyprus Embassies,' 10 July 1998, my italics.

[138] Republic of Cyprus, *National Report to the Fourth World Conference on Women 8*, 1994.

[139] The President of Cyprus, Glafkos Clerides, pledged he will include a woman minister when he reshuffles the Council of Ministers and appoint a woman judge to the Supreme Court. "Clerides made the promise after receiving a request from 250 professional women from the public and private sectors that he will include women in decision-making positions at a meeting with a delegation of the Cyprus Federation of Businesswomen's Associations. The memorandum, which was signed by the island's three women MPs, the chairwomen of all the women's organisations, ... and private professionals, will subsequently be presented the leadership of all political parties." *The Cyprus Weekly*, June 26-July 2, 1998, p.2.

[140] During a pioneering workshop entitled "Women and Men in Partnership in Cyprus", the Director of the Women's Department of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Eleni Stamiri, said that Cyprus had one of the lowest percentages in the world for women's participation in the House of Representatives and in government. *The Cyprus Weekly*, October 16-22, 1998, p.11.

[141] Anne Marie Goetz, 'Feminism and the Claim to Know: Contradictions in Feminist Approaches to Women in Development' in Rebecca Grant & Kathleen Newland (eds.), *Gender and International Relations*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, p.139.

[142] The Cyprus Weekly, *'Commonwealth Bids to Raise Sex-bias Awareness'*, May 29 –June 4 1998.

ministry that deals with women's issues, but tends to be involved in specific projects that are isolated from planning and policy-making." This type of policy provides planners with an alibi to demonstrate their commitment to basic needs of the people without being obliged to cope with the implications of "treating women as equal agents in development."[143] Goetz argues that in general women are still absent from the higher levels of planning and that their concerns in development 'seem to evaporate'; however, Dr Baksh-Soodeen claimed that "internationally there has been a shift in the manner in which women's issues are treated, with emphasis now on mainstreaming efforts into all government mechanisms, instead of staying within the isolated framework of the Women's Ministries, where special projects are created and legislative reforms introduced."[144] The current political discourse, as well as evidence on the inferior status of women illustrated above, point to a clear urgency for vast changes to take place within the public (and in effect in the private) sphere in order for Cyprus to be in line with 'international trends'. An open recognition by patriarchal authorities of the existing institutionalised discrimination would be a step towards a more positive direction.

2.4.2. Citizens of the Same World?

> *"Gender is absent from any discussion of citizenship. Despite the fact that women do not have the same access to citizenship as men, the significance of, and the reasons for this are rarely explored."*[145]

In ancient Greece, citizenship was the much-discussed 'democratic' right of all men: however, all women and slaves were excluded from the notion. In 1989, Floya Anthias explained that in Cyprus, it remained "a male privilege to pass on automatic citizenship to one's children."[146] A decade later, this privilege is eventually being challenged. With 'Sex Discrimination in Cyprus against Men,'[147] as a headline, a weekly newspaper reports:

> "Foreign-born women with Cypriot husbands get a one-time-only stamp in their passports, allowing them to live and work in Cyprus so long as their marriage lasts. No annual renewal of work or residency documents for them. But foreign-born men with Cypriot wives appear to pick up some of the *second-class cachet that frequently seems to inhere in merely being a woman in Cyprus*. Such men are faced with Hobson's Choice: they can decide that every year they will make the dreaded trips to the Migration Department and the Tax Office, where they can spend entire days renewing work permits and residency documents. Or they can take the only respite from this annual drudgery by acquiring residence. The catch here is that this takes a year or more to get, after going through a separate, mind-numbing application process- which foreign-born women married to Cypriot men are spared."[148]

In the article, it is further explained that this is an infringement of human rights. Indeed, this is the case. However, there are underlying assumptions concerning this legislative measure, which are simply ignored in the article. Firstly, "citizenship and immigration laws are fundamentally about

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[143] Goetz, *Op.Cit.*, p.137.

[144] *Ibid.*

[145] Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, Routledge, 1997, p.166.

[146] Floya Anthias, 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', in Nira Yuval-Davis & Floya Anthias (eds.), *Woman- Nation- State*, Macmillan, 1989, p.150.

[147] The Cyprus Weekly, August 22-28, 1997.

[148] *Ibid.*

defining insiders and outsiders."[149] The reason behind this particular law, its latent function in the first place, was indeed power relations and the inherent patriarchal discourse, which granted a foreign-born woman residency and a work permit simply because she was not really expected to work. Rather, she was expected to follow her husband and be supported by him. When she became the mother of his children, it was taken for granted in the eyes of the law that they were his children. Thus the Law 'oppresses' men by having them go down to the Immigration Office once a year; the same Law denies a woman the right to be a mother in her own right and have her child take up her citizenship and nationality.

'Access to citizenship is a highly gendered and ethnically structured process'[150] and there have been no efforts in concealing this in Cyprus. Sexism, but also racism, is obvious in the law governing the nationality of a child born in Cyprus to a Cypriot woman married to a non-Cypriot man. For a child to get Cypriot citizenship, she/he has to have a Cypriot father. The nationality of the mother is irrelevant. When the mother is Cypriot and the father is a non-Cypriot, it is impossible for the child to become Cypriot by birth. She or he has to apply (clearly a lot later in life) in order to become a Cypriot citizen. In order for the child to get the Cypriot nationality, the law asks for the father's name and birthplace (if the father is dead, it is required that one states where and when he died) but nothing about the birthplace of the mother, apart from her name. Another law concerning migration once required the consent of only the father in order to add a child to a parent's passport. However, this law has been changed to satisfy EU laws and now requires the consent of both parents.

Criticised by the US State Department's 1997 human rights report as constituting sexual discrimination, the current law in Cyprus states that only foreign women married to Cypriot men are entitled to automatic naturalisation, and only the children of foreign women married to Cypriot men get Cypriot nationality.[151] Officials have admitted that citizenship laws discriminate against women.[152] As citizenship now is derived from the father, mixed couples' children, where the father is a foreigner, cannot automatically gain citizenship. The law states that "foreign women married to Cypriot men can apply for citizenship twelve months after their marriage and their children are automatically considered Cypriot. Foreign men married to Cypriot women can only obtain citizenship after being a permanent resident of the island for five years and their children are not automatically considered Cypriots."[153] According to a human rights lawyer in the island, there are also practical implications to the law, like for example, the ownership of property. In Cyprus, only Cypriot citizens are allowed to possess property on the island. Thus, if a mother wishes to transfer property to a child who is not a Cypriot citizen, she would have to get a permit from the Council of Ministers to do so.[154] According to a Cabinet announcement of the 2 January 1998, though, foreign men married to Cypriot women will be entitled to citizenship if a legal amendment becomes law. The cabinet has also approved a second amendment granting Cypriot nationality to the children of foreign men married to Cypriot women. The amendments would mean a foreign spouse would only have to complete three years' residence before they were entitled to citizenship. The current residence requirement is five years."[155]

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[149] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Introduction – Cartographies of Struggle, Third World Women, and the Politics of Feminism,' in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Loudres Torres (eds.), *Third World Feminism and the Politics of Feminism,* Indiana University Press, 1991, p.24.

[150] Walby, *Op.Cit.,* p.178.

[151] *Cyprus Mail,* Tuesday, February 3, 1998.

[152] *The Cyprus Weekly,* January 30 – February 5, 1998, p.14.

[153] *Ibid.,* p.14.

[154] *Ibid.,* p.14.

[155] *Cyprus Mail,* Tuesday, February 3, 1998, p.2.

The above is an example of the centrality of political citizenship in the 'transformation of the forms of gender relations.'[156] Discrimination against women within the legal system is dealt with only if it takes place in the 'public' sphere and only if it is similar to the "experiences of men, thereby ignoring much of the realities of women's lives, especially within the confines of the domestic sphere."[157] Discriminatory laws within the present legal framework are indeed being removed in the case of Cyprus. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, and as Part Two of this thesis will show, this is a successful technique contributing to the justification and persistence of other, alternative forms of patriarchy institutionally oppressing women. The trend has shifted from the obvious to the concealed and harder to trace institutional and cultural domination of men over women in Cypriot society.

3. Conclusions on Writing Women's History

> *"It is only now, when the missing female half of history is starting to be seriously considered, that we can begin to develop a new theory of history, and of cultural evolution, that takes into account the totality of human society."*[158]

In *Medea*, Euripides's Jason gives voice to the desire of men for a world without women as they were seen as one of the greatest dangers to 'mankind': "What we poor males really need / is a way of having babies on our own- / no females, please. / Then the world would be / completely trouble free."[159] Jason's words express an idea frequently repeated in the next two millenniums: except from her function in reproduction, women do not offer anything to men's lives. In fact, women also bring unhappiness and misery to men and therefore their energy should be restricted within the walls of the house and the well being of the family. Their activities should be limited and kept within the private realm of the home, and are to be governed by men. They have no place in the public sphere of authority, power and law. Therefore, they have no place in historical accounts and no place in history. Very little change has taken place since Virginia Woolf complained that even though woman

> "...pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history ... Of our fathers we always know some fact or some distinction. They were soldiers or they were sailors. They filled that office or they made that law, but of our mothers, our grandmothers, our great grandmother what remains is nothing but a tradition ... We nothing of them except their names and the dates of their marriages and the number of children they bore."[160]

Historians and social scientists all over the world have paid little or no attention to women in history. For many years, archaeologists working on Cyprus developed theories about life on the island based upon knowledge about behaviour linked with what is generally a man's activity; that is, hunting. At the same time, little interest has been demonstrated in women's activities throughout the centuries, even though facts "about women, their work, and their place in society ... have survived in

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[156] S. Walby, *Op.Cit.*, p.178.

[157] Stanlie M. James, 'Challenging Patriarchal Privilege Through the Development of International Human Rights', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.17, No.6, pp.563-578, 1994, p.576.

[158] Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*, Pandora, 1990, p.147.

[159] Euripides's, *Medea*, lines 573-79.

[160] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, London, Grafton, 1929 (Reprinted 1977), p.45.

considerable quantity, if we know how to look for them."[161] The limited existing information though shows that Cypriot women were oppressed and subjected to the authority and dominance of men throughout the centuries.

Tracing the history of oppressed, powerless groups is a very difficult task when information is based on government records, textbooks, or other official documents. We are actually just beginning to find out how little we know and understand about half the human population - women. It would take detailed analysis and extensive personal interviewing which would raise unexpected issues and new questions in order to arrive at conclusions about 'ordinary' women's lives throughout history and it has not been the immediate purpose of this chapter to achieve it. There are lessons to be learned and a perspective to be gained in knowing the past for this is a history that is both humbling and inspiring. Women have been hidden from Cypriot history and it would be a distortion of history itself to assume that the course of social events has been directed by men's activities alone: "it is not the inferiority of women that has caused their historical insignificance; it is rather their historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority."[162] In order to try and comprehend the attitudes of Cypriot women, it is necessary to search for missing information about women and try and place them within the context of what we have been taught to present day. However, "the hardest thing to notice, is what isn't there."[163] Thus, the poverty of Cyprus' history is the darkness it sheds on its women rather than the light. Since the women on this island were rarely taught to write as a result of the oppressive patriarchal social system, there is hardly any direct documentary material about most of our foremothers' lives. I am therefore now given the chance, by writing this piece, to contribute to the writing of Cypriot women's history.

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[161] Elisabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work / The First 20000 Years; Women, Cloth and Society in Early Times*, W. W. Norton & Company, 1994, p.299-300.

[162] S. de Beauvoir, *Op. Cit.*, p.163.

[163] *Ibid.*, p.299.

Part Two

Attitudes and Practices of Women in Cyprus: Through the Front Door

The girls that walk in pairs

Two, two have just gone past
There they are, the girls.
They are all embarrassed, the girls.
The girls, the girls, in pairs, in a rush,
Come round the corner to enter the movie theatre.
They stand behind the glass window
And they ask for ice cream
The girls are now fourteen years old.
In beautiful diaries, they write
Before they go to bed, they lock them up.
In the mirror, every night
They see themselves grow up,
With some fear in their hearts.
They ask their mum every now and then...
The girls who pass by in a rush.
They wait at the bus stop
When they finish their English classes,
Their classmate looks like a gorgeous movie star.
You see how beautiful, beautiful the girls are
You see how unlucky, unlucky the girls are
They will have to pay hard for their parents ugliness,
One day, they will stand in the church...
Their mum, will be in tears,
Relatives, parents-in law,
The poor girls
No word about them after that.

Greek Song by
Dionysis Savvopoulos,
Singer, Composer, Song Writer
My translation

Chapter IV
Inside the Family Fortress:
'Old' and 'Restored' Designs

1. Entering the 'Home': Introducing Themes

The first part of the thesis has dealt with secondary sources pertaining to women's lives in Cyprus. The second part of this thesis, 'Through the Front Door', deals with the description and analysis of the data which resulted from the primary research undertaken during the fieldwork. Chapters Four to Seven aim to enter the home of the women studied and interpret their ideas and attitudes, experiences and practices. It is demonstrated that the studies carried out in the 1970s and 1980s discussed in Part One do not match the findings of this study. Rapid social change has taken place on the island and has influenced current thinking and practice, especially in urban areas. Women have become more accepting of difference and less tolerant of the structure of patriarchy that continues to dominate the island. However, as explained in previous chapters, although feminist principles are approved of and in some cases actively supported by the women in the sample, and although *attitudes* have changed to a considerable degree over a short period of time, *practices* have not followed this change to the same degree. In fact, urban women's behaviours and actions in Cyprus appear to adhere to the patriarchal model imposed on them for centuries. Variations in lifestyle are minimal and women appear in general to adhere to these patriarchal principles, although their belief systems might indicate otherwise. Theory and praxis among the urban women of Cyprus seem to be more conflicted than ever before. Feminist and anti-feminist women, as well as women who do not identify themselves in this manner or who are indifferent to the ideas of feminism, seem to follow strikingly similar patterns of practices in their everyday lives and experiences. As already explained in Chapters One and Two, the interviewees for this study and I share similarities but also differences in our attitudes and interpretations of feminist and other gender discourses. Understandings and definitions of feminism, anti-feminism, and non-feminism by the women in the sample under study were found to be varied. In order to explore urban, middle-class women's attitudes and practices in Cyprus, I first recognise both their particular socio-political and geographical locations within a global context, and the influences and variations of these women's discourses within their local environment. When I argue throughout the thesis that a woman is feminist, anti-feminist, or indifferent to feminism, I will assert that these are the terms women themselves used within this context. The meanings and content of these thus varied. Otherwise, if gender discourses apply to my interpretations and definitions, this will be further clarified and developed. Thus, if 'feminism' and 'other gender discourses' applies to my own understanding, this will be analysed and clarified.[1]

'Entering the Front Door'[2] is an act of particular importance in the case of Cyprus. The 'house', in the case of Cyprus, like the patriarchal state, is a structure of oppression and domination. It is highly symbolic as the "house is a place of cleanliness and purity as opposed to the street which is dirty ... The street is also a place of sexual impurity as well, a euphemism for adultery, as when it is said that a woman deceives her husband 'in the street'."[3] The concept of cleanliness within the home used to be very dominant in both urban and rural settings, although it is gradually losing its previous symbolic significance in urban settings (partly due to women's entry into the labour force).

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[1] Definitions of feminisms as well as interpretations of other gender discourses are explored in Chapter Six.

[2] This is part of the heading for Part Two of this thesis.

[3] Jill Dubisch, 'Greek Women: Sacred or Profane', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, 1983, p.197-8.

A clean woman (*kathari yineka,* implying a woman who keeps the house clean), as well as a clean house, are important praises that imply sexual purity. A woman who is occupied with cleaning the house, is not occupied with 'other things', her mind is not 'elsewhere' *(o nous tis enen allou)*; rather, her interest is in the home and the family. Women's commitment to household chores and responsibilities is made obvious in a high standard of cleanliness and order, "often at the expense of convenience."[4] However, a woman who neglects her house chores, in either a rural or an urban community, will be subject to gossip by both women and men as this demonstrates her lack of commitment to the family and the home. The state of a Cypriot woman's house reflects her morality.[5] It has been argued that the house represents the centre of the family in particular and society in general. It represents sanctuary as opposed to the competitive and hostile outside world.[6] Therefore, if the house is neglected, the ability to deal with this world is weakened this being the responsibility of women.[7] The house and the street, similar to the 'private' and the 'public' are interrelated and work in conjunction with one another. One cannot be studied and analysed separately from the other. Further, although urban middle class women are less affected by these standards of moral critique, they are certainly not excluded from the symbolic ideas and moral evaluations attached to the home, 'proper' behaviour, and femininity.

Chapter Four, 'Inside the Family Fortress', concentrates on the Greek Orthodox Church and its influences on women. Further, it explores women's attitudes and practices related to the family and marriage and how these are experienced within the home. Throughout the chapter, it becomes clear that gender, family, marriage, the 'home', and women's identity are mutually constitutive. It is demonstrated that vast and rapid changes have taken place in the last decade concerning both the institutions of the family and that of marriage and that attitudes show great and extreme discrepancies between the younger and older generations, as well as between the rural and urban communities. Social and gender relations are discussed and the issue of power within these relationships explored. Urbanisation, the post-war financial and social restructuring, increasing tourism, the dominance of an offshore service economy, efforts for (a problematic) entry into the European Union,[8] increasing numbers of young people educated in the Western world, to mention just some of the main factors, contribute towards the radical change of the structure of the Cypriot

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[4] Lucy Rushton, 'Doves and Magpies: Village Women in the Greek Orthodox Church', in Pat Holden (ed.), *Women's Religious Experience,* Croom Helm, 1983, p.59.

[5] Jill Dubisch, 'Culture Enters Through the Kitchen: Women, Food, and Social Boundaries in Rural Greece', in Jill Dubisch (ed.), *Gender and Power in Rural Greece,* pp.195-214, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986, p.200.

[6] *Ibid.*, p.199.

[7] The idea of the street being dirty, wrong, immoral, can also is seen in the neglect and the disinterest of the people for the street. When I asked a woman why she put a lot of rubbish right outside her (spotless) house she said: "I don't care. It is not in the house, it is in the street. And it's not mine, is it?" For a related discussion, see also Vassos Argyrou, "Keep Cyprus Clean: Littering, Pollution, and Otherness', *Cultural Anthropology,* 12(2), pp.159-178, 1997.

[8] The problem with accession into the European Union lies within the political complexities of the Cyprus case. The non-occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus wishes to negotiate entry into the Union (with Turkish Cypriot representatives), whereas the occupied territories want the Cyprus problem to be solved first and then enter the Union only with Turkey. The European Union is in full support with the Republic of Cyprus so talks are in process. The Turkish Cypriot side refuses to enter the talks. Argyrou argues that "there is no doubt that one of the reasons that Cyprus has applied for full membership was the desire to get European nations more involved in the Cyprus problem and prevent a Turkish take-over of the entire island." Vassos Argyrou, *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.49.

family.[9] It remains highly patriarchal as shown in previous chapters, and other works cited in this thesis. This 'new patriarchy,' however, takes alternative forms.

2. *The Greek Orthodox Church: The Control of Women through Religion.*

> *"Religions are major vehicles for subjugating women. To keep women from having political power – power within churches, a voice on public issues - religions concentrate mainly on women's bodies, treating the female body as if it incarnated the morality of the entire human race. Thus some focus on women's appearance, dress, and habits, as if all human virtue depended upon them (yet men's appearance, dress and habits, are seen irrelevant to virtue); others focus on women's potential for motherhood, as if women alone had the duty to perpetuate the human species. Religions do not require men to support or reward or help women in this task, but they demand that men control it."*[10]

Religion is one of the most influential social institutions for both women and men in society, even if those people do not practice a religion. Gendered attitudes, as well as ideas about masculinity and femininity, are directly affected by the tradition of Christianity in general, and in the case of Cyprus, by Greek Orthodoxy and Islam, in particular. Through its centuries of foreign domination, and as discussed in the third chapter, Cypriot society has been immensely influenced by the Orthodox Church and, to a lesser extent, by Islam. The (Greek) Orthodox Church[11] has at all times had a pervasive impact over both the public and the private lives of men and women on the island. The Church has played an important role in "defining the female image and bolstering the values incorporated in the social and economic structures which discriminate against women."[12] It seems to have been an obstacle to the abolition of entrenched social practices, and in extension, to the liberation of Cypriot women. Since the social position of Greek Cypriot women is defined to a great extent by the Christian Orthodox religion,[13] it is important to start with a discussion of the Orthodox Church's views on gender, sexuality, and morality, and the way in which it has contributed to the definition of the female image and the patriarchal norms and values incorporated in all aspects of social existence.

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[9] By radical change, one is not to assume the betterment or worsening of women's 'condition' in society in relation to the links is has to the West. Rather, change here is used as a term to describe the processes followed within society concerning the institutions of marriage in particular and the family structure in general.

[10] Marilyn French. *The War Against Women*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992, p.12.

[11] There is a very special relationship between the state and religion in Cyprus; one whose function is not that manifest (any longer), but rather, is latent and concealed. Similar to Greece, "it is no truism to say that during this four-hundred years period (of Ottoman rule). Orthodoxy and Hellenism were identical concepts." Elias Oikonomou, 'Foundations, Doctrine, and Politics of the Eastern Orthodox Church,' *Mediterranean Quarterly*, pp. 57-70, Winter 1993, p.57. The main difference, in that respect, is that Greece became independent in 1821 whereas Cyprus was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1878 when it became part of colonial Britain. Turkish people, who are Muslim, remained on the island until the present day. Although the Turkish Cypriot population does not strictly adhere to the principles of Islam, there has been some further cultural and social influence on the people on the whole island.

[12] Eva C. Topping. 'Patriarchal Prejudice and Pride in Greek Christianity: Some Notes on Origins.' *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, pp.7-17, May 1983, p.7.

[13] Maria Roussou. *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, University of London, Institute of Education, March 1985, p.15 (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis).

One of the messages given by the Church in Cyprus is that the liberation of women will directly result in the destruction of the 'desired' traditional family pattern; that is, the nuclear family where the father is the head of the household. As French points out, women's emancipation was equated with the destruction of the institution of the family.[14] It could indeed be argued that the Orthodox Church is working towards challenging the gradual changes that have been achieved at the political, social and economic spheres. "*Pisteve kai mi erevna,*" that is, 'believe and do not investigate' is a common understanding of cosmology by the Christian Orthodox majority in Cyprus. In this sense, the Orthodox Church has been an important tool for the subjugation of women. The questioning of this male-gendered terminology by either men or women is feared to be wrong and sinful by folk wisdom, and punishment will thus follow. Women should stay in the house and safeguard the morality and purity of the family in particular, and society in general. Similar to the New Right ideology, the Church, with its antifeminist theology, promotes inequality of the sexes and the excuse is the 'protection of the family'. Therefore, women are not to be drawn into the vices of feminist preaching and the Church is to remain controlled by men. The dangers of female sexuality are kept under 'control' through women's male kin, and the Orthodox church has offered people one, and only, male god who becomes the role model for the father of the family, who in turn becomes the 'controller.' In fact, the root of women's submissive image in the Christian Church has been sought for in its actual cosmology and attention has been drawn "to the male gender terminology used for the Godhead in the Christian Church."[15] Not only the Godhead, but also the church hierarchy, which performs formal rituals, is male in the Christian Orthodox religion.

However, in Cyprus, like in Greece, it is women who carry out most everyday religious activities outside and within churches.[16] Personal observation and experience during fieldwork on the island leads to the conclusion that regular church attendance is more characteristic of women than it is of men.[17] Similar to other areas of the Mediterranean, for women especially from rural parts, it is like an escape route from the confinement of the home:

> "The church on Sundays has some of the same functions that the coffee shop has daily for men ... But whereas for women the proportion going to church regularly increases with age, with men the proportions decrease with maturity until old age is reached, when it decreases."[18]

In a study carried out in 1980 which reviewed a period of 25-30 years in the development of social and family life in Cyprus, it was found that although 76.4 percent of the males and 82.5 percent of the females, believed in God, only 23.7 percent of males were churchgoers as opposed to 35.7 percent of the females.[19] Social expectations, fear, family pressure, and dominant values lead women to find spiritual refuge in active religious participation and church attendance. Churchgoing days

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[14] Marilyn French, *Op.Cit.*, p.51.

[15] Juliet Du Boulay, 'Cosmos and Gender in Village Greece,' in Loizos. Peter & Papataxiarchis, Evthymios (eds.), *Contested Identities; Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*. Princeton University Press, 1991, p.47.

[16] Jill Dubisch, 'Gender, Kinship, and Religion: 'Reconstructing' the Anthropology of Greece,' in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities; Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.42.

[17] See also Michael Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanisation in Cyprus - A Study of Nicosia*. Nicosia: Social Research Centre, 1981, p.173.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.174-75.

[19] A. Christodoulides, 'Family and Youth in Cyprus,' *The Cyprus Review*. Vol.1, No.2, 1990.

become occasions for socially sanctioned appearances in public,[20] and offer accepted 'public' space for women. Due to their social roles and 'biological and cultural definitions of their nature,' women are placed in positions of great responsibility in religious affairs, and this responsibility becomes obvious in 'all the trivia of daily life.'[21] They will light a candle from the Holy Land or a lamp, sometimes on an every day basis, so that God will look after their loved ones and family. They will attend weddings and funerals. They will go to baptisms and celebrations for namedays (after saints' names). Pregnant women in Cyprus will practice religion, even if they never have before. They will be advised to visit convents and chapels, make *tamata* (offerings to Christ, Virgin Mary or various saints), and pray to *Panayia* for *kali eleftheria* (literally meaning 'good freedom', as in an unproblematic delivery of the child).[22]

Women are thus expected by religion and society to actively act as worshippers; nevertheless, they are subjected to a number of restrictions. In 1968, Germaine Greer wrote, "women do not have to be purified or churched after childbearing any more."[23] Thirty years later in Cyprus, women do. In fact, according to religious tradition, a sister, a grandmother or a friend has to take the child to church to be blessed by a priest about a week after it is born, but the mother will not approach the church for a period of 40 days after childbirth (she is a '*lehousa*' during that period) since she is considered to be impure and unfit to leave the house. Greer also argued that,

> "...women who adhere to the Moslem, Hindu or Mosaic faiths must regard themselves as unclean in their time of menstruation and seclude themselves for a period. Medieval Catholicism made the stipulation that menstruating women were not to come into the church."[24]

Cypriot women in the 1990s are not allowed to actively participate in religious activities during menstruation as this is regarded by dominant social opinion as an unclean, impure period in their lives that has to be hidden. This is recognised by Ruether who explains that in some Christian sects remnants of menstrual taboos and views of women as impure persist.[25] Venerating icons is also prohibited during menstruation,[26] as well as taking communion and lighting a candle, and women before the menopause are not allowed to go behind the sanctuary. Although nineteen of the twenty-three women in my sample who claimed to be religious argue that they are non-practising Christians, they all follow the above rituals and traditions of the church.

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[20] Jill Dubisch, 'Greek Women: Sacred or Profane', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, May 1983, p. 195.

[21] Lucy Rushton, 'Doves and Magpies: Village Women in the Greek Orthodox Church', in Pat Holden (ed.), *Women's Religious Experience*, Croom Helm, 1983, p.57.

[22] Aspasia, Elpinice, and Sappho are three examples of women interviewed for this study who followed the tradition mentioned here. Aspasia was a practicing religious woman, but Elpinice and Sappho said that they were not.

[23] Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, London: Flamingo Modern Classic, 1993, p.56.

[24] *Ibid.*, p.56.

[25] Rosemary Redford Ruether, 'Women's Body and Blood: The Sacred and the Impure', in Alison Joseph (ed.), *Through the Devil's Gateway: Women, Religion, and Taboo*, pp.7-21, London: SPCK, p.7.

[26] Literature on rural Greek communities explains that women are considered to be polluting "because their bodily discharges render them dangerous to others and put them in a state of spiritual uncleanliness. In addition, female sexuality is seen as a threat to men and to male honor (*timi*). A woman must guard herself and the reputation of her family by cultivating her sense of shame (*dropi*), and her life and behavior are guarded and constricted." Jill Dubisch, *Op.Cit.*, p.185.

Ironically, the anti-feminist position of the Christian Orthodox church is manifested in hymns and tributes to a woman:

> "Mary is glorified in part at the expense of Eve and her other daughters. The unique destiny and glory of the Theotokos effectively separates her from her lesser sisters. In the phrases of numerous Marian hymns the Theotokos stands 'above women,' 'above nature,' 'alone among women.' While Mary is adored as the 'only' good, pure, blameless and holy woman, all other women continue to be oppressed by burdens of shame and inferiority which they have inherited on account of Eve."[27]

The relationship of many women with the Virgin Mary, rather than the (patriarchal) Father-God, in Cyprus is very strong. She represents goodness, morality, decency, femininity, and patience. A woman I interviewed said emphatically, "I have a very special relationship to Panayia. She is my closest friend and I feel that she is always there for me. In times of trouble. she has always been there."[28] Women both find strength and are subjected to weakness through the oppressive ways in which the church operates:

> "Strength is derived from the dual meaning of the term *martyria* – it give evidence or testimony and to have patience in suffering for the purpose of pursuing truth, serving humanity, and maintaining the purity of the tradition for which the Orthodox church has been a devoted bearer of the credo, 'The One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church' of Christ."[29]

Similar to the Virgin Mary, a woman is expected to be a martyr to the tortures of society and the tests of God and religion, and unquestionably demonstrate humility and respect. She is expected to be the self-sacrificing mother, suffer for the purpose of preserving the institution of the family, serve the husband, children and male or older kin, maintain the purity and morality ascribed to her sex by society and the church.

According to many biblical scholars, the Bible was compiled in a period when patriarchy was spreading.[30] Early materials were altered to "eradicate signs of an earlier female dominance and to make male supremacy a divine principle."[31] Women in Cyprus represent totally different meanings within the symbolic system of the culture. On one hand, there is the polluting, dangerous, provocative, sexual female represented by sinful Eve, and on the other hand, there is the sacred image of womanhood portrayed by *Panayia*.[32] The problem for the woman then becomes to avoid being associated with the first symbolism and make a constant effort to attain the positive ideal, that is to fulfil her social role as a mother and a wife. Such dualism does not exist in masculine

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[27] Eva C. Topping, *Op.Cit.*, p.17.

[28] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Gorgo, July 1997.

[29] Elias Oikonomou, *Op.Cit.*, p.70.

[30] A passage in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, which is part of the Greek Orthodox ceremony reads, 'η γυνη πρεπει να υποτασσεται και να φοβηται τον ανδρα' (literary meaning, the woman must obey to, and fear the man);"Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church ... every husband must love his wife as himself and every wife must respect her husband." According to relatively recent tradition, especially among the middle-classes in Cyprus, if the bride is a 'modern woman', she will jokingly step on the groom's foot in order to show that she will not fear her husband. Everyone in Church will secretly laugh. The husband will get a bit annoyed, but will smile to show that he is 'modern' too.

[31] Marilyn French, *Op.Cit.*, p.55.

[32] Jill Dubisch, *Op.Cit.*, p.195.

symbolism, although "God and Christ and their antagonist the Devil are all male figures."[33] Although Christian Orthodox, Cypriot women identify with Virgin Mary and pray to her for help, it is the male God that the religion has focused them on; however 'close' women feel to Virgin Mary, she is but the mother of Christ, she is not a Goddess. Mary's female power is not complete, and it is not fully legitimate. Thus a woman "can never have the experience that is freely available to every man and boy in her culture, of having her full sexual identity affirmed as being in the image and likeness of God."[34] Carol Christ urges for a need for the Goddess as a symbol of the new-found beauty and power of women; the Goddess symbolism, she suggests, has a lot to offer women who are fighting to get

> "...rid of the powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations of devaluation of female power, denigration of the female body, distrust of female will, and denial of the women's bonds and heritage that have been engendered by patriarchal religion."[35]

Women in Cyprus could use the symbol of Venus for this struggle. Venus, not as the exploited sex symbol of mythology, but indeed as a symbol of this new-found beauty and power.

Upon exploring the relationship between religion and women, it was found that the majority of the women in Sri Lanka believed that they should carry out certain practices which subordinated them to their male partners and placed women on a lower rank than men within the community. The only women who objected to this were feminist women, who questioned the role of women in religion.[36] Two women in my sample, who identified themselves as feminists, also questioned the role of religion in women's lives, and claimed to be non-religious. It could be argued that some women's identification with feminism led them to question or reject institutions or ideologies that discriminate against females. Nineteen women said that they were religious but in their own way, and did not practice religion on a regular basis; the remaining four women told me that they were religious. One woman asked,

> "...how can people be religious? I don't get it? Why be suppressed? Why be forced to listen to some priest telling you how you should stay at home and produce kids? I never go to church, I do not practice religion, and I do not care about these things. Now if you ask me whether I am spiritual, that is a different matter. I am, and very much so. And I am proud of it."[37]

Another woman asked, "If Marx said that religion is the opium of the people, why ruin my health?"[38] On the contrary, a practising religious woman felt that her relationship to the Virgin Mary has helped her immensely at various difficult times in her life. She said that not practising religion is becoming fashionable, "but I am not into fashion. All I know is that my faith gives me strength. I like going to church, and I do pray. *Panayia* has always been there for me and has helped me when I needed help."[39] Similarly, a woman who was indifferent to feminism explained that

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[33] *Ibid.*, p.195.

[34] Carol P. Christ, 'Why Women Need the Goddess; Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections' in Sneja Gunew (ed.), *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge*, Routledge, 1991, p.291.

[35] *Ibid.*, p.301.

[36] Thalatha Seneviratne and Jan Currie, 'Religion and Feminism; A Consideration of Cultural Constraints on Sri Lankan Women', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 17, No.6, pp. 593-607, 1994, p. 594.

[37] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Athaliah, July 1997.

[38] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Deborah, June 1997.

[39] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Elpinice, August 1997.

> "I believe in God. I believe in Christianity. I believe in the Orthodox Church. I think that it is important for people to stay close to God, to pray, to remember our Christian roots. I think that people forget and they ignore religion. We have immorality, crime, and so many problems. Political instability. Our country is being ruined. We are not close to God anymore."[40]

The vast majority of the women in my study, however, found my questions on religion difficult to answer. Some explained that they were religious but "not in the traditional way," or "in my special way," or "in that I believe in God, but that's all. I don't practice religion and I go to church every Easter and every Christmas." During my fieldwork, most urban women I interviewed, talked to, or observed, appeared to ignore religion completely. However, most will go to church at Christmas and Easter, "because everyone does that, isn't that so?"[41] My findings suggest that the direct impact of religion in the daily life of urban women in Cyprus tends to be a lot less profound than it once was Although older women are still under the constant influence of religion mentioned above. urbanisation and changes in the economic life of the island have produced different ideologies and experiences for people in cities. Religion alone cannot provide miraculous answers concerning urban women's attitudes and practices. At the same time though, due to the size of the island and socio-political and historical processes, the strong impact of religion as an institution in a small country should not be underestimated. Urban Cypriot women do not fit into anthropological narratives on rural Greek communities regarding churchgoing as the Sunday female outing or, more plainly, using Orthodoxy "as the ultimate reference point for 'local' gender meanings."[42] Nevertheless. in the case of Cyprus, religion -through its power in Cypriot society and through its direct impact in other social and political institutions- has a dominant influence on religious and non-religious urban people, practising and non-practising. Religion itself might not be an issue for individual urban women on the island, but it is not something they can ignore either. As one woman summed it up, "if I lived abroad, I would not mind getting married to someone from another religion, but in Cyprus it would be far too difficult. I am not that religious really, so I don't care, but in Cyprus it would be too much."[43]

As this woman explained, the concern was not the religious side of the wedding ceremony. Apart from Melanie, who expressed her wish for her marriage to be blessed in the house of God, the rest of the women in the sample seemed to find the social stigma and 'gossip' more problematic than religious challenges. Participation in religious activities in general did not appear to be directly linked to ideological and personal beliefs. Urban women's opinions and women's practices appeared to be conflicting and contradictory, reflecting the social structure they live in and the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church. The women in my study felt that religion could be both a way of dealing with emotionally 'difficult' issues, and a source of moral and spiritual support for their demanding social roles in Cypriot society. They 'use' religion as a tool for social acceptance or even as a means to minimise conflict between themselves and other members of society, like their partners, male kin. and older relatives. These women did not passively accept religious indoctrination. but chose to follow religious practices at various levels in order to cope with a dominating patriarchal structure that provides them with limited choices. They chose to conform in a number of ways in order to be able to function as best as possible in a society that is restrictive and allows for limited personal

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[40] *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Koran, August 1997.

[41] *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

[42] Jane Cowan, 'Being a Feminist in Contemporary Greece; Similarity and Difference Reconsidered'. in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland, *Practicing Feminism; Identity, Difference, Power.* Routledge, 1996, p.65.

[43] *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Theela, July 1997.

expression. However, in order for women to become free from the oppression of patriarchy, they will have to struggle against accepted social norms and values resulting from particular societal and religious practices.[44]

3. Of Marriage and Motherhood.

The social and cultural influence of the Greek Orthodox Church in the lives of Cypriot women is further reflected in the official statistics concerning ecclesiastical and civil marriages in Cyprus. In 1996, marriages decreased to 5761 from 6669 the year before. The lowest numbers of marriages since the war of 1974 - when there were only 2796 - have been in 1976 (3548 marriages), in 1980 (3908 marriages), in 1984 (4126 marriages), in 1988 (3932 marriages), and in 1992 (4916 marriages).[45] The main reason for the decrease (which is due to the decrease of ecclesiastical marriages) is the stigma associated with getting married during a leap year. A leap year is associated with bad luck, and people who decide to get married during a leap year are considered doomed to have an unhappy marriage. Although a large number of people nowadays choose to ignore this superstition, official statistics constantly show the effect it has on wedding plans. Zenobia said, for example,

> "...what is the point of getting married in a leap year? I don't exactly believe this kind of trash, but if everyone feels so strongly about it, why go against my parents' wishes and all that? When I decide to get married, and if it happens to be a leap year, I will just wait for a while. Unless, of course, I am pregnant, in which case I can't, can I?"[46]

In 1996, first marriages for both partners constituted 73,9 percent of total marriages, 16,8 percent were remarriages for one partner, and 9,3 percent were remarriages for both partners.[47] Official statistics demonstrate a steady increase in the number of remarriages, especially in the urban areas. They also demonstrate an increase in the average age of both men and women at first marriage. For women, the average age at first marriage was 22,9 in the period 1974-1977, whereas it increased to 25,1 in the period of 1992-1996. The same increase was observed in my research. From 25,7 in the former period to 27,7 in the latter. However, in rural areas there appears to be a lower average age at first marriage than in urban areas, for both men and women:[48]

> "Thus the number of marriages follows a four-year cycle with a trough during leap years and peaks in the years preceding and succeeding the leap year. Averaged over a four-year period to remove the leap-year effect, the crude marriage rate has been decreasing from 10,7 marriages per thousand population in the period 1979-1982 to 9,5 per thousand population in the period 1991-1994 and to 9,7 in the period 1993-1996. It is still the highest in Europe, reflecting the importance of the institution of marriage in Cyprus."[49]

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[44] Thalatha Seneviratne and Jan Currie, 'Religion and Feminism; A Consideration of Cultural Constraints on Sri Lankan Women', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 17, No.6, pp. 593-607, 1994, p. 593.

[45] Department of Statistics and Research: *Demographic Report 1996*, Republic of Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, Population Statistics, Series II, Report No.34, 1997, Table 62, p.101.

[46] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Zenobia, June 1997.

[47] Department of Statistics and Research, *Op.Cit.*, p.20.

[48] *Ibid.*, p.20 (See figure 6).

[49] *Ibid.*, p.18-19.

Out of a total number of marriages of 5761 in 1996, ecclesiastical marriages comprised 3000 of these, representing 52 percent of the total number. The remaining 2761 were civil marriages. However, a decade before, in 1986, out of the total number of marriages which was 5175, 4649 of these were ecclesiastical and only 526 were civil. Most of the civil marriages in 1996 (80 percent of them) took place between foreign nationals. In 2,8 percent of the cases, the groom was of foreign nationality and the bride Cypriot, 13,2 percent the bride was of foreign nationality and the groom Cypriot. Only 113 civil marriages or 4,1 percent took place between Cypriots in 1996. Civil marriage between Cypriots was introduced in 1990 (The Civil Marriage Law, L.21/90). All the married women in my sample got married in the Church and the rest plan to do so. Sixteen out of the twenty-five women I interviewed said that they had no problem with people who decided not to get married in Church, but they "would never do it."[50]

"It's one of those things you don't really think about. You do it, because everyone does it. Also. why cause hassle and all that. A church wedding is nice. anyway. As far as my parents are concerned. they'd shoot themselves from embarrassment if I went to the Town Hall and said, hello will you please marry us?"[51]

J:" You mean like, not go to church? It is like, you are not properly married then. It's OK if you are abroad, and are a student but then you have to get married in the proper way, otherwise they'll kill you."
MV: "Who will kill you"?
J: "You know, parents, neighbours, family, the whole of the community."[52]

"I did not even know that civil marriage is allowed. Is it really? What happens with the church? I mean, it does not bother me, but it's not like anyone does it, do they?"[53]

Although the women in the sample did not disapprove of the civil marriage and explained that it is not something that would bother them in any way, in Cyprus, *ecclesiastical* marriage is of primary importance to them because it is considered a necessary condition of reproduction and the creation of a family. It is not considered a matter of choice; rather, it is taken for granted. Even in a case where a woman got married at the registry office for administrative reasons, the ecclesiastical wedding followed, as "before we were not properly married so we could not really have a family."[54] In 1982, Lia Mylona explained that "regardless of the educational level of the Cypriot woman, the creation of a family as a reason for marriage attracts the largest percentage in comparison to any other percentage,"[55] that is 53,1 percent of the total, as opposed to 20.8 percent of the respondents who answered that getting married was the purpose of life itself:

> "The status of being married is for urban women, as it is for rural women, the only acceptable condition for them to aspire to, marriage being considered the main source of

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[50] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Melanie, July 1997.

[51] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Zenobia, July 1997.

[52] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Jezebel, July 1997.

[53] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Purpheria, June 1997.

[54] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Sappho, July 1997.

[55] Lia Mylona, Costas Paschalis, Eleni Kalava, Niki Pastalidou, Athos Erotokritou, *The Cypriot Woman*, Psycho-Sociological Research Group, Cyprus, 1986, p.16 (1982, Published in Greek). See also table on question 1.8 on page 12.

> happiness. Marriage is continuously presented as the only alternative to loneliness, or to a marginilised life; thus marriage is the ideal which completes and validates life."[56]

All the women I interviewed said that the basic reason they were married or wanted to get married was in order to have children. Marriage, for them, was the most important condition for procreation. "Being married is about having babies, right?" they asked.[57] One woman pointed out that "it is not just for me I am getting married, it is for the babies, of course. Can you imagine in this society bringing a baby to life without a 'proper' father? It is better to have an abortion than do that."[58]

Thus, in Cyprus, like in many other Western, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean cultures, motherhood is a natural reason for marriage, as well as a consequence of marriage. All the women I interviewed viewed motherhood as 'natural', universal and sought for. Those who were mothers said that giving birth was the most important thing they ever did and five more explained that motherhood was their highest priority in life. None of them questioned the biologically attributed 'mother instinct' but some said that "it's OK if some women do not want to have a child rather than giving birth and then regard their child as a burden. But, I am sure that at some point they'll want children. Women who do not want them, deny their own nature."[59] Not having a child, being childless, implies that there is something missing from the person, from the woman. If a woman decides not to have children, then she is not 'natural', or she is simply unfeminine and selfish. If she wants to have children but for some biological reason, she cannot, then she is someone to feel sorry for. Gorgo and her husband have been unable to have children but they try not to tell people, since they are aware of the social stigma this carries. "They will be trying to see whose *fault* it is, and then they feel sorry for you and all that."[60] Although motherhood itself enjoys very little status and power in society, women's inability/ unwillingness or desire/need to become mothers culturally defines their own self-worth and sense of identity.[61]

However, being a *mana*, a mother, holds prestigious status in Cypriot society. Similar to other Mediterranean family structures, women in Cyprus obtain 'power' through motherhood, and the inevitable social recognition they acquire for their function as reproducers. Motherhood is defined as the primary means of fulfilment for women, and in extension to this, as a convenient means of reproducing patriarchal structures and ideology. However, "when children are falsely presented to women as their only significant contribution, the proper expression of their creativity and their lives' work, the children and their mothers suffer from it."[62] One interviewee 'humorously' expressed her frustration:

> "Of course, I want a baby, but I am being told all the time that I need to be married to have one. I cannot exactly go out and have a baby without a husband, can I? They'll have me hanged. It's bad enough that I am not married, as it is. They already say enough about me (laughing)."[63]

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[56] Roussou, *Op.Cit.*, p.617.

[57] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Athaliah, July 1997.

[58] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

[59] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Artemissia, July 1997.

[60] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Gorgo, August 1997.

[61] Gayle Letherby, 'Mother or Not, Mother or What? Problems of Definition and Identity', *Women's Studies International Forum.* Vol.17, No.5, pp.525-532, 1994.

[62] Greer, *Op.Cit.*, p.74.

[63] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Athaliah, July 1997.

Becoming a mother without being married was not a consideration for this woman and the reasons were neither practical nor financial. Motherhood outside wedlock is extremely rare.[64] In 1996, one hundred and forty four children were born out of wedlock constituting a mere 1.5 percent of the total number of births, most of whom were children of non-Cypriot parents. In cases where they were, many went on to marry afterwards. One woman told me: "there is someone where I work who got pregnant and decided to keep the child without getting married. I suppose everyone talks about her but they leave her alone more or less, because she is generally accepted to be weird. She is an eccentric."[65] 'Everyone' in this context includes many urban, middle-class, women who both ideologically 'accept' non-wedded mothers and criticise them at the same time. Although these women feel that "if this is what the woman wants, who am I to judge?"[66] they seem to disapprove of women who challenge existing values, and reject practices that openly and bluntly oppose current structures. Once more, the contradictions and conflicts of these women become apparent. They believe in the right of women to choose whether they would get married or remain single, and they argue that what "other women do is their business, why should I care if they have kids outside marriage, I don't think there is anything wrong with that."[67] At the same time, they do not consider these alternative ways of living for themselves. Further, they 'gossip' with one another about women who do choose these alternatives, since they pose a threat to the existing 'safety' of the status quo.

Recently, the Single Parent Association has been formed, asking for social and legal acceptance of children born outside wedlock. For the first time in 1998, the association was made public through two popular television programmes, and some radio stations. According to the provisions of The Legal Status of Children Law (Law No.187 of 1991),[68] the legitimation procedures have been simplified with the aim of facilitating children born out of wedlock (the term illegitimate children is also abolished) to become members of a family and be afforded the same rights as the rest of the children. The parental care of a child born outside wedlock belongs to the mother and in case of legitimation, the father acquires parental care as well. Further, the enactment of Parents and Children Relations Law of 1990 (Law No.216 of 1990) put amend to the patriarchal authority established by the previous legislation regarding parental care. Under the present law, both parents have the duty as well as the right to care for the best interests of the child. The law refers to the representation of children in all case or legal acts concerning them or their property, the administration of this property, and their guardianship. If there is no agreement on the exercise of parental care, and it is imperative for a decision to be taken, the decision is taken by the court on the application of either parent. A decision on parental care is also taken by the court in case of divorce, annulment of marriage or separation of the parents. Parental care can be taken away by the court on the application of one of the parents or of the Director of the Welfare Office.

Further, according to the Law for the Protection of Maternity of 1987 (N.54/87), a woman has the right to maternity leave from her work of a total period of 12 weeks with a number of considerations for the protection of her working rights, job safety and security, and facilities for breast-feeding. The 1994 Amendment increased the leave period to 14 weeks and as from 1 January 1997 to 16 weeks. Concerning motherhood, there have been recommendations for the mother or father to be able to take unpaid leave for a period of up to two years to look after their children, as is the case in Germany, even though in many European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland,

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[64] Peter Loizos & Evthymios Papataxiarchis, 'Gender and Kinship in Marriage and Alternative Contexts' in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.5.

[65] *Private Conversation with Author*, April 1997.

[66] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

[67] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

[68] This law was enacted in order to give effect to the provisions of the European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock which was ratified by Law No. 50 of 1979.

Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom) maternity leave is between 14 and 16 weeks like it is in Cyprus.[69] Further, there is a need for an amendment to the present law for the protection of maternity:

> "According to a recent newspaper article, in the last two years, twenty cases of violation of the present law have been taken to court since the usual price the employed woman has to pay is the termination of her employment. It is estimated that the number of cases of violation of the present law is much higher but many woman do not press charges against the employer either because they do not wish to, or because they are not aware of their rights." [70]

Although the *idea* of motherhood secures women a prestigious position in Cypriot society, the *reality* of it results in the termination of their employment, or alternatively, the burden of the 'double shift.' The way the institution of marriage is constructed in Cyprus and the emphasis on motherhood and family life provide the perfect means through which the patriarchal status quo remains conveniently unchallenged. Marriage could also be argued, however, to provide a coping mechanism for women who by marrying avoid the social stigma attached to single women and the harmful 'gossip' associated with that. The status of being a married woman in Cypriot society, provides a protective shield against the social surveillance she can be exposed to, and secures a less complicated position in society by ensuring that her practices are accepted and approved. Consequently, single older women and men are a rare species in Cyprus, one that dominant public opinion would like to eliminate. Similar to other Western and Mediterranean societies, the socialisation of girls in the family is directed towards their understanding that the most important thing in the lives ought to be finding a man to marry. Finding a man is success, and being 'alone' is a failure (*en moni tis I kaimeni* – she is by herself, poor thing). The assumption is that unmarried, divorced women, and widows suffer somehow from psychological problems and that a husband can solve them:

> "I think the older they get, the more grumpy and fussy they get. And then they can't find anyone. A man in his late thirties would go for a twenty-five-year-old, not a thirty-year-old, of course."[71]

> "I don't mind women who are not married ... my neighbour is 45 and not married; people say that she is very fussy and that she is jealous of others who have a family ... I suppose they do get more and more fussy and eccentric when they don't get married. They go a bit funny, and then they don't find someone, and it is a vicious circle."[72]

Fifteen women agreed that there is nothing wrong with being single at an older age, but the implication in most cases was that "there is nothing wrong with her, she just never found the right man. And the older she gets, the more picky she is."[73] For all the women in my sample, remaining single was not a choice, it was a 'condition.' Women's dependency on men and marriage is such that alternatives are not even considered. However, both Artemissia and Athaliah, the 'older' single women in the sample expressed that they "would rather be single than have anyone, just for the sake

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[69] Centre for Research and Development, *Women Managers in Cyprus*, Intercollege, Nicosia, January 1997, p.68.

[70] *Ibid.*, p.69. (my translation).

[71] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Korinna, August 1997.

[72] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

[73] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

of saying I am married."[74] At the same time, both discussed their anxieties and frustration over constant social pressure they were subjected to in order to get married. Both of these women identified themselves as feminists, and were financially independent, highly educated, and involved in community work. Identification with feminism appeared, in the case of these two women, to be related to practices, which supported their personal choices and control over their own lives.

In her study of middle-class Australian women, Russianoff found that heterosexual women were emotionally dependent on men irrespective of age, gender role attitudes, lifestyle, or employment status.[75] My study indicates results that are not as rigid as that. This 'desperate dependence' or 'life-or-death focus on the opposite sex' was dominant among most of the women in my sample, and especially the younger ones. Many women, especially in rural settings, rely upon their husbands to 'take them out' on occasions.[76] A 'good husband' will take his wife out regularly. Although this practice is generally assumed to be dying out in urban areas, one of my interviewees told me that her husband "never takes me anywhere." She then said that she was not used to going places by herself "and I really would not know where to go or what to do."[77] Thus, emotional dependence is demonstrated in the ways in which women organise and run their everyday lives. However, four women were less emotionally dependent on men than the rest. They expressed their need for space and independence. Deborah said that if it had not been for her son, she would probably have preferred to live alone rather than be with a man.[78] Further Phryne argues that,

> "...I like living alone. I am used to it. With my job, and everything, it is more convenient. I was brought up in an environment where these things were not particular issues. I have had relationships, I have lived with people, I have lived abroad, and I am living alone. My parents have never thought I am weird. We are just *comfortable* people *(anetoi anthropoi)*. We do what feels right. I don't know why all the fuss with single women living alone and all that. For me, it is natural. In fact, it is the only way."[79]

Although two of the four women were married and the other two were single, they all identified with feminist ideology, they were educated and career oriented, and they were over 32 years of age. It appears that despite Russianoff's results, there is some association between women's attitudes and behaviour. Feminist beliefs are negatively related to women's emotional dependence on men; further, education, and active participation in career oriented occupations appear to contribute further towards some decrease in emotional dependency. In addition, although this was not directly tested in this work, it appears that personal experiences, sometimes acquired with age, influence the degree of women's emotional dependency on men. In general terms, though, the majority of the women in my sample and in the groups I participated in appeared to have this 'desperate dependence'. Despite women stressing the importance of their financial and emotional independence from their partners, practices again contradicted these attitudes. Part of the answer to this conflict can be sought in the fact that the patriarchal structure of Cypriot society allows only one identity for women,[80] that of

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[74] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Athaliah, July 1997.

[75] P Russianoff, *Why Do I Think I Am Nothing Without a Man?* Toronto: Bantam Books, 1981.

[76] Jane Cowan, 'Going out for Coffee/ Contesting the Grounds of Gendered Pleasures in Everyday Sociability' in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991,p.189.

[77] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Sappho, July 1997.

[78] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Deborah, June 1997.

[79] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Phryne, August 1997.

[80] For some women there is no choice at all. A thirty-year-old male educated in Europe, argued during a discussion on the subject of marriage in Cyprus: "You are really different. Where I live (a remote village where he lives with his Northern European wife), they marry them off (the women)

being married. This identity signifies the entry of the woman into adult society, and the control of the father is transferred to the husband, and other male kin. Entrance into a 'new family' introduces a woman to another network of kinship relationships that influence her behaviour accordingly.

Social anthropological work in the 1970s demonstrated that the exploration of the concept of kinship is of primary importance to the understanding of the workings of a Mediterranean rural community: "the values of kinship seemed to permeate almost every aspect of village life – from where one shopped to whom one voted for, from the forms of local economic co-operation to the adventures of overseas migration."[81] Cyprus, like Greece and other Mediterranean countries, is a 'complex' society; that is, " a society in which some of the functions of kinship are performed by other formal institutions, but also one in which there are contexts other than marriage, diverse models of identity and personhood..."[82] The basic kinship bonds are those linking members of the nuclear family[83] but it can also include cohabitation by other members of the family, such as widowed parents.[84] Three women in my study briefly discussed the issue of having their elderly parents live in the same household as their nuclear family at a later stage. and although they did not reject it altogether, they argued that.

> "...this is what used to happen; I think people today tend to employ a Filipino woman who lives with the old people and looks after them, if they can afford to. The truth is that it costs less than an old people's home does and it is better for them. Sometimes they can pay for it through their pensions. They don't have to leave their homes or anything. It is not the nicest thing on earth to do, but I don't think I will be able to look after them, look after the children, and work at the same time. But, as the daughter, I will of course take care of them as much as I can."[85]

The daughter is expected to look after elderly parents and relatives. If there is no daughter in the family, then the wife of the son tends to take some of the responsibility. Kinship (syggenia) is vital in defining male and female roles and identities. It is important to a deeper understanding of Cypriot women, who are the centre of family life and who, according to one of my interviewees, "keep the whole family together. If it was not for the mother, the family would dissolve."[86] In that respect, the

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very early, without their consent really. They "promise" them to the men from the age of 15 and 16, but of course, all this is not in the books you read, it's real life, without choices." *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview, April 1997.

[81] Roger Just, 'The Limits of Kinship', in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities; Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.115.

[82] P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis, 'Gender and Kinship in Marriage and Alternative Contexts' in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.4.

[83] J.G. Peristiani, 'Introduction', in J.G. Peristiani (ed.), *Mediterranean Family Structures*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.20. In a review of a period of three decades in the development of social and family life in Cyprus, Christodoulides found that 81 percent of the families in his study (1980) were nuclear whereas 19 percent were extended. He also points that out of 1498 people asked, the overwhelming majority explained that they lived "either with their parents or with their husband/wife and children ... A small percentage lived with their wife's *fiancé's* parents or other relatives ... Only 11 persons stated that they lived by their own." Andreas D. Christodoulides, 'Family and Youth in Cyprus,' *The Cyprus Review*, Vol.1, No.2, 1990, p.83.

[84] Anthias, *Op.Cit.*, 1989, p.155.

[85] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Lamia, June 1997.

[86] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

mother is the 'honorary superior' who becomes the focal point in the home and is responsible for relationships and issues of morality. In Cypriot society, it is generally accepted that women are naturally inclined towards performing this demanding role through her inexhaustible 'maternal love' and ability to raise children. She has a crucial and irreplaceable position in the family (*en eshi san tin yenaikan mes to spiti* – there is nothing like a woman in the house) reflecting the image of the Mother of God in Cypriot religious life and culture. Safeguarding emotional ties is 'naturally' attributed as the job of the woman who is responsible for organising social interactions and gatherings between families. At the same time, she is the enclaved victim of the 'head of the family', the patriarch, the father who demands the smooth development of these relationships and the 'proper' morality code to be followed, and who has the final say in most decisions taken.

3.1. Patriarchy Versus Matrifocality; 'Private' and 'Public' Spatial Regulations

It has been suggested in the anthropological literature on the Mediterranean family, that matrifocality is responsible for enhanced female political status outside the home, and that male privilege is a 'myth'. Further, it has been argued that since women in south European villages control the affairs of the family and domestic resources, they have as much 'power' as men do. "Thus masculine ideologies such as machismo are only a veneer used in public places disguising gender equality, or even matriarchy."[87] Similar arguments are often used by men in Cyprus to account for their dominance in societies. Upon women complaining about their oppression by their male kin, and especially by their husbands, the response will often be. '*Men tin akouis, en touti pou dhiatassi mes to spitin* – don't listen to her, it is her who orders around in the house.' Matrifocality (or matricentrality)[88] could be argued to exist in some areas of Cyprus with male dominance and "machismo within an honor-and-shame value system."[89] Families can appear to be "mother-centred, father-ruled,"[90] which is not the same as arguing that gender equality is in any form achieved and that patriarchy is simply 'a veneer.' If that was the case, why 'disguise' gender equality, or 'matriarchy'? Under such hypothetical structures, why would women choose to 'hide' it? Men 'allow' women this centrality of the house so that they can 'rule' more smoothly. This supposed 'balance of power' as expressed in the relationships within the nuclear family reflects the patriarchal environment of the 'outside world' of public life; however, these relationships take various forms and are complex in their nature.

The sharp differentiation between the nuclear family and the 'others' "is modified by a number of relations which fan out of the family into the community, linking the family groups in a number of different ways."[91] The contrast of the outside world and the family is therefore de-

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[87] Jan Brogger and David D. Gilmore, 'The Matrifocal Family in Iberia: Spain and Portugal compared', in *Ethnology*, Winter 1997, Vol.36, No.1, p.15.

[88] There exists an on-going debate in cultural and social anthropology concerning the term; however, a certain level of agreement appears to exist in that matrifocality refers to "families in which the mother is central both structurally and effectively, and second (if only inferentially), to a distribution of authority in which women have a strong position in relation to men. In such family, the husband/father has a reduced role, being physically and emotionally distant or entirely absent." Jan Brogger and David D. Gilmore, 'The Matrifocal Family in Iberia: Spain and Portugal compared', in *Ethnology*, Winter 1997, Vol.36, No.1, p.14. Also see discussion on matricentrality in Marilyn French, *Beyond Power; On Women, Men, and Morals*, Cardinal, 1985.

[89] *Ibid.*, p.13.

[90] T. Belmonte. The Broken Fountain, New York, 1989, p.87.

[91] Juliet du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village*, Oxford Monographs in Social Anthropology, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974, p.143.

emphasised since every individual and family is at the centre of a complex series of relationships situated within the wider society. For Peristiani, this network of relations develops out of a plurality of bonds and moderates the 'bluntness of rivalries', it increases the possibility of conflict by widening the choice potential, while at the same time "it reduces its vigour by providing graded rather then contrasted alternatives ... In modern society, acute but relatively rare conflict is replaced by frequent, if trivial, friction."[92]

> "Whatever the choice, the malicious can fault it either by falsifying the facts, or by attributing false motives for the choice or, and this is the trend of our discussion, by choosing to evaluate it according to a hierarchy of values other than the one which the actor claims to have used. I believe that just as the constant assertion and the putting to the test of a person's worth is a sign of status insecurity in a society where all may claim to be equal, the lack of a clear gradation between ideals, and thus of a clear hierarchy of prescriptive rules, is a reflection of this type of egalitarian, unclearly structured and thus 'anarchic' social order."[93]

Numerous studies reviewed in chapter one suggested a number of similarities with Cyprus two decades ago (or perhaps more recently in rural areas) and Greek rural communities. However, the structure of the family, and the nature of the relationships of its members are rapidly changing form, therefore possibly increasing the possibility of conflict. Further, if the frequent phenomenon of domestic abuse (or marital rape) is considered, conflict within the nuclear family cannot be assumed to be 'trivial.' Rather, the conflict is acute and a result not of an 'anarchic' social order, but rather a much organised patriarchal order of relationships.

In this organised order of things, mostly in rural areas, men and women used to be kept apart because of a 'pervasive double standard'. Men would almost always be outside the home, in the streets, in the fields, in the coffee shops, at work, out hunting: women were expected to stay indoors "in the typical sequestering pattern of females in southern Europe and the Middle East."[94] The urban, middle-class 'elite' women that were interviewed for the thesis indicated that norms have changed. Women can be 'outside the home' too. They can be actively involved with community work, take exercise, and drink coffee with the men. Spatial divisions are not as sharp as they used to be until about twenty years ago. The much-discussed Mediterranean coffee shop has lost its importance among urban residents. However, men have acquired new spatial monopolies in the countryside. Hunting is the exclusive pastime of a large amount of Cypriot males of all classes and age groups. Women are practically forbidden from taking part since the weekend ritual is both expensive and time consuming and necessitates that 'someone will have to stay home with the kids.' It is taken for granted that men are allowed this time and space, contrary to the women who spend a lot more time in the home. Violating these all male-groups during hunting, or in the rural coffee shop can be highly inhibiting for a woman. I recall numerous occasions throughout my life in Cyprus when I either had to ask for directions, buy a cold drink, or a newspaper at a village coffee shop, and found myself unable to get out of the car in the end. Women are not only unwanted in these spaces but they also have this incredible sense of guilt and discomfort about invading them.

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[92] J.G. Peristiani, *Op.Cit.*, 1976, p.24.

[93] J.G. Peristiani, 'Introduction', in J.G. Peristiani (ed.), *Mediterranean Family Structures*. Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.24.

[94] Brogger & Gilmore, *Op.Cit.*, p.16.

3.2. 'Indoor' Spatial Divisions

The spatial divisions can also be observed in the home, where women form small groups and perform rituals which are used as a way to explore emotions and to discuss their personal and relationships. One of these is 'reading the coffee.' Although dying out as a 'skill' among the younger women, 'reading the coffee' is a popular activity for women of all classes and ages. The Greek Orthodox Church regards 'reading the coffee' for divination as "a pagan form magic oriented to unravelling a future that only God may know." However, many rural and urban women (and in exceptional situations men) regard 'saying the cup' as entertaining but also shameful, "though more for its connotations of superstition than of sin. It is regarded as a way in which silly women pass the time." In Cyprus, women of all classes are to be found involved in this ritual to various degrees.

> "The significance of the coffee cup does not depend on the degree to which girls and women believe in or deny its power as a tool to divine the future. Rather, the coffee cup is significant as a focus of, and catalyst for, talk about emotions and relationships that preoccupy them in the present ... It elicits talk, sometimes clothed in highly metaphoric or elliptical language, of love, sexuality, and the directions of female destiny, talk that reiterates traditional notions of the contours and limits of female experience."[95]

Although the women in this study were not involved in the 'coffee-reading ritual' as such, which they considered it to be a mindless pastime for 'women who have nothing to do', seven of them said that they have visited a *kafetzou* (a woman who specialises in reading the coffee for a fee). It is a private meeting between the woman and the coffee reader and the aim is to unveil the future. However, on many occasions, women attend this meeting with a close friend, in order to discuss the findings later. All the women in the sample who had this experience also said, "it is a joke really. People will now think I am mad or stupid or something. But it is just curiosity. Everyone does it, they just don't admit to it. I know it is silly but I am not harming anyone. I am not superstitious, I am just curious (laughing)."[96] Once more, the conflict between what women believe is 'proper' and right for them to do, what they identify with, comes into direct conflict with actual practices. Guilt is associated with the coffee reading which social norms portray as either trivial or sinful. Nevertheless, for women, it becomes a way of dealing with emotions, problematic relationships, insecurities, and dilemmas.

Women's gatherings for the preparations of weddings (and other ceremonies) provide the space for larger numbers of women to interact, again within the home, or as the example below demonstrates, at the back of a shop. The wedding ceremony in Cyprus is a very important ritual and a complex procedure for people; it is the most important rite of passage for people in the society, since '*Mian foran pantrefketai to plasman*' (a person gets married only once). Women are particularly involved in the preparation of the festivities and the actual wedding ceremony and they participate in various 'rituals', whereas men have very little to do with the preparation for the ceremony. I was invited to a 'champagne wedding'[97] in February 1997 of two well off, middle-class people in their mid-twenties. A few days before the wedding, I was asked to help with the wrapping and arrangement of the *bombonieres* and without really thinking about what it would involve, I went. I knew about the relatively recent custom and had heard about it before, but I was never directly involved in it. It tends to be associated with the middle and upper classes that can afford to give each guest a small token representing the wedding day, in order to be remembered later. It is usually a

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[95] Jane Cowan, 'Going out for Coffee/ Contesting the grounds of gendered pleasures in everyday sociability' in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.186-187.

[96] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Zenobia, July 1997.

[97] See detailed description in Vassos Argyrou, *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean; The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.123-130.

small bowl or ornament fitted with chocolates or sweets. Depending on the financial means of the family, the bowl might be crystal, satin, silver, and so on. This is in addition to the wedding cake and the *loukoumi* (sweet especially ordered at confectioneries for weddings; each guest receives one) offered to the guests. About twenty women of all age groups and from both sides of the family were gathered in someone's shop, chatting over coffee and looking intent on their work. Women kept coming and going all day and there was a happy and euphoric atmosphere in the room. Two thousand *bombonieres* were prepared by that same evening (since two thousand wedding invitations were distributed, as it is about the norm; in rural communities, the number of the guests can be double or triple). The groom's mother thanked me and assured me that they would do the same at my wedding when the 'good time comes.' (*'I ora I kali'*).

All the married women in the sample got married in the church and all had similar preparations before the wedding. The rest of the women in my sample plan to follow similar practices, although "if it were up to me, I would get married in a chapel with thirty or forty friends. Nothing fancy."[98] One woman said, " I wish I could have a wedding like the British do. You know, invite only good friends, dance, and actually enjoy the wedding day. The way it is at the moment, you practically get married for everyone else but yourself."[99] However, these women do not feel it is ever 'up to them' to do what they want. Societal constraints are so tight as to limit the ability for individual expression and exceptions are sanctioned with contempt, gossip, and sarcasm. Despite women's attitudes, social pressure proves to be far too strong for them to ignore or oppose. The women I interviewed appeared to be aware of the limitations of the accepted social roles assigned to them and made conscious choices over how to lead their lives in order to create as little conflict as possible.[100] Rather than remaining single and jeopardising one of their few socially accepted roles – even when they might have preferred to do so- they chose to become agents *within* the patriarchal status quo. The pattern that appears throughout this study again illustrates that the practices of these women contradict their professed attitudes.

4. Spousal Decisions and Dowry Negotiations.

Traditionally, and in line with the ecclesiastical courts upon betrothal, marriage involved a dowry contract (*prikosymphono*), which had to be signed in the presence of a priest before the betrothal or wedding ceremony. This included anything from animals, to cash, property, houses, and land. However, this is not the case anymore as the dowry contract was legally abolished in 1979 with the revision of the Church Charter. Further, the Property Rights of Spouses (Regulation) Law, 1991 (Law No. 232 of 1991) was enacted in order to grant equal rights and responsibilities to women and men with regard to the acquisition, administration, and sharing of family property and the payment of alimony by one spouse to the other in the case of a separation or to the former spouse in the case of a divorce. Under this law, the married couple takes common decisions on all matters relating to the marriage and each contributes to meeting the needs of the family in accordance to her/his means. Similar to Greece, legislation in Cyprus in many cases has been an attempt to legislate against social custom.[101]

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[98] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Sappho, July 1997.

[99] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Eudoxia, June 1997.

[100] See discussion on women trying to avoid conflict situations in Chapter Six in this thesis and also in Lorette K. Woosley & Laura-Lynne McBain, 'Issues of Power and Powerlessness in All-Woman Groups', *Women's Studies International Forum,* Vol.10, No.6, pp.579-588, 1987, p.584.

[101] Gisela Kaplan, *Contemporary Western European Feminism,* London: Allen & Unwin, 1992, p.228. The type of shop that sells *'Ithi prikas'* in Cyprus is gradually dying out. *'IthiPrikas'* literary means 'dowry products'. These shops sell tablecloths, curtains, lace, carpets, towels and so on.

Social custom requires for example that in India, China, and the Middle East, male children are preferred and, thus female children are neglected, or aborted (and in some places, killed at birth). In Cyprus it is preferred that the first born is a boy, especially in order for the child to have the name of the father's father and thus keep the name within the family. Nevertheless, female children are also wanted, to look after the house and the elderly parents. 'I have a child and a daughter' (*eho ena paithi tze mian korin*) used to be a common phrase in rural settings. It has become somewhat of a joke amongst people who nevertheless used it in the recent past to express the primary importance paid to having a son, as opposed to a daughter. A twenty-nine-year-old, working class, pregnant woman, and mother of three boys expressed the wish to have a girl because "it's a different joy having a little girl in the house."[102] Furthermore, she explained that she "had the second house built for the girl, to have her with us all the time. The boys will *find* a house from their wives. (*en navroun ta yiouthkia).*"[103] Grandparents often express preferences on the sex of an unborn child, since they want it to receive their name.[104] Girls are, of course, a burden, because of the dowry they have to provide. Having a daughter is considered expensive:

> "In exchange for her lifelong obedience and (hard) work, brothers usually cannot afford to marry until the sister is married off, for that, along with the father, have to save for the dowry of the girl. Dowries are substantial contributions to a new household, either as large sums of cash, investment papers, land or an apartment."[105]

DuBoulay believes that it is not the dowry itself that makes female children unwanted; dowry is not the burden. Rather, it reflects the burden these young women were in the first place and thus it revealed rather than initiated those particular attitudes.[106]

It could be argued that the abolishment of the dowry contract was an attempt by the Church to adjust to the social conditions created by the 1974 events. Describing a rural Cypriot community after 1974, Peter Loizos explained how he was not surprised to hear of engagements and wedding plans among the villagers. By December 1975, marriages had immensely increased and people were

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However, the above term is hardly ever used in the cities in the last five years or so, in order to describe a store.

[102] *Private Conversation with Author,* May 1997.

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] A thirty-year-old pregnant woman (higher education, middle-class) explained the process her husband and her went through in order to find a name for their yet-unborn child. She pointed out that following the tradition of giving the child the name of one of the grandparents was not even a consideration and she then went on to angrily talk about her frustration over her rights as a mother: 'You have a baby inside you for 9 months, you suffer physically, and then, the minute the baby is born, it belongs to the father. Why should the baby immediately take the surname of the father? I don't mind Tom's surname, it's not that, but why should they (the government) immediately assume that the baby is his? Where do I fit in in all these? You know, in Greece, the law is different. Once the baby is born, you fill in forms with the kid's name and surname, end of story. I am so angry that Tom and I even thought about changing both our surnames to give the new, the common on, to the child!'. 'Do you feel that would make you feel better?' I asked. 'Well, it's a personal solution, really. It doesn't help any other couples, but, I can't change the law, can I? Anyway, I won't really do anything, we are just talking here." In the end, the *husband* of this woman arranged for the child to have both their surnames, as opposed to his first and second name. It was the first case of its kind. *Private Conversation with Author,* April 1998.

[105] Gisela Kaplan, *Op.Cit.,* p.228.

[106] Juliet du Boulay, 'The Meaning of Dowry: Changing Values in Rural Greece', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, May 1983, p.256.

getting married at an earlier age than their older brothers and sisters had done, and with very little cash or movable property.[107] Loizos pointed out that some non-refugees in the village talked about how refugees 'with nothing' should not be getting married since, before the war,

> "...young people tended to marry when a girl's family had managed to build her a house. This meant a period of hard work and saving for most families, and tended to *relatively* late marriage. For Argaki refugees the war has *suspended the girls-must-have-house custom*... There is a danger for refugee girls that refugee boys will be lured away to Paphos or Pitsillia, where there *are maidens with dowry-houses* but again as is well-known, generally there is a preference for marrying girls from one's own village, whose families are known to you. Young refugees are now no longer living in a structure of expectations about saving, thrift, late marriage and dowry houses. They can expect little from their parents economically, and as you would expect, this weakens parental authority over them. ... The young people are marrying as and when they feel like it ... A refugee wedding, is not being celebrated for precisely the same reason as it was before 1974: where before it was often a sober decision crowning years of educational and economic investment in a stable future, it may today approach more closely to an act of desperation, a short-term seeking for self-esteem in an uncertain world."[108]

Marriage was regarded as a way of achieving self-esteem especially for women. Given cultural expectations and values, being a wife and a mother are roles of primary importance for a woman, and thus failure to fulfil these roles results in lower levels of self-esteem. Women's chances of getting married in Cyprus depended on the provision of the dowry and therefore, their personal qualities were considered of secondary importance. Not only were they denied opportunities for education and a career by society, but they were also reminded that these 'things' did not matter for women. However, with the events of 1974, the importance attached to the ownership of land and housing was replaced by education.[109] Education became a necessary prerequisite for a 'better life' as 'you can take your knowledge and degree with you, but not your home.'

In 1996, there were thirty-three public and private institutions with a total enrolment of 8874 students, compared to 7765 in 1994/95. The main reason for the sharp increase is the number of students (especially females) who enrolled at the University of Cyprus as well as the School of Nursing. Males accounted for 40.8 percent of the total enrolment and females 59.2 percent.[110] However, if one compares the statistics for the Cypriot students studying abroad, the numbers change. During the academic year 1995/96 there were 9213 students abroad compared to 9067 in 1994/5. Males accounted for 55.6 percent of the total students abroad and females for 44.4 percent. Two decades ago, the percentage of females was only 37.8 percent.[111] Further, due to the fact that males have to serve in the National Guard for a period of twenty six months, the mean age of Cypriot students abroad is 22 years for females and 24,1 for males. This difference can also be attributed "to some extent to the higher proportion of male students staying on for postgraduate studies."[112] Education has become more important than land, although it is more important for men,

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[107] Peter Loizos, 'Argaki: The Uprooting of a Cypriot Village', in Michael A. Attalides, *Cyprus Reviewed*, Nicosia, Cyprus, 1977, p.11-12, my italics.

[108] *Ibid.*, p.13

[109] See Attlides. *Op.Cit.*

[110] Department of Statistics and Research, *Statistics of Education*, Ministry of Finance, Republic of Cyprus, Series I, Report No.28, 1995/96, p.21.

[111] *Ibid.*, p.23.

[112] *Ibid.*, p.23. Concerning students studying abroad during the academic year 1995/6, statistics show a clear tendency for females to concentrate on 'traditional female subjects' (in the humanities

who are taken for granted to be the providers for the family. One of the women in the study suggested that,

> "...it is not fair that the man is more educated than the woman but it is better. If a man has less education than his wife, a lot of problems can be created. A woman who has a Master's who is married to a man with only a Bachelor's is heading for trouble. It is also OK if both have the same qualifications."[113]

When asked about the criteria for marriage, twenty-one women mentioned education and suggested that they would not marry someone without a university degree. One woman argued that "as long as we can communicate I don't mind if he hasn't finished high school,"[114] and the other three did not mention education as an important criterion for marriage. One of them, Deborah held a postgraduate degree, whereas her husband had a high-school diploma. Although she was generally comfortable with that, "sometimes, it can be a problem."[115] These women generally regarded education as important both in their relationships and for their children, therefore reflecting the value that it acquired in Cypriot society after 1974.

The dowry however has not lost its importance. Marriage is clearly an institution with economic implications and the dowry contributes towards its stability, since it contributes to or even secures the financial stability of the newlyweds. The expressions of it have been transformed or radically changed in the last two decades– in rare instances eradicated in urban settings; nevertheless, it remains an integral part of Cypriot society in an indirect manner. The husband of an interviewee asked his wife's father for a dowry. He said that 'his woman' and himself had the right to have a big share of the (wealthy) father's money. After a serious argument, the parents and the husband stopped talking. In the end, however, the argument was settled when the parents gave a substantial amount of money and property to the newlyweds. More often than not, a dowry is expected to be provided for the daughter at the time of her marriage, but this is not openly discussed as an issue, but is rather implied and taken for granted. '*Molis teliosi to spiti en na pantrefroumen*' (when the house is built we will get married) is a phrase regularly heard among engaged couples. The house (or part of it) in question is paid for by the parents of the future bride. In fact, the contribution made by the parents of the bride is very often expected by the newlyweds and taken into account when planning for their future. Despite the discouragement of the practice of a dowry through laws, women are still (in)directly expected to provide dowry to the man in order to marry, and that

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there were 537 females versus 99 males, in education 157 females versus 30 and males) to concentrate on 'traditional' male subjects' (in engineering-technology there were 1031 males versus 186 females, in business studies 947 males versus 51 females, and in computer sciences 356 males versus 207 females. Further, in 1995/96, there were 150 males and 51 females teaching at the University of Cyprus. The ranking of females pointed even more to a clear inequality of the sexes. That is, in the same period, there were 23 male lectures as opposed to 14 female lecturers. There were 14 male professors but no female professors, 27 male associate professors and 3 female associate professors, and 34 male assistant professors as opposed to 5 female professors. There were no female Visiting Associate or Assistant professors.[112] There has been a significant increase of the proportion of women attaining third level education. In 1990 81.5 women per 100 men enrolled third level education compared to 62.9% in 1980 and 47.4% in 1973. See pp.255-295, Tables 1-7 for a detailed analysis.

[113] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Zenobia, July 1997.

[114] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Melanie, July 1997.

[115] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Deborah, June 1997.

> "...defines their position in ... society. It denies them personal values and constrains them. It reduces them to the position of marketable commodities, subject to, and dehumanised by, commercial concepts such as 'buying and selling', 'competition', 'the market', bargaining', and 'negotiations'."[116]

In rural areas, the dowry requirement is more openly discussed before the wedding. When the young man is not interested in her future bride's contribution, then he is considered to be a very worthwhile person who 'truly loves' her, but a fool at the same time. Women's behaviour is thus further shaped by the institution of dowry, since "such symbolic systems as that of the dowry are the focus of public attention, and are publicly known."[117] The history of Cyprus, observation, and my own experiences lead me to believe that 'rich women' – especially residents of urban settings - have in this century been more 'allowed' to escape traditional female roles in this society than their less wealthy or rural counterparts:

> "Large dowries, and education abroad, afforded them the freedom to experience relationships with men without their marriageability being affected. Because of their special status and their economic situation, the rich families can affect ideas and modify representations. They are accepted and are forgiven for any modifications they have brought to the ideal representations. Relevant here is the fact that whereas the basic rules are simple and crude, real situations are more complex. Both men and women, find ways to by-pass these simple rules and to modify them."[118]

In the cities of Cyprus, dowry is indirect. It is implied in the sense of 'help from the bride's parents, but formal discussions rarely take place. Roussou calls that the "disguised form in which the dowry system works in the towns."[119] She suggests that this system does not stop women from perceiving themselves as inferior to the men who propose to marry them. She also says that,

> "...the few cases of upper middle class, urban women whose financial position and parents' social status give them the security of modelling their lives according to western examples, only prove the argument that patriarchy, social class, religion, and political power have joined forces to prevent real and widespread change that could reach every Cypriot home."[120]

However, the 'Western model' cannot necessarily give 'security' to women. Rape, domestic violence, crime, the feminisation of poverty, the higher unemployment rates for women, to mention just some examples, do not provide a model for women to aspire to. Rather, it creates additional, complex problems[121] that need to be dealt with.

Whereas the expectation that the bride's parents should provide the newly-weds with a house is an implicit 'demand' on the part of the groom and his family, the groom himself is expected to have a steady income and a 'good, stable job' (*mia kali, statheri dhoulia*), and above all he must be 'kalo paithi' (*a good boy*). The man's personal qualities and the woman's financial contribution are considered an ideal combination in the security of the couple's stability and happiness. A woman's

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[116] Roussou, p.250.

[117] *Ibid.*, p.251. It was customary for people to say "she is rich, she can do whatever she likes" when referring to the sexual 'promiscuity' of a wealthy woman.

[118] Roussou, p.245.

[119] Roussou, p.617.

[120] *Ibid.*, p. 618.

[121] See Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, 1997, for a discussion on the changing form of patriarchy.

marriageability, though, depends upon the means provided by the parent and this clearly gives advantages to women with property in the marriage market. Further, it facilitates

> "...the quick neo-local settlement of the young couple. Its implications for the development of capitalism are various: the maintenance of low wages on the assumption that no rent was paid; lopsided economic development through investment in property; and the impetus given to consumerism."[122]

Participants in these structural agreements themselves, employers tend to pay low salaries to their employees (particularly females) since they either live with their parents or live in a house provided by them. In this manner, they contribute to the perpetuation of the institution of dowry. Urbanisation and the sharp increase in property prices after 1974 demand that society at large contributes toward the financial security of the couple. On the wedding day the customary practice involves the guests (who vary from 1500-4000 in numbers, mostly for economic but also for social reasons) giving money to the couple, who can 'use it to start a family'. Weddings are financial incentives for the couple, who can make anything from eight thousand to thirty thousand pounds. The burden of the cost of the wedding is shared by the parents of both the bride and the groom, but the parents of the bride are expected to contribute more.

This new financial device has increased dowry since the bride's parents invest in a costly wedding that will provide the woman with an even higher dowry than the parents could otherwise afford to give. Young couples who are not provided with a house plan around the wedding, and use the money for a deposit for their house. It could be argued that the recently increasing phenomenon of upward social mobility is partly a result of the post war investment in education and the new methods deployed to manipulate women through dowry. At the same time, women themselves become part of this social scheme of exploitation by taking for granted the financial contribution of their parents to the newlyweds. All the women in the sample argued that dowry is "old-fashioned and exists only in the villages,"[123] "it is a horrible social custom that only peasants follow,"[124] "I hate it because I feel that women are treated like meat. You go and buy what you can afford"[125]; nevertheless, fourteen out of the fifteen married women in the study were financially supported by their parents in a substantial way with either cash or the building of a house. One woman referring to her newlywed best friend said "Mary's father is stingy since he would not even buy them the house. I am not saying he should get a loan to buy it, but he has some money so why not give it to them. She is his daughter, why did he have her in the first place?"[126] Although the word dowry has negative connotations for urban, middle-class women in Cyprus, the acquisition of dowry (see 'help from parents') becomes a vital part of the process of getting married for them.[127] The contradiction between these women's attitudes and practices is strong in this sense since it becomes a matter of social and financial survival (and competition) ensuring their smooth adjustment into married life.

The acquisition of a 'decent dowry' was also one of the main aims behind the custom of arranged marriages:

> "In cases of arranged marriages, which are a common phenomenon in this place, the criterion is money. Men look for money. In other cases, I suppose they look for virgins, for God's sake. It's true, most men prefer that, that is men in my age group and above. Not that

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[122] Anthias, *Op.Cit.*, 1989, p.156-7.

[123] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Zenobia, July 1997.

[124] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Herodias, July 1997.

[125] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Elpinice, August 1997.

[126] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Korinna, August 1997.

[127] See Anthias, *Op.Cit.*, 1989.

> you can find a virgin in Cyprus today, but the less experienced the better, if you know what I mean ... Arranged marriage as an institution does indeed exist. It is not as bad as it used to be in urban areas but in villages, my God, they can actually force you. I can think of particular cases. It is a shame. I hate artificial things."[128]

Traditionally, a *proxenitra* (a woman whose main pastime was the matching of suitable partners for marriage) would suggest a prospective husband or wife to the parents of the people concerned. The father of the bride had the final say, although occasionally the girl's opinion was also asked. Alternatively, the man would approach the father of the woman he liked and ask for her hand. These customs belong to the recent past. Nowadays, according to my interviewees, the arranged marriage does indeed exist, but "it's not like it was before. It's more subtle."[129] The admission of the existence of this custom followed a strong objection to the idea behind it:

> "Of course I have heard of efforts of parents to conduct an arranged marriage. My friend who is the same age as me (twenty years old) had a big problem with this. Some idiot, a twenty-four-year-old guy saw her and told his parents to tell her parents that he was interested in her. Her parents her pressurised her for a whole month to marry him but she really did not want him. They were telling her that she would just stay on the shelf if she did not change her attitude. They made her cry a lot. But in the end, she did not get married to him. I hate things like that. It is as if you don't have an opinion, you don't have taste. It is as if your parents are going to live with the guy. However, it has happened, you know, to some of my friends. It is horrible, in our times..."[130]

Similarly, all the interviewees argued that arranged marriages took place in Cyprus, but that the woman takes the final decision; however, in some situations, there is a great deal of pressure for women to get married and prospective husbands are recommended all the time. Two interviewees explained that in the case of older women, there was nothing wrong with the parents "recommending some people or introducing the woman to someone."[131] Twenty-one women, though, strongly opposed any kind "of arrangement that reduces a woman to a product."[132] Perceptions of what constitutes an arranged marriage vary, however, ranging from the introduction of a man and a woman by a relative or any third person, to pressure imposed by the parents of the woman to get married to a particular man they feel is suitable for her. The women in this study were opposed to any type of pressure for women to marry, but were flexible in their ideas concerning third party involvement in the arrangement. In fact, for five women, when a woman reaches "thirty-something, she needs help to find a man, since men want younger women and they would not be interested in her."[133] These women support their right to choose how to live their lives and their future partner, but at the same time, they demonstrate their belief that women *have* to have a partner. If they do not, then someone must ensure that women's role as wives is encouraged in some way. Further, none of the women involved in this study questioned men's preference for younger women. Rather, the four women who mentioned this appeared to be taking it for granted. Three of these women had identified

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[128] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Thecla, June 1997

[129] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Lycimache, July 1997.

[130] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Lycimache, July 1997.

[131] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

[132] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Athaliah, July 1997.

[133] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Gorgo, August 1997. See also case study with Aspasia in Chapter Seven.

themselves as feminists.[134] This is yet another illustration of women's conformity to social norms and values and their conflict between attitudes and practices.

My study indicates that the institution of marriage is as strong as previous studies demonstrated in the 1970s and 1980s in Cypriot society; however, more alternatives are now available for women in the 1990s in terms of choices over their partner and there is less passivity on the part of the women. Women are influenced by, yet at the same time sometimes object to, their families' pressure to get married to a particular person. Urban women's conflict between attitudes and practices can indeed be argued to demonstrate assertiveness and a rejection of older values and norms. The fact that their actions contradict their attitudes is not simply an indication of passive behaviour but also an illustration of their questioning the current patterns of an oppressive, patriarchal environment. In addition to this, the recent social 'acceptance' of divorce as a viable option, as well as the 1990 decision that the civil courts deal with divorce, has contributed towards the feasibility of some women escaping oppressive and abusive relationships. It is to the issue of divorce within Cypriot society that I turn to next, in order to explore how it reflects and influences women's attitudes, options, and eventual practices.

5. Is There Life after Marriage? The Increase of Divorce.

According to the Demographic Report of the Department of Statistics and Research,[135] the total number of divorces in 1996 was 725 and the crude divorce rate increased to 1.1 per thousand population. The total divorce rate, which shows the proportion of marriages that are expected to end up in divorce, increased from 41.6 in 1980, to 64.4 in 1991 and 143.6 in 1996. The most common grounds for divorce were 'irretrievable breakdown of the marriage' which accounted for 80.6 percent and 'desertion', which accounted for 15.3 of the cases respectively in 1996. In the case of the former, 327 divorces were granted against men and 220 against women. In the case of the latter, 63 cases were granted against men and 48 against women.

Divorces are obtained from family courts. According to new legislation (the Civil Marriage Law, L.21/90) the choice of civil marriage as opposed to the ecclesiastical marriage is available for the Greek Cypriot community and divorces come under the jurisdiction of family courts.[136] Until 1990 the divorce legislation for members of the Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus was governed by ecclesiastical law and administered by the courts of the Church, as preserved by article 111 of the Constitution of 1960. "The First Amendment of the *Constitution of Law of 1989* gave jurisdiction to the civil courts, namely the family courts, to administer and deal with divorce cases. The law came into force on January 1, 1990, and contains provisions regarding the grounds for divorce applicable by the family courts."[137] The Charter enacted by the Greek Orthodox Church in 1914 remained in force and unchanged until 1980, when the new revised 1979 Charter of the Church came into force. The provisions dealing with grounds for divorce remained very similar. The grounds for divorce as set out in the Charter of 1979 are applicable by the family courts today. Article 225 of the Charter states states that,

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[134] The fourth woman's attitudes on this matter are further explored in Chapter Seven; see Interview with Aspasia.

[135] *Ibid.*, p.21 (See tables on pp.137-150).

[136] Department of Statistics and Research, *Demographic Report 1996*, Republic of Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, Population Statistics, Series II, Report No.34, 1997.

[137] G.A. Sergides, 'Grounds for Divorce Under the Law of Cyprus: The Road to Europe', *Paneuropean Law Review*, January 1997, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 31-43, p.31.

> " ...behaviour resulting in a serious deterioration of the marital relationship may be constituted by: 1) The inexcusable overnight stay of the wife in the premises of non-relatives, without the husband's consent, and raising reasonable suspicion of betrayal of the marital trust, and 2) An unproved accusation in court by the husband against the wife for adultery."[138]

Before the revision of the charter in 1979, it was stated that the husband could apply for divorce first, if the "defloration of the wife" was reported to the Bishop on the following day of the marriage; second, if the wife persistently refused to return to the matrimonial home after an invitation of the Bishop in this respect; and third, if the wife passed the night in a house not belonging to a relative except when she is turned out from the matrimonial home by the husband and there existed no house belonging to a relative. These grounds for divorce until 1979 were only available to husbands and not to wives. After the revision of the Charter, and in line with the *current legislation by family courts*, "a husband who without due cause lives away from the matrimonial home cannot employ such an overnight stay by his wife as a ground for divorce ... Along with the arguments that it is contrary to the Convention as well as to article 18 of the Constitution, it is therefore indefensible for this ground to be part of the civil law of Cyprus today."[139] Whether defensible or not, the fact remains that women need to ask for permission from their husbands for any overnight stay in the premises of non-relatives, whereas men do not. The state has made sure that women's sexual and moral control is secured at any cost, even if that involves a violation of the Constitution.

With the administration of the matter of divorce by the family courts, a new basis was added, that of "irretrievable breakdown of marriage, or more precisely, when the marital relationship has deteriorated due to a reason attributable to the respondent or both litigants, so that the continuance of the marital relationship becomes unbearable to the petitioner."[140] However, divorce by the consent of both spouses without examination of the cause of the breakdown of the marriage is not available in Cyprus, and this does not apply to other European jurisdictions. "Furthermore, separation for a stipulated period of time, is not treated as a presumption that the marriage has irretrievably collapsed. Attribution of fault is still required."[141] This violates the right of a person to respect for her/his personal and family life, as guaranteed by article 8.1 of the Convention:

> "The marriage bond arises from the contract of marriage, that is, the mutual agreement of two persons to marry. It seems indefensible therefore that if marital relations between the parties have collapsed and the contract of marriage is effectively breached, and both parties agree to divorce, they should not be allowed to do so. This is against their right to create a new family and their private life, which includes an implied right to be considered no longer legally married. It is difficult to see how the institution of marriage is protected by preventing divorce where the marriage, in the practical sense, no longer exists."[142]

The Church, however, continues to administer divorces by its courts although this is in violation of the Constitution of Cyprus. People wishing to remarry in the Greek Cypriot Church are made to obtain two divorces: one from the ecclesiastical court and one from the family court. Thus, if a "person decides to get divorced by the ecclesiastical court but not the family court as well, he commits the criminal offence of bigamy, punishable by imprisonment, if he remarries."[143] Further, a

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[138] *Ibid.*, p.34.

[139] *Ibid.*, p.34.

[140] *Ibid.*,p.36-7.

[141] *Ibid.*,p.37.

[142] *Ibid.*, p.37.

[143] *Ibid.*, p.38.

new ground for divorce was created by the Holy Synod, which is again in violation of the Constitution,

> "...the petition by one party to the family court for divorce created an irrefutable presumption in the ecclesiastical court that this party has permanently deserted the second party. The second party can then sue the first party on this ground for divorce in the ecclesiastical courts ... The Church does not allow the party who filed the petition in the family court to marry again in the Greek Orthodox church unless he apologises publicly and also personally to the Bishop."[144]

Although the Church has made changes with the revision of the 1979 Charter, its grounds for divorce still unfairly discriminate between the sexes and create further problems for women in a society where they are given mixed messages of 'supposedly' legal equality and discriminatory 'reforms.' A thirty-eight-year-old middle class woman, who had been separated from her husband for five years, shared her feelings of frustration with the Church:

> "They (the Clergy) are awful, you know. I don't want to be in bad terms with my ex-husband, because of the kids. I mean, he left me, but if I don't have a problem with this any longer, and if I tell the priest, what on earth is he doing asking me to provide evidence of some sort. He said, would you believe, that I should show evidence of his infidelity and in the end, despite how much I hate lying, I had to force my friend to come with me to the ecclesiastical court and tell lies about how I found my husband in bed with someone. They wanted me to produce photos; can you believe that? All we want is to get this stupid divorce so that we can be free and can get married again. I don't want to say these horrible things about him, but we agreed that it's the only way. You go to Church, they tell you not to lie, and then they force you to lie. I had not been out with anyone in the five years since Andrew left me, and the one man I meet, I want to marry and create a new family with. He loves the kids; he is nice, why are all these priests playing games? Photos of him with his lover, for God's sake!"[145]

All the women in the sample argued that divorce should always be the choice of the couple if their relationship was not working. However, some were sceptical about how easily it could be obtained by family courts today:

> "Divorce has increased because things are very easy now. If you get married and you don't get on with your partner you should get a divorce. But, nowadays, people here make no effort at all. I don't like you, bye, next one please. It is amazing."[146]

Changes in the law as well as the increase in divorce rates are contributing factors for the social acceptance of divorced women. The stigma associated with a woman who no longer lives with her husband appears to have lessened, but not when it is 'her fault.' "As long as a woman has done everything she could to save her marriage, why blame her?"[147] A woman's primary responsibility is to safeguard her marriage; if she fulfils this responsibility, she is not responsible for the failure of this marriage. However, if she does not, she has to bear the consequences and be subject to social stigma and gossip. One interviewee described a situation where her friend had separated from her

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[144] *Ibid.*, p.38-39.

[145] *Private Conversation with Author*, February 1997.

[146] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

[147] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Artemissia, July 1997.

husband after she found out he was having an affair with a twenty-three-year-old Eastern European artiste:

> "Although she felt betrayed, she was willing to do everything possible to save her marriage until he left the house telling her she was not good enough in bed. She begged him to return to the house and their three daughters but he refused. When she exhausted every possibility for his return to the family, her parents and parents-in-law stopped pressurising her to give him a chance. They said that she was nice because she gave him a chance, and that the poor man did not know what he was doing. They argued she should wait until he got over it, and this is what she did. But eighteen months have passed since she found out and he is still not over it. He now lives with his mistress who is about to have a child."[148]

Despite the man's infidelity, it was the husband who finally left the household and it was the wife who was begging for his return. The woman in question was not stigmatised, because she was the 'victim' of the situation. If it had been her fault (according to Cypriot social norms) however, she could not have avoided sanction especially because she would not have been considered a 'proper mother.' "What kind of mother would ever do this (have an affair) and put her children's happiness at stake?"[149] Once more, the woman is responsible for the stability of the marriage, and the well being of all the members of the family. The women I interviewed supported the right of women to leave unhappy relationships but three admitted that "I have thought about divorce, but I am waiting until my son grows up. I would not do that to him."[150] What they 'do to themselves' is secondary and in some cases irrelevant to their decisions. Although the women in my sample generally supported divorce 'for other women' who were in any way unhappy in their marriages, they hesitated to apply these views to their own lives. Although they considered divorce to be a viable option in cases where the couple is unhappy, they were themselves willing to suffer rather than consider it as a choice. They would go to great lengths to ensure that their husbands or the father of their children will remain at home at (almost) all costs. Women's beliefs often contradict their actions and this is again an example of how they make choices which they feel will secure them an accepted role in Cypriot society.

6. Conclusion: Changes and the Persistence of Patriarchy

In this chapter, it has been suggested that religion and the Greek Orthodox Church have a dominant influence on the lives of urban women in Cyprus, even when these women are non-religious and/or non-practising. Although not directly as influential as previous studies have indicated, its impact is pervasive in many spheres of women's experiences. Furthermore, it has been argued that ecclesiastical marriage is regarded as a necessary condition of reproduction and the creation of a family, as well as the central purpose for the lives of Cypriot women. The creation of a family and motherhood are highly prestigious functions in society; however, this prestige does not secure any kind of power for women. Nevertheless, failure to fulfil these functions results in low levels of social acceptance and a lowering of self-esteem among women, whose chances of getting married depend partly on the provision of a dowry. Dowry contributes toward the stability of marriage, although the urban women in my study showed increased assertiveness and awareness of the discrimination and injustice of these social institutions. The introduction of jurisdiction to civil courts to deal with divorce has further contributed toward women's less passive attitudes; practices, however, remain more or less stable with the past.

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[148] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Eudoxia, June 1997.

[149] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Elissa, June 1997.

[150] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Deborah, June 1997.

Through an analysis of the Greek Orthodox Church, and women's experiences of marriage and the family, this chapter has been an attempt to explore urban women's attitudes and practices and how the two relate. It is argued that vast changes which have taken place in the last decade in social institutions have contributed toward change in the structure of the Cypriot family; this change is clear from both quantitative and qualitative data illustrated in this study. However, most changes have resulted in ideological and attitudinal reforms rather than in actual practices. At this level, urban women's perceptions of themselves "as opposites of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome the contradiction."[151] Although these women recognise the oppressive nature of their relationships in patriarchal setting and sometimes question the way in which they are made to conform within this, they tend not to choose to follow the conviction of these beliefs since going against them would jeopardise their overall status in society. Women's status in Cyprus is formed and controlled in such a way as to ensure their sexual, bodily, and emotional submission as much as possible. It is precisely this argument that the following chapter sets out to explore.

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[151] Paulo Freire, *Op.Cit.*, p.28.

"I am not allowed to go anywhere. I am yineka tou spitiou (woman of the house). I do not go out, I am not allowed to watch TV. I want to watch TV in the evenings but he won't let me because he always wants to control what I am doing and to serve him. Of course, I am a serious woman. I look after my son and I clean the house. He lies on the bed with dirty shoes on and I have to clean after him.... I want to leave but who is going to look after him and especially my son? My husband says he'll marry a Russian woman to serve him, as they have no demands. I have thought about divorce many times but I am too worried about the gossip of the people in the village. I am alone in the world. ... If I leave him, who is going to protect me? I get scared at nights. The police come every time he beats me up and they know what he is like. They tell me to be patient, to raise my child.... I have never had pleasure in sex. He wants me to do things that hurt me. Have anal sex. I bleed, I hate it. But he makes me do it. He says that if I do not do it, he won't give me money for the shopping. I want to look after him and especially my son. I don't want people to think I am a bad wife..."

These are the words of a woman who called the hotline of the Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence. She comes from a village in close proximity to Nicosia, she is forty-five years old, working-class, and has a teenage son. She has been physically and verbally abused by her husband, as well as raped, for the last twenty years. The issues she raises in the above quotation represent an example of the phone calls that are received at the Centre. Further, she paints a picture of attitudes and practices of numerous women in rural areas. How different is the picture in the cities? Amongst the middle-classes? The more educated? This is the question that the remaining chapters will be attempting to answer.

Chapter V
Morality, Contradictions, and Emotions: 'Killing the Angel in the House'?

1. Men's Moral and Bodily Control over Women: Of Sex and Other Vices.

"For this is what living with a woman as one's wife means to have children by her and to introduce the sons to the members of the clan of the deme, and to betroth the daughters to husbands as one's own. Mistresses we keep for the sake of the pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households." [1]

Demosthenes makes a clear distinction between a wife (σύζυγος), a mistress (εταίρα), and a concubine (παλλάκη). These distinctions are clear in the case of Cyprus since a woman's sexuality is important in the way she is judged and defined in her everyday life,[2] in both direct and indirect ways. Being a '*Kypraia*' -being a Cypriot woman- carries certain sexual 'prerequisites', especially her conformity to "rules about sexually appropriate behaviour – otherwise she becomes excluded."[3] Compared to Western women, Cypriot women are considered as 'naturally' less attractive, less sophisticated, and less sexual. Confusion is created in these women's lives since they are currently receiving contradictory messages on 'proper' behaviour and appearance. One woman expressed her dilemma on how to deal with these antithetical images, saying that "men in Cyprus pretend that they like modern women, that they admire them, and they certainly desire them; but, the truth is, when it comes down to marriage, they care about how you dress, who you slept with in the past, why, where, do you smoke, do you drink, is your skirt too short? They compare us with European women. They want us to be like them, have sex with everyone, but when it comes to serious commitment, they cannot cope with us being anything like them. Whatever we choose to do is wrong."[4] This woman's sentiments and observations point to the symbolic antagonism between the Occident and the Orient, the West and the East, the 'civilised' and the 'backward', all within the context of the varying faces of patriarchal discourse. The definition of membership within an ethnic group is directly related to the proper performance of accepted gender roles, and "both identity and institutional arrangements of ethnic groups incorporate gender roles and specify appropriate relations between sexes, such as, for example, who can marry them."[5] These relations in the 1990s have become confusing for Cypriot women, who are caught between resisting or adopting the socio-cultural changes in the symbolic definitions of 'proper' female behaviour. This chapter deals with the institutional arrangements of social control of women within the island of Cyprus and explores the ways in which men attempt to control women morally, psychologically, sexually, and physically. It discusses the effects of this control, aiming to illustrate the sharp transformations of patriarchal 'regimes' within Cypriot urban society and to explore how women experience and act upon these regimes.

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[1] Demosthenes. *Private Orations III*, (Speech 'Against Naera' [Κατα Νηαίρας] Vol.6, trans. A.T.Murray, Loeb Classical Library, 1939, p.122.

[2] Sue Lees, 'Learning to Love; Sexual Reputation, Morality, and the Social Control of Girls', in Maurine Cain (ed.), *Growing up Good: Policing the Behaviour of Girls in Europe*. Sage. 1989. p.19.

[3] Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Contexualizing Feminism – Gender, Ethnic, and Class Divisions', *Feminist Review*. No.15, November 1983, p.68.

[4] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Thecla, June 1997.

[5] Anthias & Yuval-Davis, *Op.Cit.*, p.68.

In many areas of Cyprus the issue of female sexuality is still a taboo since its "possible existence may well be a threat to the male honour system."[6] Premarital sexual relationships are an important social issue that takes many forms and vary in interpretations. In a study conducted in 1982, when asked whether it is right for a woman to have a sexual life before marriage, "*when is it accompanied by an emotional bond*", 83 percent of the women in the sample answered negatively and 66 percent of those completely disagreed.[7] In my sample, none of the women was against premarital sex; however, for the majority of them, the 'emotional bond' was directly linked with these sexual experiences:

> "If you love someone then it is OK to do it. I mean, I sleep with my boyfriend, but we are planning to get married. I do not just do it. I do not understand people who sleep with people they do not love. How can someone do this? I mean, if you just sleep with someone ... what is the point?"[8]

> "If you have sex without love, then you are basically talking about prostitution. Love is what makes the difference, morally speaking. Not marriage. Moreover, of course, you do not love another man every Saturday night, do you? For men, it is different, they are animals."[9]

Essentialist ideas dominated the interviewees' analyses of women's and men's sexuality, although social constructionist interpretations were also voiced. Emotions, love, and commitment, were prerequisites for women to have 'excused' and 'justified' sexual intercourse before marriage: however, for men the criteria were not the same. In fact, the interviewees' attitudes were based on the idea of men 'needing' sex because they have greater sexual drives, whereas women 'naturally' 'need' love and emotional bonds. Similarly, in the United States it was found that men's sexual drives were generally considered greater than women's, with roughly equal numbers of men and women endorsing this view. Nearly sixty percent of the men perceived differences in sexual drives as natural, whereas women were split between viewing the differences as natural versus social.[10] In Cyprus, most women I interviewed viewed these differences as mostly biological:

> "Men have one night stands more easily than women because for men sex does not involve an emotional bond, whereas for women it does. It is mostly biological but also social."[11]

The essentialist understandings of men and women's sexual drives could be one of the reasons why women are critical, but at the same time very tolerant of sexist practices in society, which result from a pervasive double standard of morality. My interviewees expressed disapproval and used derogatory terms to refer to men's sexual drives and practices. However, through their words, a sense of resentment for being 'unable' to express themselves in similar ways was also detected: "they can do whatever they want, but if we did the same, we'd be consider sluts," one woman said.[12] Although urban middle-class women accept premarital sex and sexual drives as 'normal' and 'acceptable', the

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[6] Gisela Kaplan, *Contemporary Western European Feminism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1992. p.228-9.

[7] Lia Mylona, *Op.Cit.*, p.55, my emphasis.

[8] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Pulcheria, June 1997.

[9] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Hipparchia, June 1997.

[10] Emily W. Kane & Mimi Schippers, 'Men's and Women's Beliefs about Gender and Sexuality'. *Gender and Society*, Vol.10, No.5, pp.650-665, October 1996, p.655.

[11] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

[12] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Herodias, July 1997.

frightening social consequences that these entail also cause them to reject and criticise these activities. Further, the aspirations of many urban middle-class to become 'European' – a symbol of sexual 'liberation' in this context- comes into conflict with local realities. Adaptation to the widely aspired to European identity cannot exclude adherence to the respective moral standards for both men and women. However, adapting to this identity can have irrevocable consequences for the personal realities of women who might be unable to secure the socially respected status of being wives and mothers: "if you sleep around and you are not that young anymore, then you'd better have money, or finding a husband can be quite difficult."[13] The contradictions and conflicting attitudes and practices of Cypriot women are observed as well as are the current dilemmas they are confronted with.

1.1. 'Engaging' into Sexual Control: Just before the Marriage

Preoccupation with premarital relationships is in itself an indication of a society's norms and values. The way these relationships are understood and judged illustrates cultural interpretations and definitions of moral and sexual standards in general, and the experiences of women in particular. A study on social attitudes released in April 1998 by Cyprus College Applied Research Centre concluded that 46 percent of people thought it was wrong for a woman to have sex before marriage. and another 25 percent said that it was 'sometimes wrong.' However, only 18 percent considered premarital sex wrong for a man.[14] These attitudes towards premarital sex were particularly dominant among the over-60s respondents. In fact, 83 percent of the respondents in this age group were against premarital sex for women, but only 32 percent of people in the same category disapproved of premarital sex for men. However, 6 percent of eighteen to twenty-five-year olds were against premarital sex for men, and 9 percent were against it for women. More interestingly, the majority of people who disapprove of pre-marital sexual relationships for men (18 percent) were found to be women, that is 27 percent. Only 11 percent of the men felt the same. When it came to women's premarital sex, again, 38 percent of the men disapproved as opposed to 54 percent of the women. Therefore, both older people and women appear to be less tolerant of premarital sexual relationships than men in general. However, these results can be somewhat misleading in the case of Cyprus. and academic analysis of Cypriot society has tended to ignore this.

One of the most important 'rites of passage' among Cypriot people is a couple's engagement. Most people discuss premarital sex in the context of sexual intercourse between men and women who have no immediate plans of getting married. Having sex 'for the sake of it' is mostly unacceptable for women. However, when young couples are engaged, they can live under the same roof, and in many cases, with the woman's family. Engagement in both urban and rural settings often involves a religious ceremony in church, with hundreds of guests, and a large dinner party. In some cases, especially in urban areas, the church ceremony is avoided, or the couple 'simply' has their wedding rings blessed by a priest. The dinner party for the close relatives and friends afterwards is taken for granted. The period of engagement can vary from six months to two or even three years. In rare cases, where the couple is older or when one of the partners is foreign, it is accepted that they can 'just' place an announcement for their engagement and their plans to get married in the daily press (*na to valoume stin efimeridha*). In fact, in every case (I would dare say with almost no exceptions although no statistics exist) the most important part of the process involves the couple announcing their 'commitment to getting married' in the main national newspapers.[15] The parents, as well as the whole community will readily accept and in fact expect the

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[13] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Hydna, August 1997

[14] Centre of Applied Research, Cypriot Social Attitudes Survey 1997, Nicosia: Cyprus College, 1997.

[15] See Appendix VII.

young couple to live together the very same day. Numerous women explained that they got engaged so that they could live with their partners: "at least when you are engaged they shut up and leave you alone."[16] When residency is neolocal rather than matrilocal (this is the occasional case with better-off, urban families), there still appears a strong tendency for the future married couple to choose a home near the woman's family. Matrilocality is partly associated with financial constrains but also with the bride's parents' honour and pride. The parents can be upset due to emotional reasons for if the couple chooses to move out, they 'are losing a child'; further, they can be insulted, as public opinion might not approve. A fifty-seven-year-old woman from a rural community said,

> "...my parents also criticise me because I let my engaged daughter go and live with her fiancé and his parents before the wedding. They said I was not capable of being a good housewife and a proper mother because she was supposed to be a virgin until the wedding day. Of course, everyone knows that this is not the case any longer but they hide behind their little finger. So what if they stayed with his parents whose house is bigger? What can I do, hide it?"[17]

Although such strong sentiments do not tend to be expressed by urban residents, remnants of such beliefs stemming from issues of honour and shame (typical of Mediterranean family structures) are obvious in Nicosia:[18]

> "A man's honour, expressed primarily as manliness ... basically entails ensuring the moral propriety of the members, and, especially the female members, of one's family ... A woman's honour ... expressed as *dropi* or sexual shame revolves primarily around her sexual propriety. An honourable woman, thus, is, if married, one who is faithful to her husband; and, if single, one who maintains her virginity until marriage."[19]

Cypriots have found a system of sexual and moral control that young people will accept more readily than the 'traditional ideas about virginity.' The negotiated order in Cyprus involves older people pushing for sexual abstinence and virginity for women before marriage whereas many young people feel that cohabitation is a "good way to check your feelings before the big step."[20] A compromising solution is reached with the way that the engagement ritual has been constructed in Cypriot society. Both the parents and the young partners are often aware of the meanings and implications of this compromising solution and they are willing to accept them. My interviewees said:

> "The problem parents have is not sex as such, but rather, what people will say about it. If it is made 'official' with an engagement, not only do they accept it but also they encourage it.

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[16] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Herodias, July 1997.

[17] *Private Telephone Conversation with Author*, January 1997.

[18] Schneider argues that honour defines the group's (family's) social boundaries, contributing to its defense against the claims of equivalent competing groups: "honor is also important as a substitute for physical violence in the defense of economic interests. The head of the family challenges the rest of the world with the idea of *his* family's honor. *His* 'hypersensitive, punctilious' posture ... convinces others to exercise restraint, not so much to avoid physical retaliation as to avoid the consequences of continuing rancor. Paradoxically, the idea of honor can also serve to legitimate limited aggression, making acts of imposition, encroachment, the usurpation morally valid in the eyes of nearly everyone except the victim." Jane Schneider, 'Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies', *Ethnology*, Vol.10., pp.1-24, 1971, p.17.

[19] Mavratsas, *Op.Cit.*, p.17.

[20] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Elpinice, August 1997.

> Virginity has nothing to do with it. As long as they trap you with the man, they make sure that they will eventually marry you, no-one cares."[21]
>
> "My mum and dad do not know that I am sleeping with my boyfriend. I am sure they suspect it but they do not want to know. It is like, it is not there. I want to go somewhere for the weekend with him but I cannot, my parents would say that 'people will talk'. Instead of being worried about me, they worry about the people. That is why we want to get engaged soon. So that we can live together and not have to worry all the time about what the neighbour said last night when I came back late!"[22]

Although, 'trapping' a woman into getting married carries certain negative connotations, these are preferable to informal sex outside marriage. Similarly, for Theela, sex itself is not a "bad thing to do"; however, what carries negative consequences for her is people's disapproval of premarital sexual relationships, as this can harm her. Fear of the public opinion makes her unable to have sex unless she feels safe from gossip:

> "The guy I used to go out with was very nice. He would never tell anyone that we had sex. So I felt safe to have sex with him."[23]

The man controls the woman's sexual behaviour and reputation by deciding whether to 'tell people' of her sexual activities or not. If he chooses not to make the sexual relationship known, then he is considered 'nice' and is appreciated for it. The issue for Theela was not the sexual act, nor religion, or her values. However, not appearing to be 'cheap' was a major concern for her:

> "I am not a risk-taker. I don't sleep around or anything. What if you sleep with someone once and then they leave you? It happens. The thing I really hate in Cyprus is how you might sleep with someone and then you see them somewhere and you know he and his friends are talking about it. I don't want to appear cheap. I hate it when people talk about me, especially men. I suppose that is the reason I don't sleep with the people I go out with, although I sometimes want to. What am I going to do, walk around with my husband and having people talk about how I slept with so and so? I don't think of virginity or my body like a gift for men or anything like that. I am not 'like that' at all. I just don't want to be cheap."[24]

Women's reputation as 'proper' or not in many ways defines their future. Being aware of men's ability to control definitions of sexuality, women choose to operate in ways that will safeguard their reputation. Priority is many times given to other people's opinions and interpretations, rather than the women's own wants. One woman, whose husband was also her first sexual partner at the age of twenty-six, expressed her fears concerning her sexual 'reputation' and the contradictions between what she 'liked' as opposed to what she chose to do:

> "Ever since my husband and I decided to get married and thus formalised the relationship, I feel a lot better about sex and I express myself a lot more freely. You know, when you are not sure where the relationship is leading, you cannot do what you like ... what if you later finish with him? What will he say? What if my future husband found out? I discussed this

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[21] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Artemissia, July 1997.

[22] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Pulcheria, June 1997.

[23] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Theela, June 1997.

[24] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Theela, June1997.

with the other girls [her close friends, also in the same class and age group] and most of them agreed."[25]

This woman's fears are not unfounded. Being 'the marrying type' is extremely important when women reach their late 20s. A twenty-eight-year-old, educated man thus explains:

"There is total lack of morality in Cyprus at the moment. It is like being in the UK in the 1960s. There are so many extremes, you just cannot keep track. You cannot really find the 'marrying kind' of a woman anymore. They all sleep around. It is all this change that is taking place. I went abroad to study and there were no clubs in Cyprus when I left. I came back five years later and you have 30 places to choose from. Clubs, bars, pubs, the whole lot. It is unbelievable. It is like being in London or something. All women in their twenties and thirties are out all the time. On the tables. Dancing. There's no one at home in the evenings anymore. They are out fucking."[26]

To speak of a woman's reputation is to invoke her sexual behaviour, and it is to put her marriageability in question, while men's reputation is related to his personality and social status. In general, men's sexual reputation is distinguished from their morality standards and it is seen as 'private' and incidental.[27]

It is only when a woman gets engaged that society's 'controlling eye' is put at rest. All of the married or engaged women in my sample went through the same procedure of engagement; parents met, approved, and publicly announced the engagement through the press. In cases where women decided not to announce it in the newspaper, they faced pressure and difficulties. Philaenis explains that,

"...my parents think I am totally off my head. They cannot believe I am just living with someone, although they choose to think of him as my fiancé. They hassle and hassle but I do not care. I cannot stand them. I will try to do my own thing, but it is just so hard to oppose to the whole system all the time. I do not know of anyone, or heard of couples who simply cohabit rather than being married. This is what I want, though. And I do it. But sometimes, it is just so hard fighting them. Really hard."[28]

The rest of the women would not even consider cohabitation:

"It's not accepted in the society. It is just not OK. It is not the sort of thing you can do, although I can see why it is good. I would never dare. There is too much to pay for, if you do."[29]

"It was bad enough trying to get them (the parents) to accept that I was planning to live by myself. At twenty-nine, I thought it would be OK, for God's sake ... however, I would never

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[25] *Private Conversation with Author*, April 1996.

[26] *Private Conversation with Author*, October 1997.

[27] Sue Lees, 'Learning to Love; Sexual Reputation, Morality, and the Social Control of Girls', in Maurine Cain (ed.), *Growing up Good; Policing the Behaviour of Girls in Europe*, Sage, 1989, p.19.

[28] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Philaenis, August 1997. The reasons why certain women choose to follow options that are closer to their attitudes and others choose not to are explored in Chapter Six.

[29] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Athaliah, July 1997.

> just live with someone in Cyprus. Never, it would just be too, too difficult. If I lived abroad, I would definitely do it. I would choose to do it, I would prefer it. But not here. The thought of what they would do to me makes me dizzy."[30]
>
> "I would never live with someone. I would have to get engaged first otherwise society would stigmatise you forever."[31]

Female control of sexuality is achieved in what appears to be a compromise of opinions between the younger and older generations. Young women are indirectly told that by being engaged they can do what they want to, and this is exactly what they do. In order for them to be openly involved in a sexual relationship, without social restrictions, women are motivated to get engaged or married as soon as possible in order to escape one form of control, only to enter another patriarchal household in most cases. In a 'journey to Europe', parents have devised a strategic method by which control of the threatening 'western' moral codes of sexuality is made possible in ways that younger people accept. Institutionalising the engagement ritual as a means to having socially approved sexual relationships has achieved this goal and the subjugation of young women (and men) thus became subtler. Further, by publicising the engagement in the daily press, the parents make sure that *'etilixan ton gambron'* (they have tied the groom down), thus also ensuring the *'apokatastasin tis kopellas'* (the 'settlement' of the woman). Some years ago, it was unthinkable for an engagement to be broken; recently, however, it has become more accepted and common, reflecting the changes in the attitudes of the people. Indeed, women's judgmental attitudes and personal struggles against this sexual and moral control have contributed to the newly re-negotiated 'rite of passage' of engagement, whereby they can have more open sexual relationships before marriage.

1.2. Of Virginal Virtues

Premarital relationships used to be considered a taboo topic of discussion as recently as the beginning of the twentieth century, when it was customary in rural Cyprus for the bloodied bed-sheet used on the wedding night to be on public display for the guests on the following morning in order to 'prove' the virginity of the wife.[32] Contrary to religious preaching, however, for a Cypriot male the image of an innocent male virgin on the eve of his wedding is absurd.[33] Men in Cyprus were traditionally, especially in the twentieth century, not only encouraged, but also expected to have sexual experiences with other women before marriage; most of them would regularly visit prostitutes in the towns. A number of men – now in their thirties -in various informal discussions openly admitted to me that their fathers would give them the necessary amount of money required to visit a prostitute in town, at the ages of fifteen to seventeen. Prostitutes perform functions whose importance can be equated to those of virgins in a Mediterranean society, for obvious practical reasons;[34] that is, they keep the rest of the women pure and virginal.

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[30] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Thecla, June 1997.

[31] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Pulcheria, June 1997.

[32] Argyrou discusses the ritualized display of the bride's virginity and says "it points to a complex network of power relations, not merely between men and women, but also among men themselves as well as between the generations." Vassos Argyrou: *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: the wedding as Symbolic Struggle,* Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.80.

[33] Fatima Mernissi, 'Virginity and Patriarchy', *Women's Studies International Forum,* Vol.5, No.2, pp.183-191, 1982, p.185.

[34] Jane Schneider, 'Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies', *Ethnology,* Vol.10., pp.1-24, 1971, p.23, footnote 4. Simone de Beauvoir argues that "if the husband does not succeed in keeping his wife in the path of virtue, he shares in her

Nevertheless, obsession with virginity is not the norm as it used to be some decades ago. Cypriot families, especially in urban areas, are not as preoccupied as they used to be with their daughters' virginity and their wives' shame, and they are gradually becoming less so.[35] In my experience, during the 1970s and 1980s, numerous people used to talk and 'joke' about how women have this 'minor operation' to achieve artificial virginity before their engagement. A young woman confided in me six years ago that she was having the operation when she graduated from high school, 'in order to find a husband'.[36] The phenomenon of *parthenorafi* (the virgin's stitch) according to a Cypriot leading gynaecologist (who wished to remain anonymous) was quite widespread during those two decades but "it seems to be dying out in the 1990s, probably because not that many young people worry about these old-fashioned things anymore."[37] However, he pointed out that the vast majority of women who attended his clinic for the operation were young women from rural communities who were certain that their fiancé would leave if he realised they were not honourable and pure any more.[38] That would jeopardise the honour of the man.[39]

> "Like honour, virginity is the manifestation of a purely male preoccupation ... The concepts of honour and virginity locate the prestige of a man between the legs of a woman ... A man secures his status ... by controlling the movements of women related to him by blood or by marriage, and forbidding them any contact with male strangers."[40]

Mernissi explains that in Morocco, it is sometimes the case that when marriages are consummated, the virginity of the bride is artificial. Some young women visit gynaecologists with the relevant skills and resort to a minor operation on the eve of their wedding, "in order to erase the traces of pre-marital experience."[41] Mernissi sees the reason for the existence of more false virgins 'than before' in her society in spatial, institutional, economic, and psychological changes in Morocco. She claims that artificial virginity is a malaise, which has its basis in sexual inequality, "unnatural by definition, anti-social in its workings."[42] On the contrary in Cyprus, artificial virginity as a practice is dying out, since premarital sex is gradually becoming more accepted within society.

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fault; in the eyes of society his misfortune is a blot on his honour; there are civilizations severe enough to require him to kill the wrong doer in order to dissociate himself from her crime... She has offended not him alone, but the whole collectivity." *Op.Cit.*,p.222. Killing for reasons of male honour was not unheard of in Cyprus until the end of the nineteenth century.

[35] Jane Schneider, 'Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies', *Ethnology*, Vol.10., pp.1-24, 1971, p.22.

[36] Her mother was aware of the operation having taken place whereas the father was not.

[37] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview, April 1997.

[38] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview, April 1997, Nicosia.

[39] Similar to the Arab world, in Cyprus for men honour is associated with physical strength and virility whereas for women it is related to sexual modesty. Evelyn Accad explains that the word *sharaf* (honor) is one of the codes of Arab tribes whose meaning includes the preservation of girls' virginity, 'to ensure that the women are kept exclusively for the men of their tribe. Evelyne Accad, 'Sexuality and Sexual Politics; Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary Women in the Middle East', in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Lourdes Torres (eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, 1991, p.245.

[40] Fatima Mernissi, *Op.Cit.*, p.183.

[41] *Ibid.*, p.183.

[42] *Ibid.*,p.191.

None of the women in my sample found virginity to be a necessary prerequisite for women before marriage. In fact, they felt that sexual inexperience in a woman as opposed to that of a man could work against the relationship of the married couple. All but two agreed that it was 'normal' and acceptable for a woman to have premarital sex, *as long as a woman falls in love and is in a relationship.* Deborah and Philaenis –both of whom identified themselves as feminists- however, felt that a woman should have sex as and when she felt like it, "with no strings attached."[43] However, most women agreed that "virginity is one thing and uncontrollable sex with anyone who comes your way is another. I don't think that women should not have sex, but I don't think they should have sex for the sake of it either."[44] In the case of four interviewees, who shared this information with me, their husbands were also their first sexual partners. Another six women said that they had had more than one sexual partner in the past. Although the interviewees perceived sexual relationships before marriage as 'natural', the *number* of these relationships as well as the feelings of the women involved in them were determining factors in the way they judged and perceived these women.

1.3. What Happens Then? - Life After the Wedding

Not only premarital but also extra marital sexual affairs have increased in Cyprus. Although attitudes towards extra-marital sex appear to be subject to public disapproval, my interviewees strongly argued that the 'real picture' is different as more people are having extra marital affairs than ever before. The negative attitudes towards extra-marital affairs is apparent in the Cypriot Social Attitudes Survey of 1997 where it was found that 80 percent of all the respondents considered these affairs to be wrong for married men, and 88 percent felt it was wrong for married women. More particularly, 71 percent of the women and 39 percent of the men disapproved of extramarital affairs for married men; further, 75 percent of the women and 62 percent of the men considered extramarital affairs for women as always wrong. Thus in the study women were found to be less 'liberal' than men were. Part of the reason for this could lie in the fact that women are aware of the social punishment and psychological consequences that follow an unfaithful wife; further, women's traditional female gender role socialisation is so ingrained that escaping the norm of the 'good woman' is unthinkable. For other women, the breakage of their marriage because of their husband's extra-marital interests could partly account for their answers. However, attitudes in general appear to have become less rigid than two years ago. In 1995, 69 percent of the people said that it was 'always wrong' for a married man to have sexual relationships outside marriage, and 16 percent said it was 'mostly wrong'. By 1997, 56 percent of the respondents thought it was always wrong, and 24 percent regarded it as mostly wrong. Concerning women's infidelity, 75 percent of the people found it 'always wrong' in 1995, and 14 percent as 'mostly wrong'. By 1997, the number had decreased to 69 percent as 'always wrong' and 19 percent as 'mostly wrong.'

The Church has undoubtedly been influential in the formation of the difference in the attitudes of men and women. In a study aimed at analysing the sexual attitudes of Greek Orthodox priests living in Cyprus, Georgiou managed to get responses from only 130 of the 560 priests to whom the questionnaire was given, since the Archbishop of Cyprus restricted the 150 priests in his diocese from responding (presumably because of the sexual nature of the questions).[45] When asked their opinions on wives' adultery, 38 percent of the priests expressed the belief that the husband should not divorce his partner, whatever the circumstances. However, follow-up, face-to-face interviews demonstrated that in general, priests

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[43] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Philaenis, August 1997.

[44] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Elissa, June 1997.

[45] George J. Georgiou. 'Sexual Attitudes of Greek Orthodox Priests in Cyprus," *The Cyprus Review.* Vol.4, No.2, 1992, p.45.

> "...had different advice for the cuckolded husband, as opposed to the wife whose husband had been unfaithful. For the cuckolded husband, the priest's advice was to obtain an immediate divorce. However, for the wife whose husband had been unfaithful, the advice was different. She would be strongly advised to ponder over and reconsider her divorce plans. One possible reason for this double standard is partly related to Article 225, that as the wife is no longer a virgin, she would be considered inferior to other virginal women."[46]

The study also found that 53 percent of them believed in coital abstention during holy name days and Saturday evenings. However, 33 percent of the priests advised on such occasions the wife to respect her husband's wishes, never resisting any sexual advances,[47] otherwise the man would be *forced into* the sin of having an extra-marital relationship. The Church's essentialist notions of the male sexual drives as innate and uncontrollable, renders women responsible for both their and their husbands' morality and behaviour.

The women's responses in the interviews I carried out varied greatly. Some of the married women in the sample, however, appeared to be a little more tolerant of people being involved in extramarital relationships than single women were. For some of the younger, single women, being involved in a relationship outside marriage was inconceivable:

> "It could never happen to me. I would never be unfaithful. I would finish my relationship first. It is unnatural."[48]

Others did not rule out the idea of an extra marital affair; rather, in these situations the worry concerned being 'caught':

> "After being married for so long, the idea of falling in love again fascinates me. I would not do it for the sex; that, I get at home! However, falling in love, having passionate sex, being secretive, is just fascinating. I do not think I would dare do it. But when I hear of married women who are involved with other men, I do not condemn them. You never know what is going on within a household, between the married couple. You can never tell what is going on in a woman's heart."[49]

The fear of the consequences was also obvious in the case of Jezebel:

> "I know of many women who do it. Most of my friends are having affairs, but all in secret of course. You know, if I found someone nice, I think I would do it too (laughing). My husband is nice, but ... there is something not there. You cannot imagine how many times I have considered divorce. But I dare not do it, I just dare not. I am a coward, I suppose. It is also my daughter ... I am just kidding, forget it, I am joking."

One woman explained that she had had an affair, which lasted a year and said that her husband knew nothing about it. She had no feelings of guilt because,

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[46] *Ibid.*, p.48.

[47] George J. Georgiou, 'Sexual Attitudes of Greek Orthodox Priests in Cyprus.' *The Cyprus Review*. Vol.4, No.2. 1992. Women are responsible for the sexual vices of men but also their protection from these vices.

[48] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Pulcheria, June 1997.

[49] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Lamia, June 1997.

> "I don't think that having an affair took anything away from my relationship with my husband. I have every right to have my own life. Is there some regulation, which I am not aware of, and which states that women must tell men everything or the other way around? I was good to my husband, but at the same time, this other man came along and it just happened. I did not think for a minute to end my marriage. I think that as human beings, we are polygamous, but we are endlessly trapped in monogamous relationships because this is what conservative values and religion want. It is like this everywhere, but it is worse in Cyprus; it is all political here."[50]

This woman recognises that rather than assuming a common category of oppression for all women across the world, it is necessary that the socio-political context within which particular groups of women live and operate is examined. As argued in Chapters Two and Three, there are specific ethnic, historical, and cultural dynamics which contribute to the oppression of women in Cyprus. Within the country itself, there are the additional factors of ethnic and class divisions that need to be considered. When undertaking the current study, I had not anticipated some women's strong awareness of inequality and rights over their own lives. In the case of three of my interviewees, their feminist attitudes (as defined by themselves) were closer to their practices than in the rest of the cases.[51] Some women appear to be clear about their rights and need to take control over their lives. Unlike previous studies, it is hereby demonstrated that women are gradually becoming aware of gender inequalities and some are willing and interested in 'doing something about it' in their private and public lives –as long that they do not create great public controversy and disapproval. It is argued that these women 'fight' their own personal battles but are reluctant to include these in the context of collective action for larger groups.[52]

1.4. The Institutionalised Acceptance of Pregnancy and Abortion

Similar to many issues, abortion in Cyprus is not as controversial a subject as the case has been in other countries of Europe and the Middle East. Under the Cyprus Law (L.59/74 and L.186/86), the regulation conditions for abortion are first, a certificate from the appropriate police authority supported by a medical certificate ('where that is possible') for situations of rape and second, the recommendation of two doctors. Abortion is legally allowed under certain socio-medical or socio-economic grounds; when it represents a risk to the woman's physical and/or mental health, a risk to fetal health or fetal handicap, rape, or other sexual crimes. The law prohibiting abortion (women did obtain abortions before 1974, only if they could afford them) was amended in 1974 (L.59/74) due to the numerous cases of rape of women by soldiers during the invasion. "It is telling that this dramatic reform, undertaken under the auspices of the ecclesiastical courts, should be instigated not by the fact of rape itself but by rape by Turkish soldiers and fears about the possibility of bearing the children of the 'enemy'."[53] However, the introduction of the law and its implementation during the post-war period contributed towards its institutionalisation, and it did not become a highly controversial issue. Similar to the situation with the political citizenship for women being 'given to them' with the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, the legalisation of abortion under certain conditions was granted to women as a result of reasons other than the belief in women's right to have control over their choices and bodies.

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[50] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Deborah, June 1997.

[51] Although there seemed to be less acute conflict experienced by them than by most of the other interviewees, however, distress and worry over their actions was clear in their words.

[52] This is further discussed in Chapter Six.

[53] Anthias, *Op.Cit.*, 1989, p.158.

A woman working for the Family Planning Association[54] explained that she felt the law was 'not that bad, if you exclude the part about recommendation by two doctors. Of course in practice, nobody actually bothers to do that. Women have abortions all the time.'[55] Abortion is part of the everyday life of Cypriot women, and the main reason for the lack of controversy behind the law governing abortion is that it is ignored. According to the International Planned Parenthood Association (IPPA), the same law applies in Finland, Iceland, Portugal, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland.[56] In no other European country listed in the report was there any mention of the need for the consent of the police authorities. During fieldwork, I had no indication of any abortion having taken place after a certificate by the police authorities was issued, and the women -most of whom identified themselves as feminists- I have talked to in relevant associations did not mention it or consider this to be a problem. The power of authority and the state was not questioned in that way: 'if you don't really need to ask the police before you have an abortion, why bother to change the law?' Abortion is free of charge at the government hospital but informal sources have explained that it is

> "...incredibly rare for abortions to take place in hospitals because doctors won't do it, even when it is obvious that they should. What is down on paper does not necessarily give the real picture. The truth is that unless you are going to die or something, you have to pay a lot to have an abortion at a private clinic."[57]

In Greece, however, the only regulating condition for abortion is the requirement for parental consent for women under the age of sixteen. The same applies for Turkey, where a report of two specialists - in cases where there is a risk to the woman's life or the fetal health- is necessary, as well as the consent of the husband for married women.[58] According to the woman from the Family Planning Association, the consent of the husband is required in Cyprus for a woman to have an operation to become sterile.

Although women can have abortions without 'too many questions being asked', the 'moral' discourse on the issue takes place unofficially amongst them. Fourteen interviewees from my sample believed in the right of women to choose whether to have an abortion or not. Eleven of those identified themselves as feminists; in fact, all feminists in the sample claimed to be pro-choice. Further, nine women were against abortion and the remaining two were quite critical but not absolute in their opinions. The two interviewees who claimed to be anti-feminists were also anti-abortion. Finally, two interviewees said that they had had an abortion. They both claimed to be indifferent to feminist ideas and were pro-choice. The first said:

> "I don't really want anyone to know about it, because you know what this place is like. They will call me names and they will not understand. The tragic thing is that everyone does it.

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[54] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview, Family Planning Association Offices, Nicosia, July 1997. The Family Planning Association receives little help from the government. Some funding comes from the International Planning Parenthood Federations by which is it regulated and which has 160 member states.

[55] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with FPA member, 1997.

[56] International Plan Parenthood Federation (IPPF) European Network, *Abortion Laws in European Countries,* November 1996.

[57] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview, January 1997.

[58] International Plan Parenthood Federation (IPPF) European Network, *Abortion Laws in European Countries,* November 1996.

> but they keep silent about it. I know it's not something to advertise, it's personal, but not being able to tell a single soul is spooky."[59]

This woman made a conscious decision to have an abortion and has to face the isolation of being unable to share her experience with anyone, including her friends. Similarly, the second woman said:

> "It was seven months before the wedding. My parents knew, I suppose, that I was sleeping with my husband before. However, if my belly showed at the wedding, they would be humiliated, because people would think their daughter got married only because she had to. That her husband married her for the sake of safeguarding her name ... I do not regret it for a minute. Rather than go through all that, I was much happier to have an abortion ... No, he (the husband) does not know. He would kill me because he is all very religious and all that. He would not have married me. Don't get me wrong, I am religious, too. But, I could not go through so much hassle."[60]

A third woman faced a great dilemma when her husband insisted that she had an abortion after an unplanned pregnancy for a third child was found out. Not only did she receive no emotional support in her effort to reach a decision, but she was also faced with an additional problem. Although keeping the baby would increase problems in her marital life, she decided to do what she felt was best and had no regrets afterwards:

> "I had a lot of problems because of it. Pericles wanted me to have an abortion because he felt that three children would be too many, that it would be too difficult, and all that. But I could not do it. I think it is partly religion, but it is not only that. I could not kill my baby. I look at the baby now and I don't regret it for a minute. However, I have gone through a lot with my husband because of it. The whole relationship has worsened."[61]

Aspasia explained that "women have a right to choose whether to keep the baby or not, but for me, it was not a matter of choice. I could not even consider it, and after a visit to my priest, I knew I had made the right decision."[62] This woman seemed clear about her position concerning abortion and was accepting of other women's choices. Despite her conviction that women have the right of personal choice over their own bodies, she made her choice after consultation with a priest who 'confirmed' her beliefs. Further, although she claimed that for her it was not a matter of choice, her actions confirm that she could indeed choose between two options. In fact, she made a conscious decision to do what felt right for her rather than what her husband asked her to do. At the same time, the influential power of religion appears to be stronger than the relative power of individual men within households. A nineteen-year-old student of mine told me that she had had two abortions within one year, and that she held no regrets about it. She asked me:

> "Do you think that men have any right in a woman's decision to have an abortion or not? Because it makes me angry and frustrated that they think they can. It makes no difference if one is married or not. If it is my body, I should get to decide, right? I am fed up with all these men trying to tell me how to run my life. I mean, I am kind of messed-up in some ways, but it's my own business, right?"[63]

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[59] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

[60] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Korinna, August1997.

[61] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Aspasia, July 1997.

[62] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Aspasia, July 1997.

[63] *Private Conversation with Author*, May 1998.

In the case of these women, there were no regrets about their choices and actions; at the same time, when these decisions had to be taken, they faced many dilemmas and were subjected to great stress in order to make decisions. The interview results indicate to a relationship between women's feminist identity and their pro-choice attitudes. Similarly, anti-feminist women in the sample expressed anti-abortion beliefs, irrespective of age, education, and position in the labour market. Eventually, women who were indifferent to feminist ideas expressed both positions on the issue and two of them said they had had abortions. In the case of Aspasia, her decision to keep her baby was partly based on advice she had received from a Christian Orthodox priest. She explained that "there was no one else I could have talked to."[64]

It is telling that, according to the Family Planning Association representative, there are no government services for counselling concerning abortion or information on contraception. All this is the responsibility of the Association, which provide all these services, although they have limited members of staff and resources. The Association depends mainly on work done by private doctors on a voluntary basis.[65] The representative argued that it cost between 70 and 80 Cyprus pounds for a woman to have the coil in a private clinic, whereas it cost 20 pounds at the clinic of the Association. The need for further information on both abortion and contraception was highly stressed by the representative. A twenty-nine-year-old student of mine explained:

> " I hated my husband. I did not want t sleep with him. He was 'given to me' by my parents and I cried for days and nights. I did not know much about contraception and when the first baby was born, I was shocked. He said he had been careful. Then, the second baby was planned but the third was not. I wanted to have an abortion but I could not. It is just such a sin. It is so much against religion. Only talking about it makes me feel awful. But it is true, I thought about it. I did not do it. As a result, I have an awful marriage and I can't end it. I cannot. At least, I did not have an abortion. If my family knew I thought about it, they would shoot me. But you know, I was so naive, I did know anything. And I could not ask because there was no one I could trust. "[66]

As illustrated in the examples above, religion is one of the main influences on women's decision to have an abortion or not. The representative of the Family Planning Association confirmed that the church "is always fighting us for advocating contraception."[67] She explained that when they were trying to launch a major advertising and information campaign on safe sex, the Church demanded that photographs of condoms be removed from the leaflets, as these were obscene. After pressure from the Church, the Youth Organisation (government supported service) refused to sign a petition for the decriminalisation of homosexuality, although this was signed by the Family Planning Organisation. "The Church is trying to protect the family and so are we. However, the church is trying to safeguard the family as a unit, whereas we look at the family as a group of individuals with specific needs."[68] She demonstrated using an example of a woman with seven children who had visited the Family Planning Association and had had the coil fitted without her husband's knowledge (as was her 'formal' right). Her husband eventually started hitting her for being unable to conceive: thus, she had the coil taken out, conceived again and had it fitted once more, without her husband

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[64] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Aspasia, July 1997.

[65] About one hundred and forty volunteers, both men and women (mostly in their late teens and early twenties) also offer their services for the association, mostly in terms of organizing campaigns, advertising, information services etc.

[66] *Private Conversation with Author,* January 1997.

[67] *Private conversation with Author,* Interview, January 1997.

[68] *Private conversation with Author,* Interview, January 1997.

knowing anything about it. "It's men's technique to keep these women busy and unable to think of anything else," the interviewee argued. "They feel that if they do not have any more kids, their husbands will leave them. Of course we are basically talking about working-class women from rural areas." Further, she said, men rarely attended appointments with their wives and rarely accepted to use condoms.[69]

There is, however, a decline in the birth rate in Cyprus. It dropped from about 32.2 births per 1000 population in 1946 to about 22 in the early sixties and reached a minimum of 16.0 in 1975, because of the Turkish invasion.[70] After that, it increased steadily to 20.8 in 1982. However, by 1990 the birth rate declined steadily again to reach 19.0 births per 1000 population.[71] In 1996, the number of births in the government controlled area reached 9638 compared to 9869 the year before. The total fertility rate[72] decreased from 2,46 in the period 1982-85 to 2,38 in the period 1988-1991 and decreased further to 2,18 in the period 1993-1996. According to official statistics, Cyprus has one of the lowest proportions of extra-marital births in Europe, and "fertility is still almost exclusively marital fertility. In 1996 only 144 children were born out of wedlock constituting a mere 1,5 percent of the total number of births."[73] In 1996, the average age of women at the birth of their first child was 25,6 years while the average age at birth irrespective of the order of child was 28,2 years. Further, it appears that women in rural areas start childbearing earlier than in urban areas.[74] Education constitutes one of the socio-economic factors determining fertility in Cyprus. Although the wife and husband's education is non-linearly related to family size, there seems to be a stronger relationship in urban areas and as the age of the wife rises:[75]

> "For example, for women in the age-group 35-39, most of whom will have completed their family size, those who have not worked since marriage in rural areas have, on average, 0.9 of a child more than comparable women in urban areas, and 0.7 of a child more than urban women who have been active."[76]

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[69] The representative told me that research carried out in the late 1970s showed an urgent need for sex education at schools. When it was introduced, it used to be either part of the biology class, or the responsibility of health visitors. In 1993, however, numerous teachers were trained to deal with sex education at schools. These were physical education, biology, physics, home economics, and biology teachers. A multi-disciplinary group of professionals are currently being trained (the first workshop took place between 16-18 October 1998 in Nicosia) in order to promote and support the development and implementation of sex education of young people.

[70] Department of Statistics and Research, *Demographic Report,* Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, 1996.

[71] Department of Statistics and Research, *Social Indicators,* Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, 1991.

[72] "The total fertility rate represents the number of live births that would occur to a woman if she were to experience the age-specific fertility rates of the population of women aged 15 to 49 years during her own reproductive period". William J House, *Cypriot Women in the Labour Market. An Exploration of Myths and Reality: Women, Work and Development,* United Nations Publication; Women, Work, and Development No.10, Geneva: International Labour Office, 1985, p.9.

[73] Department of Statistics and Research: *Demographic Report 1996,* Republic of Cyprus: Ministry of Finance, Population Statistics, Series II, Report No.34, 1997. p.16.

[74] *Ibid.*, p.16.

[75] W.J. House. *Socio-economic Determinants of Fertility in Cyprus,* Republic of Cyprus: Department of Statistics and Research, Ministry of Finance, 1981 (ILO/UNFPA, Population, Employment Planning and Labour Force Mobility Study, CYP/77/POI, Working Paper No.9), p.27.

[76] *Ibid.*, p.16. One of the reasons for this phenomenon sided by House, are the differences associated with the benefits and costs of rearing children by place of residence.

The above evidence suggests that rural residence, age, and participation in the labour force appear to have a major effect on women's control over contraception and family size. The women in my sample were privileged in that respect; however, institutionalised religion was found to be an important factor influencing most women's decisions in both rural and urban settings.

2. Women and Other 'Others'

My research results indicate that urban middle-class women in Cyprus find themselves caught between their attitudes and practices. The conflicts and contradictions they face are part of their everyday realities; however, women deal with these in different ways. Some experience them unproblematically, others find them to be sources of tension and struggle, and yet others accept them despite their convictions because they feel there is not much that they can do about it. Nevertheless, all of these women adopted techniques and coping-mechanisms, which allowed them to adjust to the demanding environment they lived in. In the process of doing so, they tended to create 'others' amongst women whom they excluded from the in-groups they formed.

Since many urban middle-class women are in full-time, paid employment, their 'double-shift' can be relieved with the employment of domestic assistants. There is a rapidly growing tendency for families or couples to employ domestic assistants from the Philippines and Sri Lanka mainly to look after their children. Olympias has been employing a Filipino woman for the last three years. "I don't like it that she is around the house all the time but at the same time it is a big relief to be able to do what I like without having to worry about leaving the kids with a baby-sitter or alone."[77] Further, Athaliah's and Jezebel's parents employ Sri Lankan maids who are 'lent' to their daughters on a weekly basis to help them with domestic chores without additional payment. Sappho's mother-in-law employed a Filipino woman who also cleaned Sappho's house twice week. Sappho told her mother, who also had an Asian maid, not to let "Nina think that she can do whatever she pleases. If she mixes with all these other maids, she is going to start wanting more and asking for things. She should know her place. She is lucky to have this job, most women in her country become prostitutes to survive."[78] Sappho was referring to another maid, a friend of Nina's who openly complained that she was made by her employer to work all day and on occasions not allowed to leave the house on Sundays as indicated in her contract. Domestic assistants from the Philippines and Sri Lanka are treated like second class citizens, and on occasions like slaves, by both men and women. When a young, middle-class woman realised that at the dinner party she was invited to attend, a Filipino woman was also invited, she refused to go, saying that the people who saw her at the restaurant would think she mixed with a maid.[79]

It appears that a small number of privileged women have their needs "met through services provided by subordinate, servile, or enslaved women... Women's successes in achieving educational and occupational parity with men have enabled a growing minority of successful women to buy cheap domestic services from more disadvantaged women."[80] Many women in my study accepted this situation with domestic assistants and their behaviour toward those women supported it. Although most of them argued that women are oppressed by men in Cyprus and that they have to suffer because of it, their practices were once more an indication of the contradictions these women encountered. Domestic assistants were not included in their definitions of the 'women' category. Nevertheless, five interviewees expressed their disapproval of the abuse of these women both at a social and a personal level. All five women were involved in voluntary work, considered themselves

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[77] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

[78] Present at a discussion with Sappho and her mother, 21 September 1997.

[79] *Private Conversation with Author*, story told by Melanie during Interview, July 1997.

[80] Caroline Ramazanoglu, *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression*, Routledge, 1989, p.107.

feminists, and refused to employ these domestic assistants.[81] By refusing to employ them these women tried to show their contempt about the way domestic assistants are manipulated, but at the same time rejected these women the opportunity to work for more money than they would be able to earn in their own countries. It appears that women who identify themselves with feminism (irrespective of their individual definitions of the term) in urban Cyprus are more aware of gender as well as class and ethnic divisions within their society than non-feminist or anti-feminist women are. Awareness of one type of oppression increases awareness of other types of oppression.

Feminist women in the sample were also more tolerant of issues concerning homosexuality and sexual orientation. Although three interviewees were very critical of homosexuality, the eleven women in the sample who identified themselves as feminist did not consider homosexuality as negative behaviour in any way. The same could not be said for the majority of the women in the study. Although they accepted homosexuals, they did not "particularly want to have anything to do with them. Let them do what they want to do, but I don't have to be exposed to it."[82] Similar findings were shown in the Cypriot Social Attitudes Survey. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the decriminalisation of homosexuality as a criminal offence: 41 percent said that homosexuality ought to be decriminalised whereas 59 percent disagreed. Again, women showed lower levels of tolerance towards 'deviant behaviour': 66 percent of the women as opposed to 51 percent of the men disagreed with the decriminalisation of homosexuality. If these numbers are compared with 1994, 71 percent of the people disagreed with the decriminalisation, in 1995, the percentage was 61 percent, and by 1997, it was down to 59 percent. These findings on attitudes concerning homosexuality contrast with findings in other countries like the United States. For example, American women were found to be more accepting of homosexuality and to have a greater tendency to regard the basis for sexual orientation as somewhat social rather than natural.[83]

The sharp social changes taking place in Cyprus are clearly reflected in people's attitudes. Recently, a 'new' dilemma arose within the 'authorities' and the state and consequently within society in general. After a gay man took the State to the European Court of Justice, the law concerning homosexuality was expected to change, since the Cypriot government has been trying to facilitate membership with the European Union. In a heated debate in which the media and eventually the people were involved, the Cyprus Weekly[84] explained that "The House of Representatives will decide after Easter what its stance will be on decriminalising homosexuality. At the moment, Cyprus is failing to conform with a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights to make homosexuality legal." Most of the House Members were in favour of accepting the ruling to decriminalise homosexuality but the Orthodox Church took a vocal, strongly opposing stance on the matter, considering homosexuality a sin. It is important here to point out that according to the law, homosexuality can only be 'committed' by men and involves anal penetrative sex. Women's homosexuality was not, and is not an issue. It is not illegal and thus does not need to be decriminalised. *Lesbians were not and are not there, they do not exist, and they do not matter.* Upon discussing female homosexuality, Phryne argued that she was aware of "numerous examples, but they are not out in the open, *for obvious reasons.*"[85] She gave an example concerning a woman

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[81] Similarly, Cynthia Enloe argues that "out of a desire to appear fashionable and bolster their sometimes shaky self-confidence, many women have become the prime consumers of products made by women working for low wages in other countries." Cynthia Enloe, *Making Feminist Sense of International Politics: Bananas, Beaches, and Bases,* Berkeley: University of California Press. 1989, p.198.

[82] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Korinna, August 1997.

[83] Emily W. Kane & Mimi Schippers: 'Men's and Women's Beliefs about Gender and Sexuality', *Gender and Society,* Vol.10, No.5, pp.650-665, October 1996, p.663.

[84] The Cyprus Weekly, April 18-24, 1997, p.7.

[85] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Phryne, August 1997.

who had been in a gay relationship for six years and was "a lesbian until she could not stand the pressure any longer and decided to get married."[86] She is currently married, has three children, and her husband knows nothing about her previous sexual activities. She explained that if he found out he would kill her. Another case involved a gay couple who was in a monogamous relationship for almost a decade. They lived abroad for the whole period since they were terrified with the idea of returning to Cyprus. In fact, remaining abroad for all that time was a struggle they went through simply in order to be together. A lack of options pushed them into finally returning to Cyprus despite being unable to express their relationship in public. When one of them decided to 'confess' her sexual orientation to her family, she was treated with pity and she was regarded as ill. Similarly, Korinna argued that lesbian women were not to blame for their 'condition.' "It is not their fault really. We should not reject the *poor people*, but accept them. Feel for them. They are born that way."[87] Fifteen women in my sample were accepting of homosexual behaviour; eleven of them identified themselves as feminists whereas the rest were indifferent. Another seven women who claimed to be indifferent to feminist ideas were less tolerant, and the remaining three were very critical of gay people. One of these women considered herself an anti-feminist and the other two indifferent to feminism. Feminist opinions appear to be linked in the sample to higher levels of tolerance and greater understanding toward 'others'. The consciousness, personal experience, and awareness of 'otherness' appear to be related to greater acceptance of social groups that could fall under similar categories of oppression and exclusion.

In general, deviation from heterosexual sex seems to "posit a threat to the view that sex is innate"[88] and therefore homosexuality is treated with "exaggerated horror." In Cyprus, as in Greece, homosexual behaviour has been interpreted as involving an 'active', very masculine man, and a 'passive,' 'feminine' man. Cypriots widely accept that the passive member in a male homosexual relationship is the 'real homosexual', the *poustis*;[89] the active partner is jokingly called *kouloumbaras*, and he can be more socially accepted as a man who had 'normal' sexual urges fulfilled with a member of the same sex. Many sexual activities jokingly described by soldiers (eighteen to twenty year old men) involve "X having been fucked by Y, because he is gay." This contradictory attitude on male homosexuality is reflected in the study by Georgiou mentioned above, who found that "the Cypriot priests ... believed that the passive homosexual was by far worse than the active one ... and also reflects the societal attitudes of the majority of Cypriot males."[90] One of my interviewees told me that her husband had such experiences with two men in the army and that he confessed it to her when they first met; she found it strange but acceptable because her husband was the active partner: "he is not exactly a *poustis*, right?"[91] Patriarchal attitudes are again dominant in the above mentioned interpretations, as traditional associations of sexual passivity and weakness are connected with gay men, who are 'feminine in behaviour' (*yenekotoi, poustidhes*). However, a

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[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Korinna, August 1997.

[88] Peter Loizos & Evthymios Papataxiarchis, 'Gender, Sexuality, and the Person in Greek Culture', in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.227.

[89] The *poustis* (passive homosexual) is "strongly denigrated as someone who fundamentally lacks full humanity, and his weakness exposes him to all sorts of evil dispositions ... *Poustis* comes to be a synonym for liar or thief, a man without dignity, and it strongly contrasts with the characterization of the man who adopts the 'male' role and who may claim a 'supermale' reputation, much as he might if he consorted with a prostitute." *Ibid.*, pp.227-8.

[90] George J. Georgiou, 'Sexual Attitudes of Greek Orthodox Priests in Cyprus," *The Cyprus Review*, Vol.4, No.2, 1992. Female homosexuality is not mentioned in the study, once again reflecting the attitudes of the society in general, and the researcher himself.

[91] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Jezebel, July 1997.

commonly used term to "suggest the possibility of sexual attraction between women"[92] does not exist. Further, "not only is there no female counterpart to the poustis, but there is no common term for a woman who would wish to take a 'male role, either." Female homosexuality, if expressed, is a deep secret that no one wishes to uncover. The association of women's sexuality to fertility is so strong that a need for women to 'express' sexuality in ways that cannot result to procreation is beyond perception.[93]

This restrictive construction of female sexuality within the context of procreation is dominant in the gender-role expectations for Cypriot women only. Foreign women are considered different. They are simply there for Cypriot men to have sex with. They are considered 'easy' and as long as they are 'lured', they will give a man 'what he wants.' Their attraction to the Cypriot man, or their willingness to be involved in sexual intercourse is irrelevant. After 1974, this 'foreign' woman was generally the tourist woman from Western Europe, and especially Scandinavian countries. This 'more sexually liberated' woman became 'the official reason for the increase of divorce' since she readily accepted the advances of the Cypriot man, who was in many cases, married.[94] However, after the collapse of Eastern Europe, Cyprus has witnessed unexpected changes in the family structure. Thousands of Russian, Rumanian, and Ukrainian women came to Cyprus to work as 'artistes.' The requirement has been that they become strippers/dancers in inner-city cabarets that have increased rapidly to reach a number close to a hundred. For an island of half a million inhabitants, the figure is relatively high. Numerous cases have been made public concerning the owners of these clubs who force the women to sleep with the customers for money, most of which are received by the club owners. Women between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five offer their 'services' to Cypriot men for prices varying from thirty to one hundred pounds. 'Massage parlours' are advertised on an everyday basis in the press, only later to be discovered to operate as 'homes' for these affairs. Prostitution has reached uncontrollable rates and is linked to another 'new phenomenon' in Cyprus, that of organised crime. Currently, all fifteen agents bringing foreign artistes into Cyprus have a criminal record. At the House Crime Committee, which discussed the link between prostitution and organised crime, Interior Ministry Permanent Secretary Thanos Michael said: "Prostitution will always be there whether it stems from cabarets, night-spots or pubs and we can't stop it. If we closed all the cabarets, would not artistes work in massage parlours, brothels or enter the island as tourists and work as prostitutes."[95] He also said, "the committee was considering limiting the number of foreign artistes at each cabaret. This would mean, however, that the remaining women would simply have to sleep with more men"[96] and, closing the cabarets would force the problem underground. The reasons behind the 'fact' that women would have to sleep with more men remains unchallenged (the amount of men requiring the 'services' would remain thus stable?). In fact, it is taken for granted and given as a reason for the perpetuation of the present, patriarchal status quo. The problem does not appear to be prostitution itself, or the exploitation of the Eastern European women concerned who are many times forced to do what they do not wish to do, but rather the links of prostitution with organised crime. Cyprus is a place where prostitution has been legally accepted as part of society and *'ierothoules'* (sacred servants / legal prostitutes) have been serving the 'common good'; organised crime has 'got in the way' of smoothly run, patriarchal affairs.

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[92] Loizos & Papataxiarchis, *Op.Cit.*, p.229.

[93] *Ibid.*

[94] For a thorough discussion on tourist women and Mediterranean men, see Sofka Zinovieff, 'Hunters and Hunted: Kamaki and the Ambiguities of Sexual Predation in a Greek Town.', in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

[95] *The Cyprus Weekly*, 'Government Cannot Fight Prostitution', 22-28 May 1998, p.6.

[96] *Ibid.*

Similar to northern Cyprus, in the non-occupied, southern Republic of Cyprus which is under study here, Russian and Rumanian women are seen as a source of disorder and danger, but they

> "...also have a more complex role in helping to define community boundaries at a time of change in gender roles and expectations ... The two aspects of female sexuality symbolised by Russians and Rumanians –deviant and unambiguously dangerous, as well as modern, attractive, and ambiguous- are present in constructions of gender and sexuality that also apply to Cypriot women. Russian and Rumanian women are an embodiment of the outsider within a role that is illustrated by the was in which they are incorporated into 'traditional' structures of authority and control."[97]

In the Republic of Cyprus, the symbolic and eventual problem becomes not the Eastern European women's entry as workers in the tourist industry, but rather as artistes, available to dance and 'fulfil the sexual wishes of men' (*sexualikes epithimies ton antron*), with money as their only demand. In many cases where Cypriot couples separate after the man's affair with an Eastern European woman, the immigration authorities are called to 'kick the woman out of the country' so that the man can return home. An immigration official explained that they were thus safeguarding the traditional Cypriot family.[98] The common story involves a middle-aged man who gets involved with a cabaret dancer in her late teens or early twenties and then decides to leave his family and live with her.[99] When one of the women in my study was recently subjected to the same experience, the first thing she was asked by her relatives was whether she would like to see the woman out of the country. Her positive reply led to Immigration officers deporting the woman a few months later.[100] Further, when I escorted a Russian student to the Immigration Authorities after she was forced to have sex with her Cypriot guardian, the immigration officer asked me (as I was translating) if the woman had been a virgin before the 'alleged rape.' I asked whether that made any difference to her case and he replied "most of these common women are asking for it, you see. They are poor and they come here to lure our men. We must make sure they are decent, but they never are."[101] Many women support the sentiments of the immigration officer and they openly express hatred and disgust in certain cases about the morality and behaviour of Eastern European artistes. Regarded as a direct threat to their marriages, and thus the 'legitimation' of their status in society, Eastern European women are expected to leave the island and 'leave us in peace.' Throughout the study, the women I interviewed and observed appeared to have clearly defined perceptions about 'other' women. Although most of them claimed to acknowledge women's oppression, they appeared inflexible and intolerant in their attitudes and behaviour toward 'other women.' The fact that urban, middle-class Cypriot women are involved in a process of gender awareness does not imply their internalisation and practice of discourses which are alternative to patriarchy: "during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors."[102]

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[97] Julie Scott, 'Sexual and National Boundaries in Tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research,* Vol.22, No.2, pp.385-403, 1993, p.400.

[98] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Immigration Officer, January 1997.

[99] I am personally aware in detail of nine cases, and I hear of similar cases very regularly, especially due to my involvement at the Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Abuse. Most interviewees in this study have also described several similar incidences.

[100] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Sappho, July 1997. My interviewee asked me not to get into details about her case, as 'everyone would understand who I am.'

[101] *Private Conversation with Author,* November 1996.

[102] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, Penguin, 1970, 1993, p.27.

Nevertheless, the feminist women in my sample illustrated that their awareness of gender oppression within their society increased their awareness about other levels of oppression within the same social structure.[103]

Many issues are raised by this particular expression of patriarchal structure in Cyprus. Ethnic, class, and gender divisions are mutually constitutive and in this context create difficulties for all the parties concerned. Under patriarchy, wives, lovers, 'proper' women, prostitutes, wealthy and poor women, and their offspring, are the losers of the 'regime' that has no 'clear' winner. Men control this regime only to destroy their marital relationships and the lives of poverty stricken young European women (whom they manipulate and eventually leave in most cases),[104] but also create the path for organised crime to flourish in the society where they live. By rejecting artistes, Cypriot women struggle to safeguard their marriages, whereas by choosing to work in cabarets in Cyprus, Eastern European women can escape poverty and unemployment in their countries. These women make choices and conscious decisions -based on the options available- over how to deal with the war that men have declared against them.[105]

3. The Dark Secret of the Family and Society: 'Abusing the Other'

"The climate of violence against women harms all women. To be female is to walk the world of fear."[106]

"It is not OK that he (the husband) hits me so badly, is it? I would not be complaining if it was less, but it is just too much."[107]

Dealing with the physical war against women[108] necessitates direct and immediate actions like the introduction of legislative measures aimed to prevent and punish the abusers. In Cyprus, the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, No.47 (I) was introduced in 1994. It defines violence as "any unlawful act or behaviour which results in direct actual physical or psychological injury to any member of the family and includes violence used for the purpose of sexual intercourse without the consent of the victim as well as for the purpose of restricting its liberty."[109]

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[103] It could further be argued here that, although it has been suggested above that feminist opinions can be linked to the greater understanding of social groups that could fall into categories of oppression and exclusion, when members of these groups pose a direct threat to these women's experiences, then they might demonstrate limited tolerance or acceptance towards them. This is an issue that ought to be further explored and analyzed by researchers.

[104] These women can indeed be argued to be manipulating men in different ways. For them it is a way of surviving in a sociopolitical system that offers limited opportunities.

[105] See Marilyn French, *The War Against Women*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992.

[106] *Ibid.*, p.200.

[107] *Private Telephone Conversation*, Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence, April 1995. The victim was a thirty-two-year old, female high school graduate. She was the mother of two and she lived in Nicosia, where she worked in a shop.

[108] Marilyn French, *Op.Cit.*

[109] The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, No.47 (I), 1994, Section 3(1).

As a volunteer for the Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence for four years, I received between one and six calls on the days I was on duty.[110] During the whole period of my voluntary service, I received three telephone calls from men. One of these men suggested that we (the organisation) should stop implying that only women were abused and oppressed by their husbands, since the reverse applied as well. For example, one man talked about his marriage and the fact that his wife was sleeping with her brother-in-law. He said that he "was a good husband because I never hit her even though I should have."[111] The marriage ended in a divorce and,

> "...the whole community is talking about her leaving the children and becoming a prostitute. How can an honourable woman exist without her husband? I have no problem of honour because I am a man but she is destroyed and she deserves it because she was not honest."[112]

'Honest' women, though, appear to be facing problems as well. The thirty-year-old, abused woman who called the centre represents an example of a great number of strikingly similar cases:

> "I am an honest and good woman. What have I done wrong? I clean, I have his meal ready in the evening when he gets home, I look after the kids (four), and I always take food to his mother. I can understand why other men hit their wives when they are ... you know what. But me? I have never been with anyone but my husband, I promise. I am not one of them..."[113]

A twenty-five-year-old urban, working-class woman also expressed her acceptance of men's violence towards women. Domestic abuse is so ingrained in the patriarchal structure of Cyprus, that women themselves justify it and look for 'proper' behaviour in order to avoid it. Men openly control women's actions, and women have accepted this for centuries. Women's tolerance of abuse and their acceptance of indoctrinated values pointing to the physical punishment of women who are 'wrong doers' are illustrated in this woman's words:[114]

> "When I found out that this woman was calling my house and putting the phone down, or trying to talk to my husband, I was furious. Our husbands are friends, but we never met. But she is cheap. She is married, and she was calling my house. I could not leave it at that, of course. My husband didn't tell me about it, even though it was going on for two months because, he was innocent and didn't want me to get upset or cause trouble with his friend and embarrass him. Anyway, the minute I found out, I called her husband, and told him she was disturbing my family. Next thing I know, she came to find me and tell me, 'I hope that

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[110] Two of the women in my sample have also been volunteers for the same Centre.

[111] *Private Telephone Conversation,* Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence, March 1996.

[112] *Ibid.*

[113] *Private Telephone Conversation with Author,* March 1996.

[114] A Turkish Cypriot interviewee discussed the issue of domestic violence in the two communities and argued that in her community "men do not hit women. Women have a better status in society than on this side, I think. Men in our community do not dare to hit their wives, or rape anyone, because the woman's male relatives will find out and slaughter him. Nothing remains secret in our community so her brothers or father would find out. In your society, I have heard there is a lot of violence. I think family values are not as strong as in our community. I have never heard of domestic abuse here." Other personal sources, though, expressed the opposite although the woman who pointed this out, asked me not to refer to particular examples. *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Elissa, April 1997.

> you are happy now. You are not the one who was hit last night so you do not care'. Like I should care! She messes up, and then because she is punished for it, it is my fault! I am glad he hit her. I am against men who hit their wives, but this guy had a reason. He is not one of those men who would hit her *for nothing*."[115]

Tolerance for domestic abuse, however, has lessened partly due to the growing awareness and information of the public through the Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence. The introduction of legislation might also have been a contributing factor, though not as a 'punishment' measure, but rather, as a way of showing women that what their husbands 'do to them' is not justified. The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, No.47 (I) of 1994 has increased the penalties for perpetrators of criminal acts committed against family members.[116] For example, the penalty for indecent assault on females and males is now imprisonment for five years as opposed to two, as it was before the changes in the above mentioned law. The law further provides for the protection of victims by allowing the issuing of inhibition orders, which prohibit the abuser from entering or staying in the family home.[117] However, a woman who called the Centre had to be taken to the hospital (by a volunteer) with broken ribs. The doctors did not ask her how it had happened and she was not given the x-rays. Thus, she could not make a complaint to the police. "I did not know I could do that; but even if I could, he'd find out, and he'd kill me"[118] she told me. Another woman who called the centre from a mountainous village said "I can't tell the policeman in the village because he is my husband's friend. I told him once and he told me to be patient because my husband does not really mean to do this. He just gets bad tempered."[119] Women are unaware of the provisions of the current law; however, even in cases when they were fully aware of it, the fact remains that they do not report violence. When a successful professional woman called the centre, she explained that "I know everything about the law, I know he is not justified, I know all about patriarchy, but I still cannot take him to court. I can cope with the abuse more than I can cope with people's tongue."[120] This woman is aware of the contradictions between her attitudes and her practices, she appears in distress partly because of it, and she identifies some of the reasons behind her particular actions. Furthermore, although all of my interviewees condemned domestic (physical) abuse, two admitted to have been subject to it.[121] One of them was an admitted feminist whereas the other one considered herself an anti-feminist. The first woman argued that her experience of physical abuse was one of the basic reasons, which led her into eventually adhering to feminist ideas and principles whereas the other one did not link her experience with abuse with gender inequality.[122] Despite these women's conflicting attitudes concerning gender relations, their actual experiences were very similar in terms of the physical abuse they had been subjected to.

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[115] *Private Conversation with Author,* February 1996 (Not part of the 25 interviewees)

[116] The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, No.47 (I) of 1994. Section 4(2).

[117] *Ibid.*, Section 8(1) and 8(2).

[118] *Private Conversation with Author,* Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence, May 1996.

[119] *Private Telephone Conversation,* Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence, July 1997.

[120] *Private Telephone Conversation with Author,* February 1996. Gossip and 'people's tongue' are discussed in Chapter Six.

[121] See Chapter Seven, Interview with Mastigga.

[122] The relationship between personal experience and identification with feminist ideas is discussed in Chapter Six.

3.1. Hidden Realities: Rape in a Small Society

The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, No.47 (I), 1994, recognises rape as a crime.[123] Between 1981 and 1994, there were three to seven reported rapes every year. In 1995, the number increased to eight and in 1997 it went up to ten. In the last two decades, there were one to three reported attempted case of rape every year.[124] No information was available for me concerning how many of these cases involved Cypriot women, but experience at the Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Abuse, as well as fieldwork undertaken, indicate that there is a near-zero percentage of Cypriot women who report rape. Most newspapers and the mass media inform the public on attempted rapes by Cypriot men of foreign, especially Scandinavian women. In 1997, there was a heavily publicised case (the first of its kind) of the rape of a Cypriot woman with her young daughter while parked by the side of the road in Nicosia.

According to the European Commission of Human Rights, there was strong evidence of rape in Cyprus during the 1974 war. The Cyprus Government complained of

> "...wholesale and repeated rapes of women of all ages from 12 to 71, sometimes to such an extent that the victims suffered haemorrhages or became mental wrecks ... in certain cases members of the same family were repeatedly raped, some of them in front of their own children. In other cases, women were brutally raped in public. Rapes were on many occasions accompanied by brutalities such as violent biting of the victims to the extent of severe wounding, hitting their heads on the floor and wringing their throats almost to the point of suffocation. In some cases attempts to rape were followed by the stabbing or killing of the victim."[125]

An urban, middle-class woman described how during the 1974 events, at the age of sixteen, she was raped by three Turkish soldiers in the presence of her parents and her two older sisters. She later found it difficult to get married because she "was poor and dishonoured." She got married at the age of thirty to a "good man who accepted me as I am. However, I never told him that I got pregnant and had an abortion because that would have been too much."[126] Roussou explained that in November 1974 the Press in Nicosia reported for the first time that rape victims were facing further problems since their husbands or fiancés had filed to the Church for divorce. Public interest in the matter was portrayed through correspondence in the daily newspapers; some of it supported the male partners who could not accept their wives 'under the circumstances'. The direct involvement of the Church was unavoidable since

> "...it was the only institution legally capable of granting divorce. Even in the cases of engaged couples where the priest blessed the rings and signed the dowry contract, approval of non-marriage had to be sought through the Church since vows had been exchanged and the engagement blessed by a church ceremony."[127]

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[123] The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, No.47 (I), 1994, Section 5. Rape within marriage is also recognized by the law.

[124] Police Headquarters, Nicosia, Cyprus, Personal Visit, June 1998. During my visit to the Police Headquarters, I was not given any formal documents, but a piece of paper was prepared on the spot using information from the computer.

[125] Council of Europe, Report of the European Commission of Human Rights, 10 July 1976, p.121. Quoted in Maria Roussou, 1985, p,93.

[126] *Private Interview with Author*, January 1996. (not part of the 25 interviews)

[127] Roussou, p.96.

It is telling that men would increase their requests for divorces or dissolution of engagements due to their wives' –or future wives'- rapes. The involvement and position of the Church in those instances and the issue of rape during 1974 in general needs to be further explored, together with its detrimental consequences for a number of women in Cyprus.

Twenty four of my interviewees condemned rape[128] in any situation and under any circumstances, and agreed that it was possible for a husband to rape his wife: "If a woman says no, then it means no, doesn't it?"[129] Twenty-two of them, however, explained that although they would probably get a divorce "if such a thing ever happened,"[130] they explained that they would never take their husbands to Court because of it. "Can you think of the ridicule? Never mind that he would probably kill me afterwards" one woman commented.[131] Although these women were clear about their beliefs on their rights over their bodies and sexuality, they were not prepared 'to punish' anyone who violated those rights. Part of the reason is actual fear of further physical abuse, but also fear of stigmatisation, social rejection, and isolation.[132] A twenty-seven-year-old, urban, working-class student confided in me something that 'no one else on earth knows'. When she was seven years old, one evening she was walking down the street towards her grandmother's house in the village, when she was confronted by an eighteen-year-old young man who sexually abused her and raped her. She did not scream because she was 'too frightened to be seen with this man' and when he explained to her that what she had done was terribly wrong, she went home and locked herself into her room. She had never told anyone to the day of our conversation. When she was feeling a 'bit better because of having told me', she explained how she had spent years during her adolescence worrying about the loss of her virginity and how that would prevent her from finding a husband. Her mother had always told her that her virginity was her 'passport to a wedding and respect from her future husband.'[133] Greer explains:

> "When little girls do meet an exhibitionist or happen to talk to a stranger who does something odd to them, they are to frightened and guilty, as well as too worried about the effect on their parents, even to tell them. It is a contributing factor in the pattern of child violation that little girls think of themselves as victims, and cannot even summon the energy to scream or run away. Because they are prevented from understanding the threat, they can have no adequate defence. The bitterest irony is that the child violators are themselves products of the same clumsy conditioning."[134]

My research and direct involvement at the Centre for the Prevention and Handing of Domestic Abuse indicate that urban middle-class women are less tolerant of domestic abuse than working-class women in both urban and rural settings. My interviewees, as compared with other women I observed or had contact with, seemed to be more critical of violence, possibly because of the greater options available to them. More specifically, sixteen women in my sample were very

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[128] Melanie does not condemn rape when a woman is asking for it. See interview with Melanie in Chapter Seven.

[129] *Private Interview with Author,* Interview with Artemissia, July1997.

[130] *Private Interview with Author,* Interview with Elissa, June 1997.

[131] *Private Interview with Author,* Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

[132] Susan Brownmiller defines rape as a "conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear", in *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape,* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975, p.114

[133] *Private Conversation with Author,* September 1997 (Approval to use the incidence came later, in May 1998 when the woman was asked)

[134] Greer, *Op.Cit.,* 1968, p.87.

critical of domestic abuse. Eleven of these sixteen women were feminist and four of them indifferent. The remaining one was a woman who identified herself as anti-feminist. The other anti-feminist woman in my sample (out of a total of two) appeared to justify violence against women under certain circumstances. My results indicate that tolerant attitudes about violence against women and domestic abuse are not related to women's stated feminist opinions. However, identification with feminist ideas and gender consciousness is a critical factor, which motivates and contributes to women's stated decision to leave abusive partners.

3.2. Of Legal Offences: Sexual Harassment and Women

> *"Sexual harassment exposes men's deep, unacknowledged sexual hatred of women and the censored fact that men are the agents of women's oppression."*[135]

Although demonstrating a certain acknowledgement of domestic abuse and making efforts to protect the victims, the law does not treat sexual harassment as an offence. When a female employee of one of the biggest banks in Cyprus in 1998 complained of persistent verbal sexual harassment by one of her 'superiors', she complained to higher levels of management who allegedly tried to hush it up. There was a highly publicised case as "no case of sexual harassment has been contested in the courts before ... The only previous sexual harassment case involved a female tourism employee who was awarded £4000 last year, but that case was heard by an industrial tribunal and was uncontested."[136] Discussing the case, it was argued that "both parties now seem on course for a lengthy legal battle the like of which Cyprus has never seen before,"[137] especially since the woman was allegedly asking for about 350,000 Cypriot pounds. Later, one more female employee supported the former by complaining of sexual harassment by the same person. However, the whole case was settled out of court in the end for 120,000 pounds. More precisely, in the first case, the woman resigned after negotiations with the bank management and after receiving the above amount, whereas in the second case the woman got promoted and received other benefits. Since the legal system does not yet provide for the victims of sexual harassment at the workplace (or anywhere else), this was again a demonstration of a patriarchal regime that strives to remain unchangeable at 'any cost.' In a similar case involving a Rumanian woman married to a Cypriot man, the case went to court and her abuser (her employer) was accused of indecent attack/assault, because of the lack of legislation on sexual harassment. Although hundreds of complaints are reported by female members of various trade unions, the cases always remain unresolved or ignored, since little or nothing can be done about it. When cases were reported to the police, no help was given to the victims.[138] In one case, where there was an attempted rape, the victim reported the incident to the police, but absolutely nothing was done about it since the abuser enjoyed a high status in his community. The victim finally resigned and eventually experienced nervous breakdown and social isolation.[139] Similar feelings were experienced in 1997 by a female Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation employee who was sexually assaulted at her place of work. The woman suffered a shock and had to leave her job, but the whole case has been, after some publicity, suppressed. In the last few months, and more specifically in the summer and fall of 1998, a number of sexual harassment cases have reached the headlines of both

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[135] French, *Op.Cit.*, p.137

[136] *The Cyprus Mail*, Sunday, March 1998, p.1.

[137] *Ibid.*, p.2.

[138] Center for Research and Development, *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in Cyprus*. Intercollege, Nicosia, Report 20 March 1997, p.8.

[139] *Ibid.*

the daily press and magazines. Most involve harassment of women by male doctors, and the most recent case, a male university lecturer and his female student.

When the Association for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace organised an open lecture on sexual harassment, the participation by various groups, institutions, and individuals was relatively low.[140] After the lecture, a study was contacted[141] to examine the extent of the phenomenon in Cyprus. The sample consisted of a large number of working people, 66.6 percent of them being women and the rest men. Both personal interviews were conducted and confidential questionnaires were distributed. 84.4 percent of the people agreed that the phenomenon did indeed exist. Out of this number, 46.5 percent believed that the phenomenon was observed very regularly, 34.3 percent said it happened 'sometimes' and 19.2 percent claimed that it was extremely rare. However, 15 percent of the respondents felt that there was no sexual harassment at the workplace in Cyprus. More than half of the respondents (51 percent) believed that people who were sexually harassed provoked with their behaviour and appearance; 48 percent of women agreed with the above. Further, more men than women in the study complained of having been sexually harassed. that is, 59.3 percent of the men and 40.7 percent of the women. Moreover, 38 percent of the respondents considered the 'provocative dress of women' as sexual harassment whereas only 16,5 percent felt the same in the case of men. More women (60 percent) felt that 'provocative dress for women was sexual harassment than men (40 percent). Again, women appeared to be less 'liberal' than men were. In the study, it was also found that 55 percent of the women who were sexually harassed felt intense anger whereas only 5.2 percent of the men felt the same. Furthermore, 63.2 percent of the women felt greatly disturbed as opposed to 10.2 percent of the men. Finally, 26.7 percent of the women experienced 'great fear' whereas no man claimed the same.

Two women in my sample suggested that sexual harassment is merely the response of men to provocative female behaviour. One of them said, "it is not really harassment but simply the reaction of men to cheap women who are asking for it."[142] The other one explained that "this sort of thing does not happen at the workplace, some people just exaggerate. I think that some women want it, some men are creeps, and you get isolated incidents of some form of abuse, but it is not in the workplace, or anywhere specific. It is just that a few people do not know how to behave."[143] The former considered herself as anti-feminist whereas the other was not interested in "these sort of things at all."[144] The remaining twenty-three of the twenty-five women in my study, irrespective of their individual gender attitudes, acknowledged the existence of sexual harassment and stressed that it was very common in the workplace: "there are all these bastards who think that just because they hold a position of authority, they can stare at your breast and legs while you walk past. I ignore it, because he (the boss) is just looking. I hate it, he gives me the creeps. But, if he ever says or tries to do anything, I will make sure he is fired."[145] First, for this woman the 'gaze' is not sufficient to require immediate measures to be taken, despite the distress that is causes her. She recognises that his action is beyond his authority, she disapproves of it, but in practice, what she does is to accept it without saying anything. The conflict between perception and praxis becomes evident in the case of this woman. Second, although this woman suggested that she 'would make sure he was fired', whether this man would indeed be accused of sexual harassment is a different matter as no legislation protects the rights of this woman. Cypriot men keep women in a constant state of fear. Similarly, women can further contribute towards male dominance -through the perpetuation of sexual harassment, by explaining the phenomenon as some women's fault. Finally, by not

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[140] January 1997.

[141] Centre for Research and Development, *Op.Cit.*

[142] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Melanie, July 1997.

[143] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Hydna, July 1997

[144] *Ibid.*

[145] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Herodias, July 1997.

acknowledging the existence of sexual harassment as a serious issue that requires legislation, the patriarchal state (and its predominantly male leaders and decision makers) manages to perpetuate this fear.

4. Conclusion: The Confinement of Women outside the Home

This chapter has demonstrated how the patriarchal 'regime' operates in Cyprus through the various ways in which men control women sexually, bodily, and emotionally. My study demonstrates that although patriarchal relations dominate everyday life and the activities of Cypriot people, attitudes of urban women have sharply changed since other studies were conducted in the 1980s. It has been demonstrated that women in the 1990s are subjected to conflicting messages on 'proper' behaviour and appearance and are caught between resisting or adopting the socio-cultural changes currently taking place in Cyprus. Moreover, although there has been evidence throughout the chapter of how women are still subject to norms concerning their 'private' sphere of existence, they are not as confined within the home as they used to be; participation in the labour market and other socio-political changes have resulted in women's more recent confinement within the so-called 'public life' and the state itself.[146] Although moral and sexual codes are not as restrictive as previous studies on Cyprus indicated, a Cypriot woman's sexuality is of great importance in the way she is perceived, judged, and defined in her everyday life and activities. Premarital relationships are controlled with the institution of the engagement, a social device by which parents control women's sexual practices. Further, extra-marital relationships are not socially accepted by either men or women; at the same time, they are more tolerated than previous studies have indicated. Moreover, abortion is not a highly controversial issue for urban women in Cyprus as society and doctors ignore a practice, which is simply not discussed in public. In the present analysis, it was further demonstrated that feminist women were more aware of gender as well as class and ethnic divisions within Cypriot society than non-feminist or anti-feminist women were. Thus, the feminist women in this study have demonstrated higher levels of tolerance and greater understanding towards 'others' (such as homosexuals, domestic assistants from other ethnic groups, and women from other countries who work in Cyprus as prostitutes) and difference. Some women's consciousness and experience of actually 'being the other' seem to lead to their acceptance of members of groups in society who are themselves 'others'. Finally, in this chapter it has been suggested that in cases of domestic abuse and sexual harassment, most women interviewed condemned any practice that bodily, sexually, or psychologically demeaned women, irrespective of their identifying themselves as feminists or not.

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[146] See Sylvia Walby, *Theorising Patriarchy*, Blackwell, 1990 and *Gender Transformations*. London: Routledge, 1997.

"I will tell you how you can survive in Cyprus:
you have to be a man all day,
and a woman all night."

Woman, twenty-nine, working-class, rural residence, mother of four, homemaker. Upon my expressing admiration over her ability to fix her own car.
March, 1997.

Chapter VI
Feminisms, Identities, and Dreams: On Being a Cypriot Woman

1. Cypriot Women's Experiences: Introducing the Relationship Between Identity and Praxis

"Women's ties to men limit their consciousness of themselves as a subordinated group and, thus, shape interpretations of gender inequality... The ... ties of social, economic, and interpersonal dependence of women on men affect both men's and women's interests and their interpretations of gender inequality."[1]

The previous chapters of Part Two analysed and explored women's attitudes and practices in society, within the context of the family, marriage, morality, and sexuality, as well as their relationships toward 'other women'. The purpose of this chapter is to examine women's consciousness of gender inequality in Cypriot culture; to find out how these women place themselves in society and how they define their gender identity; to explore women's 'feminist consciousness'; and, to discuss women's involvement in activism directed toward social and political change in patriarchal structures. In the process of analysing feminist praxis and feminist attitudes, I found that the two are separate issues, which are at the same time related to one another. Further, adherence to feminist ideology and the development of feminist identity can sometimes create immense conflict and distress for women who, for reasons discussed below, do not abide by feminist praxis.

Asking questions about gender should not immediately be interpreted as a simple way of learning more about women, their attitudes, and practices. A feminist approach can provide the tools for learning more about gender identity, gender roles, and the male-centred, traditional interpretations of these, as well as reasons for, and involvement in activism in order to bring about social change within these spheres. Although an increasing amount of research on feminist attitudes has taken place in the last decades in other parts of the world, this type of analysis, which adheres to feminist methodology, is now just appearing in Cyprus. There are no background statistics on the issue, apart from one small-scale survey carried out as recently as 1998.[2] The fact that only one such study took place, in 1998, is in itself an indication of attitudes about feminism in Cyprus.

The study was conducted by A.M.E.R, a market research company, and followed the instructions of local magazine journalists who decided on the questions. Men between the ages of 18-55 were interviewed;[3] thus, the only published study on gender role attitudes in Cyprus concentrated on male attitudes. Although the content analysis of the survey is not the aim of the following chapter, an indication of the results can be an interesting demonstration of attitudes in Cyprus. In fact, the results support the argument of this thesis that strong sexism is dominant in the current structure of this society. Three hundred and three men between the ages of 18-55 from urban and rural communities were asked a set of seven questions by telephone by fourteen *women* researchers. In the question 'Do you think that a woman would be as able as a man to be the president of a country?' 59 percent of the respondents answered positively and 41 percent gave a negative response.[4] More

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[1] Janeen Baxter & Emily W. Kane, 'Dependence and Independence; A Cross-National Analysis of Gender Inequality and Gender Attitudes', *Gender and Society*, Vol.9, No.2, April 1995, pp. 193-194.

[2] 'OMIKPON' monthly magazine, March 1998.

[3] A.M.E.R World Research, Market Research Company, February 1998, Tables of Results, received after my personal request.

[4] In a 1982 survey, when women were asked, "if women governed countries, the world would be better," 22 percent answered probably no, and 20 percent said definitely no. Although the questions

specifically, 71 percent of university graduates answered yes as opposed to 56 percent of high-school leavers. Furthermore, 61 percent of urban residents answered yes as opposed to 57 percent of rural residents. Another question whose results are indicative of the local culture is, 'Would you accept a woman as your wife, if she had a lot of sexual experiences before your relationship?' The majority of the respondents, or 61 percent, answered no, whereas 39 percent said yes. More specifically, 54 percent of university graduates said no, as opposed to 64 percent of high-school leavers. Moreover, 35 percent of rural residents said no as opposed to 41 percent often residing in cities. Forty percent of the men who gave a positive answer were in the 18-29 age group, as opposed to 39 percent in the 30-44 age group, and 34 percent of the 45-55 age group. When asked whether a man and a woman with the same qualifications have the same opportunities for career development in Cyprus, 58 percent answered yes and 42 percent said no. Forty percent of the university graduates said yes, as opposed to 60 percent of high school leavers. Further, 56 percent of urban residents and 63 percent of rural residents answered positively. When asked whether a woman should have her career or her family as a priority, 62 percent said her family, 5 percent said her job. and 32 percent said both. Explanations were not however given as to how women could have two priorities which social norms and values portray as contradictory. A 'dynamic' woman was less feminine, agreed 17 percent of the respondents, as opposed to the remaining 83 percent. Finally, these men were asked to 'rank' the Cypriot woman, from a scale of one (a woman with many taboos) to 10 ('a totally sexually liberated woman', whatever this term might imply). The implications of this question concerning attitudes in Cyprus are rather obvious: 23 percent of the men 'ranked' women from 1-4; 37 percent said five; 31 percent said 6; 16 percent said 7; the remaining 15 percent said 8+. The average worked out to be an inconclusive 5.5. Not good, not bad; not here, not there; Not 'too liberated', not 'too old-fashioned'. Just right for them, perhaps? As demonstrated in previous chapters, during the last twenty years, and especially after the events of 1974, there have been important shifts in ideology concerning women's lives in terms of employment, education, and family patterns. Consequently, changes in the lives of men must also be reflected on their attitudes. Although the present chapter is concerned with women's rather than men's attitudes, these results can provide useful background information for the purpose of my analysis.

Throughout the analysis and interpretations of the results gathered during fieldwork, I found myself in conflict between being a Cypriot feminist and being an 'academic' interested in exploring the 'feminist' attitudes and practices of other women in my society. The dilemma of being 'one of them' but 'not one of them', which I referred to in previous chapters,[5] became intense. My interpretation of the (participant) observation of some of these women, and their own interpretations and answers during the interviews, were on occasions very conflicting. What I knew *of* them, what I had understood, and what I was hearing during the interviews sometimes seemed contradictory; interpretations of women's own words became problematic. Interpretations and attitudes of gender relations amongst urban, middle-class women were diverse and different feminist, as well as other gender discourses have been found to exist within the group of women I studied. Further, *contradictions and conflicts between attitudes and practices of urban, middle-class women were found in all cases, but the nature of these contradictions would vary in most cases. Thus conflicts took many forms and were experienced differently by individual women.* I am aware that I was personally 'involved' in the analysis of these interviews. Exploring women's gender attitudes and their identities as feminists or non-feminists has been fascinating but hard. First, as already mentioned, no other work has been published concerning this topic before. Second, women's reactions and reservations about discussing these issues, as well as their admission (in five cases) that "this is something I never really thought about before but I will try and answer,"[6] or "we never

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differ, the implications are similar. In 1982, 42 percent of the women gave a negative answer as opposed to 41 percent of the men in 1998. Lia Mylona , *Op.Cit.*, p.103.

[5] See especially Chapter One.

[6] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Melanie, July 1997.

really discuss these things, do we?"[7] made the interviewing process quite slow and hard to continue. On three occasions, women were fascinated by the thought of discussing issues that "you would understand. Most people do not understand, and unfortunately, most women do not care to listen."[8] On occasions, there was a very fine line dividing the insights which "similar experiences of respondents bring to the research process and the element of exploitation implicit in mixing up one's own personal history with those of women whose experiences"[9] are being studied. However, a method for detaching the researcher from the circumstances of life and the fact of her involvement with a particular social class, a specific set of views and ideas, or from the simply being a member of society,[10] has never been devised. Besides, the detachment of the scholar herself is not always desirable during the research process, as many academics would argue. Rather, an understanding and an acknowledgement of the position and the circumstances of the researcher herself might be what is required.

1.1. Interpretations of Feminisms

> *"The seemingly innocuous question, 'What is the position of women in Cyprus?' is more often than not rhetorical. It presupposes the 'knowledge' that they are in fact dominated. One may deny the 'backwardness' of one's culture – 'Men and women are equal' – in which case one is simply not believed. Or one may defend it – 'women in Cyprus are not promiscuous' – in which case one simply confirms one's backwardness. Alternatively, one may take the middle ground: acknowledge the backwardness but emphasise the modernising trends – 'they are still subjugated, of course, but things are changing, particularly in towns' – in which case one implicitly acknowledges the other's superiority for setting the standards."*[11]

Argyrou argues that practices should not be understood as traditional or modern, since they do not follow a distinctive modern or traditional logic. Rather, he suggests that practices be conceptualised as strategies, actions that give actors the opportunity to manipulate contradictions to their advantage, "however these may be defined in different cultures or in different contexts within the same culture."[12] Actors might occasionally be able to manipulate these conflicts to their advantage, but that depends on their relative power within the social structures they live. Those who do 'enjoy' this relative power, get women to vote if they need the 'housewife' vote, and when these women elect the particular person, they are not given any further public voice. Alternatively, they give women positions in the labour market, and then they pay them less. *Actresses,* similar to many of Argyrou's actors, however, have less power to 'manipulate conflicts and contradictions' to their advantage; instead, they have to devise alternative 'strategies' often at the expense of their time (dual careers), status (social stigma), and on occasions, their physical well-being (actual domestic violence). In order for actors and actresses to manipulate these conflicts to their advantage, they need to have the power and authority, or simply the choice to do so. Further, although for Argyrou's analysis, in certain cases one implicitly indeed "acknowledges the other's superiority for setting the

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[7] *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Eplinice, August 1997

[8] *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Lycimache, July 1997

[9] Diane Reay, 'Insider Perspectives or Stealing the Words out of Women's Mouths: Interpretation in the Research Process', *Feminist Review,* No.53, Summer 1996, p.57.

[10] Edward Said, *Orientalism,* New York: Vintage, 1979.

[11] Vassos Argyrou, *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean; The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.5.

[12] *Ibid.*, p.164.

standards", there are other cases where dominant ideology and structures decide for the actors (and actresses). Thus, in Cyprus men do not have the superiority but the authority to set the standards. Acknowledging this is one thing, and having the ability (and opportunity) to do something about it or change it is another. Why do certain women have this 'ability' more than others do? What is the force that motivates women to act upon the imposition of certain standards and not others? These questions will be addressed in the chapter.

In my study of urban women, I have found that there is some acknowledgement of gender inequality and the institutionalised oppression of women by men in Cypriot society. There is further an open and clear recognition by many urban women of their inferior position in society; the same women, however, do very little to change their 'condition.' Their condition is taken for granted, accepted for what it is, and hardly anything is done to transform it, the general feeling being that there is nothing that can be done. Further, the interpretation and conceptualisation of gender relations by the women in my sample varied; different understandings of feminism, as well as other discourses of gender became apparent throughout the interviews. Out of the twenty-five, two declared themselves to be anti-feminist, eleven to be feminist (the same ones that were also involved with community work), and twelve were indifferent to the idea of feminism (or did not want to be labelled as feminists). Feminist women identified with feminism in different ways; women who claimed to be indifferent to feminism gave various explanations for their indifference; and, the two anti-feminist women I interviewed had contrasting views for their opposition to feminist ideology.[13] The first said that feminism was only a pastime for women who had nothing else in their minds:

> "Women are feminists because they have nothing else to think about. No kids, no husbands, or husbands who are wimps, or they simply do not get enough sex. That is why all of them, when they find a man, if they ever do, their feminism goes down the drain. I mean, it is only very young women who know nothing of the world or spinsters/career women who have time and money to spend on these things. If you have a man who loves you and cares for you, you realise that all this is bullshit."[14]

The second woman acknowledged women's oppression by men, expressed disillusionment with feminist activism, and felt that feminism has failed to give women what they needed. Further, she pointed to her frustration with the 'double shift' that women have to deal with in current times, and the lack of any alternatives in Cypriot society:

> "I am an anti-feminist and I'll tell you why. Before this wave of so-called feminism (probably referring to the late 1970s 'feminist movement' in Cyprus mentioned in Chapter Three), all women had to do was to clean the house, look after the children and the elderly, read the coffee and sometimes get beaten up. Now, women do all of these things, but they also need to get degrees and work full time for it."

Eleven out of the twenty-five women whom I interviewed have been directly involved with (women's) voluntary institutions or non-governmental-organisations.[15] They were volunteers at the Centre for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Abuse, members of the Bicommunal Women's

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[13] Upon reporting on the death of a famous Greek writer who died in 1998 at the age of 76, a national Cypriot newspaper article explained that her work concentrated around "the woman of our times, her problems, her struggles for gender equality. It is to this female image that her last book 'From Medea to Cinderella – the Story of the Phallus' is dedicated ... In her introduction of her book, Lili Zografou declared that this was not a feminist book: 'I am a passionate anti-feminist, for the simple reason that I was born a woman' she said." *Philelefthreros*, 3 October 1998, p.27.

[14] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Melanie, July 1997.

[15] See Appendix V: Sample and Content Analysis

Group, or involved in the Association for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace. One of them worked full-time at the women's section of a political party. Some of these women were involved in more than one of these organisations. I had personally heard most of them talk about social issues in general before I asked to interview them. Some wanted to be called feminists but felt it necessary to clarify their exact definition of this. Some wanted to be called feminists but were sceptical of the implications of it. Two of them called themselves feminists, explained what they meant by that, and led lifestyles that contradicted these explanations, as they, themselves argued.[16] For instance, one woman said, "I believe in feminism, I feel a feminist, and I understand feminism. But in Cyprus, I can't be one. As simple as that; I have tried, but I have tried for so long, and with no results. I cannot *practice* feminism, as I understand it. Not in this country."[17] Feminist women in Cyprus are very isolated from the majority in society. They experience alienation because of their beliefs. The same woman continued:

> " I don't just preach feminism to be heard by other people. I live it on an everyday basis. I experience and sense patriarchy in every single situation in my life. I trace it at home, at work, when I go out, when I talk to friends. When I mention it, people think I am mad. I get very sad, not angry, but sad, when these people are female close friends of mine. I feel so lonely. I know that when I am around, my friends try to adjust the conversation to 'suit' me. They said so on numerous occasions. They told me that they stop talking about recipes and hair and fashion. They do not understand that I do not mind that. They do not understand me. And it makes me frustrated, but also determined to explain to them as well as I can what I see, what I feel, and what I experience. But then, I find myself keeping quiet and pretending I don't understand."[18]

Another woman also expressed her 'inability' to 'practice' her feminism in Cyprus. She said:

> "I like it that you are a feminist and all that, but people cannot be like this, it's too weird and difficult and really, it would make my husband very angry. Your man is not Cypriot, that's why *he takes all this* from you."[19]

Feminism, here, is perceived as a burden, a problem that a man can choose to accept or not tolerate in the relationship. Feminism becomes an issue for the man to control rather than the woman. Similarly, domestic responsibilities are not re-negotiated in order for women to be involved in the community. On the contrary, women are given permission to be active in the community so long as it does not affect their domestic duties[20] or the power relationships with their partners. Men define women's practices, irrespective of women's own attitudes and perceptions. In an informal speech, a male social scientist talked about the influence of the Ottoman period in Cyprus explaining that "It was different in those days. Women *had to* do the housework. It is not like now, when they have choices ... After the 1974 events, the beginning of the *full liberation* of women started but of course, there is still a lot to be done. (Full liberation seeming to mean the changes in the legal system, as he later explained).... Tough conditions, a great deal of difficulties: both men and women have to work

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[16] *Private Conversation with Authors.* Interviews with Artemissia, Deborah, Phryne, Mastigga, Philaenis, Athaliah, June – September 1997.

[17] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Deborah, June 1997

[18] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Deborah, June 1997.

[19] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Korinna, August 1997

[20] Naomi Abrahams, 'Negotiating Power, Identity, Family, and Community; Women's Community Participation,' *Gender and Society,* Vol.10, No.6, December 1996, pp.768-796, p.792.

whereas before women could *enjoy* staying at home."[21] The question he addressed to the audience at the end of his speech was "How do men control women? Where does freedom stop and control start? It is a difficult line to draw. It is the same with children. Is there too much freedom, should we control them?"[22] Men decide how much freedom women and children are allowed in this society. The message given to Cypriot women in that audience was that the more 'open minded' the men are, the more freedom they will allow, and women should be grateful for that. This is considered natural and is not subject to discussion.

People's interpretations of gender inequality are partly related to the dominant contemporary view that men's sexual drive is greater than that of women. For example, socio-biological theories of gender inequality have conveniently justified female passivity and male infidelity through defining men's sexual drive as greater than that of women.[23] In the "Cypriot Woman" study of 1982, it was found that eight percent of *women* regarded extramarital sex as 'natural' and 'excusable' for men, while in no case was it considered natural for women, and one percent would excuse it for women.[24] In Cyprus, there is a dominant image of men as seed givers whose function is to fertilise women. As a thirty-year-old, middle-class man told me,

> "...we are genetically different. We are superior, I guess, not in a sexist way, but in that we have the ability to give women babies everyday, all the time, whereas women are naturally different. They can have one baby every nine months. It's like this in relationships. Men are polygamous and women are monogamous ... the man will go out in search for sex and a variety of sexual partners. The woman, like in the animal kingdom, will stay at home, in the nest, to protect the children. You do not have the same drive, it is simply not in your nature."[25]

This man expressed his views to his wife and myself. His wife enjoys 'apparent autonomy and equality' in Roussou's terms, but within the home, both ideology and practice differ. Roussou explains:

> "Apparent autonomy and equality enjoyed by predominantly middle-class educated urban women, is essentially illusory. These women are accorded formal equality and some autonomy but this is denied in the reality of their family life. The complex of traditional values, modern practices and unchanging sexual power relations, produces not increased freedom for women, but conflict, contradiction and continued frustration ... [they] are expected to follow a set of rules and apply them in all spheres of their life."[26]

I would argue, however, that some of the women themselves do not have any illusions. Six of the eleven feminist women in my sample did not have illusions about their autonomy and gender equality. Rather, my findings suggest that they were directly (or indirectly in some cases) aware of the conflicts and contradictions they faced in their every day experiences and the resulting frustration they experienced. Some women interpreted power relationships as their own problem:

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[21] Cypriot Social Scientist, *Speech on Cypriot Society*, 1997.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] See related discussion in Chapter Five.

[24] Costas Paschalis, 'The Sexual Liberation of the Cypriot Woman', in Lia Mylona *et als*, *Op.Cit.*, p.63.

[25] *Private Conversation with Author*, July 1997.

[26] Roussou, *Op.Cit.*, p.617.

> "Maybe women in Cyprus do not try to have an equal relationship with men. But I do not think that all women are oppressed. For example, I am not oppressed. I feel OK about things. But I think that women in Cyprus are not liberated. I have never been abroad but I think that women in other places, like in Europe, are better off. They can have boyfriends and all that without hassle. Like, in P (a village), I have a friend who has a clothes shop and she doesn't have any mini skirts in the shop anymore, because women there do not wear them, they can't because their men shout."[27]

Others considered patriarchy as the cause of these problems, and felt that it was a problem for most women. However, in my study I have concluded that, similar to Miri Song's findings on Chinese women's experiences within the family business, some *feminist* women in my sample have been able to exercise more autonomy than others.[28] The reasons for the exercise of this autonomy are explored further in this chapter.

The twelve women in the sample who did not want to be labelled feminists had various reasons and interpretations of gender roles and feminism. Eight of them did not like the idea of being associated with feminism because these are "radical women who want to dominate men because they think they are superior to them."[29] The remaining four gave other reasons for their 'indifference': "I am not interested in these issues, really. It is not something I ever think about."[30] One interviewee who thoroughly acknowledged women's oppression in Cypriot society wrote on the form at the beginning of the interview that she was indifferent to feminist ideas. At the end of the interview, she decided to change it because "talking about it has clarified my thoughts."[31] This woman was actively involved in an organisation that is directly aimed at helping women. She argued:

> "I don't know what a feminist is. I am not a feminist, I do not care. I mean, I think extreme feminists think that they should rule men. I don't want to be called a feminist. I imagine these women to be dominant and authoritarian."[32]

The interpretation of feminism as an ideology that aims to put women in an authoritative position over men was also expressed by another woman, who said:

> "I think feminists think that women are superior to men. I don't care about what they say. I am not against them but I have no interest in them ... I think that there is no real equality between the sexes in Cyprus. Like, my dad has more rights than my mum. He can do more things. My dad will go out with his friends but my mum does not dare."[33]

Similarly, another woman said:

> "I am a feminist and I believe in women. But I am not one of *those* feminists. You know, who think they are above men and all that. So, maybe I am not a feminist. I dislike all those women who call themselves feminist and then go out and shout for their rights. I just want to

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[27] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Pulcheria, June 1997.

[28] Miri Song, 'Between the Front and the Back; Chinese Women's Work in Family Businesses'. *Women's Studies International Forum,* Vol.18, No.3, pp.285-298, 1995, p.269.

[29] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Korinna, August 1997.

[30] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Hydna, August 1997.

[31] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Theela, June 1997.

[32] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Theela, June 1997.

[33] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Pulcheria, June 1997.

> be treated equally to men. This is not something that you can do in the streets, it is something you earn with your behaviour within the house. If you want your husband's respect, you have to show him that you deserve it. "[34]

Interestingly, this woman expressed both her support for gender equality and her disapproval of women who tried to achieve it. She felt that collective action did not serve the purpose of achieving egalitarianism and suggested that equality was something that women needed to 'earn', but that it had to be done individually rather than collectively. She linked the generic term 'feminism' to the idea of women collectively arguing for their rights and suggested that for her it had another meaning. This was further confirmed after the tape recorder was off, when she continued to say how much she had enjoyed the interview because

> "...we people talk about rubbish all the time, even though there is so much to talk about in our society. And I'll tell you something else, now that this thing (the tape recorder) is off. I don't want anyone to get the wrong message here. I think women are superior to men. They do the same things that men do, but make double the effort. No, triple the effort. I mean, can you imagine having to fly a plane on the first day of your period? Awful. But they do it. A man would never be able to cope with that."[35]

This woman challenged the existing patriarchal status quo, which portrays men as 'superior' to women. She expressed her admiration for women who perform male-dominated occupations since they encounter many barriers in their efforts. However, she questioned neither how these women entered these occupations in the first place nor the problems they might have faced in order to do so. Attitudes and actions do not appear to be directly related. Another woman expressed similar sentiments about 'feminists'.

> "Women do not want to be called feminists because that would put into question their femininity. Feminism is associated with masculine women, and what woman would like to be seen as a man, right?"[36]

Therefore, the above analysis demonstrates that both women who do not wish to be called feminists and women who do, can be gender identified. For women who identify themselves as feminists, gender consciousness may be a means of challenging patriarchal structures. For non-feminist women, gender identification may be the only way of re-affirming their maternal values.[37] It is telling that gender inequality and women's oppression was implicitly or explicitly acknowledged by all the women in my sample, who considered themselves as feminists, anti-feminists, and indifferent. However, as the above examples illustrate, interpretations of this gender inequality varied. Different definitions of feminism, as well as other discourses of gender stemmed from the interviews discussed above. Feminist women experienced feminism in numerous ways; women who declared themselves indifferent to feminism gave various explanations for their indifference. Finally, anti-feminist women had different explanations for their beliefs and attitudes. Feminism is only one of many manifestations of gender awareness. Further, the acknowledgement of inequality does not necessarily result in the conviction to act upon it on a collective or individual level. In fact, gender

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[34] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Elpinice, August 1997.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Lycimache, July 1997.

[37] Laurie A. Rhodebeck, 'The Structure of Men's and Women's Feminist Orientations; Feminist Identity and Feminist Opinion', in *Gender and Society, Vol.10 No.4, August 1996,* pp. 386-403, p.388.

inequality could, for some women, be considered as a situation that needs not be challenged as other alternatives might be considered as unacceptable for them. Moreover, women themselves, feminist and non-feminist, do not always agree on policy matters related to 'women's issues.' Finally, the personal experiences of women in my sample showed various levels of contradictions between practices and attitudes, but these contradictions would take different forms for individual women.

1.2. Women, Feminism, and Beauty Control

Most women who have spent some time in Cyprus have experienced the 'gaze' and the verbal as well as physical harassment by men. Having lived in Cyprus for a long time, I was subject to experiences that can be extremely restrictive and humiliating in women's lives.[38] Men's definitions of women can become a source of tension and anxiety amongst women who are 'measured' and 'weighed' on an everyday basis in the streets and at work. If a woman falls under the category of a '*gomena*' (good looking, sexy, striking), then she has to ensure that she keeps up with men's notions of her appearance and has to face the hostility and scepticism of other women. If, on the other hand, she is a '*kashia*' (literary meaning a box; the implication here is that the woman is shapeless, ugly, and only good for the practical reason of carrying 'things'), she is subjected to unsubtle, sarcastic looks and comments.

Marilyn French explains how in most Indian families, men are given priority over eating, whereas women eat the leftovers and feed the girls last. In many cases, men leave almost nothing for women.[39] Naomi Wolf writes that that the same is the case in Turkey, Pakistan, North Africa, the Middle East and Morocco. In fact, in Morocco, women guests are practically expected to refuse to eat. In Cyprus, I have vivid memories of being told not to eat 'too much' in other people's houses because it was rude. It is an implied part of good manners that men would eat a lot to prove how much they enjoyed the food whereas women were expected to show limited appetite and eat a lot less.[40] If a woman chooses to ignore that on a formal occasion, people tend to comment on it. In addition, the comments become a lot more negative if the woman is 'socially overweight'.

In 'The Beauty Myth,'[41] Wolf quotes a 1984 *Glamour* survey of thirty-three thousand women and explains how the respondents chose to lose weight (ten to fifteen pounds) above success in work or in love as their most desired goal. In my research, two out of twenty five women put their desire to lose some weight above anything else in their lives and said that it was the thing they would most like to change. One anti-feminist woman explained that

> "...if there was one thing I could change in my life right now, that would be my weight. I really think women should try and look good for the husbands otherwise, you know what happens? They go off for other women, and then who can really blame them?"[42]

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[38] See also Jane Cowan, *Op.Cit.*, 1996, p.67.

[39] Marilyn French, *The War Against Women*, Penguin, 1992, p.114. See also Julia Brannen & Gail Wilson (eds.), *Give and Take in Families: Studies in Resource Distribution*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1987 for a discussion on similar attitudes in Western societies.

[40] "The 'suppression' of food parallels the suppression of sexuality." Peter Loizos & Evthymios Papataxiarchis, 'Gender and Kinship in Marriage and Alternative Contexts' in P. Loizos & E Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.24.

[41] Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth; How Images of Beauty are Used against Women*, 1991, p.187.

[42] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Lamia, June 1997.

The latter, a self-identified feminist said, "the *fact* that I am ugly still bothers me a lot, even though I have now learnt to live with it. I know the implications of what I am saying as a feminist, but I can't help it."[43] Social expectations require that "women pre-empt the implications of our recent claim to our bodies by feeling ugly, and that forcibly lowered self-esteem looks to the sufferer like real 'ugliness'":[44]

> Melanie: "I want to have a nose job. My nose is huge and my boyfriend thinks it needs to be changed. I don't feel comfortable with this nose, either."
> MV: "What is his nose like?"
> Melanie (laughing): "Huge!"
> MV: "Is he also thinking about having an operation?"
> Melanie: "Of course not, what are you, crazy? What is he, gay? Of course, I don't like it that men can tell us how we should look and all that, do you? But, in my case, he is not telling me what to do; it is me, I don't like it, it's big."
> MV: "Big for who?"
> Melanie: "Big for a nose! Big compared to a French nose."

In Cyprus, like in other Western societies, there is a rapidly increasing obsession with 'beauty' as well as weight loss. Numerous magazine articles in the last two years have suddenly been devoted to aesthetic plastic surgery, breast enlargement, rhinoplasty and, more recently liposuction. Social comparisons are becoming more intense and aggravate women's perceptions of their body images. An interviewee described the story of a twenty-two year old woman who was suffering after a liposuction operation. "The woman is 5'6" tall and weighs seven and a half stone, 'but her thighs are a bit fat'. I can understand why she did it. If something makes you feel bad and you can sort it out, why not do it?"[45] A thirty-three-year-old British teacher, who visited Cyprus in the summer of 1997, said to me that she was beginning to feel bad because she had never seen "so many thin women concentrated in one place before. It's like being in Brazil or something. It just makes you not want to eat again, doesn't it?"[46] This obsession with looks and 'beauty' gives rise to rivalry, jealousy, and resentment amongst women of all age groups, and general unhappiness about their appearance. It is therefore important that additional research takes place to explore how women's body images and gender attitudes affect relationships among women. Could it be, for example, that the relationships among women are aggravated subject to appearance comparison and that, in extension, leads to a deterioration of their feminist consciousness? Could that be another patriarchal device to counteract women's participation in public life?

Upon describing her own experience of doing work on women in Cyprus, Roussou explained that throughout her fieldwork, her awareness of the contradictions and inconsistencies between opinion and praxis became stronger. She suggested that the 'inconsistencies' were larger amongst the female urban population. Similarly, the findings from the interviews I conducted with both women who did not identify themselves as feminists and those who did, did not confirm the idea that the development of a feminist identity or the endorsement of an egalitarian ideology would incorporate more favourable body-image evaluations.[47] Feminist consciousness and ideology proved to have little relationship to women's perceptions of their own bodies. Further, my findings indicate that women's

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[43] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Deborah, June 1997.

[44] Wolf, *Op.Cit.*, p.224.

[45] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

[46] *Private Conversation with Author,* July 1997.

[47] Thomas F. Cash, Julie R. Ancis, & Melissa D. Strachan, "Gender Attitudes, Feminist Identity, and Body Images among College Women," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research,* April 1997, Vol.36, N.7-8, p.433-448.

passive acceptance of traditional gender roles was directly related to their greater interest in their looks and internalisation of social standards for and maladaptive assumptions about their appearance.[48] The internalisation of cultural ideas about beauty was so ingrained in the interviewees' minds and beliefs, that identification with feminist or other egalitarian attitudes had little or no impact on the importance they ascribed to appearance. Thus, policy preferences and political ideology concerning gender inequality contribute, but do not necessitate a definite influence to the definition of oneself, in the sense that they reinforce identification with a group. Feminist beliefs do not always relate directly to feminist identity: "identity and opinion are separate constructs and ... identity has a stronger causal effect on opinion than vice versa."[49] In the case of the conflict created over cultural ideas about beauty these arguments do not apply. Identity and opinion become very little related to practices.

1.3. The Myth of Egalitarianism

> *"No man can call himself liberal, or radical, or even a conservative advocate of fair play, if his work depends in any way on the unpaid or underpaid labour of women at home, or in the office." Gloria Steinem*

This study has demonstrated that gender discrimination is evident in formal institutions and legislation in Cyprus as well as in the everyday relationships and interactions among people. However, in 1982 it was suggested that the traditional Cypriot family pattern where the man had absolute power over decisions no longer represents Cypriot society.[50] Rather, a trend towards the egalitarian family was found. However, the researcher recognised that it was impossible to evaluate the extent of that trend from the data in the study concerned: when women claimed that they took decisions concerning the household 'together' with their husbands, this could imply that the husband only informed his wife; or that they entered into discussion, but in case of disagreement the view of the husband prevailed; or, it could mean that one insisted and the other one gave in.[51] Nevertheless, it was concluded that it was a *fact* that the position of the Cypriot woman in the family was at a transitional stage on the way to equality.[52] Sixteen years after the completion of the above-mentioned study, my findings support the opposite. Although variations can be observed in women's attitudes, in actual practice little has changed. One woman explains: "there is no boss, no one has the upper-hand... I suppose my husband is more dominant and, in the end, he decides on what is to be done."[53] This woman was clear about power relationships in her family. Other women, though, found it difficult to describe their partners' dominance in their relationships:

> "I can't explain. He is the boss, but it is not things like where are you going and what are you doing. It is something deeper, more complicated. I kind of ... let myself go, and he takes

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[48] *Ibid.*

[49] See discussion by Laurie A. Rhodebeck, 'The Structure of Men's and Women's Feminist Orientations: Feminist Identity and Feminist Opinion', in *Gender and Society, Vol.10 No.4, August 1996,* pp. 386-403, p. 400.

[50] Eleni Kalava. 'The Position and Role of the Cypriot Woman in the Family Today', in Lia Mylona, *Op.Cit.*, p.74.

[51] *Ibid.*, p.75.

[52] *Ibid.*, p.75.

[53] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Korinna, August 1997.

> advantage of that. I guess that makes no sense, does it? It just happens. It is not because I am a woman, it is because I am like that, it is my nature."[54]

This woman expressed her emotional rather than material dependence on her partner. She did not identify this dependence as a gender issue, but rather considered it a 'natural' phenomenon over which she had little or no control. She therefore demonstrated her passivity over doing something about it, which characterised many women in the sample. Other women were more direct about how they viewed gender relationships in general, and their relationships with their husbands in particular: "Well, I don't know if we have patriarchy. We have Hitler politics that is what we have. All men are like Hitler (laughing)."[55] She went on to say that "men want to appear to be feminists nowadays, because it is trendy and it attracts women. However, they do not want to BE feminists. It is not in their best interests to be feminists, right? Then they loose all their privileges."[56] Under 'patriarchal regimes', men enjoy greater financial and social power than women do. Therefore, in general all men maintain some interest in gender inequality. Two women in the sample suggested that feminist men do exist, whereas the rest appeared to be negative or doubtful about the reasons why a man would ever claim to be feminist. One woman argued that "feminist men are just pretending. They are advertising themselves to get laid with women who believe the bullshit they tell them."[57] Similarly, "I don't think feminist men exist because they have to be altruistic and fair to be feminist and men are neither."[58] Although some women recognised the institutionalised domination of men over them as well as realise the benefits that men enjoy in the current structures, the interviews and further fieldwork I conducted indicated that they were unwilling to do anything about it. Thus, despite the realisation that "women in Cyprus are definitely not liberated. They are oppressed and full of taboos. They are told what to do and when to do it. They are not liberated,"[59] these women were generally very passive about their 'condition.' One woman felt that in Cyprus "women have a lot of strength and energy. Unfortunately, they do not know it."[60] What are the reasons why some women are not as aware as others of their strength and ability to change (even partly) the patriarchal regimes they live in? The aim of the remaining sections of this chapter is to explore the reasons behind this passivity, as well as to analyse the factors that influence women's feminist consciousness, gender role awareness, political activism, and non-activism.

2. The Development of Feminist Consciousness and Praxis; Political Activism or What?

> *"I have always admired the women of Cyprus who, in my view, have remained intrinsically women. They have a very special way of feeling and understanding the events around them, albeit keeping it very much to themselves. Their perception is well-rooted in an inner strength which survives the vicissitudes of an environment often difficult to fathom."*[61]

Despite Lasan's tribute to Cypriot women, the description of them as being able to understand and feel the events around them 'albeit keeping it very much to themselves' points to

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[54] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Thecla, June 1997.

[55] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Lamia, June 1997.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Jezebel, July 1997

[58] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Lycimache, July 1997.

[59] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Artemissia, July 1997.

[60] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Lycimache, July 1997.

[61] Dolores B. Lasan, *The Trailblazers*, 1995 (Preface).

women's lack of voice, itself a result of passivity that stems from a regime that discourages the right to speak. Recognising this necessity for women to acquire a voice in Cyprus as well as the empowerment in order to do so, the Family Planning Association developed a plan for a project to fulfil the above needs.[62] Thus, the Association aims to "defend and advance the reproductive and sexual rights of women, to increase men's commitment, to ensure gender equality, to enrich interpersonal relationships."[63] These goals are to be achieved through seminars, theatre productions, films, panel discussions, and workshops; further, through public announcements (for example, 'before you be a mother, be a woman; children by choice etc.), use of the mass media, publicity stands in football grounds, and information to men's unions and Co-operatives. When asked about the implementation of the above objective, a member of the Family Planning Association said that "this it not really an immediate goal; let's say that it is a 'side' program. There are other issues which are more urgent than that."[64] Other issues always appear to be more important in Cyprus, and women's issues become 'side programs' in the best of cases. There is no centre which deals with only women's issues –with the exclusion of the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence and the Centre sponsored by it, which works mostly with women-although not officially.[65]

Different discourses of gender relations existed amongst the volunteers of the centre. One woman in the sample who has been involved in the centre argued that her involvement with cases of domestic abuse toward women had contributed toward the transformation of her identity since she became clearly aware of gender inequality as a social issue rather than an isolated phenomenon.[66] Life experiences for women can prove to be important factors influencing their engagement with feminism. It has been suggested that identities can change form through the practice of feminism and that this is often one of its results.[67] This woman does not claim to be a feminist, but believes that women are institutionally oppressed by men in Cypriot society. However, the stigma associated with a term that equates feminist women with dominance and feelings of superiority toward men has stopped this woman from claiming a 'feminist' identity herself although throughout the interview she supported women's rights to equality without hesitation. Similarly, another volunteer of the centre argued that she got involved with this work because she "always liked helping people in need, and since I can afford the time, why not?"[68] Issues of gender inequality or feminism were not mentioned at all. "Feminist politics both arises from socially constructed identities and is a means of their

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[62] Cyprus Planning Association, *Strategic Plan; Promoting Choices for Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Cyprus –Goals for the Future,* Goal 1, Objective 3.

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Despo Hadjiloizou, Family Planning Association, May 1997.

[65] The Centre works with two full-time members (one of whom is a psychologist) and a number of volunteers that fluctuate from ten to thirty at a given time. Until 1996, there were no male volunteers at the centre, but currently there are three men involved. The volunteers are mostly responsible for the Centre's twenty-four-hour Hotline, but can also be involved in fund-raising, administrative work and so on. By receiving no payment and no benefits for their work, it could be argued that they alleviate the state and the government from being responsible for the needs of the people, the majority of whom are women. It is the only organisation in Cyprus working on issues of violence and abuse. A shelter for victims of domestic abuse is currently being set up; however, up to the present day, the victims have nowhere to go in cases of emergency.

[66] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Thecla, June 1997.

[67] Nickie Charles, 'Feminist Practices: Identity, Difference, Power', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practising Feminism; Identity, Difference, Power,* Routledge, 1996, p.21.

[68] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Jezebel, July 1997.

transformation;"[69] in Cyprus these socially constructed identities are banned by social opinion; despite my regular participation in the Centre's activities and work, the term 'feminism' was never used. Further, although the volunteers referred to the victims as 'the women', direct links of gender inequality, and domestic abuse were rarely made. My findings suggest that different discourses apply in this case and that women's various interpretations of gender inequality can weigh equally in their struggle against oppression.

The present discussion illustrates that the socio-political, geographical, and economic location of Cypriot people renders expression of non-conformist, rebellious 'feminist' identities almost impossible for most women to adhere to. Passivity, conformity, and uniform acceptance of authority are characteristics of post-colonial discourses, especially in cases of small societies, which are politically dependent on, and subjected to international forces. Moreover, social class, status, the family employment status of men and women, education, age, personal experiences, and experience of gender discrimination, are all factors associated with the development of feminist consciousness and in some instances, the willingness or not to be actively involved in actions that will eliminate gender discrimination and oppression. Furthermore, non-activism is partly a result of the current attitudes of feminists, and in part a result of the Cypriot social context that discourages both individual expression and any challenge to existing norms. The following discussion does not aim at a comprehensive overview of all the factors found in the study to be associated with the development (or not) of feminist consciousness and its relationship to political and community activism; such a task cannot be thoroughly fulfilled in a few paragraphs without running the risk of superficial analysis. An overview of the major factors identified in this thesis, which best illustrated the arguments and results reached here, is offered.

2.1. Social, Political, and Personal Experiences

Women's community participation can be understood as a form of social action. Community work both affects and is affected by changes in the socio-political and economic circumstances in a society; both society and social action can be argued to transform one another over time.[70] Community participation for women, in this sense, could also be argued, however, to be an example of capitalist exploitation, harmless community service or, as empowerment.[71] In Cyprus, community participation by women is low, as are the levels of feminist identity. Nevertheless, this is not to say that in general feminist consciousness and identity necessarily requires community action and organised participation. In the case of Cyprus, however, issues of political consciousness and self-identity are important factors[72] in the definition of women's involvement with feminism.

Active participation could be partly related to personal experiences of discrimination and injustice, personal background, personal characteristics, and the need for social support.[73] Family experiences as well as the impact of some life event or personal crisis can act as triggers for women's activism: "I am a refugee, and I am woman. I know what it feels like to be oppressed. That is why I became involved in the Bicommunal Women's Group. I want to see things change."[74] Similarly, another interviewee explained that her involvement in the same group was related to her

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[69] Nickie Charles, *Op.Cit.*, p.10.

[70] Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement; Dynamics of Change in Social Movement, Ideology, and Activism.* New York: Routledge, 1992, p.160.

[71] Naomi Abrahams, 'Negotiating Power, Identity, Family, and Community; Women's Community Participation,' *Gender and Society,* Vol.10, No.6, pp.768-796 December 1996, p.768.

[72] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Op.Cit.*, p.33.

[73] *Ibid.*, p.110.

[74] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Athaliah, July 1997.

experience as a woman, as a Maronite, and as the daughter of enclaved parents. This points to the important role of the group as a means for encouraging social change. In practice, distinguishing where the desire for personal support in the face of discrimination shades into the desire to bring about equal opportunities can be rather difficult.[75] Both individual efforts and social efforts that motivate women to use their individual resources should be utilised in order to achieve gender awareness and gender equality. Further, personal interaction with institutions of social control and public agencies is believed to shape gender attitudes.[76] Contact with the public agencies, involvement in the Church, and political participation have been found to influence attitudes concerning gender roles and feminist consciousness.[77] For example, the Orthodox Church, as argued in Chapter Four, has been very influential in discouraging liberal attitudes of both men and women concerning gender roles in society; religion-based traditions within the family discourage egalitarian attitudes for both women and men.[78]

Interviews with women involved in the Association for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace as well as the Bicommunal Women's Group indicate that self-identity and political consciousness are important indicative factors of women's engagement with feminism. Seven women in my sample (two of whom are Turkish Cypriots) were at some time involved with the Bicommunal Women's Group since they felt that their "identity as a woman first, and a Cypriot second, can help me contribute toward the improvement of the relationships of the two communities."[79] Women from the northern and the southern part of the island feel the responsibility to act as 'mediators' between members of their respective communities for the betterment of the current tense socio-political climate. However, these women lacked both status and recognition from both parts of Cyprus and were not allowed a political voice. Thus, their role was undermined since they were just "a women's group talking about flowers and peace."[80]

Although not denying the subordinate status of women in Greek society, Dubisch argues that Greek women's roles as mediators is a very powerful one. She argues that they mediate between

> "...the particularistic interests of individual families and the universalistic concerns of the Greek Orthodox Church, between the human and the spiritual worlds, between the public and the private realms, the inside and the outside, the forces of nature and those of culture. They are controllers and creators of boundaries, as well of bridges between the realms which those boundaries delineate."[81]

Although women involved in the peace movement attempt to act as mediators to contribute towards the resolution of the political and ethnic conflict in Cyprus, the same could not be argued about the example quoted above. If mediation, as a term, implies third party involvement, then women do not act as a third party in this dynamic. Rather, they constitute one of the two parties, one of the two

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[75] C. Kelly & S. Breinlinger, *Op.Cit.*, p.109.

[76] Margaret Anderson & Patricia Hill Collins, *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992; Linda Gordon, *Women, the State, and Welfare*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1990; Andrea Hunter & Sherill L. Sellers, 'Feminist Attitudes among African American Women and Men', *Gender and Society*, February 1998, Vol.12, No.1, p.81-100.

[77] Andrea Hunter & Sherill L. Sellers, 'Feminist Attitudes Among African American Women and Men', *Gender and Society*, February 1998, Vol.12, No.1, p.81-100.

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Phryne, August 1997.

[80] *Ibid.*

[81] Jill Dubisch, 'Greek Women: Sacred or Profane', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, 1983, p.202.

ends of the line; thus, it could be argued that they act as negotiators. As negotiators, do they hold power? If, as Dubisch asserts, we accept that women have subordinate status in Cypriot society, then essentially we are referring to negotiations between the powerful and the less powerful, rather than mediation. We are referring to asymmetric negotiation where the weaker party has little influence over the negotiating positions. In what ways, and under which conditions do these women 'control and create' boundaries? If this 'mediation' involves women mediating their 'female' role and interests to meet those of the men, then, where should we assume (from the above quotation) that these interests lie? Within the patriarchal 'individual family,' the traditionalist Orthodox Church, the public, the private, the inside, or the outside? Since parallels are drawn in this thesis between Greek women and (Greek) Cypriot women,[82] then similar ideas should apply in the case of Cyprus. However, as the previous chapters have clearly demonstrated, women are not in a position to create bridges and boundaries; they are conveniently used by patriarchal structures, ideally to lift the weight of Atlas at their very own expense. Women are made to balance all these different spheres in such a way that men are content. Only in this context, can one accept that women 'mediate'. Although women do not always passively accept their roles as 'victims' or dominated' parties, their efforts often lie within negotiations that will relieve them of the heavy burdens they carry into more tolerable situations. Women's lives in Cyprus as studied in this thesis demonstrate that women (some consciously and others subconsciously) negotiate for a compromising solution that will alleviate some of the problems they are currently facing in a patriarchal society, similar to any asymmetric negotiation case.

Many women involved in the Bicommunal Women's Group as well as the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Harassment can be argued to have various level of politicised oppositional identities, and this is the reason for their involvement. Therefore,

> "I challenge the notion simply by being a woman, or being poor or black or Latino, is sufficient ground to assume a politicised oppositional identity. In other words, while questions of identity are crucially important, they can never be reduced to automatic self-referential, individualist ideas of the political (or feminist) subject."[83]

Restrictive factors for the development of a feminist movement (and consciousness) in Cyprus might include those of the 'closed, small society structure' as well as colonialism. The historical conditions prevailing when social and political attitudes were formed[84] influence awareness and attitudes of gender inequality in Cyprus. Unlike some social anthropologists and other social scientists, Monique Gadant identifies a great difference between the countries of the Mediterranean:

> "The difference that separates the developed capitalist countries along the northern edge from the others (whether Christian or Muslim), those which have been left behind industrial growth or were former colonies ... Feminist ideologies have developed in the former. They

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[82] However, sharp contrasts between the two communities can also be observed - as discussed in Chapter One. For example "in Greece more women are members of women's liberation organisations and more claim to be feminists than in any other western European country – four percent overall membership in feminist organisations as against a European average of one percent" Gisela Kaplan, *Contemporary Western European Feminism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1992, p.228.

[83] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Introduction – Cartographies of Struggle, Third World Women, and the Politics of Feminism,' in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Loudres Torres (eds.), *Third World Feminism and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, 1991, p.33.

[84] Davis & Robinson, *Op.Cit.*, p.206.

> followed the advances of individualism from which capitalism benefited and in turn accelerated."[85]

For a long time, women in Cyprus, like in many other areas in the Mediterranean, were oppressed both by patriarchy and colonialism. It appears that women in general have tried to conform to cultural – moral and religious- values more than Cypriot men have. It was found that Greek Cypriot women were more ready to assume responsibilities than to claim freedom. Sixty five percent of the women believed that women and men should have the same responsibilities; however, only forty percent felt that women and men should have equal freedom.[86] The question then becomes, whether the reason is that they understand lack of freedom and adherence to conformity as an escape route to further oppression. Post-colonial discourses in Cyprus include people's reluctance to accept that actions, practices, riots, demonstrations, and revolts can make a difference to the affairs of society and the state. Subjected to constant colonialism, Cypriot people in general refuse to challenge the discourse of authority that has developed throughout the centuries. Women and men, "as gendered beings, actively constitute and reconstitute the social relations within which they live."[87]

It has been suggested that Cypriots "participate in their own domination and constitute *themselves* as Western subjects."[88] For Argyrou, during the last sixty years or so

> "...the notion of the West has emerged as the dominant idiom through which a series of relations of inequality are both resisted and legitimated: between social classes, age groups, men and women, city dwellers and villagers, mainland and Cypriot Greeks, and between the two main communities on the island, Greek and Turkish Cypriots ... Through these struggles Greek Cypriots express, enact, and inadvertently reproduce a historical experience of symbolic domination – the recognition that their cultural identity is inferior to that of the countries of Western Europe and North America."[89]

In an attempt to explore how 'dividing practices' deny Cypriots the identity that they aspire to, Argyrou makes the point that through the concept of modernity Cypriots people enact and inadvertently reproduce a "historical relation of domination that ties them to the West."[90] In that context, he analyses the ways in which urban, educated women "struggle to impose their own vision of the world, and how this vision clashes with that of many men and, ironically, of many older women."[91] He uses the example of a woman who criticises the sexual morality (modesty) imposed on women and who is thoroughly "steeped in the culture of the women's movement"[92] arguing that by "embracing a *hegemonic* identity, Eleni may be able to achieve legitimation *as a woman.* At the same time, however, inadvertently but inevitably, she reproduces the conditions of being dominated

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[85] Monique Gadant, 'Introduction', in Monique Gadant (ed.), *Women of the Mediterranean*, Zed Books, 1986, p.1-2.

[86] Lia Mylona, 'Equality' in Lia Mylona, Costas Paschalis, Eleni Kalava, Niki Pastalidou, & Athos Erotokriotou, *The Cypriot Woman*, Psycho-Sociological Research Group, Cyprus, 1986(Published in Greek in 1982), p.113.

[87] Nickie Charles, *Op.Cit.*, p.23.

[88] Vassos Argyrou, *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean; The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.169 (also see pp.170-183).

[89] *Ibid.*, p.2.

[90] Argyrou, *Op.Cit.*, p.171.

[91] *Ibid.*, p.171.

[92] *Ibid.*, p.172.

as a Cypriot."[93] Argyrou argues that recognising and resisting a hegemonic ideology are two sides of the same coin since whatever strategy is adopted "one ultimately reproduces the conditions of one's domination."[94] Through their exclusion of 'other women'[95], women reproduce the values of 'traditional Cypriot identity' which account for their subjugation in the first place. In their effort to affirm their identity, urban middle-class women adopt elements of domination in it.

However, I would further argue that the struggle of the urban, educated women has contributed to the alleviation of a number of problems experienced by all women in Cyprus. These women might be argued to be striving to impose their visions of the world, but at the same time I suggest that they contribute towards positive change for Cypriot women's lives. For example, the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence, itself a product of these group of women, has been very important to the acknowledgement of the vast extent of family violence and has motivated women from all classes, ages, and backgrounds, to seek help in order to escape abusive relationships.[96] Further, there is the argument that for some women their legitimation as women (gender identity), rather than as a Cypriots (ethnic identity), is indeed more important since they feel that the oppression suffered because of their former identity is deeper than the oppression suffered due to the latter.[97] At the same time, three women in the sample –two of whom were indifferent to feminist ideas and one was an anti-feminist- explained that their identity as Greek Cypriots, and the oppression they experienced because of it, were much more important to them than their identities as women and the 'problems' they faced because of it. Moreover, Third World (Post /Colonial) feminism, as well as arguments presented throughout this study, demonstrate that improving the status of women in specific societies does not necessitate their adherence to Western models and ideals. Wishing to function in the 'public' and 'private' spheres without the fear of social stigma or the terror of rape and abuse is not a 'European Standard' but rather a human right. As argued in Chapter One of this thesis, Western models of feminism do not always apply to Cypriot women's 'condition;' however, various models and discourses of feminism exist, not only within an international context but also within a regional context.[98] Despite general critiques of Western socio-political dominance, where the Cypriot 'Other' could be argued to be insufficiently understood, Cyprus' ambiguous historical, ideological and political and placement *vis-à-vis* the west

> "...complicates its facile insertion within such a narrative. My own account insists that Greek women's cultural 'difference' from that of the paradigmatic 'western' (North American or North European) anthropologist is only grasped by acknowledging, to a greater degree than has occurred so far, certain *historically rooted rather than essential or universally posited,* cultural 'similarities' between them ... The similarities were real yet at the same time fashioned within perniciously asymmetrical and hegemonic relations between Greece and various western powers."[99]

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[93] *Ibid.*, p.174.

[94] *Ibid.*, p.177.

[95] See Chapter Five for an analysis.

[96] Although some might suggest that escaping abusive relationships is not always 'best' for women in Cypriot society, and that leaving their husbands can have 'worse' social consequences, the fact remains that a number of women in Cyprus *wanted* to leave, and had limited support and options to do so, whereas now they have more.

[97] *Private Conversation with Author.* Interview with Artemissia, July 1997.

[98] See relevant discussion in Jane Cowan, 'Being a Feminist in Contemporary Greece: Similarity and Difference Reconsidered', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practising Feminism; Identity, Difference, Power,* Routledge, 1996.

[99] *Ibid.*, p.82.

Women do not necessarily agree among themselves about the definitions of gender inequality, or concerning the policies, which should be applied to women's issues. I argue that one cannot simply assume that irrespective of one's actions in Cyprus, one reproduces the conditions of one's domination. Rather, one ought to recognise both similarity and 'difference' to the West in the conceptions of gender by Cypriot, urban, middle-class women can be an important step in the analysis and exploration of their feminist consciousness and their identities as women.

2.1.1. Political Identities, Ethnicity, and Nationalism: Men's Control over War, Peace, and their Women

"As a woman I have no country, as a woman I want no country, as a woman my country is the whole world."[100]

" The worst curse that was laid upon woman was that she should be excluded from these warlike forays. For it is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills."[101]

Any division in terms of gender, class, and ethnicity, "has to be waged in the context of the others."[102] Gender and ethnic relations affect each other since women are involved in ethnic and national processes. Women are involved in these processes as biological reproducers of members of ethnic groups; as reproducers of the boundaries of these groups; as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the ethnic collectivity and as transmitters of its culture; as symbols for the construction, reproduction, and transformation of ethnic and national identity; as participants in national, economic, political, and military struggles.[103] In the case of the political situation in Cyprus, it could be argued that for a large number of women in Cyprus, the family is not the major factor behind women's oppression when families are kept apart by occupying or colonising forces.[104] The 'Cyprus problem' has affected all inhabitants of Cyprus, especially in the period after 1974. The war and its socio-economic and political effects have influenced women's lives immensely. Many women in Cyprus have been misplaced from their homes as a result of the 1974 events. Some have lost their husbands at war and their brothers, partners, or sons, are missing in action. It is not therefore a practical political possibility for women of subordinate groups to concentrate on eliminating the sexism of dominant majority men.[105] Rather, because of the nature and the complexity of the Cyprus problem, some women were directly used in national liberation struggles, similar to Palestine, Iran, and Algeria.[106]

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[100] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas,* London: Hartcourt, Brace & Ward, 1938, p.109.

[101] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, pp. 95-96.

[102] Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Contexualizing Feminism – Gender, Ethnic, and Class Divisions', *Feminist Review,* No.15, November 1983, p.73.

[103] Nira Yuval-Davis & Floya Anthias (eds.): *Woman- Nation - State,* London: Macmillan, 1989. See also Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations.* London: Routledge, 1997, pp.180-184.

[104] *Ibid.*, p.72.

[105] *Ibid.*, p.73.

[106] Cynthia Enloe explains that several presumptions of nationalist men have made women's behaviour highly important. She argues that men in many communities see women as the nation's most valuable possessions; the main vehicles for transmitting the whole nation's values from one generation to the next; the bearers of communities' future generations; the most vulnerable to

In Cyprus, women were motivated to take part in their country's struggle for independence, only to be confined to the oppressive environment of the home when 'independence' was achieved.[107] Even though women have not been 'mere pawns' in Cypriot politics, the authorities and the government have made open efforts to control women's actions in order to achieve their own ends.[108] The role of women in the nationalist movement has been quite significant. Although hardly involved as activists, or on a personal level, they have been used both materially and symbolically to promote the interests of these movements. Anthias argues that Greek Cypriot women were used as symbols of national identity for the 'nationalist struggle' in the 1950s, for example. Is it possible, however, that these women involved in nationalist movements, identify themselves as feminists? It has been argued that it is viable to think of a blend of nationalism and feminism and that the two can co-exist as long as nationalism progresses from its sexist stage, and as long as it moves beyond ownership and possession as final goals:

> "In Lebanon, then, both nationalism and feminism are necessary: nationalism in order to save Lebanon, and feminism in order to change the values upon which social relationships are created and formed. Only with the two combined will salvation become more lasting ... With a stronger nationhood based in real love, rather than domination, the strength might radiate and push out outside influences."[109]

How can nationalism move beyond ownership? Moreover, what is the definition of a 'nationhood based on real love'? These points represent a contradiction in terms. An encouragement of some form of nationalism involves 'pushing others out' to create groups of 'us' and 'them' (amongst whom there are plenty of other women) seems to be against the ethos of 'inclusion' behind feminism. Nationalist women could be argued to be reproducing structures of exclusion and oppression, such as patriarchy. At first, the discussion of feminism that reinforces a strong identification with the nation-state appears to be incompatible or contradictory. However, making an ultimate choice between nationalism and feminism can be very complex, and the majority of women experience these contradictions at the level of practice and resolve them according to the situation, rather than generally.[110] Indeed, interconnections have been found to exist between feminism and anti-imperialist nationalist movements in Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan.[111] Being a nationalist feminist is an incredibly hard political task especially since large numbers of women in colonising countries encouraged the policies nationalist movements have organised to reverse. The seriousness of patriarchal oppression can appear diminished when both women and men have participated in the outsiders' conquest.[112] Women's

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exploitation -by oppressive alien rulers- members of the community; and, the most susceptible to assimilation and co-option by insidious outsiders. Cynthia Enloe, *Making Feminist Sense of International Politics; Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, p.54.

[107] "While men, who dominate public life, have told women to stay in the kitchen, they have used their public power to construct private relationships in ways that bolstered their masculinized political control." *Ibid.*, p.195.

[108] *Ibid.*, p.199.

[109] Evelyn Accad, 'Sexuality and Sexual Politics; Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary Women in the Middle East', in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, & Lourdes Torres (eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, 1991, p.246.

[110] Charlotte Aull Davies, 'Nationalism; Discourse and Practice', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practising Feminism; Identity, Difference, Power*, Routledge, 1996, p.177.

[111] Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, London: Routledge, 1997, p.184.

[112] Cynthia Enloe, *Op.Cit.*, p.46.

relationship to the nation-state is indeed a very problematic concept for which utopian answers can hardly be offered; discussing the dilemma faced by non-Israeli Jewish feminists upon the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982, Goetz asks: "was there a feminist position to be taken on the dispossession of the Palestinians which would not be seen as a threat to Jewish identity?"[113]

The development of nationalist ideology in a country is argued to be positive for women since they belong in that nation. Through nationalism, women enter political life in some way; thus, their political rights are enforced and certain gender inequalities can be overcome. Thus,

> "...both the practice and discourse of nationalist women prevent too facile a rejection of nationalism by feminists, whether activists or researchers. The range of nationalist movements ... suggests that struggles to create national communities nearly always included gendered struggles over whose experiences will define these communities."[114]

National consciousness encourages women into taking part in public debates and provides millions of women with the opportunity to act internationally. [115] However, the very same nationalism can have irrevocable consequences for women. Nationalism is a useful tool for governments wishing to promote and safeguard the 'family' and traditional gendered ideologies. Since nationalism is not gender-neutral,[116] it reinforces a male-defined conformity to norms, values, and ideas. Further, it sets up a convenient trap: women's feminist voices are silenced in the name of the state, and patriarchal hierarchies and ideologies are manipulated in order to legitimise control over women. Fred Halliday argues that nationalist movements create narrow, subordinating definitions of the female role and make it viable to "de-legitimise alternative policies on the grounds that these are alien."[117] Theories of nationalism have not yet managed to prove how they can incorporate a feminist perspective; nationalist and feminist practices appear to be

> "...in conflict more often than tandem ... nationalisms either seek to prioritise the two practices, in effect taking feminism off the agenda until nationalist goals are achieved; or, when nationalist practice appears to promote feminism, any resulting feminist practice is limited to narrowly defined spheres by nationalist insistence on the importance of women's traditional roles for the nationalist project as a whole."[118]

Nationalism might indeed be the product of patriarchal structures associated with the states. Nationalism sometimes grows out of men's experiences, and not those of women. If so, nationalism

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[113] Anne Marie Goetz, 'Feminism and the Claim to Know: Contradictions in Feminist Approaches to Women in Development' in Rebecca Grant & Kathleen Newland (eds.), *Gender and International Relations*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, p.145.

[114] Charlotte Aull Davies, *Op.Cit.*, p.175.

[115] Enloe, *Op.Cit.*, p.61.

[116] Fred Halliday, 'Hidden from International Relations: Women and the International Arena' in Rebecca Grant & Kathleen Newland (eds.), *Gender and International Relations*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, p.164.

[117] *Ibid.*, p.164. Similarly, Cynthia Enloe explains that male nationalist organisers have elevated unity of the community to such "political primacy that any questioning of relations between women and men inside the movement could be labelled as divisive, even traitorous. Women who have called for more genuine equality between the sexes – in the movement, in the home- have been told that now is not the time, the nations is too fragile, the enemy is too near. Women must be patient until the nationalist goal is achieved; *then* relations between women and men can be addressed." *Op.Cit.*, p.62.

[118] Charlotte Aull Davies, 'Nationalism; Discourse and Practice', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practising Feminism; Identity, Difference, Power*, Routledge, 1996, p.165.

as an ideology which constructs "public (large-scale) identities on the basis of private (familial) relations, could be expected to facilitate considerable movement and interplay between public and private forms of patriarchy." The low representation of women in public office and the ineffective measures taken for the protection of women who are subject to domestic violence discussed in previous chapters clearly demonstrate women's exclusion from the state; for Walby, this is yet another case of movement from private to public patriarchy which is characteristic of nation-states like Cyprus.[119] However, one ought to be careful not to assume from the above that patriarchy is by itself a sufficient condition of nationalism, or war. Further, one could not suggest that "patriarchy is a necessary condition of war, that is, that between non-patriarchal societies this would be impossible."[120]

In the late 1990s, nationalist women from the Pancyprian Anti-occupation Movement (ΠΑΚ) found themselves in conflict with women who were involved in the Bicommunal Women's Group. The former group was involved in the nationalist movement through the 'significance assigned to them as women', rather than their individual actions; they were black-dressed mothers or wives of missing people, refugees, widows. The women in the latter group, however, placed their identity as (mostly feminist but not necessarily so)[121] women above their nationalism.[122] Women involved with ΠΑΚ regularly demonstrated at the Green line, trying to enlighten tourists, wishing to cross the Green line, on the Cyprus issue and explained that they were planning to enter a non-recognised pseudo-state. Since the meeting place of the two communities under the auspices of the United Nations was actually in the Green Line (the 'Dead Zone'), women involved in Bicommunal Peace work needed to pass through the demonstrations. On many occasions, conflict arose between members of the two groups. Two of my interviewees have been called various names, such as 'slut', 'whore' and 'traitor.' I also experienced similar treatment when upon returning from the Green line with a flower in my hand (a gift from a Turkish Cypriot woman), I was accused of sleeping with the enemy and having a good time "while we cry for freedom." Although to my knowledge no women from the bicommunal group responded, hostility was nevertheless created for both parties.

A number of problems and some hostility also occurred amongst the women in the bicommunal 'all-women group', who had to put aside years of propaganda from both communities, terrible personal experiences during or before the war, and stigma from their own respective communities.[123] Concerned with the intense rage and irreconcilable differences that occur on certain

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[119] Sylvia Walby, *Theorising Patriarchy*, Blackwell, 1990, pp.174-179. According to Anthias, "Cypriots have never talked about a Cypriot *nation* as such although they have recognised and indeed desired the nation-state structure ... One unified nation-state was created (in 1960), although bi-communalism was written into the constitution at all levels." *Op.Cit.*, 1989, p.152.

[120] Hidemi Suganami, *On the Causes of War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p.61.

[121] "Feminist politics does not need to be based on a shared identity, it can be based on alliances between women who are different, but who share the same interests in particular circumstances." Nickie Charles, *Op.Cit.*, p.32.

[122] Nine out of a fluctuating number of about twenty-five of these women are also refugees and widows. See arguments in Charlotte Aull Davies, *Op.Cit.*, p.160.

[123] This is also related to the fact that in the Cyprus case, people are experiencing the 'double-minority effect.' Greek Cypriot are a minority in relation to the Turkish Cypriots and the Turks together, and since they are the occupied people, whose property and lives were taken away from them. They can do little about that due to their lack of power. On the other hand, Turkish Cypriots feel that they are a minority and in the 1960s they were indeed oppressed and treated like second-class citizens by the Greek Cypriots. In a workshop on conflict resolution that took place in Israel in January 1998, participants from the Cypriot delegation were asked to enter the group with whom they most identified. The choices were a Palestinian and an Israeli group. All the members of the Cypriot team (both Greek and Turkish Cypriots) joined the Palestinian group.

occasions 'among women who are working together to help other women', Woosley and McBain suggest that there are several ways in which the phenomenon can be understood. First, there is the problem of power imbalance. When two Greek Cypriot, highly-educated, fluent English speakers tried to explain that there was no necessity for an American, male facilitator to be in the group, most Turkish Cypriot women disagreed in the beginning and reacted defensively as they could not understand the reason for that. They felt better, or safer, with the facilitator in the group. The imbalance in this situation was linked to the way that women from the Greek Cypriot community were considered 'as richer, more advanced, and more educated.' Furthermore, women were so accustomed to the idea of authority and to being given orders that they felt unable to participate in the group without some form external control and leadership by an 'outsider'. Second, intense frustration and anger followed the realisation that most women's expectations -that in their group one should receive continuously large supplies of nurture, support, and sympathy- were not met.[124] Most women in the group had expected strong friendships to develop bi-communally during the sessions. These were not often accomplished, partly due to the nature of the workshops but also in part due to the inability of these women to meet or communicate outside particular hours, which were very limited.[125] Third, the high intensity of emotional involvement between the women in the group magnified early experiences of intimacy within the group and the level of hostility demonstrated when the relationships started to break down.[126] This was particularly true since the situation in Cyprus created intense emotions for these women; thus, the intention to 'do something about it' had caused them to invest a lot in these meetings. Finally, since women are in general socialised into expressing anger indirectly, the 'hostility' within the group (by some members) increased on occasions and their feminist norms contributed towards the further suppression of criticism of other women.[127] This is especially true in the case of Cyprus, since expressing anger could be interpreted as expressing hostility to the other community. Anger, or hostility, were never expressed directly in the group. Women tended to express 'sadness' rather than other negative feelings.[128]

In a comparison of men and women's attitudes and responses to bicommunal humanitarian programmes in Cyprus, it was found that women were predominantly guided by programme objectives in their self-perceived motivation to get involved; further, women became more concerned with interaction and the formation of relationships with people of other ethnic origins in their answers and reactions to bicommunal planning and evaluation of situations.[129] Thus, men's responses were shown to emphasise the results of the programme whereas women's tended to emphasise interaction with other persons involved in the programme.[130]The Bicommunal Women's Group was established as part of humanitarian programs used

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[124] Lorette K. Woosley & Laura-Lynne McBain, 'Issues of Power and Powerlessness in All-Woman Groups', *Women's Studies International Forum,* Vol.10, No.6, pp.579-588, 1987, p.584.

[125] On most occasions, this would be a three-hour session every month.

[126] *Ibid.*, p.584.

[127] *Ibid.*, p.582.

[128] For Hester, feminist spirituality in non-violent actions is critical in "avoiding burnout by channelling anger, cultivating our younger selves and empowering ourselves, cultivating a deep reverence for the planet in order to preserve it." Karen Hester, 'Why the Non-violent Movement Needs Feminist Spirituality', *Women's Studies International Forum.* Vol.12, No.1, pp.87-89, 1989, p.87.

[129] Dolores B. Lasan, 'A Comparison Between Men's and Women's Perception of and Responses to Bicommunal Humanitarian Programmes in Cyprus', in *The Cyprus Review,* p.111. Bicommunal activities in Cyprus officially started in 1993.

[130] *Ibid.*, p.103(Abstract).

> "...as a post-conflict peacemaking strategy aimed at bringing together two different ethnic groups of people separated by a 'green line' within one country ... It is a situation where the fighting has ceased but short of peaceful co-existence between the conflicting ethnic groups and while this state of affairs may be universally viewed as undesirable, in a small country like Cyprus it becomes doubly irrational."[131]

Through the method of 'Interactive Management', the members of the group did a workshop on a monthly basis during the Summer and Fall of 1996 on 'Goals for Minimising Pain and Suffering in Cyprus.' In a report of the 'collective vision statement' of the women, Benjamin J. Broome, Former Fulbright Resident Scholar in Cyprus, suggested that "other goals could be added to the structure (for example, there is only one statement included in the current structure that directly addressed the role of women)."[132] I suggest that more attention ought to be paid on the reasons behind the fact that only one statement was included and less on the goals that could be added in the final vision statement. Further, the above report once more confirms the argument presented in the thesis that women's actions and attitudes appear to be conflicted and contradictory.

The women involved in the bicommunal peace efforts have held a number of activities in the last three years or so to show their resentment to the present deadlock in the case of the Cyprus problem.[133] For example, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash received a group of twelve women from different organisations in the north of Cyprus who had recently attended a bicommunal meeting entitled "Give Peace A Chance: Women Speak Out for Cyprus", in Brussels under the auspices of the European Union (17th-19th April 1997). The women asked Mr. Denktash for permission to attend a meeting at the buffer zone with their Greek Cypriot counterparts. However, when permission was refused on the grounds that the women were being politically misled, they answered "You are a politician and have to deal with positions but we are not politicians and we do not deal with positions but needs. The need of the community is peace. We try to give voice to the people's needs."[134] Further, four Turkish Cypriot women were barred from leaving the occupied areas to take part in a bicommunal union meeting in London in May 1998. They were to join another seven Turkish Cypriot women and several of their Greek Cypriot counterparts in London for further meetings. The first meeting under the auspices of the Jerusalem Link took place last year in Brussels and was partly financed by the EU Commission. The Turkish Cypriot press claimed that according to the 'Attorney-general' of the so-called 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' the three women had not obtained leave of absence from the 'government' departments where they worked as required by civil service law; his office had therefore acted legally in the issue. The women, however, were quoted as saying that their human rights had been violated. Also, on the 24th May, Greek and Turkish Cypriot women held demonstrations on either side of the Green Line in Nicosia to mark International Women's Day for Peace. A statement calling for peace in the face of the deadlock between the two sides and the dangerous situation resulting from this, was prepared on both sides of the divide by members of the Cyprus Women's Movement (POGO).[135]

Some women in Cyprus are calling for peace and some are openly involved in nationalist movements. They appear to come from the working classes and the upper classes.[136] They are young

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[131] Dolores B. Lasan, *Op.Cit.*, p.103.

[132] Benjamin Broom, *Interpretation of Bi-communal Support Structure of Goals for Minimising Pain and Suffering in Cyprus*, 17 March 1997.

[133] Four of the women interviewed for this study were also members of these groups.

[134] *The Cyprus Mail*, 25 May 1998.

[135] *Ibid.*

[136] "As stressful as it is to live as a feminist nationalist, to surrender one's national identity may mean absorption into an international women's movement led by middle-class women from affluent societies." Enloe, *Op.Cit.*, p.64.

and they are old. They are feminist and anti-feminist. They try to do what they can do given the fact that they are 'heard less' in defining what the national project will be.[137] In the case of Cyprus, they do so in a non-violent way rather than by adopting a militaristic outlook. Athough militarism necessitates that men allow women to take on new responsibilities, it also puts priority over communal unity for the sake of national survival, thus silencing women who are critical of patriarchal practices and attitudes. Ultimately, nationalist militarization possibly privileges men.[138] Further research is needed to address the reasons for this phenomenon and the question of whether women's lesser militarism is "a cause of lesser nationalism? Alternatively, does it mean that women support a different nationalism? Or that women are greater supporters of transnational projects?" The answers to these questions could lead toward a better understanding of how to deal with nationalism itself and in cases of divided societies like Cyprus that would be of vital importance to the lives of women.

2.2. Social Class and Education

The degree of integration and conformity of women to the norms and values of patriarchal society as well as the reflection of this integration in their identification with these norms are questions that can lead into further analysis concerning women's (lack of) participation in political activism and community work that is directed toward social change. Based on models of class awareness or consciousness,[139] one could argue that in order for women to decide to take some measures and action for gender inequality, they must first perceive that this inequality exists, which twenty-two of my interviewees do. Then they have to realise that this inequality is so unfair as to necessitate action, and this could be argued to have been the case with *some* of the women in my sample who became involved with community work. Thus, the eleven women who identified themselves as feminists were also involved with community work; however, not all of them argued that their feminists identities were the reason which led them into this involvement. In fact, as explained above, some became involved for personal reasons other then egalitarian attitudes and then developed feminist identities during the process of their involvement.

> "Consciousness of inequality includes the self-awareness of subordinate groups as well as awareness of inequality on the part of those who are not disadvantaged. ... We propose further that perceptions of the extent of gender inequality and support for efforts to combat it arise from (1) location in gender and other stratification hierarchies, (2) educational and labour experiences, (3) family situation, and (4) the historical conditions prevailing when social and political attitudes were formed."[140]

In the analysis that follows, one ought to bear in mind these 'historical conditions' described in Part One and Two of this thesis. Studies on feminism recognise a number of spheres in the social

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[137] "Women of different classes and different ethnic groups have made their own calculations in order to cope with or benefit from the current struggles between states." Cynthia Enloe, *Op.Cit.*, p.198.

[138] Enloe, *Op.Cit.*, p.58.

[139] Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structures of the Advanced Societies*, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973, pp. 112-16.

[140] Nancy J. Davis and Robert V. Robinson, 'Men's and Women's Consciousness of Gender Inequality: Austria, West Germany, Great Britain, and the United States,' in Alex Inkeles & Masamichi Sasaki (eds.), *Comparing Nations & Cultures; Readings in a Cross-Disciplinary Perspective*. Prentice-Hall, 1996, p.206.

structure being influential towards the development of feminist consciousness. Women's attitudes and consciousness of gender inequality in Cyprus can be said to be directly or indirectly influenced by individuals' social class, education, age, labour force participation, family (employment status), and institutions of social control. According to the *underdog thesis,* people who are in a socially disadvantaged position will be more aware of inequality than individuals who are advantaged, and therefore women will be more aware of gender discrimination than men.[141] My observations, through research, following media material, and articles published on gender in Cyprus, seem to support the above theory, even though no specific research (within the social sciences) has taken place concerning gender awareness. However, the same theory also predicts that men and women with low-prestige jobs and/or low incomes will be more aware of gender inequality.[142] It has thus been suggested that relative deprivation is directly related to all forms of participation in women's groups.[143] If it is accepted that the groups in which the interviewees for this study participated were *committed* to achieving some social change, and in extension to that, some change in gender relations, then the above statement would not be valid in the case of Cyprus. None of the subjects in my study participated in community work due to 'relative deprivation.' In most cases, the opposite could indeed be argued.

Studies have indicated that location in the middle class has a large positive effect on women's egalitarian gender *attitudes*. Although not directly asked to comment on this, participation observation and interviewing in this case led to the conclusion that middle-class women in Cyprus are prompted to actively *'do something'* because of their status in the community and their social beliefs; they can afford the time, and they have been exposed to some ideas through their education and sometimes through travelling. Thus, some middle and upper class women in Cyprus tend to be a lot more aware of sexism and gender inequality than working class women; similarly, Davis and Robinson found little support for the underdog thesis' assumption that the individuals who have lower-status and/or lower-paid jobs will be more aware of gender discrimination. "Sex is the only determinant of attitudes towards gender inequality, suggesting that the underdog thesis applies only when the disadvantaged group has a direct interest in the inequality under study."[144] This creates a paradox, given that many middle-class women tend to be more educated and more academically qualified than working class women are.

If one accepts that education encourages a greater awareness of injustice and inequality, the explanation for the above mentioned paradox can appear to be more simple. However, if one is to assume that education reproduces inequality through its conservative values and its promotion of prejudice and discrimination as meritocratic, then the answer to the above dilemma becomes more complex. Throughout this thesis it has been argued that education in Cyprus has not been encouraging awareness of injustice and inequality. Having been educated in this country myself, and after extensive observation and study demonstrated in the previous chapter, the first assumption is thus rejected. It is hereby suggested that formal education in Cyprus has been a major path through which dominant patriarchal ideologies have been reproduced. However, the women in my sample have also participated in further education and most of them have been exposed to other (Western) countries in order to get degrees. Further education, travelling, and access to a variety of cultural ideas as well as all the factors explored before in this chapter can thus prove to be better indicators of the multi-dimensional reason why certain women become more aware (and active) against gender inequality than others.

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[141] *Ibid.*, p.207.

[142] *Ibid.*, p.207.

[143] Caroline Kelly & Sara Breinlinger, *The Social Psychology of Collective Action: Identity, Injustice, and Gender,* London: Taylor & Francis, 1996, p.69.

[144] Davis and Robinson, *Op.Cit.*, p.212.

In my study, I found that age (in the age group of eighteen to forty-five that I studied) seemed to be a contributing factor towards the development of feminist consciousness (or not), only in conjunction with education. High educational achievement for women appeared to have an effect on the subjects' positive attitudes toward feminism, in which case, older women appeared to be more aware of gender inequality and discrimination. Both education and life experiences have been found to have a 'liberalising' effect. On the contrary, older women in my sample with less education tended to be more conservative, and as admitted by one of them "I get worse as I get older. Having kids makes you like that."[145] The two youngest subjects in my sample (Pulcheria and Melanie) showed a slight variation in the results. Melanie was in her first year whereas Pulcheria was in her third year of an undergraduate degree and they were more conservative than the rest of the women in the study. It has been suggested that individuals' attitudes towards inequality are very much affected by the historical context when they were coming of age politically (The egalitarian Zeitgeit thesis).[146] The post-war period (described in previous chapters) has created different contexts and experiences for these women than the older women in the sample. However, the woman who has been in further education for three years up to present,[147] appeared to be more aware of gender inequality and less tolerant of gender discrimination. The effect of education on women's attitudes has been cited in numerous studies; this could be related first, to its contribution toward women's entry in the labour force; second, the higher self-esteem of educated (and career) women; third, the inevitably successful role models of highly educated women than women who enter the labour force (given the 'glass ceiling' effect experienced by women in the labour force); fourth, women's educational opportunities which create groups of women who have the means to deal with individuals and groups who reinforce traditional gender roles or otherwise block women's opportunities. Further, large groups of educated women can use their resources to create public support for the women's movement.[148] It has also been suggested that people with college graduate spouses are also more supportive of non-traditional gender roles.[149] In an ageist society like Cyprus, most of the above effects are directly related with age. Studies have shown that younger women, for example, are more emotionally dependent on men than older ones. It appears, therefore, that younger women adhere to a romanticised view of heterosexual relationships; however, through experience women realise the flaw in the romantic ideal and "lean toward 'un-dependence'."[150] Although my study cannot be used as a guide to represent attitudes of women in Cyprus in general, these results provide a useful indication of urban women's experiences and how these can influence their views of feminist ideology. Educational opportunities appear to be very important in the evolution of egalitarian attitudes and feminist consciousness. High levels of educational achievement can encourage large groups of women who can act against social institutions that support sexist values.

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[145] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Aspasia, July 1997.

[146] Seymour Martin Lipset & Everett C. Ladd, 'College Generations and their politics', *New Society.* No.16, pp.652-58, 1971, p.654.

[147] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Pulcheria, June 1997.

[148] Lee Ann Banaszak & Eric Plutzer, 'Contextual Determinants of Feminist Attitudes: National and Subnational Influences in Western Europe', *American Political Science Review,* March 1993, Vol.87, No.1, pp.147-156.

[149] Margaret L. Cassidy, & Bruce O. Warren, 'Family Employment Status and Gender Role Attitudes - A Comparison of Women and Men College Graduates', *Gender & Society,* Vol.10, No.3, pp. 312-329, June 1996, p.326.

[150] Susan N. Henderson & John D. Cunningham, 'Women's Emotional Dependence on Men: Scale Construction and Test of Russianoff's Hypothesis', *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research,* March 1993, Vol.28, Nos.5-6, pp317-335.

2.3. The Employment and Family Status of Women and their Partners

It has been suggested that through women's labour participation, egalitarian gender role attitudes and feminist consciousness are encouraged and developed. Women's newly acquired financial independence as well as networks developing in the workplace can contribute toward the awareness of gender discrimination and women's oppression. It has been further suggested that studies which generalise based on research on either individuals or nations cannot give an accurate explanation of the influences of women's status and opportunity structure on feminist consciousness and egalitarian attitudes.[151] Rather, the social structure itself is important is shaping the conflict surrounding the advancement of feminist goals.[152] It has been argued, for example, that individual participation in the labour force is associated with pro-feminist attitudes; however, in areas where women's participation in the paid labour force was highest, adoption of the most conservative values by women who were not in the paid labour force was also observed. "This appears to be a classic example of status politics, with those being left behind by rapid social change adopting an especially conservative posture."[153] Left behind? If the authors are suggesting that women who are not in paid employment are both 'left behind' and are 'non-active', then they create unnecessary stereotyping of women as homemakers. Although their findings are of interest in terms of understanding feminist consciousness among women, they do not mention other social and psychological factors that might influence conservative behaviour. The authors explain that women's entry into the labour force has not led to uniformly pro-feminist attitudes partly because of economic competition; if businesses are unwilling to pay men a 'family wage', then the economic security of full-time homemakers is under threat by other women's financial gains. Further, the answer could lie in the current character of women's employment, which remains well below that of equally qualified men.

In a study that sets out to examine the relationship between the family employment status of men and women and their gender role attitudes, Margaret Cassidy and Bruce Warren found that women in full-time, paid employment were the most supportive of egalitarian gender roles in families, followed by women in part time employment. The women in their study who were employed part time shared attitudes closer to those of full-time employed women rather than to homemakers,[154] due to these women's need to enhance and protect their dual- or single-earner arrangement. Women's participation in the labour market could indeed be the reason for these differences. These women's gender attitudes appear to reflect ideologies which protect "their dual-or single-earner arrangement: employed women are more supportive of providing day care, men's greater involvement in families, and employed mothers, compared to homemakers."[155] Female homemakers' attitudes, it was found, are more similar to those of men's. In countries where women experience great dependence on men, like in Cyprus one could argue, marriage as an institution of social control strongly promotes women's dependence and has a negative influence on women's non-traditional gender attitudes.[156] It appears then that women's family situation has a strong effect on women's gender attitudes. That does not mean that married women adhere less to feminist ideology than single or divorced women,

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[151] *Ibid.*

[152] *Ibid.*

[153] Lee Ann Banaszak & Eric Plutzer, *Op.Cit.*

[154] Margaret L. Cassidy & Bruce O. Warren, 'Family Employment Status and Gender Role Attitudes - A Comparison of Women and Men College Graduates', *Gender & Society*, Vol.10, No.3, June 1996, pp. 312-329, p.325.

[155] *Ibid.*

[156] Janeen Baxter & Emily W. Kane: 'Dependence and Independence; A Cross-National Analysis of Gender Inequality and Gender Attitudes', *Gender and Society*, Vol.9, No.2, April 1995, p.206. See also Christine Delphy & Diana Leonard, *Familiar Exploitation; A New Analysis of Marriage in Contemporary Western Societies*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

but rather that their husbands and their own employment status can affect their attitudes. In my sample, Olympias and Hydna were both full-time homemakers whose husbands were the 'breadwinners' of the household; they both held more traditional views on gender roles and demonstrated limited feminist consciousness. Further, Gorgo, whose husband had a successful career, worked from home. She had little 'direct' contact and interaction with 'the public sphere' on an everyday basis and demonstrated little awareness of gender inequality. Deborah, who was married and called herself a feminist, had a successful high-ranking job for a semi-governmental organisation. Her husband, on the other hand, had in a low- ranking, low–paid job. This couple's 'reverse' employment statuses –in the sense that they did not follow the traditionally expected employment pattern of married couples- were subject to 'gossip', questions, and disapproval by their immediate environment and, according to the interviewee herself, have affected her feminist awareness: "You don't really think about how 'weird' what you are doing is, until everyone around you starts commenting on it. Then the more you think about it, the angrier you get."[157] Korinna, on the other hand, expressed indifference to feminist ideas; her job was of a lower ranking than that of her husband's. It was not the fact of being married as such that was the factor that influenced these women's identification with feminism or not, but rather what these women did for a living, who they were married to, and what his occupation was.

It has been suggested that despite Western women's entry into the labour force, pro-feminist attitudes have not followed uniformly as it has been found for women's entry into higher education. Part of the answer could lie with the fact that women have lower quality jobs and feminism has had its most visible impact in the professions,

> "...rather than in industrial and clerical labour, where the great majority of women work. Most employed women occupy low-paying jobs with limited opportunities for upward mobility. These 'gains' by women may provide neither positive role models nor a cadre of women with resources that can be used for political ends. The current character of 'women's work' may therefore blunt its potential positive impact on other women."[158]

Although the status of women's employment is critical to the development of awareness of gender inequality and the development of feminist consciousness, researchers have found that income itself does not need to be associated with egalitarian gender role attitudes.[159] Rather, it has been suggested that the greater the economic power of the husband in the household the less egalitarian views on gender roles of both husbands and wives, since women will have less power to assert independent views. Women's economic dependence on men contributes towards both men's and women's gender attitudes becoming more conservative.[160] My findings support the above claim since nine out of the twelve women in my sample who claimed to be indifferent to feminism also reported to be financially dependent on their husbands *and fathers*. When asked whether they were financially independent, they said, "it depends on what you mean by independence. I have plenty of money since I work, but I could not make ends meet without my husband. Well, my dad gives us money occasionally, too. I suppose that if he had not given us the money for this house, I would have never been able to have one built. Too expensive. I mean, my money is mostly for a bit of food and my own expenses really."[161] Similarly, the other eight women claimed that their husband's or father's contributions to the household were vital to their everyday lives and survival: "I have a monthly income, of course,

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[157] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Deborah, June 1997.

[158] *Ibid.*

[159] Davis & Robinson, *Op.Cit*; Baxter & Kane, *Op.Cit.*

[160] Baxter & Kane, *Op.Cit.*, p. 209-210. See also Jan Pahl, *Money and Marriage,* Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1989.

[161] *Personal Conversation with Author,* Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

but it is not really fixed. I mean, I am OK about my everyday expenses and needs, but I could never be totally independent without X [the husband]'s money. He makes triple than I do, for God's sake. If we ever got a divorce, my dad would help me anyway. If I asked."[162] The importance of these arguments lies in both women's material dependence of men, but also on their interpretation and acceptance of it as a 'part of life'. Women's material and emotional dependence on men is often unquestionably accepted as an unchangeable fact, indicating to various levels of passivity about the current social structure and setting.

In the above discussion, it has been argued that passivity, conformity, and uniform acceptance of authority are characteristics of post-colonial discourses, especially in cases of small societies like Cyprus. Furthermore, it has been argued that social class, social status, the family employment status of men and women, education, age [including the historical context when individuals were coming of age politically], personal experiences, and experience of gender discrimination as well as the historical conditions of particular societies are all factors associated with the development of feminist consciousness –or other expressions of gender awareness- and in some cases, the willingness or not to be actively involved in actions that will eliminate gender discrimination and oppression. But what about non-activism? Why are most people not involved in any collective or community work directed towards social change?

3. Non-activism of Cypriot Women: The Culture of Gossip, the 'Panopticon', and Feminism.

Ultimately, the discussion leads to the question of non-activism. In most parts of the world, it is only a very small number of the population who become involved in collective action, and especially women's groups. The powerlessness that has been expressed by the women in my sample indicates that inaction is partly a result of feelings of inability to change situations and circumstances. Part of the answer can be found in the cultural value attached to individualism and the derogatory manner in which group membership *per se* may be regarded by the members of an individualistic culture.[163] They argue that members of minorities are often regarded as rigid and dogmatic; therefore, the members of the majority hesitate to have any links with the minority because that would result in negative images of their social identities. Similarly, in the case of women in Cyprus, women are reluctant to be associated with feminism and women's groups, as such an involvement would 'confine' them in a stigmatised, restricted space in which even less freedom exists. Cyprus has been described as a culture where 'collective individualistic familism' exists, that is, 'a cluster of values concerning the individual, the family, and their role in society.' This 'ethos' exhibits "a strong sense of familism coupled with an equally strong sense of individualism, both of which are embedded in a climate of competition and mutual hostility."[164] Thus, membership in organised action that is directed toward collective social change is seen as a threat to Cypriots in general. Further, the political and social history, recent and not so recent, of the island in terms of the treatment of immigrants, workers from Asian countries, the Turkish Cypriot community in the past, has demonstrated that minorities are not tolerated. At the same time, however, the strong sense of 'familism' identified in the Cypriot culture motivates people to subordinate personal goals to family goals; further, on an ethnic level, there is great concern for the integrity of the ethnic group as well as intense emotional attachment. Escaping the norms and values of the groups can become impossible. Adhering to feminist ideas involves escaping these norms, being stigmatised, fighting a closed system, and suffering the 'gossip'. Resisting patriarchy by women on a collective level is un-

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[162] *Personal Conversation with Author,* Interview with Jezebel. July 1997.

[163] *Ibid.* p.136.

[164] C.V. Mavratsas, 'The Greek andGreek-Cypriot Economic Ethos: A Socio-cultural Analysis,' *The Cyprus Review*. Vol.4, No. 2, Fall 1992, p.18.

feminine, assertive, and outspoken, and thus unattractive to men, to whom most women are emotionally dependent. Many women in my sample were reluctant to adopt the label feminist although they endorsed feminist ideas.

The final part of this discussion draws certain conclusions that are particular and specific to the case of Cyprus. When women in the sample were asked what kinds of things bothered them in their environment and the society they lived in, as well as what they would do to change them, twenty four women mentioned *koutsombolio* (gossip). Some discussed it in more detail than others; for fourteen of them, 'gossip' was the only thing they did mention: "I wish people would stop living for other people, and start living for themselves. Both men, and women";[165] "I would like to change how much people *paraksigoun* (mis-explain, misinterpret) each other."[166]; "Gossip bothers me more than anything else in my life. It is just everywhere. Neighbours staring outside the windows, people talking, going on, and on. It is horrible, I hate it."[167] Further,

> "Our society is very, very oppressive. Everyone gossips, everyone is worried about your every move, everyone is all over you. I wish people would leave each other alone, it is just very stifling. I really try and teach my pupils not to do this sort of thing. Not to laugh at people. Not to judge people. To accept others. To allow other to be who they want to be. At the same time, I find my self doing it as well sometimes, and I hate it."[168]

Gossip (*to koutsombolio*), that is talking about other people (often with a critical or negative intent) is the main weapon devised by patriarchy in Mediterranean cultures to deal with women's behaviour and sexuality, and women themselves are the main participants in it. It is a method of control and social punishment, a means to enforcing subtle fear and particular norms. Writing in 1983 after having studied village women in rural Greece, Rushton's findings are very close to the results of this thesis. She says, "Gossip is, of all vices, the one most frequently noticed and discussed."[169] Women are more associated with gossip than men, and they are called '*koutsomboles*', females that gossip. People will often associate gossip with jealousy and envy. 'They are only saying this because they are jealous' (*laloun to epithi zilevkoun),* is a frequent remark heard by individuals of all backgrounds and social classes.

The contradictions between the attitudes and practices of urban, middle class women in Cyprus are clear in the case of gossip. They explained that they disapproved of the practice, and argued that they had themselves done it 'occasionally' or were involved in it, but 'not with a malicious intent'. Although hesitant about admitting it, most also claimed to being influenced by 'people's tongue' (*tin ylossa tou kosmou)* and to adjusting their behaviour (at various levels) in an effort not to give spark to gossip. Rushton explains that gossip can function in two major ways. On the one hand, it has the ability to unite people through the exchange of news and opinions. On the other hand, it can be divisive: "in its less innocent form this may be its intention. Any outsider is particularly vulnerable both to gossip and to the sense that she is being gossiped about."[170] Although the information involved may not be accurate, it is effective "if it may be supposed to be so."[171] Women are thus influenced by gossip:

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[165] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Lycimache, July 1997.

[166] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Hipparchia, June 1997.

[167] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Pulcheria, June 1997.

[168] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Theela, June 1997

[169] Lucy Rushton, 'Doves and Magpies: Village Women in the Greek Orthodox Church', in Pat Holden (ed.), *Women's Religious Experience,* Croom Helm, 1983, p.66.

[170] *Ibid.*

[171] *Ibid.*

> "I wish I didn't have to say this, but the answer has to be yes. You know what it is like here: everyone cares about what you do, where you go, who with, why. I tried to escape this, and for a while I thought I did, but not really. And I won't believe any woman on this island who claims she doesn't care."[172]

In the case of a very 'closed' culture, 'claustrophobic' as one woman told me, how people will regard a particular action that does not conform to the norm can be of primary importance to a person's decision to participate in it or not. As explained in previous chapters, there is very low tolerance for difference in opinion, ideology, and action in Cyprus. Most interviewees commented upon the much-hated 'culture of gossip' as I call it and expressed strong resentment about it: "only Cypriots can understand it, and sense it. You can smell it everywhere you go, and as a result you cannot breath."[173]

Similar to Jeremy Bentham's (1748-1832) 'Panopticon', the 'culture of gossip' acts as a single person, who can observe every person in prison, or on the island, at all times. Well- behaved citizens, conformers, are rewarded with social approval. Maladjusted people, innovators, deviants, non-conformers, are given informal sanctions that can be unbearable. Numerous examples throughout the thesis have demonstrated women's conflict between ideology and praxis. I am using the Panopticon to draw a parallel not to the 'actual' situation (whatever that might be defined as), but rather to the sentiments and experiences of women in Cyprus. In the Panopticon, the prisoners cannot view each other, nor can they view the guard. Thus, they are always aware of being observed, guarded, under constant scrutiny. This is not the same in the Cyprus case. People can, and do see each other. People are aware of the 'culture of gossip,' and they can see the guard. People participate in it. The guard is patriarchy and represents the institutionalised domination of women by men; the prisoner is the woman. The 'culture of gossip' concentrates around sexual morality, chastity, virginity, dowry, home cleanliness, upbringing of children, church going, dress code, weight, make-up, extra-marital affairs, and pre-marital affairs. At one level, it could be argued that the guard, through the Panopticon, defines behaviour for the prisoners. The man, through patriarchy, defines behaviour for women. Although class, ethnicity, and age are mutually constitutive and important in the analysis of the various discourses and epistemologies adopted by people in Cyprus, I argue that this particular 'culture of gossip' is mostly the product of the patriarchal structure dominant on the island. Throughout this thesis, the importance of other factors in relation to gender have been addressed and explored. Thus, drawing a parallel between the Panopticon and the 'culture of gossip' illustrates the importance that women in Cyprus attribute to 'gossip' and their experiences with it.

It should be noted here that it is both men and women who gossip and criticise non-conforming behaviour. "Both sexes say that men belong in the streets, women in the home. Both men and women will say that a good woman is 'the mistress of her house'; both will argue heatedly that modesty demands that a woman remain housebound and secluded, that she devote herself to housekeeping and children."[174] Women openly recognise and contribute toward the perpetuation of negative patriarchal symbols and structures of their own sex. Although the women in my sample appear to be more flexible about difference and individuality than previous studies have indicated, although their opinions are gender conscious, their identities, and actual practices, indicate otherwise, and illustrate the idea of contradiction discussed in this thesis. Dozens of examples during fieldwork indicate that they recognise the 'culture of gossip' and most women seem to acknowledge that they are the direct victims of it. At the same time, they do little to control or eliminate it. Rather, they contribute towards its perpetuation since Cyprus is a culture where any challenge to dominant

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[172] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Zenobia, July 1997.

[173] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Korinna, August 1997.

[174] Jan Brogger & David D. Gilmore, 'The Matrifocal Family in Iberia: Spain and Portugal compared', in *Ethnology,* Winter 1997, Vol.36, No.1, p.17.

values and norms is seen as threatening and thus, subject to ... gossip. One woman's words can serve as a conclusion to this idea and this chapter: "Gossip is not something that you necessarily need to be directly involved in to see. It is just there, all over you, eating your life away. But unless you experience it, you cannot really understand it."[175] The 'culture of gossip' in Cypriot society is patriarchal rule discouraging and attempting to prevent women from developing 'a culture of women', a culture where they can freely evolve and be more open to changes.

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[175] *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Artemissia, July 1997.

Chapter VII
Investigating the 'Personal': The Case Studies

1. Introducing the Case Studies: Analysing Women's Own Words

"The rich detail which emerges from the intimate knowledge the analyst must acquire in a case study if it is well conducted provides the optimum conditions for the acquisition of those illuminating insights which make formerly opaque connections suddenly pellucid."[1]

In the present chapter I use three case studies out of the twenty five interviews I carried out between May and September 1997 in order to present the attitudes and practices of urban, middle-class women, since case studies can provide detailed, rich data that are difficult to concentrate from broader surveys.[2] During the semi-structured, in-depth interviews,[3] adhering to feminist methodology, all the women generalised about Cypriot society to talk about themselves. Personal experience was the basis for describing their society and culture. As demonstrated in Chapter Six of this thesis,[4] these women's gender opinions could, but did not necessarily, affect praxis. The detailed examination of the three interviews used here as case studies allows for a fuller analysis of the themes and issues covered in Parts One and Two of this thesis.

The focus of concentration throughout the data analysis has been the relationship between the practices and attitudes of women in Cyprus. The conflict and contradictions which these women experience between what they think (attitudes) and what they do (practice) are portrayed in the three case studies that follow. These were chosen in order to demonstrate the variation of discourses which exist amongst urban, middle-class women in Cyprus concerning interpretations of gender relations, the differences in how they experience these relations, and the strategies they adopt in order to act upon these experiences. The focus in the examples and interview-extracts used for the sake of analysis will vary; rather than a comprehensive exploration of the whole context of the interviews, two to four variables -which in my opinion best illustrate the variety of arguments presented throughout the thesis as well as the conflict between opinion and praxis- have been chosen for each

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[1] J. Clyde Mitchell, 'Case and Situation Analysis,' *Sociological Review,* Vol.31, 1983, p.207.

[2] Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, & Bryan S. Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology.* Penguin Reference, Penguin Books, Second Edition, 1984, p.28.

[3] After the interviews were conducted, I kept in contact with the last two interviewees, but not on a regular basis. A lot of the issues that were covered during the interviews became clearer in our subsequent meetings, through these women's descriptions of relevant life experiences and feelings. The original transcripts are in Greek and I promised my interviewees that no one would read them apart from me. However, I did explain to them what the case studies would imply and that I would be translating their words. I contacted them upon deciding on the case studies. All three of them consented to this, as long as their identity would not be betrayed. Aspasia and Melanie were especially worried since "Cyprus is such a small place, you can never be sure." The issue of confidentiality was a major one for most interviewees. Although they were all very cooperative and willing to be interviewed, when the tape recorder was presented, most hesitated and asked, "who else will hear this? If it is no one in Cyprus, I don't care." Gossip and its restrictions in a small society like Cyprus once again became apparent. I felt privileged to have been able to conduct the interviews below in Greek (actually, in the Greek Cypriot dialect) since it is my native language, and it has been extremely useful in identifying hidden, metaphorical meanings and implications in these women's words.

[4] See also Appendix V, Sample and Content Analysis.

case study. The common variable in all three is these women's interpretations and analyses of gender relations and their thoughts on feminist identity and politics in Cypriot society.

The first case study presents extracts from an interview with Mastigga, a woman in her late twenties. She experienced intense conflict and contradictions between feminist praxis and ideology, which she herself recognised and discussed throughout the interview. Since the thesis is concerned with demonstrating the attitudes and practices of women in urban Cyprus and how these can be contradictory, Mastigga provides a good example. However, the case of Mastigga is atypical. She identified herself as a feminist, similar to another ten women in this study; however, she is not a representative member of the group of women I interviewed, since she consciously and openly recognised the conflict between her identity as a feminist and her behaviour as a woman in Cypriot society. This was an important issue for her, which preoccupied her in her everyday life and affairs.

The second 'case', Aspasia, is representative of half of my sample in many ways: similar to another eleven interviewees, she claimed to be indifferent to feminism. Further, she expressed many ideas and opinions that were similar to those expressed by the majority of feminist women in the study. She expressed thoughts that were similar to those of a lot of women of her class and urban background in Cyprus. Similar to the other eleven women, she did not wish to be labelled a feminist, although a number of her answers suggested recognition of some feminist ideas; that is, she recognised gender discrimination as a problem and she believed in the equal treatment of women and men in society. However, she argued that she was not interested in 'women's issues' as such. This position was a dominant one in the sample; that is, the position of "pro-women, non-feminists who wish to defend and develop women's sphere of activity;"[5] such women wish to see this activity develop but are not involved in the actual process.

The third woman is again, typical in terms of a number of the answers she gave during the interview process, but totally atypical in others. She was one of the two women in my sample who claimed to be antifeminist. Since gender politics need to be analysed with the inclusion of anti-feminist as well as feminist forces,[6] Melanie's words became important in identifying reasons for the rejection of feminist ideology. Her answers to the questions varied from acknowledging women's oppression and discrimination to accepting and supporting patriarchal values and norms. In that respect, Melanie is a very atypical case from the sample. She presented views that were both in favour of, and antithetical to, the other women's interviews. She falls into no general pattern in terms of this study and it therefore becomes particularly illuminating to explore and comprehend her opinions and practices.

2.1. In Mastigga's Own Words

Mastigga is twenty-eight, married, and the mother of a two-year-old child. She comes from a wealthy, urban, upper-middle class family, and lives in Nicosia. I approached her for an interview after our common involvement in a recently founded association that deals with women's issues. She holds a postgraduate degree in the social sciences from an American university and works for a private company. She considers herself a feminist and has expressed an interest in women's issues and associations. She also expressed an interest in this project and asked to read it when it was finished. We met at her office after work and the interview lasted two hours. What follows are selected parts from the interview in June 1997. Throughout the interview, Mastigga's conflict between her identity as a feminist woman and her experiences of being a Cypriot woman living in Cyprus constantly reoccurred. There was clear dissatisfaction and general discontentment expressed in her interview, as she claimed that her opinions and attitudes were continually contradicted in her environment and personal life, and that became a source of uncomfortable feelings. The areas of

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[5] Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, London: Routledge, 1997, p.154.

[6] *Ibid.*, p.154.

concentration in the discussion below include Mastigga's attitudes and practices concerning marriage and dowry, domestic violence, and interpretations of gender relations.

Mastigga explained that she felt pressure and frustration when she discussed the institution of marriage in Cyprus. She appeared clear about the reasons why she had got married and she recognised that social forces led people into particular actions. She mentioned women in particular, pointing to the pressure imposed on them to get married in Cypriot society. Despite her frustration (and disapproval which was also detectable in her tone of voice and facial expressions) though, she followed the norms and conformed to the requirements and values of her culture. She recognised the strong influence of the Orthodox Church in society and pointed to people's conformity and acceptance of particular ideas and normative behaviour.

> "In Cyprus there are particular reasons why people get married. There is a lot of pressure. If you don't get married, you are pinpointed; it's like you haven't succeeded in life. The goal of life if you are a woman in this country is to get married and have children. Some people of course, have this need to have a long-term partner in life; all of them always go ahead and get married. The reason they get married in this country, is the pressure they feel ... There are no real alternatives in Cyprus for people. I got married for this specific reason. I lived with my husband for ten years abroad before we got married. If we lived in Cyprus, we would have got married a lot sooner than we did. I got married because I had to ... The pressure came from his parents, from my parents, and from my grandmother ... I got married in a church because (*smiling with sarcasm*) it's given, it's expected. If you ask me whether I would have got married in a church if I were given a choice, yes, I would, because I'd like that ... I chose to marry my husband because I lived with him for a long time, and I knew I wanted to be with him, I got on with him, we had no real problems."

She drew a distinction between 'foreign men' and Cypriot men in that familial relationships in the case of the latter influenced their decisions. She pointed out that strong 'familism'[7] in Cyprus was highly important in the formation of attitudes and behaviour in men, and that parental intervention could be decisive in a married couple's lives:

> "I believe that a *Cypriot* (her emphasis) man is under a lot of pressure to find a woman who will be up to his standards. I am thinking of my case. I think that under no circumstances would my mother-in-law accept that her son should marry someone with less education, such as no university degree; I believe that she would like a woman for her son who has money so that he is secure; on the other hand, she would want a woman who is always in the house, whose home is always clean and so on. My mother in law has a lot of expectations. Far too many Cypriot men are influenced by this sort of thing. I am saying this because while we lived abroad, subjects such as dowry, houses, property and so on, never came to the surface. We felt that our parents paid a lot for us to study abroad, and that when we went back home, we would have no expectations from these people ... The minute we came to Cyprus. things changed. I strongly feel that his family influenced him. And his friends. All of a sudden, he took it for granted that he had to *have something from me.* He expected that there would definitely be some help from my parents. Maybe not buy the whole house, but definitely something. And he demanded that I go and ask for it. I said I didn't feel comfortable to go and do such a thing, to tell them that after all they had spent for my education, I wanted a house as well. I didn't do it. But my parents realised that I had this problem... *(hesitating)* They helped as much as they wanted. They did not help as *much as*

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[7] C.V. Mavratsas, 'The Greek and Greek-Cypriot Economic Ethos: A Sociocultural Analysis,' *The Cyprus Review*, Vol.4, No. 2, Fall 1992.

it was expected, but they did help. I had a lot of arguments about this with my husband. He insulted me on numerous occasions about this issue; sometimes in front of other people ... it was not just his family, but also his friends, his acquaintances, his crowd. For them, it's not important if they love their partners, if they can communicate, if they are educated. What matters is how much money the woman has, if their father is going to have a house built for them, if he will give them money and so on. And that is what happened with a lot of his friends. Some of them got engaged, married and were trying to have a baby within six months all together, because they found a woman who met their criteria. So my husband was influenced, too ... It really hurt me, to the point that I wanted to get a divorce. In the beginning I tried to calmly explain that I disagreed with these things, that these things are against my principles ... because he knew my thoughts about all these from the beginning ... But I went ahead and got married; I don't regret it. Some things bother me but I believe that he is gradually realising his mistakes. I just think that he is influenced by all this. He has changed since we got back to Cyprus."

The subtle practice of the institution of dowry in urban Cyprus becomes evident in Mastigga's experience. Her feminist identity and opinions come into conflict with the society she lives in. Her husband, who previously agreed with his wife and thus disapproved of the idea of dowry, later conformed to social expectations. Mastigga's words pointed to her disappointment and frustration about what she felt forced to do, which was to accept her husband's and societal expectations. Social pressure became too intense for her to ignore. Further, her feelings (and emotional dependence, as shown in other parts of the interview) for her husband as well as public opinion, led her into accepting a situation she felt uncomfortable with:

> "Anyway, we had terrible fights when he asked me to tell my dad to buy us a luxury flat. He demanded that. And I struggled, I said I couldn't do that, it was against everything I stood for.... (*tears in her eyes*). In the end, I did exactly what I had laughed at before. I hated myself for doing this. Now, we live in a nice flat, mostly paid by my dad ... but I can't forget what happened. After ten years together, I thought I knew my partner a lot more. But I did not."

Mastigga's conflict between her feminist opinions and feminist practices becomes apparent since her efforts for an egalitarian relationship with her husband had, in her own view, been compromised. Social institutions and cultural norms presented continual obstacles that consequently had an impact on many aspects of her relationship: Mastigga recognised the patriarchal structure that operates to undermine women's work for example.

> "He makes a lot more money than I do. As far as financial responsibilities are concerned ... we have a joint account and we cover the expenses. We have two joint accounts, but I manage one of them and he does the other. Normally, though, I deal with the financial aspects of our lives. I pay for the instalments and all that. It bothers me that we have the same academic qualifications and that he gets paid three times more than I do."

The natural inevitability of the 'mother instinct' and the eventual division of labour within the household, as well the problems associated with inflexible schedules for full-time workers with children, the lack of sufficient day care facilities discussed in previous chapters of this study, are summarised by Mastigga in a few lines:

> "I have the responsibility for our six-month old daughter. He does work more hours than I do, but I don't exactly have the perfect schedule either. I have no afternoons free or anything. It's not because of the time; it's because (*thinking*) he takes certain things for granted that it's my responsibility. He doesn't even think about this. For example, he might

> be at home with the kid, and I will come home and I'll ask, 'have you bathed the baby?' and he'll say 'why, did you ask me to?' I have to tell him to do something, he won't think, 'oh, the baby needs a bath, I'll do it.' He takes it for granted that I will decide what will happen with the kid. It's my responsibility."

If she fails to fulfil this responsibility, then she has to bear the consequences. The mother-in-law (*pethera*) will confront the young bride on issues concerning the proper performance of housework, management of finances, and the upbringing of children.[8] The relationship between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law is very intense, and in most cases conflict occurs as most couples live in close proximity to the parents' household.[9] [There are numerous jokes and negative connotations associated with *petheres* (mothers-in-law)]. The position of a daughter-in-law is clearly subordinate to that of her mother-in-law because of her younger age and because she is a newcomer to the household. Thus, unless the daughter-in-law obeys her mother-in-law, conflict arises which results in the daughter- in-law being held responsible.[10] Although Mastigga's mother-in-law lives in another town, and the former does not depend on the latter in any way, she still feels uncomfortable and frustrated with the ability of her mother-in-law to interfere in her and her husband's life. Similar to most of my interviewees, who have a mother-in-law, their husbands either support the mother or stay neutral so as not to upset either of the two. In rural communities, tradition holds that the young woman respects and listens to her mother-in-law under any circumstances. These ideas are heavily challenged by women in urban settings, but the main idea of respect and submission (even for 'people's eyes'/*yia ta mathkia tou kosmou*) still holds.

> "My experience up to present is that problems tend to increase within marriage, for all the reasons mentioned above. Having a kid makes things even worse, because I have certain ideas about how to raise her. He agrees with me, but we have the intervention of his parents mainly, about how the kid ought to be raised. I need to be extremely assertive to show them that I have another opinion about all this ... His parents, actually his mum, interferes a lot because he is an only child, and she depends on him ... actually her dependence has now been transferred from my husband to my daughter. And I have a terrible problem to deal with: she thinks that my daughter is her kid, it's like she is part of her life too ... My parents do not interfere in that manner, and if they ever do, I feel comfortable enough to tell them not to."

Mastigga considered the problems she faced with her parents-in-law, as well as her husband's inability to confront them, to be a result of the fact that he was an only child. She did not consider this to be part of a wider phenomenon of parental control and safeguarding of traditional patriarchal practices, but rather believed it was a case of an only-child overprotected by his parents.

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[8] Loring M. Danforth, 'The Resolution of conflict through song in Greek Ritual Therapy', in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.103.

[9] It is customary in Cyprus for the offspring, and especially the daughters, to have their house built on top of the bride's parents' house –unlike a number of societies in the Mediterranean and the Middle East where the bride has to follow the groom's family. This is due to both financial reasons (no need to buy or pay for land) and the strong family ties on the island (the grandmother, for example, can look after the young ones – baby-sitters might not be unheard of, but they are certainly far from an ordinary practice on the island). This is mostly the case in urban settings where housing is more expensive. In rural settings, the young adults will very often have a house built in close proximity to that of the parents or, as a result of urbanization move to a city. See also Chapter Four for a discussion on matrifocality and patriarchy.

[10] Danforth, *Op.Cit.*, p.103.

Interestingly, her analysis of the power imbalance and problems within her relationship could partly be resolved by the withdrawal of the in-laws in the couples' decision-making processes.

> "If I could change only one thing in my life, I would rather ... my husband had more brothers and sisters (he is an only child) ... it plays a big role in the problems we have ... with the in-laws. Also, I would have changed certain aspects of an old relationship I had ... Still, I learned a lot from that ...Some situations though, yes, I would change them."

Mastigga was involved in an abusive relationship during adolescence with a man slightly older than she was. Although she did not regret having dated that person, she felt that her current experience and knowledge of gender relations and women's oppression would have helped her to deal with it in a better manner.

> "I was a victim of violence. Physical violence. Yes. It was that relationship I was telling you about. I was very young, so I did not do much about it. But it has stayed with me. It happened many times. He had made me think that if I had left him, no other man would ever look at me. I was very young, fifteen. My parents could not believe that I could end up like that. He was an outlaw, a deviant guy, he was involved with the police, illegal stuff. I was brought up in a very conservative, urban family. It took me three-four years to say, wait a minute, I can get out, I have a choice to leave if I want to."

A young middle-class woman like Mastigga brought up in an educated and wealthy environment. and whose parents would clearly support her ending the relationship, found breaking off an abusive relationship a difficult and lengthy process. Her emotional dependence on her partner as well as his undermining remarks created insecurities, which she is still struggling with.

> "Before, my husband would go on about the relationship I had before. I came out of that relationship heavily traumatised and so he would tell me ... It's true, that relationship was very bad ...intense ... two different people ... different backgrounds ... that guy made me have an inferiority complex about myself ... I still carry it with me ... sometimes I am jealous of my husband for no reason, I am just very insecure about some things ... that guy used to make me feel inferior ... so sometimes I can be irrational in my behaviour towards my husband ... I am incredibly jealous ... we do go out separately, with our own friends. that's no problem ... It's not a matter of trust, this jealousy ... It's something I cannot explain ... it's one of those things ... My husband asks me, why should I suffer for the mistakes of your past?"

Mastigga's emotional dependency on her husband can also be illustrated by her 'confusion' over the reason behind her jealousy. She explained that her husband's behaviour was not threatening and it did not 'justify' her expression of jealousy, but that she could not help her feelings. Her previous, abusive relationship left her with feelings of insecurity and discomfort about her personality and identity as a woman; her husband provided both a means of gaining social and parental acceptance and reassurance for herself. Despite her feminist identity and opinions, and notwithstanding her high academic qualifications and financial independence, she could not escape patriarchal norms, which encourage the dependency of women on men. Her husband further perpetuated this situation by not acknowledging the intense experience she had at a young age and thinking of his own 'suffering' because of it. She became the victim of patriarchy through both these relationships, but also through gossip and its power and dominance in Cypriot culture. Mastigga's case demonstrates a clear example of how pervasive social norms are and how deviance from these can result in a woman's 'unrecoverable stigmatisation.'

"When I came back from my studies, I wanted to believe that I was not influenced by *tin ylossa tou kosmou* (the tongue of the people-that is, people's opinion and gossiping); however, every day, I realise that I am more and more influenced; the things that can be said or done concerning you, can change your whole life. They have said a lot about me. About the relationship I used to have. *I was stigmatised. To an almost unrecoverable extent.* Let me make you understand. When my mother-in-law found out he was having a relationship with me, what can I say ... it was chaos. I was going out with someone who was stigmatised by society. So, without knowing me, (his parents) assumed that I was not worth the effort, for their son to pay attention to me. A lot took place, and maybe subconsciously I cannot forgive them, and that's probably one of the reasons I feel like that about them."

Public opinion in Cyprus and the tireless social watching eye proved to be too strong for Mastigga to avoid. In the 'culture of gossip', talking about people is not about the innocent exchange of opinions and news, but rather a ruthless social critique on deviating from accepted social standards of morality and sexuality. Mastigga found herself in conflict once more. She was not happy to admit her participation in this 'culture of gossip' which she found unable to escape.

> "No matter how much I hate to admit it, I suppose that I do think about what people are going to say. I am sometimes stopped in the way I want to act by people's opinion. I sometimes think, now what are they going to say?"

She was preoccupied with people's opinions, and that seemed to be a reoccurring theme in her comments and answers.

> "I have sometimes thought that if I had not met my husband, I would have thought about the possibility of having a child but no partner. Sometimes, when I am angry with him, I still think about it ... If a woman decided to do this in Cyprus, she would be heavily stigmatised, to the extent that she probably would not be able to get a job."

The birth of her child was the most important experience in her life. As argued in previous chapters, marriage is considered a necessary condition for reproduction, and procreation itself, as well as the formation of a family, is socially constructed as the most important stage in a woman's life. However, she did not adhere to the dominant idea in Cyprus that motherhood is an instinct that all 'normal' women must experience in their lives. Rather, Mastigga considered motherhood to be a very intense experience for a woman, but it was however a woman's choice to decide whether to experience it or not.

> "I don't believe that women *must* have a child. I can only talk about myself. Up until last year, I heard the word baby and I turned the other way. When I decided I wanted to have a child, I thought there was no way I could ever manage to be a mother. I could see myself in all roles but not in the role of the mother. But motherhood has made me mature. It is a feeling I cannot explain. You cannot understand this unless you have a child, it is extremely important for me, and it is a very strong feeling. But it is a woman's choice to have or not to have a child."

Mastigga was critically aware of her society and openly discussed attitudes and structures that she felt should change. She confirmed the discussion in Chapter Six concerning the complex phenomenon of an individualistic yet collective culture[11] and reflected on the problems that created for her as an individual and as a woman who was an 'active' victim of the 'culture of gossip.'

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[11] See discussion in Chapter Six, Section 3.

"The things that bother me ... primarily, reassurance (*kathisihasmos)* in a sense, passivity, the feeling that everything is going to be OK that people feel here. There are many things that need to change in this country ... it bothers me that as an employed person, I cannot go and do the things I need to do, let's say concerning the civil service, the government. There is no time for employees in the private sector. Go to the bank, I don't know. It's not really the timetables that bother me, it's the attitude here. It bothers me that in order to be employed somewhere, you need to have lots of connections and know everyone. The way we drive bothers me ... We never think about other people when we drive. No, it is a general thing. Everyone does what they like, without any consideration for other people. It really bothers me ... In one respect, we Cypriots do not appear to be individualists – if I need to take a decision, the whole neighbourhood needs to help me reach a decision, if you know what I mean. On the other hand, if something is convenient for you, you do it and you don't care about other people."

Further, she confirmed arguments presented in Chapters Three, Four and Five on the ineffectiveness of the legal system in confronting social custom. The alternative forms of patriarchy are evident in the way a woman can now be employed and be interested in a career which can simply be put on hold by patriarchal attitudes at the workplace.

"It bothers me that my husband gets paid more than I do; when I told my employer last year that I was pregnant, I received the lowest salary raise in the whole department (because I was going to be on maternity leave for four months). If a man did what I am doing, he would be getting paid a lot higher. I am sure."

Despite her clear contempt for gender discrimination at the workplace, her attitudes on women's work and experiences were rather complex. When asked about a classic case of a reversal of the traditional gender roles, Mastigga gave a contradictory answer, signifying again the conflicts that she herself faced. She felt that she had to justify herself for saying or thinking 'the wrong thing', not only to me but to herself as well.

"I could see my husband at home looking after the baby and the house, and me going out to work if I earned more money ... He would mind at some point, not socially, but he is a very active person ... I cannot imagine him *doing nothing*.... That was the wrong expression, I know, I know. I am sorry. However, I don't think I could be at home, a housewife, I would not be able to manage. When you are at home, there is no excuse for not doing something all the time, I don't care ...it's your job to do the housework."

Although domestic and sexual abuse as well as harassment of women was completely unacceptable for this woman in any form, she recognised the structures that prevented social norms and values from changing. She considered this to be a social rather than a personal problem, and pointed out that the passivity of Cypriot women in becoming active in overthrowing oppression was a result of the social institutions on the island.

"When there is a kid in the middle, getting a divorce is something you seriously need to think about. However, if there is violence or abuse, then it is better for everyone, including the kid, to get a divorce. In Cyprus domestic violence is not reported, it is a taboo. The whole neighbourhood might know, but you don't go and ask for help from a specialist ... I have heard of cases when violence was reported, but nothing gets done. You come to the point of saying I might as well not report it, because nothing will happen, apart from one police officer gossiping with the next one. The whole system is to blame, not just a man or a woman."

For this woman, and as demonstrated in Chapter Six, education and personal experience can be crucial in the development of feminist consciousness. Interestingly, part of her personal experience involved the 'freedom' of living abroad, as opposed to the oppression she felt in Cyprus and living at home.

> "I think that men and women should be treated in exactly the same manner ... exactly the same ... to have exactly the same responsibilities ... I work, he works, we should both do everything, share everything, no exceptions ... It was only after I went to the States that I started thinking about these issues. I was *free*, alone, in a different world, I took some courses, and I started questioning things. Living abroad and education are of primary importance."

Despite her questioning of the current social structure and the existing status quo, Mastigga's life and relationship did not mirror her ideas about equality of the sexes.

> "In Cyprus we are very far away from this equality of the sexes. Very far ... In my relationship? He is the kind of guy who, if I tell him to do something, he will do it. But I have to tell him. I get in the house, the dishes are in the sink, someone needs to wash them. so I do it. He will not tell me to do it, but he will not do it. It's not an equal relationship. These are just stupid examples, but *it is not, it is not an equal relationship*. Many times, he will tell me that I am a ...bitch, you know, because I will dominate, I will say what I think. If a man does that, he is strong, but a woman is a bitch (*dhragouna* – in Cypriot dialect. this means a female dragon). He jokes about it of course, but still ... He does respect me as a person but not as much as I would like. For me, respect would mean that he comes home and he says, 'Mastigga I know you are more tired than I am today so sit down and I will do everything.' He won't do that "

Throughout the interview, Mastigga expressed her frustration with her lack of leisure time. She explained how in her household, it was taken for granted by her husband that she was responsible for raising the child and doing the housework. Similar to Green, Hebron and Woodward,[12] in my study I found a number of cases where negotiations had to take place between the couple in order for men to 'babysit' their own children. Mastigga would receive help from her husband, after she explained what needed to be done and why. In other words, she needed to justify asking the father to look after his child. For many men in Cyprus, according to my interviewees, baby-sitting is clearly a woman's job, which is menial and degrading for a man to do. The patriarchal values implicit in the Cypriot family become obvious here. Leisure time is defined in gendered terms and reflects the power relations within the household. The man demands and expects services from the woman and the children in the house. Refusal to provide such a service represents a challenge of both familial authority and the socio-political order that is imbued with such patriarchal settings.[13] Thus, when women make a rare attempt to claim time for themselves, they are criticised for rejecting and neglecting the family. Further, even though a growing number of women, like Mastigga, are in full-time paid employment, she still faces the 'double shift' burden and has "no time to call her own."[14] Nevertheless, a number of women I spoke to, either through interviews, the groups I got involved in, and every day, 'in the field', expressed directly and indirectly that baby-sitting is a woman's job. Thus, when a friend was talking about an acquaintance of hers, Mary, she expressed how sorry she

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[12] Eileen Green, Sandra Hebron & Diana Woodward, *Gender and Leisure: A Study of Women's Leisure in Sheffield*, London: Sports Council, 1987.

[13] Julie Seymour, 'No time to Call my Own; Women's Time as a Household Resource', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.15, No.2, pp.187-192, 1992, p.191.

[14] *Ibid.*, p.191.

felt for her "because her mum is one of those very educated career women who is not interested in helping her out with the kid." Mary's husband is away for a few weeks, and so is her mother. However, her father, brother and sister live in close proximity. My friend felt that Mary's mum should have stayed in Cyprus to help her out and "sometimes baby-sit" for her newborn baby. Her father, or other members of her family, was not even mentioned.

Mastigga felt that patriarchy and other aspects of Cypriot culture have an irrevocable effect on Cypriot men and doubted the existence of egalitarianism in relationships among Cypriot couples in her immediate environment. Further, Mastigga recognised than some men are likely to support policies that feminists advocate but she was sceptical about their incentives.

> "I think his sexism stems from the fact that he is Cypriot. Definitely. I have met and lived with people in the States and they were different. Of course, it always depends on the family but I had male friends who helped with everything. In Cyprus I know of very few cases where the relationships are on an equal basis. Very few. But really, they are not equal either. I think that you can find feminist men but they are very few. I know men who claim that they are. But I have not lived with them to know if that is true. I have my doubts. In many cases, it is very clear that it is all talk ... but I do know of one or two people whom I would describe as feminists."

Commenting on Cypriot women's attitudes toward gender inequality and their feminist consciousness, she suggested that

> "In Cyprus women want to *appear* to be liberated, but I don't think they are. For a Cypriot woman, liberation is to wear a mini skirt, go out at night, smoke, drive, do this sort of thing. For me, it is something far deeper. It is a way of thinking; wearing some mini skirt, going out alone, doing anything, and then say, I'd better marry this guy because I won't find another one, that is certainly not liberation. Liberation is an attitude and a way of thinking. I don' t think that women in Cyprus have realised what equality is all about, and what they should do, work on, to achieve this equality. I think that they only revive a very conservative society, that of our parents' generation and they simply live with the very superficial, small changes. The way they dress, going out. Very superficial changes. There are very few women who really think in a different way, and work towards change."

As a feminist, she related to the alienation experienced by members of minority groups explained in Chapter Six. She said that many times "I feel very different ... I feel alienated because of the way I think..." Mastigga finished the interview with a negative tone. Upon describing Cypriot women, she used the third person and then switched to include herself in her analysis. She was aware of the extent of oppression she was subjected to but did not name it as patriarchy. Rather, she felt that it was the actual place that caused the stifling environment.

> "They are full of contradictions; in Cyprus women are always do something different to what they say. It's amazing. Actually, what they say and what they do, are two totally different things. Many times, I feel that I do this too. I say some things, I believe in them, but many times I act differently because I cannot do what I want. I would have liked to live elsewhere, so that I could be free. This place is like a cage."

2.2. In Aspasia's Own Words

Aspasia was the friend of another interviewee, Sappho. We had briefly met at social gatherings a few times before and we arranged the interview through snowballing; I had told another interviewee about my study and she mentioned that Aspasia might consent to be interviewed as well.

Aspasia explained that she was indifferent to feminism and did not wish to be labelled in any particular way. She is thirty-four years old and married with three children. The oldest, during the time of the interview, was seven years old and the youngest, less than a year old. She had a long-term relationship with her husband before they got married. At the time of the interview, she was studying for a postgraduate degree in the social sciences and worked in the field of further education. Her background is urban and middle-class and she claimed to receive financial, emotional and practical help from her parents. Her parents, and especially her mother, were 'very religious people' and so was she, "although not in an old-fashioned way." She was indifferent to feminist ideas and did not express any active interest in public affairs, voluntary work, or women's issues. The interview took place at her house and lasted about two hours, with numerous breaks since her children were there. Her mother came to the house and took two of the children with her. This was common practice in the household.[15] The areas of concentration in the discussion that follows are the institution of marriage –arranged or not, gossip, and understandings of gender relations.

Similar to Mastigga, Aspasia recognised the importance of marriage in Cypriot society and acknowledged the influence of socialisation in the development of traditional gender roles. Various discourses of gender awareness appeared in my study. Mastigga considered herself an activist and a feminist; for Aspasia, the case was different. She was conscious of gender discrimination in Cypriot society and at same time chose to conform to norms and expectations within it.

> "People in Cyprus get married because they absolutely *have to*. This is how things operate in this society. I got married for a combination of reasons. I dated my husband for eight years before and that was considered too much by Cypriot standards: since the age of eighteen. At the age of twenty-six, we decided to get married and went ahead with it straight away. I was not stressed about getting married at that point. I had a lot of pressure from my mother when I was about twenty-two; she really wanted me to get married. Then she stopped. *When he asked me to marry him*, we had never discussed it before. I would have never asked him; I suppose this is what we have learned.(laughing)."

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[15] One thing that became very problematic and created many questions for me as a researcher was the issue, or rather, 'the fallacy of easy access'. Although Aspasia readily agreed to be interviewed, the date of the interview date changed four times. When I went to her house, we were surrounded by her three children. The youngest, an infant, was crying most of the time. We repeatedly had to stop. The tape I had at the end was very difficult to transcribe. Although I share a lot of common characteristics with my interviewee, such as class, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, and common acquaintances to name just a few, access was not made a lot less problematic. Similar to the problem experienced by Reay, we were both 'very busy' all the time. These women, especially mothers, can easily refuse to be interviewed. Although none of my interviewees had to be persuaded to take the interview, "there were aspects of the research relationship that continued to feel exploitative."[15] Watching Aspasia struggling with three very energetic young children, and trying to be polite, hospitable, and talk to me at the same time was definitely not easy. Further, it was very difficult for me to finally arrange the interview, since I cancelled other appointments two times for this particular interview. Being in the house while so many other things were going on, made me feel uncomfortable and 'in the way', even though Aspasia was trying to make things work. After the interview, we chatted about 'other' things. We did not cover all the questions because she looked really tired by her demanding children surrounding her and the phone rang regularly. When we talked about 'other' things without addressing particular questions or having the tape recorder on, a lot more information about her attitudes came to the surface and she appeared a lot more relaxed. That was also related to the fact that her mother took two of the children to her house, next to Aspasia's house, to look after them. See Diane Reay, 'The Fallacy of Easy Access', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.18, No.2, pp.205–213, 1995.

She unquestionably adhered to the values of society that regard marriage as the purpose of life for women and she explained that reproduction was directly related to the institution of marriage. Further, she pointed out that choosing to ignore social standards and norms was impossible: she felt that motherhood outside of wedlock was not a choice for women on the island, but that did not pose a problem for this woman.

> "Even though there are no real instances of people cohabiting, I think there is the trend now, it is going to happen. As for me, I wanted to get married, it was part of what I thought I should do, my path in life. Children are related to that of course. You could not have children in this country if you were not married. But I still think I would go ahead and get married..."

Moreover, Aspasia discussed the importance of life experiences on the decision of a partner and complained about her husband's lack of interest in family life. Similar to four other women in the sample, she voiced her dissatisfaction with the division of labour within the home and explained that her husband did nothing whereas she was expected to fulfil 'her household responsibilities.' Despite changes in the attitudes of urban women, my study indicates that this gender division of labour within the home remains practically unchanged. Although women repeatedly complain about it, the situation is similar to that described in social studies of the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting the dominant patriarchal discourse in Cyprus as a whole. The attitudes of urban, middle-class women appear to have changed in the last two decades but practices remain unchanged.

> "Criteria about marriage? Well, I had no criteria. I fell in love at eighteen, I knew him well, I did not think at all about it. I just went ahead and got married. If I were to advise a very young girl, I would tell her not to get married at twenty. I would tell her to wait until she was about twenty-five. Second, I would tell her not to get married to the first guy she fell in love with from a young age. Because you don' t think about it, you just go ahead and get married. But at about twenty-six, if you get married to someone *new*, you can have certain criteria. If I were to get married now, I would choose a husband who was more interested in his family, someone who did more things in the house, who did not just think that his wife would do everything and so he would not have to do anything ...I would not get married to someone who was unemployed. Even though I have a job, I would feel more secure if I knew that my husband had a job too. Who is going to support the kids?"

Referring to her own personal circumstances, however, she explained that problems always increased with marriage. Similar to another eleven women in the sample, she expressed her feeling that Cypriot men were 'especially' socialised into traditional gender roles. She referred to them as 'spoiled' (*kakomathimenoi*) and her further analysis as well as extracts from other interviews pointed to men's high expectations of women, who demand to be looked after in the home by their wives (or other female members in the household). Further, they expect attention and affection. Thus, they expect women to fulfil their traditional female roles ascribed to them by their society and culture.

> "The first problem is the relationship. Cypriot men are very spoiled, they want a lot of attention, but if you have kids, you have to look after them; you have other people to love; to care for; your love is divided in many parts, and men are really bothered by that. They feel that they should always have priority over everyone else, and although they love the kids and all that. they love themselves much more. They want everything. Their mother's love. their wives passionate attention, and the kids' unconditional love. And, they want all these while making very limited effort. "

Although Aspasia considered spousal relationships within marriage as unequal in terms of the division of labour and responsibilities within the home, and felt that problems increased after marriage, her attitudes concerning the institution of marriage were firm and clear. She accepted and approved social expectations for women to get married by the age of thirty, have children, and thus she encouraged other women doing the same, even thought she felt that would add to their problems. This could be related to her acceptance of women's low status at the workplace and their low income as parts of life, and her expectations that a husband could alleviate these problems. This was illustrated in the interview with her example of a thirty-five-year-old woman who lived at home with her parents because she was not married. The importance of institutions of social control in keeping women in need for constant financial support, the taken-for-granted phenomenon of marriage as the only escape route, and her general discontentment with her married life, were expressed at various levels throughout the interview.

> "Arranged marriages exist in Cyprus. A lot (laughing). All the time. When women are over thirty, especially, then the arranged marriages begin (*proxenio* – the process of getting two people together with the ultimate goal for them to get married), because it is very difficulty for them to get married ... Men who are over thirty and not married go after young women ... A friend and I once arranged a meeting of this sort. We have a friend over thirty who is not married. We thought of some man that we knew. We thought it was a *good case* so we went out for dinner. We told both of them before and they both accepted. They did not like each other so it did not work out. There was some pressure on the man from me. I kept telling him to try and see her again, but he pulled back. He said he liked her but he needed time to think about it. She was indifferent, but he did not seem to want to ... If women choose not to get married, I think it is OK. It is not because they are weird or something. With this friend of mine, we just *wanted her to become financially independent. Her salary is low, even though she is thirty-five, so she lives with her parents; we wanted to marry her off so that we could find someone for her to support her (laughing).* However, lately we told her, you are better of this way, it's better to have no husband ...(laughing)"

For this woman, there were clear boundaries between her 'private' life with her partner and family, and her public image, although her feelings about these boundaries were rather ambiguous. Within the home, she argued that she felt comfortable to express her opinion and discuss many issues that concern her with her husband. Although she felt that her husband trusted her, she expressed anxiety over other people's opinion of her actions, even when these directly related to her status as a married woman. In her discussion, she further expressed frustration "that things are not the same for my husband. He goes out for lunch with female friends, but it's not regarded (by people) to be the same thing":

> "I have a good male friend, a colleague; many times we said we'd go out for a coffee or something. But in the end I always stop, not because I am worried about my husband, but because they (the people) will see me with some man and will start talking and I can't do it. Five years ago I would have done it, but now I won't. I don't know what has changed. My husband would not mind, he knows me and trusts me. If he went for a coffee with some woman. I would not mind – if she were a good friend of mine or something. A colleague though, ... it would bother me. It's best not to do these things. They will say she is his girlfriend or he is my boyfriend or something."

Although Aspasia would have liked to interact with her male colleague, she felt that friendships between married persons of the opposite sex were subject to gossip in society, since they had sexual connotations. "A woman treated to a drink by an unrelated man or a man visiting an unrelated

woman's house is assumed to be evidence of sexual liaison."[16] Even though married men and women are not expected to openly interact without the presence of their married partners, socialising with other women is an important part of a woman's role in Cypriot society.[17] Contrary to rural Greece, however, women in Nicosia form friendships. Urban women visit neighbours, extended family members, daughters, sisters, mothers, and close friends. This circle of close friends, present mostly in urban, but also sometimes in rural settings – these 'woman-centred kinship networks'[18]- get together on a regular basis and are an accepted part of women's lives. Urban women (of all classes, but mostly lower/upper middle classes, and the upper classes) will occasionally invite these women for 'tea' (*yia tsai*). Basically, this is a relatively formal, organised occasion where women dress up, and visit the house of the hostess, who prepares cakes, drinks, and cleans the whole house for the gathering. In the case of homemakers, the visits are more informal, and often take place after the morning chores are completed, or while the hostess is cooking lunch;[19] for the rest of the women, these visits take place late in the afternoon or early in the evenings. Some of the women in my sample mentioned that they would sometimes go for 'a coffee' in town, or "even for a meal in the evening with their closest friends, but not all the time."[20] Married women, however, are not expected to go out with men while not in the presence of their husbands, since the 'culture of gossip' can ruthlessly stigmatise them. Aspasia thus explained further:

> "What bothers me most in Cyprus is all the gossip. Everyone is interested in what everyone else is doing; people's vanity; people here live to buy a showy car and a huge car: their desire in life is to be seen ... I cannot say that I do not comment on people too; I gossip with my best friend for fun, but we don't live to gossip. But, for example, if we find out that our friend is having an affair and she is married, we talk ... we laugh ... *we say we are the stupid ones because we don't do anything.* Lately it has become a trend. It is said a lot, you know, that many women are having extra marital affairs; men too. Mostly men. Before it was only the men; now it is the women as well. Maybe it is related to financial independence. I think it is immoral, it is not right. Since you decide that you are going to be in a relationship, you must be committed; if you want to do something, you must finish the relationship first. It is just not right, not moral ... Hypothetically speaking, if my husband had an affair but then told me himself and really apologised, I would be very hurt but I would have accepted it; otherwise, no. I think he would too... maybe ... no, we would definitely finish because he would not be able to deal with it ... You know, I think that if you do sleep with far too many people, you get used to it, and then when it's time to get married, you can't cope with only one partner ... I could never sleep with someone, simply for the sake of physical pleasure. Men can but most of *us* can't."

This woman repeated three times her comment on how she was 'stupid' for not having an extra marital affair. However, she also elaborated on essentialist notions of men's and women's different sexual habits, needs, and drives and used these to support her arguments on extra-marital activities:

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[16] Evthymios Papataxiarchis, 'Friends of the Heart: Male Commensal Solidarity, Gender, and Kinship in Aegean Greece,' in P. Loizos & E. Papataxiarchis (eds.), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, p.158.

[17] See similar arguments in Jan Brogger & David D. Gilmore, 'The Matrifocal Family in Iberia: Spain and Portugal Compared', in *Ethnology*, Winter 1997, Vol.36, No.1.

[18] S. Cole, *Women of the Praia: Work and Lives in a Portuguese Coastal Community*, Princeton, 1991, p.62.

[19] In these occasions women are invited for coffee (*yia café*). See also Chapter Four for a related discussion.

[20] *Private Conversation with Author*, Interview with Olympias, June 1997.

while there was the expectation that a married woman should forgive her husband if he showed remorse for his infidelity, for a woman it was different since the husband would not tolerate such behaviour. The double standards of traditional gender roles became apparent once more. Further, although fathers were not socially expected to look after children or take part in their upbringing, their sheer presence was seen as important within a family. That could be argued to present a contributing factor to the necessity of the woman to remain married irrespective of how high the personal emotional cost might be for her:

> "Women should not have children without the presence of the father. It is very difficult. Children need role models, especially boys; they need the father. As for the woman, it is not immoral or anything, but it is just not right for the children. Women need to care for their children so they cannot just be selfish and think only about themselves."

This is often attributed to mainly natural but also social reasons. Most women in my sample, however, expressed the idea that women are naturally more sensitive and capable of looking after children because of the mother instinct.

> "It is more natural for the mother to take the children [in case of divorce]. A mother is more sensitive to how to raise them, and care for them than a man; I suppose it is the way we grow up. It is a combination of social and natural biological factors. A woman is naturally inclined to raise children. It is our nature. You can't change that. It is an instinct. It's OK if you don't want to have children, but if you do, then it becomes like ... natural to raise them. Men don't know how to. It is a matter of sensitivity. When you have kids, you will understand."

This argument was further elaborated in the interview when Aspasia talked about traditional men's and women's jobs. Although she felt that in general there was no excuse for the existence of gendered division of labour, she identified certain occupations which she felt best suited women for both 'natural' and 'social' reasons.

> "It is not that certain jobs are women's jobs, but ... There are, there are, women's jobs but in my case, I chose what to do, it was not because it was good for women. But it is also very convenient. I get summers, Christmas, and Easter off. I get more time to devote to the family, which is necessary... Nursery school teachers ... (hesitating), yes, I suppose women might be better because they are naturally inclined to look after children, they are *attracted* to kids."

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, women's attitudes are directly related to the Orthodox Church in Cyprus. Aspasia is a practising religious woman whose idea of marriage as being the purpose of life might be linked to religious indoctrination.

> "I don't care if people choose the civil marriage. I did that too. I got married at the registry first and then at the church. I wanted to have an ecclesiastical wedding. I am religious, I go to church on Sundays, I believe in God. I take my children to church ... I would not mind if they got married to someone from another religion. The only religion I would not want is Muslim ... I think they are very conservative, religious fanatics..."

The political situation in Cyprus and the political and religious propaganda on both parts of the island is evident in Aspasia's scepticism about Muslim people. Despite having had no interaction with the Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus, she held certain predetermined assumptions about the Turkish Cypriot women. The ethnic and political conflict on the island dominates people's ideas

and interpretations about the 'other'. The low tolerance of urban, middle-class women in Cyprus concerning 'other' women is also discussed in Chapter Six and is illustrated in Aspasia's words:

> "I don't know anybody from the 'other side'. I think they are more oppressed as women. It is the regime, the religion, Muslims, the culture. It is not backward, but they are Eastern (*Anatolites*)"

Asked to comment on domestic abuse and rape, Aspasia appears firm on her belief that women have the right to fully control their bodies and sexualities. She argues that a woman can provoke a man, although she did not mention men provoking women.

> "You might indeed as a woman provoke people with your appearance, but for God's sake, no one has the right to touch you if you don't want to be touched ... But you know, it is not just rape, many things can be called [domestic] violence. Facial expressions, verbal abuse. all sorts. When my husband does this, I react. I have a long face and I tell him I do not like it."

Although she admitted to feeling that there was a level of abuse in her relationship, and notwithstanding her previous complaints toward her husband, she did not attribute that to the existence of gender power relations. Rather she said, "there is no boss is our relationship. We both oppress each other in some ways." However, she also said, "feminist men do indeed exist. I would not necessarily say that my husband is one of them. I suppose that in some ways he probably feels superior. Like ... physically ... He might feel that. Sometimes this is expressed in the relationship, I think ... Often, yes, often." Aspasia was unsure about the link between gender relations and her relationship with her husband but she was clear about the social conditions under which women and men operate on an everyday basis. Further, as explained in Chapter Six, many women's 'condition' is taken for granted, accepted for what it is, and hardly anything is done to transform it; in fact, when action is taken by some women, this becomes subject of criticism.

> "Yes, I told you that I am indifferent to feminism. But I am a feminist. I just don't like the way feminism is portrayed; 'we are stronger, or we are equal'; this is not the way to cope with these things. It is not through war against men that these things will happen. We are equal as human beings, but totally different. They are stronger in some ways and we are in others. But, there is no equality in Cyprus. Men get promoted in the workplace, not women. In the parliament. Where I work though, it is an academic environment so these things are equal."[21]

Tellingly, Aspasia, together with another nineteen women in my sample, said she was 'more liberated'[22] (*ime pio apeleftheromeni*) than the rest of the women in Cyprus. The wish to balance attitudes and experiences became apparent, and women's words suggested that the current situation was unsatisfactory for them. Aspasia, like many others, explained that women go out, they have jobs, and they dress 'as they please.' However,

> "In the way I understand liberation, I would say that women in Cyprus are not 'very' liberated. On the contrary, they are very oppressed. I think liberation is something spiritual; it is about free thought. Women here think it is about financial independence, clothes, and going out ... *I think that I am more liberated than the rest of the women in Cyprus.* I don't

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[21] My research, as analyzed in Chapters Three and Four, indicates otherwise.

[22] However, interpretations of 'liberation' would vary for almost every case, indicating to the variety of discourses adopted by these women.

> wear mini skirts to show I have freedom. I don't sleep around to show I am liberated. Most do. Things are changing very fast nowadays - in the last five years or so. Women are changing. Fast."

Aspasia expressed the general feeling of dissatisfaction and discontentment that women tended to demonstrate during the interviews. Anti-feminist and some 'indifferent' women understood "other women's practices" as superficial and not truly 'liberating'. This is a way for women to rationalise gender discrimination: by criticising 'other women's' actions as superficial, many interviewees indicated a clear awareness of gender inequality, frustration about the current social setting, and also a need to be distinguished or isolated from that. Moreover, Aspasia's conflicts and the contradictions she faced between her attitudes and her practices became clear throughout the interview. However, these contradictions took a very different form – milder, one could say- to those of other women in the sample (for example, the examples of the other two cases studies indicate to totally different kinds of contradictions), especially those of feminist women. In a sense, most feminist women in the sample tried to 'do something' (in their personal lives, and some on a collective level) about what they conceived as a 'problem' between what they thought and what they did. Others who did not see themselves as feminists, like Aspasia, felt strongly about gender inequality for example, but showed a great level of passivity over resolving issues for themselves. Whereas Aspasia recognised that women were treated unequally in Cypriot society, and that she herself was subjected to this inequality, she did not link this to her own experience with her partner. She did not distinguish between her conflicting attitudes and practices. For example, she felt that she was 'more liberated' than the rest of the women she knew and at the same she complained about her 'double shift', and the double standards concerning the division of labour with her home. Further, she felt that it was important for women to be financially independent, but tried to arrange a marriage for her friend in order for her to have someone to support her. She felt that problems increased with marriage; that marital relationships in Cyprus were unequal; that she and her friends suffered in their marital relationships and were unable to get a divorce. At the same time, she encouraged her friend to become dependent on someone else and suggested that the best way to escape 'parental control' was to get married. However, she felt that marriage, as constructed in Cyprus today, created restrictions and limitations for women. Eventually, Aspasia's case illustrates the conflicts she experiences in her everyday life. Nevertheless, in the analysis of the interviews in general and the three case studies in particular, it was observed that the eleven women in the sample who did not identify themselves as feminists or were 'indifferent' to 'women's issues' -amongst them Aspasia- experienced less intense contradictions between their attitudes and practices than both feminists and anti-feminists. Since these women were not concerned with gender inequality or did not perceive their problems as related to it, their opinions and eventual actions were less contrasting

2.3. In Melanie's Own Words

Melanie and I met after a friend in common asked her if she wanted to be interviewed. We had never spoken before the interview, which was arranged by this third woman. Melanie is twenty-three, single, and lives with her parents. She has no children and for three months after the interview she was a student. At the time of the interview, she had just returned from abroad where she had studied for two months for a degree. She had decided to give up her studies and return to Cyprus in order to be with her forty-year-old partner. She then registered on a course at a college in Cyprus and wanted to eventually convince her parents that she should live with her partner. She is financially dependent on her parents who are middle class and of urban origin. She considers herself an anti-feminist and she is not interested in social issues. She is very interested in the arts. We met at our common friend's workplace and talked for two hours. Melanie wanted to cover many topics while answering the questions and therefore the interview took a different form to the one I had anticipated and many of the questions were covered without my having to ask. Transcribing and

organising the results of the interview became really complicated, since the semi-structured interview in this case became almost unstructured. The areas of concentration in the discussion below include premarital and extramarital relationships, violence against women, interpretations of beauty, and gender relations.

Religion was very important to Melanie, who felt that an ecclesiastical marriage was a necessary condition for procreation; however, acceptance of alternative opinions held by other women was also obvious in her words:

> "I am very religious and I think marriage is a very important institution ... I want very much to get married because ... of the family ... not because of people's opinion. Because I want my children to know that after the sacrament of marriage, they came to life, that I am married to their father, that the church, the religion, is binding us together ... I don't mind what other people choose to do: they can just cohabit if this is what they want; I don't care: but I want to go to church, to be properly married, to go through the religious side of it ... I don't regularly go to church, but I strongly believe in God and I gain strength from that ... I don't think I would marry someone from another religion. I doubt it ... maybe. Different attitudes, way of thinking, it would be too difficult."

Despite religious preaching, Melanie wanted to live with her partner before she got married to him; however, because of "my personal circumstances, I could not get married within the next two or three years. If there were no problems, I would get married now." The circumstances she referred to involved her parents' disapproval of the age difference between her and her forty-year-old partner as well as the fact that she felt the need to complete her studies. She felt that age difference

> "...does not matter. For the moment, there does not seem to be a problem. It doesn't stress me. What stresses me is the people who keep advising me about it. I think I can get over it though. They are trying to stop me, to tell me it won't work ... My parents claim that if I had finished my degree, they would have no problem. They say that, but they think age would be a problem, and the fact that my partner has two children. However, what they say does not affect me, I still go ahead and do whatever I wish."

Melanie argued that she was in full control of her life and did what she felt right at all times. At the same time she explained that she could not live with her partner since her parents did not approve, and since she was financially dependent on them. While expressing her approval of cohabitation, Melanie demonstrated her conflict between her attitudes and actions in her personal life. However, in Melanie's case, these contradictions were often the result of her parents' refusal to support her, and thus took different form to the contradiction experienced by both Mastigga and Aspasia. At the same time, Melanie's conflicts also became obvious in her practising religion and believing in cohabitation, which was against religious preaching and norms. In her effort to do what she considered the 'proper thing' and at the same time do what she wanted, she contradicted herself and was led to intense anxiety and stress, which she herself openly discussed.

Melanie said that her partner contributed to her finances, since he received a higher monthly income than she did. She also felt that the underpayment of women in general was a coincidence and added that in her own relationship "he just happens to have more money and a better job, so he is more responsible for the financial side of things ... It just happened. It does not matter." She also said that the fact that parents tend to promote "further education for boys rather than girls ... is just like this. I have never thought about this. It does not happen on purpose, I think." Further, she thought that it was the natural order of things that women should stay at home and look after the children while men are paid to work outside the home.

> "I would accept him staying at home, being the homemaker and child minder, if the money I made was substantially more than what he could make. ... However, no matter how we try

> to hide it, it is better for a woman to do this, though … for both him and the children; if the mother works, the kids become neurotic, but also because men freak out if they do that. Men become really tense when they stay at home for too long. Actually, I probably would not accept it. I would prefer to stay at home myself. I don't know … Also, there is the problem with people who judge the couple negatively. I mean, they would think that he must be a real pig, a failure, not to be working. It is bad for people to be in the house and *do nothing all day. Being inactive is a very bad thing.* People ought to work, they should get out of the house. For women, things are different. If they stay at home, they are used to it, they don't go crazy."

Since the interview, Melanie registered at a higher-education institution in Cyprus, as her plans to return to the United States 'did not work out.' Although her parents were happy to finance her studies abroad, and despite the fact that she was fascinated by the particular field she chose, her boyfriend decided, in the end, not to follow her, since "he had his job, his children, his whole life was here." Thus, she started studying something completely different in Cyprus. A few months later, she discontinued her studies and 'unofficially' moved in with her partner. "Most of my stuff is there but I officially live at home." Her parents highly disapproved of her decision and the last time I spoke to her she appeared to be less content. She complained that she spent her day cleaning his old house and trying to get on with his children (who are only five years younger than she is). Her dreams of living with her partner in the US and studying did not work out. Further, she has given up college.

While discussing the issue of premarital relationships, Melanie said that it was necessary to have them, but "always within limits". As explained in Chapter Five, even though the women in my sample regarded sexual relationships before marriage as 'natural', the number of these relationships as well as the feelings of the women involved in them were determining factors in their approving them or not. She once more expressed her opinion about the 'natural order' of gender roles explaining that,

> "there is a huge difference between men and women in that respect. I think that the number of women a man sleeps with is not that important; with women it is different. I think it might have to do with human nature; maybe it is social, I have not thought about it. If my boyfriend slept with seven women and I slept with seven men, I am *more of a slut than he is.* That is how I would feel. Now if you go out for dinner with someone, a drink, and then you sleep together, well it is OK. But just meeting someone and sleeping with them! It is like that friend of mine. I think that if you are planning to fuck, you should at least get something out of it. Money, a chat, dinner, get something first; women just give and go and get nothing in return."

The double standards of traditional gender roles become obvious in Melanie's beliefs. Sexual relationships on their own offer nothing to a woman who also needs to be in some form of a 'relationship' to make sense; dinner, conversation, something else. For men though, things are different, as Melanie conceded. Asked her opinion on marital infidelity, Melanie once more confirmed that men's sexual drives are stronger than women's, and that these differences are natural.

> "I think that if it is not in the woman's nature, if *she is not a whore in her soul,* if she is not *naturally* like this, then there must be some problem with her to end up doing such a thing … I think that some women are born this way."

Further,

> "I think it (marital infidelity) happens a lot, I know a lot of cases. Do you want me to give you an example? I have a female friend who was married and is now divorced. Actually she is not *properly divorced yet, she only got a civil divorce;* all she ever thinks about is who

> she is going to sleep with every night. No matter how I don't really want to admit this, because I adore this woman, I can't be bothered to pay attention to her anymore. She is very narcissistic and her mind revolves on the men she is going to meet, have sex with and so on ... I regard her as a prostitute. This thing is prostitution ... I have not told her this directly, but I implied things, indirectly. I criticise her for what she does."[23]

These beliefs about the sexual drives being natural have been important in justifying men's sexual and other types of physical aggression and in portraying women as passive. Further, these beliefs create a basis for portraying sexual violence as natural and for presenting men as naturally more aggressive than women.[24] When I asked Melanie's opinion on rape, she found it too abstract and asked me to tell her more about it:

> MV: "Well, some people say that if a woman is dressed or behaves in a provocative manner. and then she is raped, then she was asking for it. Other people disagree. Can you tell me what you think of this?"
> M: " I think that often women are asking for it. If you went out and got raped, I would not say, oh she was asking for it. But if you tell me, I showed him my undies, or my thighs or something, or the wind lifted my mini skirt up, I would think, what the fuck did you expect then! Why did you do this? We have little demons within our souls. Why provoke them? I consider it a rape of course if a woman says no. But I believe that sometimes they are responsible for it. OK, the rapist is wrong, but she is also responsible."

She believed that there were limited numbers of rape cases in Cyprus, but at the same time argued that "there is rape within marriage; all the time. Also, I think that there are parents who rape their children; not just physically, mentally as well." Further, concerning domestic abuse, she argued that.

> "...there are many men who hit their wives. In fact, I have heard of far too many cases. I haven't actually seen anyone do it, but when I heard that X hits his wife, and then I saw him. I thought, yes, he probably does. It shows sometimes that men are animals ... Listen, I think that it depends on the person; we are all human beings. Someone who is bad tempered, or someone who isn't but who has had enough, and this is what his nerves tell him to do. and then he does it, then it depends on this behaviour, I think. If my boyfriend hit me, I would hit him back (just kidding) ... Actually if he hit me, ... it would depend on his behaviour. I might have accepted it if it only happened once ... In Cyprus reports of domestic abuse come just before the woman is about to die from being beaten too much ... It's the society; it is the fear ... Actually, you know the woman I was telling you about, the ... slut? Her husband used to hit her. He was blackmailing her. And she did nothing ... Maybe she got too worried about what people would say, you know what it is like."

The 'culture of gossip' can act as a catalyst in a woman's passivity and acceptance of patriarchal authority. As discussed in Chapter Six, gossip can be the exchange of news and opinions, or it might have 'malicious intent' in the sense that people do not comment on others' behaviours but rather criticise it. A comment can be positive but gossip never is:

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[23] Similarly another woman said that since "temptation is now greater than ever before, especially in cities, marital infidelity has increased. It is especially difficult for men to control themselves. For women it is easier. I could easily control myself, but a man could not do the same. *Private Conversation with Author,* Interview with Thecla, June 1997.

[24] Emily W. Kane & Mimi Schippers, 'Men's and Women's Beliefs about Gender and Sexuality'. *Gender and Society.* Vol.10, No.5, pp.650-665, October 1996, p.662.

"No matter how much we hate to admit it, people's opinion influence us. From the moment you think about it, it affects you. I personally do not care about *kosmos (the people)* to the extent that ... I can't describe. But there are some things that I do think about ... What bothers me most in Cyprus is people's gossip. The taboos. The prejudices. It influences you. There is nothing you can do about it. People gossip about what others wear, who they are seeing, everything. I don't do it. Well ... I don't know. Everyone does it. Everyone gossips. It is natural. There are two types of gossiping. My friend X (a close female friend) and I belong to one group. Most people though belong in another group. If I gossip, I do not do it to harm anyone, to tell everyone around me so that a person is hurt in any way. If you do it with a bad intention, that is bad gossip. The other type is harmless. You know, I feel that I am currently a target for gossip because of the things I do. With my previous boyfriend ... someone went and told him, you know she comes from a good family, but herself, she is not good. She had never seen me, ever. My family was considered good because my dad has a good position in the government."

When a woman comes from a 'good family', then the parents of the man will be motivated to push the couple to eventually get married. If not so, then the relationship has to end in order for the man to find an appropriate wife. The 'prerequisite' of a 'good family' is often a part of arranged marriage negotiations.

"The institution of arranged marriage exists in Cyprus. A lot. In my understanding, if a third party gets involved in the whole thing, then I consider it *to be proxenio.* I don't condemn it. but personally, it bothers me if... let me give you an example; my grandmother told me, let me introduce you to such and such person. It bothers me that she wanted the whole family to go and meet this guy. All together. Now if I meet up with some friend, and she says I know someone, let's get together sometime, well that does not bother me. When it is more a matter of choice, then I do not consider it to be *proxenio.* If it happened to me in the city, imagine what happens in the villages. Of course I did not go. They are always hassling about these things ... Parents just hassle too much. Hassle women, that is. They just go on and on and on. They moan. *They'd rather see you unhappy within marriage than happy not in marriage.* Actually my parents are not that bad, but in general, I know a lot of examples like this."

Parents, and even grandparents as both Melanie and Mastigga argued, play a central role in the decision-making process of a woman wishing to marry, or get a divorce. Although Melanie expressed her disapproval of parental involvement in the decision-making process and actual relationship of a young couple, she nevertheless tried to conform to her parents' wishes and 'officially' stayed in the family household instead of moving in with her partner, which was her wish. To clarify, although Melanie spends most of her days (and nights) at her partner's house, her clothes and other personal belongings are still at her parents' house *yia ta mathkia tou kosmou* (for people's eyes) and thus people outside the family are unaware of this arrangement. Once more, conflicts and contradictions between attitudes and practices of women in Cyprus become apparent.

Melanie portrayed an understanding of the social pressure imposed on people in Cyprus, and while criticising it at times, she sometimes accepted it or encouraged and agreed with it. At other times, she demonstrated a strong passivity and tolerance for women's oppression.

"I think that my partner has the upper hand because I let him. Very much so. Maybe it is all the trust I have in him, my belief in his experiences due to his age. I have been with him for more than a year and a half and I still have not let myself say and do the things I want. Never mind, these things take place gradually. For example, I never shout at him, I never get angry with him. I just stay quiet and say nothing. I go silent ... It does not worry me. These are things that will eventually be sorted out in the relationship. I know that."

Ultimately, the questions concerning her opinions on gender relations pointed to a limited awareness of gender inequality and discrimination in Cyprus and the forms that it took. At the same time, this woman's convictions and eventual actions appeared to be assertive and firm in her 'private' life. She followed her beliefs and demonstrated strong willingness to resist social pressure for urban, middle-class women to be educated, and then get married to 'the right person'. She violated conformist values and expectations for Cypriot women to be passive and accepting of the existing social structure and did what she felt was right. The variety of discourses of gender relations and roles is clearly illustrated below since this woman challenges the existing female roles in her society *and* is also anti-feminist.

> MV: "You told me at the beginning when you filled in that form that you are an anti feminist. What exactly do you mean by that?"
> M: "I am against fanatical behaviour in any field. I don't like it, it is not me. I think that feminists are fanatical. They want to be better than men, to dominate them. These things do not work in this way. Bringing equality between the sexes, there are better ways. You can just prove yourself, if you want. Prove that you can do something. A woman went to the moon, she proved she could go, end of story ... I think that equality between the sexes exists for only some in Cyprus. Equality is the ability to do what the other person is doing. You do that, I do that too. I have this, you see. But not everyone does. Mostly young people though. It think there are still plenty of women, even in Nicosia, whose husbands won't let them go out by themselves. I know of certain cases, a lot actually. I don't go out without him either, but only because I choose not to, I don't want to. If I want to go, I can go."

The question of being allowed to prove one's abilities or whether someone is given opportunities to do so was not addressed by Melanie. Further, she felt that men had an advantage over women due to their muscular strength. "Both men and women can do things equally well, or badly. However, one thing is muscular strength: it is a very important advantage, for men mostly. It is natural." Melanie demonstrated throughout the interview her unquestioned conviction that gender roles and behaviour are more natural than they are social, but at the same time explained that some things happen not because one is socialised into female or male roles but rather because of coincidence and individual differences.

> "Liberation is when I say what I want to say, when I do what I want to do, and face the consequences. I suppose that men in Cyprus are more liberated than women are. I think. It is the same in my relationship. Take lovemaking for example. He is more liberated, about what he is going to say, do, or ask. I am not like that, even though there is some improvement. He teaches me things. I mean things I knew about but I would not do before. That was because I was embarrassed. I am still embarrassed. Not because I am a woman, it is just personal ... I am not like that, and he is. As simple as that."

At the same time, she criticised women as a group and their behaviour in contemporary society, but also recognised 'positive' changes in attitudes and practices concerning women.

> "Women in Cyprus have become air-heads (*ta miala tous epiran pollin aeran* -meaning that they are over confident and think too much of themselves). I think someone is causing this; maybe the mass media. They are brainwashed; they have this thing whereby they dress the way they want to and do what they feel like doing, they get undressed on the beach ... I don't like it. This is not the way to show you are liberated. Getting naked, taking clothes off is something I despise. I don't like women wearing very little and dancing on bars and all this. They look like whores. They are provocative. Also there are some positive things about

> some women here. They have started thinking seriously about their careers, their personal life and contentment. They react."

Melanie could be argued to be 'reacting' against traditional gender roles imposed by society, in that she chose her partner despite her parents' disapproval; she practically lives with him without being married because this is what she wants. She made a conscious choice to follow her beliefs despite social and parental disapproval. At the same time, she perpetuates gender discrimination since the social imposition of patriarchal values and norms is so ingrained as to forbid critical thinking of the situation. I argue that Melanie used the idea of religion as a means to balance her contradictions between her actions -that were against social norms of accepted behaviour- and her attitudes about society and gender relations. In order to deal with her conflicting beliefs and practices, she adopted religious faith as a way to become accepted by her otherwise disapproving parents and social surroundings. In other words, for Melanie religion was a means of negotiating her own identity as a woman living in Cyprus. Moreover, the questions I asked Melanie were ones that she had not thought about before. She said after the interview was over that she felt like she was asked to analyse society and that most of the things I had asked her were "certainly not the kinds of things I discuss over dinner. Especially all the stuff on liberation and all that." She said that she gives no thought to such issues but that I had 'got her thinking.' If one accepts that feminist research is also emancipatory, then motivating Melanie to consider women's status in society must have contributed towards that direction. Throughout the interview, religiousness, education, personal experiences, and financial and emotional dependency on men clearly supported the conclusions reached in the previous chapters.

3. What Did They Say? Conclusions and Interpretations of Women's Interviews

In this chapter, three interviews conducted during fieldwork were explored and analysed in detail. The first interview discussed demonstrated feminist women's intense conflict between feminist ideology and feminist praxis in a predominantly patriarchal structure with limited choice of expression of individuality and difference. The second interview portrayed the case of a woman who did not want to be labelled as feminist, even though she admitted to adhering to the basic ideas behind feminism; that is, she recognised women's institutionalised oppression in society and believed that they were unequally treated in society. However, at the same time she did not question the existing social structure and she passively conformed to the dominant norms and values in Cypriot society. The last interview analysed the attitudes and practices of an anti-feminist woman who, for the most part, accepted traditional gender roles. The findings from the exploration and analysis of the above case studies in particular and the interviews in general, are mixed and varied. Both continuity of traditional gender role patterns and change has been observed.

The conflicts and contradictions of urban, middle-class women's attitudes and practices appear in all three case studies irrespective of identification with feminist ideas or levels of awareness of gender inequality. Although the three interviewees shared certain ideas and sharply disagreed on others, and even though their ages, educational backgrounds, and occupations varied, all of them appeared to experience anxiety and frustration between how they felt they wanted to live and what they eventually did. None of them expressed satisfaction with the way they led their lives or demonstrated contentment about the things they did. Indeed this could be argued to be the case with many women around the world. However, my analysis has indicated that there were particular issues which were distinctive in Cyprus: the 'culture of gossip', the direct effects of the political problem on the island, and the contrasting images which women were presented as an ideal, have all been identified throughout the thesis as creating particular difficulties for women. In most cases, the reasons for women's dissatisfaction were 'external' and involved family involvement and social pressure. Contradictions, in the case of women who were indifferent to or do not wish to be labelled as feminists took very *different* forms to those of other women in the sample, especially those of

feminist women. For example, they felt strongly about gender inequality, but showed a great level of passivity over resolving issues for themselves, and did not identify attitudes and practices as directly related.

The case studies explored confirm that social class, the family employment status of men and women, education, age, personal experiences, experience of gender discrimination, and family background, are factors which are associated with the development of feminist consciousness and the active participation of women in movements promoting social change. Further, the 'culture of gossip' in conjunction with religion define women's behaviour and attitudes. Despite the change in some of these attitudes in recent years, actual practices remain alarmingly similar. Urban women's current attitudes do not indicate a commitment to overcome the contradictions. Although some women demonstrated a willingness to struggle against a system which encourages their submission, at the same time they appear to 'surrender' to what they experience as extreme social pressure – taking the form of the 'culture of gossip'. Women's ability to put agency into practice becomes constantly challenged and restricted by the socio-political, historical, cultural, and religious circumstances they are faced with. Their socially constructed identities present barriers to their 'practising' agency. The case studies above demonstrate that there is a relationship *and* contradiction between feminist attitudes and feminist praxis. Through understanding these contradictions inherent in women's location within various social structures, "effective political action and challenges can be devised."[25] Further, there are higher levels of acceptance for alternative lives by women who adhere to feminist principles, other than the traditional 'female role' assigned to them in Cypriot society. Finally, my findings suggest that previous studies on Cypriot society do not reflect the attitudes of urban, middle-class, educated women in Cyprus today; rather, they point to a greater acceptance of individuality, more flexible ideas, and greater awareness of gender discrimination than previous studies have suggested. Women in Cyprus have mostly fought their personal battles and have had some success in perceiving and questioning gender inequality and surviving in a culture that discourages challenge and difference: the patriarchal discourse on the island constantly counteracts women's struggle.

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[25] Chandra Mohanty, *Op.Cit.*, 1988, p.74.

Part Three:

Conclusive Thoughts

Chapter VIII
The Linkage Problematic:
Levels of Contradiction and Cypriot 'Others'

1. Introduction

This exploratory study of urban, middle-class women's attitudes and practices in the 1990s has uncovered an inherent contradiction in the contemporary Cypriot environment in which modernity and tradition have produced conflicting forces of continuity and change. It has become imperative for Cypriot women to negotiate between the two in order to tread a fine line between agency and oppression. Three levels of contradictions have been identified in this thesis: first, the contradiction between the conflicting images and messages presented to women in Cypriot society; second, the inherent contradictions between women's attitudes and practices in patriarchal structures; and, finally, the diverse *kinds* of contradictions among urban, middle-class women in the sample themselves, and whose experiences and interpretations of gender relations and patriarchy vary immensely. The study has thus been an exploration of women's contradictions between their belief systems (attitudes) and actions (practices): that is, their conflicts between praxis and theory. The identities and struggles of women have been analysed in order to understand how they operate in an environment where they are expected to be passive, patient, and submissive. Finally, the questions and dilemmas stemming from the struggle between what women want, what they think, and what they do, have also been addressed. The feminist perspective adopted for this study has challenged existing and limited literature on the field.

The methodological and theoretical framework for my exploratory work on feminism in Cyprus is derived from the significant debates in the literature, which are related to the identification and assimilation of the main issues my research has identified. The emphasis of this part of the discussion has been on whether research should be carried on, by, and for women. Through an exploration of the use of qualitative methods in feminist research, I have concentrated on the debates around interviewing and addressed the issues of objectivity, subjectivity, and power relations in my work. Liberal feminist perspectives have been identified to be a small fraction of Cypriot societal concerns, partly due to efforts for international acceptance and accession into the European Union. Recently, questions have been raised, concerning equal rights for the two sexes, and changes in the law have consequently been made. However, 'radical' perspectives have not been found in the attitudes of urban, middle-class women in Cyprus, nor in social and state policies. An analysis of the particular socio-political context of Cyprus has raised questions concerning the 'Other' in current debates of feminist theory and epistemology.

An examination of the rich background of Cypriot women's socio-historical experiences and an exploration of these historical experiences and their complexities has recognised that this may be a compensatory process rather than a feminist one, and thus an emancipatory process. Nevertheless, it is apparent that this work is part of an effort to develop a culture of a feminist academic discourse in Cyprus, and in that respect it represents a challenge to pre-existing patriarchal frameworks; the implications are thus political, and aim towards the documentation of institutionalised and historical oppression, and the domination of women. For this reason, I assert that mine is a feminist account. It has been demonstrated that the systematic oppression of women is still dominant in Cyprus but it is reproduced through new, subtler -and therefore harder to trace- sets of attitudes and beliefs than before. This represents a manipulative method of presenting patriarchal norms and laws as justified and acceptable for all people: a method, which has been devised by the patriarchal order in order to redefine their privileged position. The analysis of the gender discriminatory characteristics of socio-political institutions in Cyprus has contributed towards gaining insight into the more 'personal' (private?) lives of women.

The results of various research projects and studies carried out in the 1970s and 1980s differ greatly from the results of this examination of Cypriot women's lives. Cultural diffusion and acute

socio-political and economic changes in Cyprus have resulted in new attitudes, perceptions, and ideas for women, especially in urban settings. While more tolerance towards difference, and to alternative ideas, and the further acceptance of alternative norms has been observed, practices appear to remain stable, or merely slightly altered. Individuality within society at large is not appreciated or accepted and deviation from norms is practically unacceptable. Women have become more receptive to alternative ideas and challenges to practices at the conceptual level, but have not acted upon these. They tend to adhere to patriarchal norms, despite often disagreeing with them. Important changes in the social and political structure have contributed toward women's less passive attitudes; nevertheless, these changes point to attitudinal rather than 'practical' reforms, as the latter could directly jeopardise women's everyday lives and experiences. Consequently, this study has illustrated how the contradictions between ideology and praxis in the case of urban, middle-class women have become accentuated, apparent, and even dominant in the case of Cyprus.

Sharp contrasts of experiences and changes of attitudes and practices can be observed in the last decade; these include great and extreme discrepancies between the younger and older generations, as well as between rural and urban communities. Some women are comfortable with having numerous sexual partners, living alone, or getting divorced because their relationships are not fulfilling. They will face disapproval and the terrifying 'culture of gossip', but on rare occasions will go ahead and do what they want. At the same time, marriage is an integral part of a socially accepted 'package'; women will express themselves in contrasting ways, and their attitudes vary but after the generally accepted 'necessary' step of marriage, they will enter similar gender power relationships to those of the 1970s and 1980s.[1] Indeed, it is also clear that marriage, as an institution is as dominant and important in Cypriot society as previous works have indicated. However, more diversity has been identified concerning women's choices and availability of alternatives and less passivity over these issues has been observed. Urban women's conflict between attitudes and practices concerning the institution of marriage illustrates assertiveness and a rejection of existing social norms. The fact that their behaviour contradicts their belief system is not a mere indication of 'passivity' but an illustration of their questioning the current social structure in which they live. Women have demonstrated various levels of assertive behaviour, gender consciousness, and awareness of institutionalised discriminations against them. The 1990 jurisdiction for civil courts to deal with divorce, as well as other important changes in the social and political structure, have further contributed toward women's less passive attitudes. However, sharp contradictions between women's attitudes and practices have been identified since women accept and support the idea of divorce for 'other women' who are in unsatisfactory marital relationships, they were unwilling to consider this option for themselves. In fact, they ensure that their husbands or the father of their children remains within the household at (almost) all costs. Women's attitudes often come into conflict with their practices and this is regularly a confirmation of their attempt to make choices which they feel will secure them socially accepted gender roles.

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[1] See, for example, Michael Attalides, *Cyprus Reviewed*, Nicosia: The Jus Cypri Association, 1977; Michael Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanisation in Cyprus - A Study of Nicosia*, Nicosia: Social Research Centre, 1981; K.C. Markides, E. Nikita, & E. Rangou, *Lysi: Social Change in a Cypriot Village*, Nicosia, 1978; K.C. Markides, *The Rise and Fall of the Cyprus Republic*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977; Lia Mylona, Costas Paschalis, Eleni Kalava, Niki Pastalidou, & Athos Erotokriotou, *The Cypriot Woman*, Psycho-Sociological Research Group, Cyprus, 1986 (Published in Greek in 1982); Vassos Argyrou, *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Maria Roussou, *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, University of London, Institute of Education, March 1985 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis).

2. Contradictions between Practices and Attitudes of Cypriot Women

Gender, family, marriage, the home, and women's identity in Cyprus are mutually constitutive. Cypriot women's identities are restrained and controlled by complex social norms concerning sexually appropriate behaviour. Identification with an ethnic group, in this context membership within Greek Cypriot society, implies and necessitates the performance of particular gender roles, and women's failure to do so results in social rejection or contempt. These socially accepted gender roles have projected contradictory images and messages for women in the last decade. Both resisting and accepting 'proper' female behaviour is considered negative, and women are criticised irrespective of their actions: if they adhere to the traditional female roles, then they are 'backward', 'old-fashioned', and 'unsophisticated' and if they do not, then they are 'cheap', they are 'common', and they are not of the 'marrying type.'

The means and ways in which men attempt to control female moral and sexual behaviour as well as the techniques they adopt in order to ensure sexual, psychological, and physical submission of women, have been analysed in this thesis. One of these attempts, greatly ignored by social scientists studying Cypriot society, involves female control of sexuality through the re-defined rite of passage of engagement. A compromise of perceptions and attitudes between the younger and older generations is ensured by the acceptance of sexual activities for women who have become publicly committed into getting married to a particular person. In order for them to be involved in socially approved sexual relationships, women are encouraged to become engaged as soon as possible in order to escape one form of control, only to enter another patriarchal household in many cases. The Cypriot patriarchal society has incorporated a strategic device in its workings by which control of the threatening 'western' moral codes of sexuality is made possible in ways that younger people accept, since women's emancipation is associated with the westernised ideas often argued to be destroying Cypriot identity. Further, by institutionalising the engagement ritual as a means to having socially approved sexual relationships, the subjugation of young women (and men) has become subtly secured. Until recently, breaking an engagement carried a similar stigma as getting a divorce. It has, nevertheless gradually become accepted -if not already a common practice, thus reflecting changes in attitudes. Women's questioning and critical stance against sexual and moral control have encouraged this re-negotiated 'rite of passage': although this can be seen as a form of subtle control. it is also a way of having sexual relationships without being married, and the current structures imply that their sexual partners can be changed, in a similar way as it has been for men throughout the decades.

It has been argued that institutionalised religion through the Greek Orthodox Church has had a central and influential role in the lives of urban, middle-class women, even when they are non-religious and/or non-practising. Although the direct impact of the Church has diminished throughout the years,[2] it nevertheless pervades many aspects of women's experiences. Women's religious participation has been found to result from ideological beliefs and spiritual questions, as well as from a need to balance the contradictions between their personal opinions and socially accepted practices. Further, ecclesiastical marriage is seen by women as a necessary prerequisite for the 'creation of a family' and the central purpose of their lives. Motherhood and the making of a family are highly regarded and respected functions within Cypriot society; however, the status these secure does not also result in any kind of 'power' for women. At the same time, failure to conform to the demands of these social roles results in social disapproval and eventually diminished levels of self-respect and self-esteem for women. The socially institutionalised acceptance of dowry as a means of either finding a husband or securing a steady marital relationship further contributes towards women's problematic and complex roles in Cypriot society. Despite the negative implications that 'dowry'

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[2] However, its 'indirect' political and financial influence in Cyprus is still very powerful. Interestingly, the last months of 1998 have witnessed the extensive publicity of illegal and 'promiscuous' activities of high-ranking members of the clergy. See Chapters Three and Four for a discussion on the impact of the Church in the lives of Cypriot women.

holds for urban, middle-class women in Cyprus, the actual acquisition of it is considered as an important step to the marital process. Social and financial survival and competition are secured, thus ensuring the non-problematic transition into married life. At the same time, this is an indication of the sharp contrast that can often be observed between women's attitudes and practices. Although women themselves underestimate the importance of dowry and consider it as a discriminatory institution, one cannot deny its contribution towards marital stability and its importance for Cypriot society. Nevertheless, the actual expressions of dowry have indeed been transformed in the last two decades- even eradicated in rare instances- amongst the urban population, with the parents of the bride giving the newlyweds money or property which they describe as 'help' for the couple.

The manner in which the socio-political environment in Cyprus is developed and formed motivates and encourages women's sexual, bodily, and emotional submission. At the same time, men are having to change this patriarchal discourse to fit into 'regional' (see European) norms, and this indicates the conflicting messages, mentioned throughout the thesis, which women are receiving, and which often result into attitudinal rather than practical reforms. If we accept that social order is constantly being constructed and changed through negotiation, and that the social interactions between people define and redefine its character ('negotiated order'), then women have been largely ignored from this ongoing process; limitations in the structure of various societies discourage certain groups of people –predominantly women- from entering this negotiation process in order to reach agreements. These limitations can include coercion, force, violence, domestic abuse, conditions of domination by military forces, social class, minority group membership, religious indoctrination and so on.

In the case of Cyprus, as in other Mediterranean social structures, the list also includes what I have described as 'the culture of gossip'. Gossip is associated with judgmental and critical comments on the appropriateness of people's behaviour and actions and involves the participation of both men and women. However, it is mostly women who will be called with the derogatory term *'koutsomboles'*, since they are most likely to be associated with feelings of jealousy and envy. Analysis of the findings of this thesis indicates that gossip is a tool used in patriarchal discourse in Cyprus in order to control women's sexual and moral behaviour and everyday practices as well as to impose particular social norms which best serve the purposes of the social structure. It is a technique of sanctioning and a way of enforcing submission to a socially approved form of behaviour. The way in which people will understand and interpret a particular action which does not conform to accepted social norms, can be of primary importance to a person's decision to participate in it or not. Women's recognition and contribution to the perpetuation of this 'culture of gossip' could be argued to have similarities with women's participation in religious activities which have been identified as oppressing them, as well as their symbolic participation in military activities and nationalist causes. In effect, through interaction with the 'culture of gossip', women secure their socially accepted traditional female roles of preserving the morality and 'proper' behaviour of members of the family and thus contributing towards the stability of the patriarchal status quo. This is clearly a conflicting issue as women both despise and participate in this process. Women's contradictory practices in relation to their self-admitted opinions and attitudes become obvious in the case of gossip. By being involved in and perpetuating this 'culture of gossip', these women contribute towards patriarchal discourses on the island while at the same time, non-involvement (and thus implicit acceptance of deviant behaviour and non-conforming practices) makes them 'subjects of gossip' in return. I have suggested in this thesis that the identified 'culture of gossip' is one of the major methods deployed by patriarchy in Cyprus to discourage women from developing a 'culture for women'.

Bentham's 'Panopticon' has been used in this thesis to draw a parallel between women's feelings and interpretations of the 'culture of gossip' in Cyprus. In the Panopticon, the prisoners are not able to see each other, or see the guard, although they are aware that they are being observed and guarded, under constant scrutiny by 'him'. In the 'culture of gossip', however, people can, and do view each other. They sense, know, and discuss the 'culture of gossip,' thus they can see the guard. People participate in it. The guard could be seen as patriarchal dominant ideology and praxis: the prisoner would in such a case be the oppressed, the accused: the woman. Further, since the 'culture

of gossip' concentrates around the issues of sexuality and morality, it could be said that the guard, through the 'Panopticon', defines the behaviour of the prisoners. Men, through patriarchy, define behaviour for women. Even though it is recognised in this study that class and ethnicity are mutually constitutive and important in the discussion and exploration of the discourses and epistemologies which exist in Cyprus, it is also suggested that this distinctive 'culture of gossip' is predominantly the construction of patriarchal modes of thinking.

This study has concluded that urban, middle-class women in Cyprus are faced with constant conflicts and contradictions between their attitudes and practices, and that they deal with these in contrasting ways. Agency and structure are conflicting and for many, not identified as problematic: other factors are expressed by them to be the source of their unrest within their environment and society. For others, these conflicts are recognised and become the source of great tension and anxiety. Yet, others accept these contradictions despite their opinions since they believe that not much can be done to change their situation. All of these women, however, devise methods of coping with the contradictions they face on an everyday basis and in their effort to do so, they often create 'others' amongst women whom they exclude from the in-groups they form. These 'others' could be members of separate ethnic groups, social classes, or sexual orientations, and so on. Feminist women in the sample under study were found to be more aware of not only gender but also class, ethnic, and sexual discrimination and divisions in society and less prone to create these 'others'. This study has concluded that self-admitted feminists, irrespective of their respective definitions of feminism, were more conscious of gender, class, and ethnic inequalities in their society than non-feminist and anti-feminist women. It was therefore suggested that awareness of one type of oppression was strongly related to awareness, and tolerance of other types and levels of oppression and 'otherness'.

Three interviews conducted during fieldwork were further analysed in this thesis in order to better elaborate upon the variety of discourses concerning gender relations, which appear amongst urban, middle-class women in Cyprus. The conflicts and contradictions of urban, middle-class women's attitudes and practices appeared in all three interviews irrespective of identification with feminist ideas or levels of gender consciousness. Although the three women shared some opinions and sharply disagreed on others, and even though their ages, educational backgrounds, and occupations varied, all of them expressed discontent about the way they felt they wanted to live ideologically and what they eventually did. No satisfaction was expressed by them concerning their lives and the explanation that was given included family involvement and social pressure. Further, both a relationship and a contradiction between feminist opinion and feminist identity were found to exist. Also, higher levels of acceptance for alternative lives by women who adhere to feminist principles, other than the traditional 'female role' assigned to them in Cypriot society, were observed. The case studies explored, as well as all the interviews, indicated that a number of factors are associated with the development of gender awareness, feminist consciousness, and the active political and community participation of women. Social class, family employment status for men and women, age, but especially education and personal experiences are all factors which further contribute (or not) to the development of feminist consciousness and the rising of awareness in relation to gender discrimination. Moreover, these factors are also associated with the willingness or not to be actively associated in practices that will decrease or eliminate the existing institutionalised oppression of women.

Unlike previous findings, it has been argued here that women are gradually becoming aware of the framework and workings of unequal gender relations in Cyprus and that a number of them are interested in changing them, mostly in their own, personal lives. Public controversy and social disapproval are feared in Cyprus more than in some others, as confrontation with existing norms and any expression of individuality is punished. Thus, women become involved in their own personal battles rather than in collective action for larger groups. They have had some success in perceiving and questioning gender inequality and surviving in a culture that discourages challenges and differences through the patriarchal discourse on the island constantly counteracts women's struggle. The socio-political and cultural circumstances in Cyprus discourage women's ability to put agency into practice. Urban women's general attitudes and practices do not indicate a commitment to

overcome the contradictions. Although some women express determination to work against the patriarchal structure, which encourages their submission, at the same time they 'surrender' to what they experience as intense social pressure –taking the form of the 'culture of gossip'. Women's ability to put agency into practice becomes constantly challenged and restricted by the socio-political, historical, cultural, and religious circumstances they are faced with.

Feminist theorists often tend to be inclined towards two different streams of analysis concerning women in society. The first group regards women as helpless victims of patriarchy who are unable to express themselves within their society and who do not have a voice. The other group, which tends to dominate current thinking, regards women as agents with choices. I argue that women are both. My data analysis and fieldwork results indicate how women are restricted and victimised by an intensely patriarchal structure, struggle to practice agency, make choices, and deal with the oppressive environment that they live in. Women's role as both agents and victims clearly demonstrates that Cypriot women are in a constant struggle between their attitudes and their practices and live with an inherent conflict and contradiction between what they think and what they do. Society and culture in Cyprus is highly patriarchal; however, alternative, latent forms of gender discrimination exist, and these are more dangerous for women since they are disguised by women's enhanced participation in the labour market and changes in the legal system. Thus, the argument goes, if women can work, earn some money, belong to a union, and have the right to be elected, then things cannot be that bad. This thesis has illustrated that although women are not as confined within the home as they used to be, they are oppressed and discriminated against at another level, within Walby's public patriarchal regime and the state itself.[3] It is indeed difficult to see how equality and egalitarianism could occur under the auspices of the state system. The idea of the state being restrictive towards the open expression of various discourses and new epistemologies needs to be further addressed in feminist literature.

My fieldwork demonstrates that previous studies on Cypriot society do not reflect the attitudes of urban, middle-class women in Cyprus in the 1990s; rather, my findings indicate a greater acceptance of individuality, further flexibility, and greater consciousness of gender discrimination than previous research projects have suggested. Cypriot women have mostly been involved in personal rather than collective battles and have been relatively successful in criticising and questioning gender discrimination and adjusting in a society which discourages individuality and differences. The patriarchal discourse on the island constantly counteracts women's struggle but they have found new methods of adjusting and claiming their constantly re-defined rights. The symbolic antagonism between the Occident and the Orient, the West and the East, the 'civilised' and the 'backward', all within the context of the varying faces of patriarchal discourse, have created contrasting messages for Cypriot women in the 1990s and definitions of 'proper' behaviour and appearance are becoming highly contradictory, thus resulting in conflicts between what these women want and what they do (if so) to get it.

3. The Case of Cypriot Women and its Implications for the Development of Feminism

Interpretations of gender discrimination and women's oppression were found to be varied in the study, with different gender and feminist discourses identified. For the women in the sample, many feminisms were explained, many reasons for indifference or non-identification with feminism were expressed, and contrasting views were voiced by anti-feminist women. Since feminism is but one of many manifestations of gender awareness, the acknowledgement of gender inequality does not often result in the conviction to act upon it on a collective or individual level. Further, women

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[3] See, for example, Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, London: Routledge, 1997; R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power; Society, the Person, and Sexual politics*, Polity Press, 1987.

themselves, feminist and non-feminist, do not always agree on policy matters related to 'women's issues.' Moreover, contradictions between women's attitudes and practices were found in all cases, though these varied. Thus, conflicts were experienced differently by individual women. Recognising similarities and differences of gender discourses expressed by women in Cyprus and how these do (or do not) relate to western models of feminist analysis therefore became important in the analysis of feminist consciousness and women's identities.

The results of this study led to the conclusion that feminist praxis and feminist attitudes are two separated, but interrelated issues. At the same time, feminist identity has been found in this study to have little relationship to women's perceptions and eventual practices concerning their external appearance and their bodies. The common assumption that the greater the women's acceptance of the traditional gender roles, the more their interest in their looks and internalisation of societal standards of beauty, is not valid. Internalisation of cultural ideas about beauty is so deep that identification with feminism is little or not-at-all related to the importance women ascribe to their appearance. Thus, feminist attitudes and opinions are, as argued above, separated issues, which are often linked to one another, but not necessarily so. The need for further research to take place in order to identify the ways in which relationships among women are influenced by women's body images and gender attitudes was pointed out. Moreover, acceptance and belief in feminist ideology and the development of feminist identities was found to be the source of conflict and distress for women who, for the reasons explained above, do not abide by feminist practices. In general, however, in my sample it was found that women who did not identify themselves as feminists or who were 'indifferent' to gender issues, faced fewer contradictions than women who were anti-feminists or feminists. For example, whereas tolerance towards violence against women and domestic abuse has not been found in the study to be related to women's stated gender attitudes, the determination and willingness to act upon leaving an abusive partner, however, was suggested to be linked to identification with feminist ideas and other egalitarian gender opinions. Similarly, women's egalitarian gender attitudes in general, and feminist opinions in particular, were found to be positively related to pro-choice attitudes. Furthermore, anti-feminist women in the study expressed anti-abortion opinions and women who identified themselves as indifferent to feminism expressed both positions. Despite the interviewees' variation in terms of age, education, occupation, and family background, and although they shared similar opinions about gender and completely disagreed in others, they all expressed dissatisfaction and distress about the ways in which they could not do what they wanted to do.

3.1. The 'Morality' of the Inclusion of 'Other' Women in Feminist Perspectives

Concerns have been addressed about the exclusion of large numbers of women from feminist literature, because of their membership in ethnic or cultural minorities. Cypriot women's lives have not been incorporated in existing debates of Western or Third World feminist discussions. I have argued this to be a result of limited awareness of the implications and heterogeneity of women's experiences throughout the world, some of whom can become isolated in their effort to incorporate feminist arguments in their work. This thesis aims to draw attention to the need for further exploration into groups of women who have been less vocal about their issues and concerns due to various forms of social, ethnic, political, economic, geographical, and cultural oppression and discrimination. It has thus applied and at the same time criticised the existing feminist perspectives and has incorporated the particular experiences of women in Cyprus –such as the 'culture of gossip' and the Green Line- in the discussions. If feminism aspires to the inclusion of women in socio-political and academic areas throughout the world, then it should also aim to incorporate all women in its analysis, while recognising the ethnic, political, class, and sexual diversities and experiences of these women.[4] Cypriot women constitute a minor fraction of the unexplored groups I am referring to.

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[4] At the same time, local groups need to become aware of global and regional debates of agency and

Palestinian women in Israel, for example, or Eastern European women until recently were neglected by the main feminist theoretical perspectives due to their particular political, ethnic, cultural, or colour 'traits'.[5] Many women are not 'black' and are not 'white', many women are not Catholics, Protestants, or Muslims, many women live under occupation, many women live on islands, and many women have characteristics of none or all of the above.[6] The processes of 'gendering' research on ethnicity as well as incorporating ethnicity in gender studies are very important in the development of theoretical frameworks and practical research methods. Incorporating gender in class and ethnicity research, however, should not be regarded as an issue to 'add-on' to the rest. Rather, to put it simply, to talk about gender without ethnicity or class, and to underestimate their interaction in society, is to attempt the analysis of an incomplete narrative.[7]

However, diversity of experiences is not only a cultural characteristic, but also a characteristic of women within the same society or social group. Thus, while the interviewees for this study and I could be argued to share similarities in our class background, urban experiences, or even membership in the same age groups or voluntary organisations, it is important to recognise the heterogeneity of our attitudes, practices, and experiences. Interpretations and explanations of gender relations amongst urban, middle-class women vary and different feminist and gender discourses have been found to exist within groups of women of the same social class, age groups, and area of residence. It is hereby suggested that situating women within a particular context requires the inclusion and exploration of their particular socio-political and geographical locations within a global context as well as the local influences and variations of these women's discourses. It further necessitates a comprehension of the heterogeneity and contradictions of working and/or rural women's experiences and, in effect, epistemologies. An exploration of the particular histories of various groups of women can contribute towards this understanding.

The local experiences, circumstances, and situations of Cypriot women render expression of non-conformist, rebellious 'feminist' identities almost impossible for most women to adhere to. I argue that passivity towards collective goals and actions, conformity to existing socio-political structures, uniform acceptance of authority are all characteristics of post-colonial discourses, especially when these involve small societies which are politically and financially dependant on international forces. To put it bluntly, in the case of Cyprus, independence was gained for the first time only in 1960 after which occupation of half of the country followed. People are not 'used to' confronting issues and democracy as a culture has not been internalised: even in cases were people hold strong views against particular social phenomena, structures, or institutions, they feel that nothing could be done to change them. Similarly, women in my sample hold attitudes that contradict currently accepted expectations concerning gender roles and are unwilling to collectively act against them. In fact, Cypriot women appear to have conformed to cultural – moral and religious- values more than men have, and part of the reason could lie in the former group's interpretation of

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structure within feminist perspectives.

[5] See arguments in Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis: 'Contexualizing Feminism – Gender, Ethnic, and Class Divisions', *Feminist Review*, No.15, November 1983; Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis: *Racialized Boundaries; Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle*, Routledge, 1992; Floya Anthias, 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', in Nira Yuval-Davis & Floya Anthias, *Woman- Nation- State*, Macmillan, 1989.

[6] See discussion by Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, 'Issues of Contemporary Caribbean Feminism', *Feminist Review*, No.59, Summer 1998, pp. 74-85.

[7] For example, a comprehensive assessment of women's nationalist involvement should regard them as actors, symbols, and authors at the same time: using, being used by, and constructing nationalism in their own terms. See Frances S. Hasso, 'The Women's Front: Nationalism, Feminism, and Modernity in Palestine', *Gender and Society*, Vol.12, No.4, August 1998, pp. 441-465, p.442.

adherence to conformity as an escape route from further oppression. Post-colonial discourses in Cyprus include people's reluctance to accept that actions, practices, riots, demonstrations, and revolts can make a difference to the affairs of society and the state. Thus, subjected to constant colonialism, Cypriot people in general refuse to challenge the discourse of authority that has developed throughout the centuries.

Lawrence Kohlberg has identified three distinct levels of moral judgement, which point to an individual's cognitive development: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Drawing upon his ideas, Habermas drew comparisons between individual and social development. Habermas suggested that,

> "Pre-conventional morality exists when actors obey norms because they fear that non-compliance will be sanctioned by a higher authority; conventional morality exists when norms are observed because actors are loyal to a specific social group; post-conventional morality exists when actors stand back from authority structures and group membership and ask whether they are complying with principles which have universal applicability."[8]

The capacity for ethical reflectiveness demonstrated in post-conventionalism indicates the agents' *recognition that "moral codes are malleable social products rather than immutable conventions to which they must submit. It reveals a capacity for de-centredness in which agents recognise that* moral standpoints are diverse and that none has prima facie validity across time and place."[9] Having the above in mind, one might draw certain parallels between these three levels of morality and colonialism. Thus, pre-conventional morality could be argued to exist in societies under colonisation, where the colonised people obey regulations, norms, and laws because of fear for the consequences. Colonising forces can exert enormous pressure for civilians to conform and accept particular orders and rules. During a post-colonial period, however, conventional morality could be said to dominate within societies. Post-colonised people appear to be loyal to either institutions, social groups, political parties, religious dogmas, or even the government, and are likely to express extreme nationalism as this is a way of securing their newly acquired 'liberated' status. In order for these post-colonial societies to reach 'post-conventional' morality, particular socio-economic and political factors might be necessitated, for example, which secure stability, safety, and peace. In these circumstances, movements or ideologies such as feminism can be seen as alternative, critical ways of looking at authority structures and group membership, and the universal applicability of their principles. When the gradual appearance of feminism occurs during the post-colonial period, then it can provide the means and facilitate the process for a society to move towards post-conventionalism. Indeed, one could argue for further attention to be drawn to the relationship between post-conventional morality and feminist ideology. Could it be suggested, for example, that feminist principles represent a post-conventional morality, given the diverse challenges they present to the idea of feminism itself? These questions could and should further be addressed and explored.

4. Afterthoughts

The process of describing and analysing the primary and secondary data, which I gathered as an insider and an outsider during fieldwork, has been a challenging task. My partial identification with some of the women in the study as well as my commonalities with others point to obvious methodological issues which were discussed in the first part of this thesis. By having recognised my

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[8] Andrew Linklater, 'The Achievements of Critical Theory', in Steve Smith, Ken Booth & Marysia Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.285 [See also J. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, London: Heinemann, 1979].

[9] *Ibid.*, p.286.

identity, ethnic group, social class, and educational background, I am drawing attention to a conscious acceptance of how this can and does affect my 'conclusions' in this thesis. As a female, Greek Cypriot researcher carrying out this study, I explored throughout this thesis my involvement and choice of specific women's groups and interviewees. Moreover, I explicitly acknowledged my 'subject position', thereby demonstrating 'strong objectivity', or 'inter-subjectivity'. Finally, when the exploration of data and the reaching of results is regarded as a social process, then it can be shown that interpretation is a political process, which involves the lives of both the researcher and the researched.[10]

The data acquired and assimilated during the fieldwork has been vast. Although a representative number of quotations were used in order to better illustrate the arguments presented throughout the thesis, many observations remained hidden and some voices were not expressed. Considering the wealth of information gathered in the interviews, only a fraction of women's words could actually be said to have been employed towards the development of the overall arguments in this piece of work. Data from interviews and observation was thus used for illustrative purposes and it would be an exaggeration to suggest otherwise. Qualitative researchers, in-depth interviewers, and ethnographers are destined to be 'victims' of the attempt to assimilate and absorb overwhelming and significant sources of insight, which consequently may remain hidden from the reader. Although the information used for the study under discussion is relevant to and illustrates the arguments for this thesis, other information will remain hidden in drawers and on bookshelves (in the best scenario) until further research, which can explore it further, takes place.

New directions in women's perspectives and lives have appeared in the last two years or so and these should not be neglected but rather uncovered in order to motivate their exploration in future research. Acute changes and 'other' ways of expression have been observed recently. Three academic or/and specialised conferences on gender and women have taken place recently in Cyprus (on archaeology, political life, and the environment); a sexual harassment association was formed and many cases were given retrospective publicity, involving contact between lecturers and students, doctors and patients, employers and employees; single mothers have appeared in the media, discussed their problems, and demanded their legal and social rights; actresses of the National Theatre complained of sexual discrimination at the workplace after they became pregnant; a woman refugee appealed to the European Court of Justice for the right to her property in the occupied North; women formed bicommunal groups to work towards resolving the conflict of the two main ethnic communities on the island; women actively campaigned at the buffer zone for the right to know what happened to their missing loved ones; a 'peace village' is under development by a group of women in the South; courses concentrating on gender are being introduced at colleges of further education.[11] These changes have all been very recent and thus evaluating their impact and influence on women's practices and attitudes would be superficial. While attitudes but not practices have changed, such isolated cases suggest that patriarchal structures are declining in legitimacy, although this does not indicate the decisive emergence of a feminist movement. Ingrained patriarchal ideas can not be transformed within days or months and the recent changes cannot be claimed to have resulted from an open recognition of the cause of feminism and the principles it adheres to. However, the variety of other gender discourses resulting from various socio-political factors has made these developments possible. Although my findings concern women in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, I suggest that similar

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[10] See for example arguments in Janet Holland & Caroline Ramazanoglu, 'Coming to Conclusions: Power and Interpretation in Researching Young Women's Sexuality' in Mary Maynard and June Purvis (eds.), *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*, London: Taylor and Francis, 1994; Nickie Charles, 'Feminist Practices: Identity, Difference, Power', in Nickie Charles & Felicia Hughes-Freeland (eds.), *Practicing Feminism; Identity, Difference, Power*, Routledge, 1996.

[11] The above examples were the product of fieldwork, observation, and content analysis of the daily press in Cyprus in 1997-1998.

studies in the near future may present a less gloomy picture of women's attitudes and practices in Cyprus. Societal restrictions can make the change an incremental, but stable process. The change I am referring to does not imply, or aspire to, westernised notions of gender relations, but rather to open, 'public' and 'private' recognition and acknowledgement -by both men and women- of women's oppression in Cyprus, and the willingness for something to be done about it.

Cypriot women's "struggle for independence" –or, their conflict between structure and agency- and the mixed nature of my findings indicate that continuity and change can be observed simultaneously in the case of Cyprus. The three levels of inherent contradictions identified represent a linkage problematic between women's attitudes and praxis, which will remain ambiguous for as long as there exists structures of oppression which discourage women's ability to practice agency.

Appendix I: Interviewee Form

Form given to interviewees to fill in at the beginning of the interview:

General Information

Age: .....

Marital Status: .....

Children/Ages: .....

Education: .....

Occupation: .....

Feminist / anti-feminist / indifferent:.....

Refugee / non-refugee: .....

Financial Situation (dependent/independent): .....

Family Background (rural/urban): .....

Support from family of origin (financial / emotional / practical): .....

The following information is strictly confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study. All names will be changed and no information will be used in any way that would jeopardise the anonymity of the interviewee.
Thank you for your co-operation.

Appendix II: Questionnaire in Greek

Ερωτημιατολόγιο

Οικογένεια / Γάμος

1. Ποιά άτομα θεωρείς σαν μέλη της οικογένειας σου; Πόσο σημιαντική είναι για σένα η οικογένεια;
2. Γιατί πιστεύεις ότι ο κόσμος, γενικά, παντρεύεται; Πιστεύεις πως στην Κύπρο υπάρχουν πιο συγκεκριμένοι λόγοι; Εσύ γιατί παντρεύτηκες (ή, θα παντρευτείς) ; Ποιές άλλες επιλογές είχες; Ποιές επιλογές υπάρχουν για τις γυναίκες που δεν θέλουν να παντρευτούν ή που για κάποιους λόγους δεν παντρεύτηκαν;
3. Πόσο σημαντικό ήταν / είναι για σένα να παντρευτείς; Γενικά, πόσο σημαντικός είναι ο γάμος;
4. Ποιά πιστεύεις ότι πρέπει να είναι τα κριτήρια για μια γυναίκα όταν αποφασίσει να παντρευτεί; Εσύ πως αποφάσισες / θα αποφασίσεις;
5. Ποιά πρέπει να είναι τα κριτήρια για τον άντρα; Γιατί; Πως πιστεύεις ότι αποφάσισε ο δικός σου σύντροφος;
6. Ποιά είναι η 'σωστή' ηλικία για τους άντρες να παντρευτούν; Για τις γυναίκες; Εσύ πότε παντρεύτηκες / θα παντρευτείς (αν υπάρχουν τέτοια σχέδια) ;
7. Μερικοί λένε ότι τα προβλήματα με τον γάμο αυξάνονται κι άλλοι λένε ότι μειώνονται; Εσύ πως το βλέπεις; Σε ποιά προβλήματα αναφέρεσαι;
8. Ποιός από τους δύο συζύγους / συντρόφους έχει τις περισσότερες οικονομικές ευθύνες; Οι γυναίκες πρέπει να έχουν λιγότερες, περισσότερες, ίσες, και γιατί;
9. Τι πιστεύεις για το προξένιο; Υπάρχει σήμερα στην Κύπρο; Αν ναι, περίγραψε μου πως περίπου γίνεται; Πόσο διαδεδομένο είναι;

Γενικά / Προσωπικά

10. Ποιό είναι το σημαντικότερο στάδιο στην ζωή μιας γυναίκας; Στην δική σου ζωή ειδικότερα;
11. Εχεις κάποιους στόχους στην ζωή σου; Ποιοί είναι οι στόχοι αυτοί; Τι θα σε έκανε/ σε κάνει ευτυχισμένη;
12. Πόσο επιρεάζεσαι από την γνώμη του κόσμου; Με ποιούς τρόπους; Μπορείς να μου πεις *παραδείγματα;*
13. *Αν μπορούσες να αλλάξεις κάτι στην ζωή σου, ποιό θα ήταν αυτό;*
14. Ποιά πράγματα σε ενοχλούν περισσότερο στο περιβάλλον που ζεις και στη κοινωνία γενικότερα; Κάνεις τίποτα για να τα αλλάξεις; Ποιά πράγματα θα ήθελες να δεις να αλλάζουν;

15. Πως βλέπεις τα άτομα που διαλέγουν να ζουν μαζί αντί να παντρευτούν; (Εσύ θα το έκανες) ; Τα άτομα που ζουν μαζί πριν παντρευτούν; Υπάρχει διαφορά;
16. Πιστεύεις ότι είναι σημαντικό να κάνουν παιδιά οι γυναίκες; Εσύ πως το αποφάσισες;
17. Σκέψου πως για κάποιου λόγους εσύ ή ο σύντροφος σου πρέπει να μείνετε στο σπίτι και να φροντίζετε τα παιδιά;Ποιός είναι καλύτερα να το κάνει αυτό; Πως θα ένιωθες αν ο σύντροφος σουήθελε να μείνει στο σπίτι και σου ζητούσε να εργαστείς εσύ;
18. Τι πιστεύεις για τις γυναίκες που αποφασίζουν να αποκτήσουν παιδιά αλλά να μην παντρευτούν; (Σε ποιές περιπτώσεις το βλέπεις σαν αποδεκτό)
19. Τι πιστεύεις για τις εκτρώσεις;
20. Πως βλέπεις το θέμα της απιστίας μιας γυναίκας; Ενός άντρα; Παραδείγματα από προσωπικη πείρα ή από το στενότερο περιβάλλον;
21. Πωςβλέπεις το θέμα του διαζυγίου; Πότε πρέπει οι σύζυγοι να καταφεύγουν στο διαζύγιο; Πότε το θεωρείς απαράδεκτο; Ποιές είναι οι κοινωνικές συνέπειες για τους άντρε;. Για τις γυναίκες;
22. Ποιός πρέπει σε γενικές γραμμές να αναλαμβάνει την κηδεμονία των παιδιών; Γιατί;
23. Πως βλέπεις την ιδέα του πολιτικού γάμου; Εσύ θα τον διάλεγες σαν επιλογή; Γιατί / γιατί όχι;

24. Τι πιστεύεις για τις μεγαλύτερες γυναίκες που δεν είναι παντρεμένες; Πως νιώθεις για αυτές τις γυναίκες; Ποιοί πιστεύεις ότι είναι οι λόγοι για τους οποίους μια γυναίκα δεν παντεύεται;

25. Τι πιστεύεις για την ομοφυλοφιλία; Από ότι φαίνεται, θα νομιμοποιηθεί στην Κύπρο; Νομίζεις ότι υπάρχει διαφορά μεταξύ της αντρικής και γυναικείας ομοφυλοφιλίας;

26. Μερικοί άνθρωποι υποστηρίζουν πως οι γυναίκες που γίνονται θύματα βιασμού, 'τα ήθελαν και τα 'έπαθαν.' ; Σε ποιό βαθμό υποστηρίζεις αυτή την άποψη. Τι πιστεύεις για το θέμα του βιασμού γενικά; Νομίζεις ότι στην Κύπρο υπάρχουν περιπτώσεις βιασμού; Γενικά, οι γυναίκες το καταγγέλουν; Νομίζεις ότι ένας άντρας μπορεί να βιάσει την σύζυγο του;

27. Πως αντιλαμβάνεσαι την βια μέσα στην οικογένεια; Τι σε ωόθησε να ασχοληθείς με το Κεντρο Αμεσης Βοήθειας); Νομίζεις ότι αυτότο φαινόμενο υπαρχει στη Κύπρο, και σε πιο βαθμό; Ξέρεις εσύ προσωπικά κάποιες περιπτώσεις; Πιστεύεις πως σε μερικές περιπτώσεις δικαιολογείται; Πότε; Νομίζεις ότι γίνονται καταγγελίες;

28. Τι πιστεύεις για τις προγαμιαίες σχέσεις; Για τα παιδιά σου; Σε ποιές περιπτώσεις είναι εντάξει και σε ποιές όχι;

29. Είσαι θρησκευόμενη(έννοιες);Θα παντρευόσουν κάποιον από διαφορετική θρησκεία; Πως θα το έβλεπες αν τα παιδιά σου το έκαναν;

30. Πόσο σημαντική είναι η μόρφωση για τις γυναίκες; Για τους άντρες(προσωπικά παραδείγματα) ; Πιστεύεις ότι στην Κύπρο μορφώνονται περισσότερο οι άντρες ή οι γυναίκες, και γιατί;

31. Ποιά πιστεύεις ότι είναι η θέση των Τουρκοκυπρίων γυναικών στον Βορρά (ή το αντίθετο) ; Πως νοιώθεις για αυτές τις γυναίκες; Πιστεύεις ότι έχουν παρόμοιες ή διαφορατικές ιδεές με τις γυναίκες στην άλλη πλευρά;

Φεμινισμός / Ταυτότητα.

32. Πως θα όριζες την σχέση σου με τον σύντροφο σου: Υπάρχει 'αφεντικό' στην σχέση σας; Τι άλλο μπορείς να μου πείς για την σχέση σου / σχέσεις σου;

33. Τι σημαίνει για μια γυναίκα να είναι φεμινίστρια; Πως νιώθεις για τις φεμινίστριες;

34. Εσύ θεωρείς τον ευατό σου φεμινίστρια; Από πότε; Γιατί;

35. Πιστεύεις πως πρέπει να υπάρχει ισότητα μεταξύ αντρών και γυναικών; Πως αντιλαμβάνεσαι αυτή την ισότητα;

36. Πιστεύεις πως υπάρχουν κάποια πράγματα που ένας άντρας ή μια γυναίκα δεν μπορούν να κάνουν; Υπάρχουν κάποια επαγγέλματα που ταιριάζουν περισσότετο στις γυναίκες και άλλα που ταιριάζουν στους άντρες;

37. Νομίζεις ότι υπάρχουν άντρες φεμινιστές;

38. Οι Κύπριες γυναίκες είναι απελευθερωμένες; Είναι ίσες με τους άντρες; Αν όχι, νομίζεις ότι όλες οι γυναίκες είναι καταπιεστμένες με τον ίδιο τρόπο; Πως αντιλαμβάνεσαι/οραματίζεσαι αυτό τον όρο της απελευθέρωσης;

39. Πως νομίζεις ότι σκέφτονται οι υπόλοιπες γυναίκες στην Κύπρο; Πως βλέπεις τα πράγματα γενικά;

Appendix III: Questionnaire in English
(Translated from Greek)

FAMILY/ MARRIAGE

1. Whom do you consider as family? How important is your family for you?
2. Why do you think people, in general, get married? Do you feel there are any specific reasons why people get married here in Cyprus? Why did you get married? What other options did you have? What are the other options open to women who do not want to get married or for some reasons never got married?
3. How important do you feel it is for people to get married? How important was/is it for you to get married?
4. What do you feel / think should be the criteria for a woman when she decides to get married? How did you decide?
5. What should the criteria be for a man when he decides to get married? Why?
6. What is a good age for marriage for women/men and why? How old were you when you got married?
7. Some people seem to feel that problems increase with marriage whereas others say they decrease. How do you feel about this? What kinds of problems are you referring to?
8. Who do you think is the more responsible party in marriage in terms of financial security? Should women more or less obliged to contribute towards the family budget?
9. How do you feel about arranged marriages? How is a marriage arranged in Cyprus? Does this marriage exist now? To what extent?

GENERAL

10. Which is the most important stage in a woman's life? What about in your life?
11. What are your goals in life? What would make you happy/fulfilled?
12. How much do people's opinions influence what you do? In what ways?
13. If there was something you could change about your life, what would that be?
14. What kinds of things bother you in your environment/the society you live in? What would you do to change them? What kinds of things would you like to see changing?

ALTERNATIVES / 'OTHERNESS'

15. How do you feel about men and women who choose to live together rather than get married? What about women and men who live together before they get married? Is there a difference between a man doing this and a woman doing this?
16. Do you believe it is important for a woman to have children? Why did you have children?
17. Think of a situation where you or your partner/husband have to stay at home, look after children, and take care of the house. Who should do this? Why? How would you feel if you husband/partner wanted to stay at home and asked you to go to work?
18. What do you think of women who have children outside wedlock? (If not justified in general: under which circumstances do you feel it can be justified, if so?)
19. How do you feel about abortion?
20. How do you feel about wives' infidelity? What about husbands' infidelity? Examples.
21. What do you think about divorce? When should a couple seek a divorce? When not? Men? Women?
22. Who should in general take care of the children? Why?
23. How do you see the concept of civil marriage? Would you consider it as on option? Why/Why not?

24. What do you think if an older woman/man says s/he is not married? How do you feel about this woman/man? What do you think the reasons could be why s/he never got married?
25. How do you feel about homosexuality? It seems that it is going to be legalised in Cyprus. Is there a difference between male and female homosexuality?
26. Some people say that women who get raped are 'asking for it'. To what extent is this true? How do you feel about rape? Do you think there are many cases or rape in Cyprus? Do you think that all women report it? Do you think that a husband can rape his wife?
27. How would you define violence in the family? Violence against women in the family? Do you think that there is such a phenomenon in Cyprus? If so, how widespread is it? Do you know of any cases? Is it ever justified? If so, when? Do you think it is reported?
28. What do you think about premarital sex? About your own son/daughter?
29. Are you religious? Would you get married with somebody from a different religion? Your children?
30. How important is education for women? For men?
31. What do you think the position of Turkish Cypriot women is at the North? The Greek Cypriot women in the South? How do you feel about these women? Do you feel they have similar ideas and attitudes to the ones in the South/North?

FEMINISM/IDENTITY

32. How would you describe your relationship with your partner? Is there a 'boss' in your relationship? What else can you tell me about your relationship/s?
33. What is a feminist woman? How do you feel about feminist women?
34. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Since when? Why?
35. Should there be equality between men and women? How do you understand this equality?
36. Do you believe there are things that a man/woman cannot do? Are women/men better suited to certain jobs?
37. Are there feminist men?
38. Are Cypriot women liberated? Are they equal to men? If no, do you think all women are oppressed in the same way? How do you see/envisage this concept of 'liberation'?
39. What do you think the attitudes of the rest of the women in Cyprus are? How do you see things, in general?

Appendix IV: Portraits of Interviewees

The nicknames chosen have been taken from Vicki Leon's book, Uppity Women of Ancient Times (1995), from the chapters on women of 'Asia Minor & the Holy Land' and 'Greece and the Islands' (to reflect the area and culture). The list of the names was given to some of the interviewees, who chose their own nickname.

1. Artemissia

I was introduced to Artemissia after a public lecture on 'women's issues' and saw her in various meetings following that. Artemissia is thirty-four years old, single and has no children. She has a degree in the social sciences from a European university and has a successful career at a high administrative post at the offices of a political party. She lives alone and she was not 'seriously involved' with anyone during the period of the interview. She is a refugee whose parents are enclaved in the North of the island. She is financially independent. Her family background is rural and she explained that her parents are working- class. She is actively involved in public life and is especially interested in women's issues. She did not wish to be classified as a feminist or an anti-feminist. She said that she hated the label 'feminist' and she would never use it. I met with Artemissia at her office and the interview lasted little less than two hours. After the interview, we chatted about my work, and the nature of the interview, for about thirty minutes.

2. Deborah

I met Deborah through common friends and then we were members of the same women's group for a few months. Deborah is forty-five, married (at the age of thirty-five) and has an eight-year-old son. She has a Master's degree in Social Sciences from a European University and has a high administrative post in a semi-governmental organisation. She is not a refugee; she is financially independent and comes from a working class, urban background. She identifies herself as a feminist and has an active interest in politics, 'public' life, and women. She has a highly paid, prestigious job and receives no support from her family of origin. I met with Deborah in the park and our talk lasted about 150 minutes. The recorded interview itself lasted 110 minutes.

3. Herodias

I have known Herodias for six years and we are friends. Herodias is thirty years old, single and has no children. She has a Master degree in the Social Sciences from a European University and works for the government in the sphere of education. She lives alone. She is not a refugee; she is financially independent but receives both practical and financial support from her family of origin. Her family background is urban and could be considered as upper-middle-class (in terms of family background, income, lifestyle, and education). She has been involved with someone for five months and is planning to get married within the next two years. She has done voluntary work in women's organisations because of her interest in social issues rather than 'women's' issues. She does not identify herself as a feminist and is rather indifferent to the issue. I met with Herodias at her house, and the interview lasted *three hours but I stayed there for more than four hours*, talking 'more' about the questions.

4. Aspasia

Aspasia is a 'friend of a friend' that I briefly met at various social gatherings. Aspasia is thirty-three years old, married with three children. The oldest is seven years old and the youngest less than a year old. She had a long-term relationship with her husband before they got married. She is currently working on her postgraduate degree in the social sciences and she works in the field of further education. She is not a refugee, she is financially independent and comes from an urban, middle class background. She says that she receives financial, emotional, and practical help from her parents. She is indifferent to feminist ideas and does not express any active interest in public affairs, voluntary work, or women's issues. The interview took place at her house and lasted about two hours, with numerous breaks since her children were there. After the interview, we chatted about 'other things'.

5. Elpinice

Elpinice and I have common acquaintances. We spoke briefly a few times before the interview. Eplinice is twenty-nine, married and pregnant for the first time (at the time of the interview). She received a degree from a college in Cyprus and works in a bank. Her parents are refugees, and she said that her background is both urban and rural. She is financially independent but receives financial, practical, and emotional support from her family. Elpinice does not want to be labelled as feminist or anti-feminist. I met with Eplinice at her house where we chatted for more than one hour before the interview and thirty minutes after that. The interview lasted two hours.

6. Korinna

Korinna and I met through our membership in the same women's group. We spoke many times, but very briefly, before the interview. Korinna is thirty-nine, married and has two children under the age of ten. She received both an undergraduate and a postgraduate degree from a European university. Her background is urban and middle-class and she is not a refugee. She is financially independent; however, she receives emotional and financial support from her family of origin. She considers herself a feminist (but in the "right way"). We met at her office, and the interview lasted 110 minutes. We talked for about thirty minutes after the end of the interview.

7. Phryne

I saw Phryne in various lectures and meetings on public issues and approached her myself once. We spoke twice before the interview. Phryne is thirty-two years old, single and not involved with anyone at the moment. She has a Master's degree in the Social Sciences from a European university and she is a journalist. She is not a refugee and comes from an urban, middle class background. She is financially independent and receives emotional and practical support from her parents. She lives on her own. She is interested in her career and is very involved in public life and voluntary work. She is particularly interested in the political problem in Cyprus and current affairs. I met with her at her house and the interview lasted 150 minutes; afterwards, we talked for about one hour about my work and the questions.

8. Lamia

I met Lamia through common friends and have known her for about a year. Lamia is thirty-seven and married with two children. She is a beautician and has her own clinic. She is not a refugee, she is financially independent and comes from an urban, middle class background. She receives emotional, practical, and financial support from her parents. While talking to her on one occasion, I referred to my thesis and she expressed a keen interested on what 'I was writing about in my book'. I said, "I am writing about women in Cyprus. In fact, if you know of any women who are either working with women or women's issues, do you think you can get me in touch with?" She looked at me and smiled, but I didn't understand what she meant, so I asked "What, you know someone?". She replied: " I work with women a lot more than any of the women I know. I know everything about them, they come here and they tell me anything. So, I can tell you". Even though at that particular moment I was not sure whether she would 'fit' my sample, I felt that I had a lot to learn from her so I immediately arranged to meet her at her clinic. The interview lasted two hours.

9. Olympias

I met Olympias though a common friend. Olympias is thirty-three, married, with two children. She has a degree from a reputable university in the United States and she is a full-time mother and homemaker. She has never worked since her marriage, but was in part-time, casual employment before. She depends on her husband financially and comes from an urban, upper-middle-class background. She is not a refugee and her mother is not Cypriot. She is indifferent to the ideas of feminism. She devotes most of her time on her children and social gatherings. She is not involved in any organisations or associations. I met with Olympias at her house and the interview lasted one hour. I stayed there for more than two hours in all, and we talked about a number of things that were 'irrelevant to my work', as she put it. We talked about her children, her partner, and their relationship.

10. Lycimache

Lycimache is a 'friend of a friend'. I met her a few times at social gatherings and briefly talked to her. She is twenty-nine years old, married and has two children. At the time of the interview, she was pregnant with her second child. She has a Master's degree from a European University and she works for the government in the field of education. She is not a refugee, her family background is urban and upper middle class, and she is financially independent. She receives emotional, practical and financial assistance from her parents. She is a feminist and interested in women's issues. We met at my house. The interview lasted almost three hours.

11. Zenobia

I met Zenobia through a common friend and talked to her once before the interview. Zenobia is twenty-six, single, and lives with her parents. She has a postgraduate diploma in the social sciences and works in the field of secondary education. Her parents are refugees; her family background is urban and lower middle-class. She said that was financially independent but also mentioned that she could not afford to move out of her parents' home. She is practically, financially and emotionally supported by her parents. She does not want to be labelled as feminist or anti-feminist as she is not "particularly interested in that sort of thing." The interview was conducted at a common friend's house and lasted two hours. We talked for about ten minutes before and after the interview.

12. Thecla

Thecla and I did voluntary work for the same organisation on women. Thecla is twenty-eight, single, and lives at home with her parents and younger brother. She has a degree in the social sciences and works within the sphere of nursery education. She is not a refugee, and her family background is rural and lower middle class. Her parents emotionally and practically support her and she is not sure whether she is financially independent. She cannot afford to have her own place. She has a general interest in social issues and is actively involved in voluntary work concerning problems of women. We met at my house and the interview lasted 160 minutes. We also talked for about an hour afterwards about 'women's studies.'

13. Eudoxia

I met Eudoxia on the day of the interview. She was the friend of a relative. Eudoxia is twenty-four, engaged to be married and lives with her fiancé. They have been together 'since school'. She has a Master's degree in the social sciences and she is very interested in pursuing a career. She has a prestigious, well-paid job and she is financially independent. Her family background is urban and upper class. She is a refugee (because her parents 'lost their property' as she said). She receives financial, emotional and practical support from her family of origin. She considers herself a feminist and is interested in incorporating her feminist beliefs in her job. We met at her office and the setting and nature of the interview was more formal than the rest. It lasted ninety minutes. We talked about the phenomenon of domestic violence in Cyprus for about thirty minutes after the interview.

14. Melanie

Melanie attended classes at the college where I teach but she was never my student. I met her through a common acquaintance and never spoke to her before the interview. Melanie is twenty-three, single, and lives with her parents (see further analysis in Chapter Seven). She has no children and she is currently a student. At the time of the interview, she had just returned from the United States where she had studied for a few months. She returned to be with her partner. She had just registered for a course at a college in Cyprus and wanted to convince her parents that she should live with her partner. She is financially dependent on her parents who are middle class and of urban origin. She considers herself an anti feminist and she is not interested in social issues. She is very interested in the Arts. We met at a common friend's office and talked for two hours.

15. Pulcheria

Pulcheria is a student at the college where I teach and I met her for the first time on the day of the interview. Pulcheria is twenty years old, single, and lives with her parents. She has no children and she is currently a student at a college in Nicosia. She is not a refugee, her background is urban, and her parents lower middle class. She is financially dependent on her family and she receives emotional and practical support from them. She is indifferent to feminism and is currently involved with a man one-year-older than her. She has been involved with this man for four years and they are soon planning to get engaged, because 'she wants to live with him'. We met at my office and talked for about forty minutes. Nothing outside the context of the interview was discussed.

16. Jezebel

Jezebel and I did work for the same voluntary organisation for women. Jezebel is thirty-three, married and has an eleven-year-old daughter. She met her husband briefly after she finished school. She started a degree abroad when she finished high school but returned to Cyprus a few months later. She has her own business, she is financially independent, and she comes from an upper class, urban background. She is practically dependent on her parents, who also provide her with emotional support 'if she asks for it'. She is not a refugee. She is indifferent to the idea of feminism and she is very actively involved in a voluntary organisation for women. We met at her office and the interview lasted two hours. We also talked for about ninety minutes after that.

17. Mastigga

I met Mastigga through work and later, through an association on women in which we both expressed an interest. We spoke briefly on a few occasions. Mastigga is twenty-eight, married and has a one-year-old child. She has a Master's degree in the Social Sciences from an American university and she works for a private company. She is not a refugee and she is financially independent. She comes from an urban, upper-middle class family. She receives financial, emotional, and practical help from her parents. She is a feminist and has expressed an interest in women's issues and associations. Mastigga has also expressed a keen interest in my research and has asked to read it when it is finished. We met at her office after work and the interview lasted two hours.

18. Hydna

Hydna is a thirty-four-year-old, married, middle class, Armenian woman. She comes from a middle class background and has a degree from a European university. She is not involved in any way community work or 'women's issues'; I was introduced to her through an acquaintance, when I explained I would like to interview an Armenian woman (who fitted the sample). She is not interested in feminism, and she is not antifeminist. She is a refugee, financially independent, and receives emotional support from her family of origin. I interviewed her at her house; the interview lasted one hour, after which she had to leave.

19. Hipparchia

I met Hipparchia through the work we both do for bicommunal activities. Hipparchia is a Turkish Cypriot woman, thirty-six, single, and middle class. She lives alone and is currently working on her doctoral thesis. She is financially independent and receives emotional support from her family of origin. She is a refugee from the south and comes from a rural background. She is very actively involved in community work. She does not consider herself as a feminist, because she does not want to be labelled as such. She feels that working for the 'common good', will improve the position of women in society. We met at the buffer zone and the interview lasted 100 minutes. We had no time to talk after that.

20. Gorgo

I have known Gorgo since I was a child. Gorgo is twenty-nine, married, and has no children. She has a degree in natural sciences from an American university and is self-employed. She is financially independent and she comes from a middle-class, urban family. She is financially, emotionally and practically supported by her family of origin. She is a feminist but sceptical about the connotations of the term. I met her at her house and we talked for ninety minutes.

21. Philaenis

I met Philaenis at some organisation that deals mostly with women's issues. I went there to get some information on the work they do. She recognised my name and said that a friend of hers had mentioned my work. She felt that the subject was very interesting and she wanted to be interviewed for my thesis. We talked for a while and when I understood that she 'fitted' my sample, we agreed to meet at my house. She is twenty-nine, single, living with her partner of the last four years and has no children. She is not a refugee, she is not completely independent financially, and she comes from an urban background. One of her parents is non-Cypriot. She is financially, practically, and emotionally dependent on her parents. She is currently attending classes for a postgraduate course and she is a feminist. She is very interested in women's issues and wants to carry out some research on women later. The interview lasted almost four hours. At the end, we also talked for another half-hour.

22. Thargelia

Thargelia and I met in a women's group. We chatted briefly on a few occasions. She is thirty-nine, married and has two children. She has a Master's degree in the social sciences, and she works in the field of further education. She is financially independent but also receives financial support from her parents. She comes from a rural/urban background and spent twenty years of her life in a big European capital. She is a feminist and interested in women's issues. We met at her office and the interview lasted ninety minutes.

23. Athaliah

Athaliah and I have known each other for six years, through a common close friend. Occasionally, we see each other on a social basis but we tend to meet regularly at lectures, meetings on social issues, or at common friends' houses. She is forty, currently working on a Master's degree in the social sciences and she is self-employed. She is financially independent and comes from an urban, upper class background. She receives financial, emotional and emotional support from her parents. She is a feminist and very actively involved in women's groups.

24. Elissa

Elissa is Turkish Cypriot and lives in the north of Cyprus. She is thirty-eight, married and has two children. She is a university lecturer, and comes from a middle-class background. She is financially independent, and receives emotional and practical support from her parents. We met during bicommunal activities. Our interview lasted fifty minutes. It had to be cut short, due to lack of time - she had to cross the Green Line at a specific time. She considers herself a feminist and she is not involved in community work concerning women especially.

25. Sappho

I have known Sappho since I was a child. She is thirty-five, married, and has one child. She has a Bachelor's degree in the social sciences from an American University and works for the government in the area of education. She comes from an urban, middle class background and she is financially independent. She receives practical and financial support from her parents. She is indifferent to feminism and women's issues. We met at her house and the interview lasted two hours.

Appendix V: Sample and Content Analysis

Sample Analysis

BASED ON TWENTY FIVE IN-DEPTH, SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS CARRIED OUT BETWEEN APRIL AND OCTOBER 1997

TABLE 1: LEVEL OF EDUCATION

EDUCATION	
HIGH-SCHOOL DIPLOMA	3
DIPLOMA/F.E. COURSE*	2
UNIVERSITYDEGREE	11
POSTGRADUATE DEGREE	9
TOTAL	**25**

*one-two year college course

TABLE 2: AGE GROUPS

AGE	
18-25	3
26-35	15
36-45	7
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 3: FAMILY STATUS

FAMILY STATUS	
SINGLE	7
MARRIED	15
DIVORCED	--
COHABITING / ENGANGED	3
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 4: OCCUPATION

OCCUPATION	
EDUCATION/CAREER GUIDANCE	8
LAW	1
HOMEMAKING	3
STUDENT	2
SELF-EMPLOYMENT	4
JOURNALISM	1
WELFARE	1
ADMINSTRATION/SERVICES	5
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 5: DIRECT IMPACT AFTER 1974 WAR

WAR RESULTS*	
REFUGEE	6
NON-REFUGEE	19
TOTAL	**25**

*As defined by interviewees

TABLE 6: MOTHERHOOD

MOTHERHOOD	
CHILDREN	14
NO CHILDREN	11
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 7:FINANCIAL SITUATION

FINANCIAL SITUATION*	
INDEPENDENT	14
DEPENDENT	4
NOT SURE	7
TOTAL	**25**

*As defined by interviewees

TABLE 8: FAMILY BACKGROUND

FAMILY BACKGROUND	
URBAN	20
RURAL	5
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 9: ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

GENDER ATTITUDES	
FEMINIST	11
ANTI-FEMINIST	2
INDIFFERENT	12
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 10: ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY WORK FOR THE COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION* non-paid, voluntary work	
INVOLVED IN COM.WORK	11
NOT INVOLVED	14
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 11: GENDER ATTITUDES AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

ATTITUDES	*COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION*	*NO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION*
FEMINIST	11	--
ANTI-FEMINIST	--	2
INDIFFERENT	--	12
TOTAL	**11**	**14**

Content Analysis

TABLE 12: ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELIGION

RELIGION	
NON- RELIGIOUS	2
RELIGIOUS/PRACTICING	4
RELIGIOUS/NON-PRACTICING	19
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 13: ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABORTION

ABORTION	
PRO-CHOICE	14
ANTI-ABORTION	11
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 14: IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS STAGES IN WOMEN'S LIVES

MOST IMPORTANT STAGE IN A WOMAN'S LIFE	
MOTHERHOOD	12
UNIVERSITY	6
MARRIAGE	3
'ALL STAGES'	3
ADOLESCENCE	1
TOTAL	**25**

TABLE 15: REASONS FOR MARRIAGE

REASONS FOR MARRIAGE	*ALREADY MARRIED / IN FUTURE*
LOVE	1
SOCIAL/PARENTAL PRESSURE	3
RELIGION	3
TO HAVE CHILDREN	18
TOTAL	25

TABLE 16: SOCIAL ATTITUDES

	VERY CRITICAL	CRITICAL	LESS CRITICAL	TOTAL
Abortion	9	2	14	25
Extramarital Affairs	17	5	3	25
Homosexuality	3	7	15	25
Religious	2	3	20	25
Domestic Violence	16	8	1	25
Rape	19	5	1	25
Other Ethnic Group i Cyprus	3	3	19	25
Gender Inequality	11	4	10	25
Alternative Lifestyles	2	8	15	25

*Cohabitation, marriage outside wedlock, choosing to remain single, choosing not to have children.

TABLE 17: FEMINIST ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES

	FEMINIST	ANTI-FEMINIST	INDIFFERENT	TOTAL
Prochoice	11	--	3	14
Extramarital Affairs(less critical)	3	--	--	3
Acceptance of Homosexuality	11	--	4	15
Religious (practising and non-practising)	9	2	12	23
Domestic Violence(condemn)	11	1	12	24

TABLE 18: FAMILY STATUS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES

	MARRIED	SINGLE	ENGAGED/ COHABIT.	TOTAL
Prochoice	6	5	3	14
ExtraMarital Affairs (less critical)	1	2	--	3
Acceptance of Homosexuality	10	2	3	15
Religious (practising and non-practising)	13	7	3	23
Domestic Violence (condemn)	15	6	3	24

Appendix VI

Greek Cypriot Ideal — *Views of the Political Parties* — *Turkish Cypriot Ideal*

Greek Cypriot Nationalists- Elements of liners- DISY, DIKO, EDEK.	Greek Cypriot Moderates- AKEL, ADISOK Elements of DISY, DIKO, UD. Turkish Cypriot Moderates- NCP, CTP, TKP	Turkish Cypriot Nationalists- Elements of DP, UVP.	Turkish Cypriot Hard- Elements of DP, UVP.

Views of Leaders

Makarios	Kyprianou Eroglu	Clerides, Vassiliou Lyssarides Durduran, Christofides	Talat, Akinci	Denktash

←----------→

Unitary State — *Federation* — *Confederation* — *Two States*

From Richmond, Oliver P: *Mediating In Cyprus: The Cypriot Communities and the UN,* Frank Cass, 1998.

Appendix VII
Engagement Announcements in the Press

See page 112, footnote 15.

Υποσχέσεις γάμου

Ο κ. Θεόδωρος Κωνσταντινίδης από τον Άγιο Δομέτιο και η δ. Γεωργία Παπαλοΐζου από τη Λευκωσία, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο κ. Νικόλας Λοϊζίδης και η δ. Χριστιάνα Πέτσα και οι δυο από τη Λευκωσία, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο κ. Διονύσιος Χριστοδούλου από Αγ. Γιωρκούη Αμμοχώστου και τώρα στη Μουτταγιάκα και η δ. Μαρία Προδρόμου από την Αμμόχωστο και τώρα στα Πολεμίδια, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο κ. Παρασκευάς Θ. Θεοφίλου από το Κάτω Βαρώσι και τώρα στη Λάρνακα και η δ. Δέσπω Α. Λοϊζου από τη Νέτα Αμμοχώστου και τώρα στο συνοικισμό Καμάρες Β' στη Λάρνακα, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο κ. Ιωάννης Χ"Λοΐζου από τον Πεδουλά και η δ. Ευτυχία Ν. Γεωργίου από τη Λεμεσό, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο κ. Νεκτάριος Βάσου Θεοδοσίου από τη Λεμεσό και η δ. Λίζα Στέλιου Μεσομέρη από τον Άγιο Δομέτιο, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο κ. Κωνσταντίνος Καλοψιδιώτης από τη Λευκωσία και η δ. Δήμητρα Δημητρίου από τη Λάπηθο και τώρα στη Λευκωσία, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο Κυριάκος Ανδρονίκου από το Καϊμακλί και η Λένια Παρασκευά από το Συριανοχώρι Μόρφου κάτοικος συνοικισμού Στροβόλου 3, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο κ. Πάρης Ζαχαρούλης από την Αραδίππου και η δ. Μαρία Δημητρίου από τη Μηλιά Αμμοχώστου και τώρα στους Αγίους Αναργύρους, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

- Ο κ. Χριστόδουλος Θεοφιλίδης και η δ. Νιόβη Ν. Κετώνη και οι δύο από τη Λευκωσία, έδωσαν αμοιβαία υπόσχεση γάμου.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Constantinos Maki Adamides
and
Vera Renou Lyssioti,

both from Nicosia, have given a promise to marry.

From the daily Greek language newspaper *Fileleftheros*, 22 November 1998; also, *The Cyprus Weekly*, November 20-26, 1998.

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