# School Culture and Health Promotion

## An anthropological study in the Republic of Cyprus

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Frankfurt, 23.11.2019 Katerina Hommens

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Giannis and Mary.

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CSA: | Committee of Seven Academics |
| ECD: | Early child development |
| EEA Grants: | European Economic Area Grants |
| EFA: | Education for All |
| Cy-CEHAP: | Cyprus Committee for Environment and Children's Health action plan |
| Cystat: | Cyprus Statistical Service |
| D&T: | Design and Technology |
| ENHPS: | European Network of Health Promoting Schools |
| GDP: | Gross Domestic Product |
| HE: | Health Education |
| IIEP: | International Institute for Educational Planning |
| KEEA: | Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation |
| KISA: | Action for Equality, Support, Anti-racism |
| MOEC: | Ministry of Education and Culture |
| MoH: | Ministry of Health |
| MoU: | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NGO : | Non-governmental Organization |
| NHIS: | National Health Insurance Scheme |
| OECD: | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OELMEK: | Secondary school Greek teachers association |
| PISA: | Program for International Student Assessment |
| POED: | Primary school Greek teachers association |
| STS: | Science and Technology Studies |
| UNESCO: | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| WHO: | World Health Organization |

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# Abstract

This cultural anthropological study focuses on the introduction of a new health education curriculum in Cyprus' public schools. The curriculum's implementation is looked at as a project of modernization. It is examined ethnographically in two primary schools in the Republic of Cyprus over a period of three years. Utilizing theories and methods from Science and Technology Studies and Global Ethnography, the study examines the entanglements of Science with Culture and of Tradition with Modernity as experts, teachers, parents and children encounter the new health education curriculum. Health education is compared to a project of biological citizenship and the curriculum is seen as an actant attempting to form a personal obligation towards health by promoting "common sense" knowledge and privileging "modern" individuals. However, the financial crisis affects people who decide that they have more important concerns than to promote health for the common good. Tensions are created between teachers in their attempts to establish their expertise and "gain their lost respect". Claims of "objective knowledge" are contested by teachers, as well as parents, as they express reservations when it comes to the subject of sex education. The teachers are unable to act as moderators between Science and Society and parents have their own imaginations of morality and normality. Tensions between the social actors bring to the surface ideas about what constitutes "acceptable" choices, "proper" childhoods and "good" mothers. In these symbolic struggles, there is no space left for the children to exercise their agency. The responsibilization lessons to be learned promote children who adhere to specific standards suited to a local description of proper citizens. Consequently, boys' and girls' imaginations of health are also heavily influenced by ideas of "proper" gendered bodies that behave in "proper" ways and they describe themselves as belonging to different worlds. They also have specific conceptions of others' spoiled images, view health as the promise of properness and describe only one way to be proper. Although the curriculum is officially presented as a major innovation, very little actually changes. This is largely due to the fact that the authorities are unable to recognize local contention of what constitutes acceptable knowledge as a valid argument and to work with this knowledge to streamline the process of Europeanization.

# Introduction

When approaching the island of Cyprus by plane, one sees shimmering blue waters that break on the rather densely built seafront of Larnaca. A network of four salt lakes, three of which are interconnected, with or without water, depending on the season. There is also the old oil refinery, whose oil reserves were transferred by August 2015, to the energy centre in Vasilikos power station, towards Limassol. The traveller may be in anticipation of an upcoming holiday, new experiences, or relieved at reaching home safely. In my case, the experience of flying home for the purposes of this study was interspersed with anticipation and melancholy; the familiarities of a welcoming homeland that simultaneously became a symbol for things that would never be the same again – even if I were to return and continue life 'as usual'. This dissertation is not about my own transitional moments as I encounter anthropology, although they too are embedded in this story; it is about the transitional moment in which health education officially enters the public school system in Cyprus, following the trend towards health promotion that has recently received a lot of attention in the Western world.

This renewed interest, evident in the emergence of new prevention regimes in public health policies in European societies that build on individual responsibility and healthy lifestyles (Lengwiler and Beck 2008; Mathar and Jansen 2010; Lupton 1995), has been described as characterizing a new moral regime (Mathar and Jansen 2010). As this shift marks the overall discourse of public health, the everyday life and the self-images of social actors, are also changing. Social and cultural anthropology has thus turned its interest to societal procedures in which more and more life aspects are redefined as medical issues in late modern societies (Burri and Dumit 2007;

Conrad 2007). This shift has also affected educational policies. As a result, we are witnessing a focus on health promotion inside schools (Paulus 2003; Deschesnes et al. 2003) and in some cases, innovations in the curricula to include health education, like in the case of the Republic of Cyprus.

## 1. The island

Cyprus has a rich historical past with settlements of different peoples over the years, but official Greek Cypriot sources focus on the islands' Hellenic roots (Peristianis 2000). In the Cyprus Country Review for example, it is stated that around 1184 B.C.E. (Before Common Era) toward the end of the Trojan War, settlers from that region began to arrive in Cyprus and that by the end of the second millennium B.C.E. Cyprus had developed its own distinctively Hellenistic culture (Youngblood-Coleman 2016). After the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Persians and the Ptolemies, the period of Roman rule, in the first century also saw the introduction of Christianity. Almost 1000 years later, in the tenth century, the Byzantine Empire regained control over Cyprus after an Arabic occupation and by the twelfth century Richard I, King of England, captured the island and sold it to the Knights Templars, a Frankish military order. Eventually control of Cyprus moved to the domain of Guy de Lusignan, the ruler of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (Youngblood-Coleman 2016). Within the Frankish Lusignan dynasty Cyprus was established as a feudal entity for more than three centuries. During the Frankish Lusignan dynasty period, the struggle for dominance between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church ensued in Cyprus and under Queen Helena Paleologos, the Orthodox faith enjoyed a public revival (Youngblood-Coleman 2016: 12)[1]. After the wedding of James II of Cyprus

1. Edbury (1999) refers to the relations between Catholic and Orthodox Christians and argues that assimilation and acculturation of the two are major themes, which are relatively unexplored.

of the house of Lusignan with Caterina Cornaro, a Venetian noblewoman, the weakened Kingdom of Cyprus joined forces with Venice. Throughout the period of Venetian rule, Cyprus suffered attacks and raids by the Ottoman Turks and the Venetians fortified Famagusta, Nicosia, and Kyrenia. In 1570, after a full-scale invasion, Cyprus came under Ottoman control. Under the Ottoman Turks, the feudal system was abolished and former serfs were then allowed to work on their own land. Although these small landholdings of the peasants were heavily taxed, the end of feudalism marked a significant shift in Cyprus by providing the Greek Cypriots ownership of land (Peristianis 2000). Land was also granted to Turkish soldiers and peasants, setting the foundation for the Turkish community in Cyprus. During the Ottoman rule, increased oppression by the Ottoman Turks resulted in the Ottoman Turks being viewed with enmity by the Greek Cypriots who had held tightly to their Greek and Orthodox heritage. Consequently, the middle of the nineteenth century saw "*Ένωσις*" - the notion of a unitary Greek identity and nation - become deeply embedded in the consciousness of most Greek Cypriots (Youngblood-Coleman 2016: 14). In the mid-1870s, Britain responding to the changing power relations in the Mediterranean region and the Russian expansion, secured an agreement with the Ottoman government to take over Cyprus in exchange of protection for the decaying Ottoman Empire. In June 1878, the Cyprus Convention after secret negotiations between the British and the Grand Viziers, declared that Cyprus would be occupied and administered by the British (Faustmann and Peristianis 2006). Colonial administration was then established in Cyprus and Greek Cypriots almost immediately made clear their nationalist aspirations. The 80 years during which Cyprus was a Crown colony and Cypriots' encounter with modernity encapsulated by the 'civilized' West Europeans as opposed to the 'backwardness' of the Ottomans, have been seen by many anthropologists

researching Cyprus as having permanently penetrated the self-images of Greek Cypriots who often refer to "civilized trends" or "parochial traditions" when they imagine themselves as striving for a European identity (Argyrou 1996, Welz 2001); a condition that the social anthropologist Vassos Argyrou called *postcolonial condition*. As Argyrou argues, Cypriots' encounter with the British, and the dichotomies of the civilized and primitive images it brought with it, still has a hold on the people "whose vision of the world has been colonized by the idea of Europe" (Argyrou 2010: 41).

An independent state, the Republic of Cyprus, established in 1960, was a solution that did not satisfy either of the two interethnic groups Greek and Turkish Cypriots, both of which continued to pursue their respective aims of *enosis* and *taksim* (Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz 2006). In 1963 interethnic violence broke out and in 1974 the Turkish invasion resulted in the division of the island and the physical separation of Greek (South of the division) from Turkish Cypriots (North of the division) solidified. The Turkish Cypriot flag features nowadays predominantly on the south side of the Pentadaktylos Mountain, floodlit during the night. For the Turkish Cypriots, a symbol of their national pride, and for the Greek Cypriots, a symbol of Turkey's arrogance, since it is placed facing the South. If the traveller, on her way from Larnaca airport to Nicosia, were asked "what is that flag there for?" and she is a Cypriot, you may get varying responses to this question. To answer in a way that does not mention the national identity of the Self and the Other, is perhaps not possible. While Turkey represents the ultimate Other, the Greek Cypriots have by no means been a uniform group. There were the Cypriots who, along with the Church of Cyprus, saw the island as a legitimate extension of the ancient Greek civilization. They viewed Greece as the motherland and envisioned unification with motherland Greece as the

only acceptable destiny for the island. There were also the Cypriots, traditionally representing the political Left, who disagreed with the efforts to unify Cyprus with Greece in the 60s. These views, although not fixed structures, may be used to contest internal imaginations of nationalism as Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz (2006) mention. Right wing supporters mainly imagine an ethnic nationalism whereas left wing supporters try to promote civic nationalism (Peristianis 2006). All these issues are a part of what constitutes "*Cypriotness*". For me, a Greek Cypriot born in divided Nicosia, references to the Other across the border were part of daily life while I was growing up. My parents became refugees in 1974 before I was born and were renting a small apartment on the top of a fabric store in Apollonos street; a narrow side street between Ledra and Onasagorou streets, very close to the green line when I was little. I knew Turkish Cypriots existed, but I had never seen one before. I first saw what a Turkish Cypriot actually looked like when I went to England for my Masters in Education in 1999. He looked quite ordinary but in my head I wondered how different we must have been.

In 2003, the Turkish authorities opened the previously uncrossed internal border and the Cyprus Government announced some measures that would enable the Turkish Cypriots who lived in the occupied areas in the North, to enjoy the citizenship rights that citizens of the Republic of Cyprus enjoy[2]. Nowadays, the reunification talks have resumed but what is popularly called the "Cyprus Problem" is still unresolved. Living with the "Other Within" (Argyrou 2010: 43), some optimistic voices have been proclaiming a

2. Source: Press and Information Office. Retrieved 3 February 2015 from http://www.moi. gov.cy/moi/pio/pio.nsf/6645bc8e70e73e2cc2257076004d01c1/e620a587100f0ff6c22578380036872d?OpenDocument#

"unanimous desire of the Cypriot people to live in a unified and independent Cyprus so that all the inhabitants of our patrída [Fatherland] live peacefully and brotherly in a new European Cyprus" (Christou 2006: 298). However, this desire is not that unanimous at all. Issues over what constitutes "Cypriotness" also continue to permeate the educational system. During Ottoman rule, Greek Cypriot Education was limited to the initiations funded by the Orthodox Church, whose priests represented one of the few educated groups of people on the island (Persianis 1978). The British rule however, had schools established in accordance with British ideas of education. What Persianis (1978) describes as the British *laissez-faire* policy, proved convenient for the Greek Orthodox Church and according to Heraclidou, schools were modelled on their counterparts in Greece with schools staffed by graduates of the University of Athens and books chosen by the Greek Ministry of Education (Heraclidou 1012). Bryant also mentions the politicization of education during this period and how it was nationalized around Greekness, adding that nationalism was understood by Greek Cypriots as synonymous to civilization (Bryant 2006).

Nationalism and a sense of pride associated with being Greek continue to infiltrate education today. The ongoing partition of the island and the close ties between church and education in Cyprus as mentioned by Kitromilides (1989), partly explain this. Furthermore, as Spyrou (2001; 2006) found in his research, despite an official political rhetoric of reconciliation, teachers in the classroom continued to distinguish Turkish Cypriots, thereby labelling them as hostile others and not acknowledging the existence of a Turkish Cypriot minority indigenous to the island. The prevalence of Greek Cypriots' preoccupation with national identity have been so interesting for anthropologists researching Cyprus, that they have mainly focused on the

modernization of post-colonial Cyprus and the Cyprus problem (Argyrou 1996; Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz, 2006; Welz 2001, 2006), supporting the popular assertion that the "Cyprus Problem" has stopped developments in other areas of the society (Baga 2001).

## 2. Cyprus and Europe

In 2004, Cyprus became a full member state of the European Union. This process and experience of Europeanization set in motion a number of changes as Cyprus adapted to the challenges orchestrated by the EU. As financial crisis distressed Europe in 2011, Cyprus which had been - up until that point - progressively enjoying a rapid economic transformation during the second half of the 20th century, as Welz (2015) mentions, found itself entering a prolonged financial recession. According to the Cyprus Statistical service (Cystat) report:

> The inadequate regulatory and supervisory framework and the excessive credit expansion of the financial sector, the significant exposure of the Cypriot banks to the Greek economy and to Greek government bond holdings, as well as, the unprecedented lax fiscal policy that led to a rapid deterioration in public finances, were the key factors leading to a loss of access to the international capital markets by Cyprus, in spring 2011 (Cystat 2014: 7).

The financial crisis escalated in 2013, with the collapse of Laiki Bank and the decision of the Eurogroup on Bank of Cyprus recapitalization through creditors' participation. Cyprus had to resort to an international bailout agreement with a committee consisting of the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank – the so called

Troika – in order to avoid bankruptcy (MoU 2013)[3]. Troika raised several prerequisites and the health sector was among the first to be massively reformed, followed by the educational sector. As expected, the austerity measures changed the lives of people and disappointment was evidenced when I was 'inside' the 'field'[4]. One example were emotionally charged letters written by newspaper readers in the daily press. For a part of the population, the sentiment was that "despite people's hard work, the Eurogroup and the other 'kitchens of United Europe' are cooking solutions that drive people to poverty" published Philelefthеros in July 2015[5]. For many others, however, an external imposition of order was necessary because Greek Cypriots were incapable of managing. They believed this was made evident in the financial crisis, the bribery scandals in the local government, as well as the political impunity. Unlike people in other EU member states, notably Britain; that in a referendum in June 2016 voted for exit from the EU, Greek Cypriots do not feel that they are ruled by Brussels. As Argyrou argues, "what others experience as imposition that should be resisted, they experience as natural and necessary, a step towards full Europeanization" (Argyrou 2010: 43).

3. Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy. Retrieved 20 February 2015 from http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A62013TO0289

4. I placed the words 'inside' and 'field' in single quotation marks as a recognition of the problematic that Appadurai (1995) posed in "The production of locality"; namely "how can we undertake ethnography in a world where locality is contested and shifting". To simplify the reading of this dissertation I will only be using single quotation marks the first time I use a contested term although I recognize that the terms remain contested. Nevertheless, I might be using quotation marks when a point needs to be emphasized.

5. Philelefthеros is a local newspaper in Greek language. The article was retrieved 6 July 2015 from: http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/koinonia-epistoles/441/265008/pathitiki-antistasi-psonizoume-ellinika

## 3. Public Health in Cyprus

The austerity measures that Cyprus had to submit to, as a prerequisite in order to qualify for the European Stability Mechanism, became a predicament to public health. The OECD results of a comparison of the health systems between North and South Europe highlighted the striking differences between the two systems (OECD 2013). Karanikolos et al. (2013) describe the unintended – and unwanted – effects of policy decisions about how to respond to economic crises on public health in southern European countries. The two Greek nationwide cross-sectional surveys cited (both in 2008 and 2009), showed prevalence of major depressive disorders hitting especially people facing serious economic hardship. They added that self-reported general health had deteriorated, with many people reporting their health status as "bad" or "very bad" in 2009.

In Cyprus, public per capita expenditure on health of 1052 US$ in 2011 was decreased to 910 US$ in 2012 and 873 US$ in 2013[6]. Total expenditure on health was at 7.4% of the GDP in 2013 with government expenditure at 46% and the rest being private expenditure, which is quite low compared to Germany's 11.3% of GDP in 2013 of which 77% was government expenditure. Furthermore, entitlement category B was abolished for all except people with specific chronic diseases (MoU 2013) which increased the share of the population without free access to publicly financed health care from 17% to 19% (Theodorou et al. 2012). Free care access for public employees and state officials was abolished and as of August 2013 they had to contribute 1.5% of their gross salary or pension in order to be beneficiaries of public health services (MoU 2013). Applications for state

6. The data was received from the Global Health Observatory. Retrieved 2 April 2016 from http://apps.who.int/gho/data/ view.main.HEALTHEXPRATIODEU?lang=en.

hospital care access could only be considered if one had contributed for at least three years to the social security fund, stated the website of the Ministry of Health (MoH) [7], excluding in this way Turkish Cypriots, immigrants and Asylum seekers or refugees. The implementation of a National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was postponed to 2015. In 2017, at the time of writing this dissertation, NHIS implementation had still not taken place but came into effect on March 1st, 2019 when I was reviewing the dissertation for publication.

The financial crisis exacerbated social inequalities, especially among children and the elderly. As the unemployment rate was rising, the category affected the most was the 15-24 age group with an unemployment percentage of 38.9% in 2013, followed by the 55-64 age group with an unemployment rate of 16.3% (Cystat 2014: 158). Despite the increasing numbers of unemployment, the number of cases for beneficiaries of public assistance was reduced from 41,750 to 30,374 (Cystat 2014: 13).

Against the backdrop of financial uncertainty, prevention strategies in the school context were also affected. Programs such as "Mentor", involving activities held in a travelling bus that promoted attitudes which would keep students away from substance abuse, was outsourced and privately operated as I found out in 2015. "Mikri Arktos", a prevention programme of the Youth Board of Cyprus and the counselling services of the Ministry of Education, offering workshops on emotional development, tolerance and bullying awareness, held its last workshops in December 2014, as an official in the Youth Board told me in 2015. At that moment it was not yet clear in which form these workshops could or would be resumed. Additionally, as

7. The official website of the Cyprus Ministry of Health is www.moh.gov.cy

one official of KISA, an NGO for "Equality, Support and Anti-racism", mentioned, the family planning clinic for free gynaecological examinations, contraception and HIV testing closed after state-funding was discontinued. Contact was framed within the parameters of emergency, and according to Demetriou (2013), political actors presented this deterioration of social welfare as inevitable.

## 4. About the Study

The context of Cyprus as the locality on which this study is based, carries with it all these issues. The focus on health promotion is examined under the scope of *Modernization* (Kahn 2001), or as Vassos Argyrou states "the politics of globalizing processes like Westernization" (Argyrou 1996: 2). My aim is not to question whether the health education curriculum is appropriate or inappropriate, right or wrong. What I am attempting is an investigation of the assumptions that are being made with its implementation, the conditions under which it works and the tensions that reshape it.

The implementation of the new health education curriculum is looked at as a "Project" drawing on Anna Tsing's description of modernization as a set of projects "with cultural and institutional specificities and limitations" (Tsing 2000: 328) and on Gisela Welz's (2005) "Europäische Produkte"; a term conceived to capture the interconnections that develop between the local, the national and the global as a result of European directives. The study utilizes the principles of Global ethnography, what Burawoy et al. (2000) describe as involving three levels of analysis: global forces, global connections and global imaginations. These distinct levels allow the researchers to "directly examine the negotiation of interconnected social

actors across multiple scales" (Gille and O Riain 2002: 279). Global forces concern the ways in which external forces shape local situations. The second level deals with newly established translocal and transnational connections and examines the agency from below but also from above, of "global connections that may produce global forces" (Gille and O Riain 2002: 283). The third level of analysis entails imaginations that social actors engage and these "may construct places […] that are quite different from global forces and connections, even if at other times these three elements of globalization are deeply intertwined" (Gille and O Riain 2002: 284).

Utilizing theories and methods from Global Ethnography, as well as, the Science and Technology Studies through a social-cultural anthropological perspective, this study examines the entanglements of Science, Technology and Society as experts, teachers, parents and children encounter the new health education curriculum in the Republic of Cyprus. It prioritizes the individual voices of the social actors and field notes taken during participant observations to discover connections and form an understanding of broader tensions and frictions, and deals with the role of Knowledge in societal order processes, ideas of Normality, the ambiguities of the borders between Nature and Culture, and the tensions between Tradition and Modernity.

Using health promotion in the school culture as a case-in-point and with a renewed interest on practices surrounding children, the study contributes to anthropology in the areas of School Ethnography and Anthropology of Childhood, as well as Medical Anthropology, areas that have only recently started to gain attention from an anthropological point of view and aims to contribute to the social theories of Modernity, Globalization and Medicalization of human life.

## 5. Theoretical assumptions

The study draws on Bruno Latour's premise that "the two Great Divides do not describe reality – our own as well as that of others – but define the particular way Westerners had of establishing their relations with others as long as they felt modern" (Latour 1993: 103). Furthermore, modernity is both a top-down discourse riven with hegemonic ideologies and a product of everyday tactics through which individuals and collectives manipulate the social possibilities available to them (Merrifield et al. 2013)[8]. The study also recognizes, as Anne-Marie Mol in her book "The body multiple" wrote, that "In our daily lives we are engaged in practices that are thick, fleshy and warm as well as made out of metal, glass and numbers – and that are persistently uncertain" (Mol 2002: 31). Consequently, natural and social orders are being produced together everywhere. Jasanoff refers to co-production as an idiom – a way of interpreting and accounting for complex phenomena. The co-production framework is symmetrical and does not give primacy to either nature or society; instead it investigates the continual changes to the boundaries between the social and the natural (Jasanoff 2004: 20). Finally, there is the recognition that in these "transaction zones" (Beck, Niewöhner and Sørensen 2012), frictions are vital elements of wholes and these frictions and instability are the rules and not the stabilized structures they pretend to be.

8. Merrifield et al. (2013) review four books based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in West Africa, China, the Caribbean, and Latin America, all of which address aspects of the anthropology of modernity. They argue that any useful conceptualization of modernity must acknowledge both the concept's checkered history(ies) and its live career within a multitude of contemporary practices that can best be studied ethnographically.

## 6. Outline of the study

The following Chapter, "Theoretical Background", examines the existing theoretical approaches in cultural anthropology that inform this dissertation. It discusses "Modernization Projects" (Tsing 2000) and "European Products" (Welz 2005). Drawing on medical anthropology, it discusses the establishment of the institution of health and explores the concept of "biological citizenship" (Rose and Novas 2005). Questions of risk perception, forms of identity construction and knowledge production are also examined. Finally, schooling practices are considered and associations are drawn to normalization of children's lives.

Chapter 2 "Mapping the Field", outlines the methodological approach. The decisions that needed to be taken in anticipation of the fieldwork and the methods that were used. The two schools are presented, Dimotiko Ayias Elenis[9] in Nicosia, the island's capital, and Strovolos Elementary in the capital's suburb. Marcus' (1995) multi-sided ethnography and ethnography as revisit (Burawoy 2003) are explored, followed by a discussion on complexities that arise once the researcher is engaged in the fieldwork, especially during the children's interviews. I not only indicate the benefits, but also the predicaments of being an insider; and how processes of acculturation and enculturation were important for the writing of the dissertation.

Chapter 3 "The Curriculum", discusses the forces behind the reform and the implementation of the curriculum. It presents the ways in which hegemonic forms of knowledge tried to establish themselves and the mechanisms that

9. All names used are pseudonyms.

were used to achieve this in order to yield the curriculum's success in forming a common sense of personal obligation towards health.

Chapter 4 "Tensions and Negotiations", focuses on the changes in the teachers' roles. The introduction of the curriculum created tensions between teachers who felt that they needed to safeguard their professional identities. Teachers reacted to the stories that were told from above citing their own expertise as the only true expertise. As Sismondo argues, social actors "are not mere logical operators, but have investments in skills, prestige, knowledge and specific theories and practices" (Sismondo 2010: 11).

Chapter 5 "So How did They do It", discusses the different ways that the teachers chose to teach the topics; the different ways of enacting prevention. Four examples are presented: "Lessons on nutrition", "Bullying prevention", "Being good is fun" and "No more stereotypes". What the lessons had in common was that they all tried to responsibilize the children; to prescribe "proper" ways of behaviour and creating groups of "normal" individuals, with some school rituals also reinforcing definitions of "properness".

Chapter 6 "Resistance", presents the side of the parents and how the legitimacy of the curriculum's claims of "objective knowledge" was contested also by the parents due to their reservations when it came to sex education. Imaginations of morality and normality were intertwined, together with the participants' imaginations of being modern or traditional. This leads to some interesting conclusions on Cypriots' encounter with social stigma, normality and modernity.

Chapter 7 "Moments of Encounter", describes tensions between social actors that were taking place outside the classrooms and around the official

lessons. They were about challenges of everyday life and concerned the expectations that social actors had from others. In these struggles for identity and power, ideas about what constitutes "proper" childhoods and "good" mothers were revealed. These moments throw some light on the "responsibilities" that people subscribe to and how these influence the strategies that they employ. These strategies have a double impact; on the curriculum's successes or failures and on children's subjectivities.

Chapter 8 "Children's Lives and Agency", describes some facets of children's lives on the island. These are heavily influenced by ideas of what it means to be a boy or a girl and are in turn associated with ideas about healthy men and women. The chapter elaborates on children's imaginations of others' spoiled health, agency and normalization of health and associates these with the curriculum's expectations.

Chapter 9 "Conclusions", brings together the theoretical concerns and the empirical findings, and discusses the complexity of the makings of biological citizens in Cyprus. This process is messy and multifarious because neither the curriculum nor the structures supporting it are stable, and because the social actors have concerns that are very different from those the curriculum subscribes to them.

# Chapter 1

# Theoretical Background

This chapter presents the theories that inform this dissertation. It begins with the section entitled "Modernization as a set of Projects" which discusses recent theoretical approaches in the field of cultural anthropology, and is followed by "Biopower, Biological citizenship and Governmentality", which reviews concepts that were developed within the field of medical anthropology. The section "Health as an accomplishment of the individual self" highlights how failing attempts at 'achieving health' are incumbent upon individuals' wrongdoings rather than on social inequalities or state deficiencies. The section entitled "Health Education in Schools - the future biological citizens" discusses the investment in childhood and the establishment of standards in schools. Finally, "Acceptable knowledge and uncertainty" discusses knowledge production inspired by the field of research in Science and Technology Studies (STS).

## 1.1. Modernization as a set of Projects

The European Union, "a unique economic and political partnership" as it is stated on the official website[1], is a set of political institutions and identities that is both cultural object and project "best studied by anthropologists", argued Bellier and Wilson in their "Anthropology of the European Union" (Bellier and Wilson 2000: 6). Indeed anthropologists working on Europea-

1. Quoted from the website of the European Union. Retrieved 4 September 2013 from http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/about/index_en.htm

nization have focused on the processes in which countries *become* European and more specifically, on the interactivity of this process when each country adapts to the challenges in its own way, often readjusting them so that they can work "on the ground", where real, practical work is done (Welz 2015; Radaelli 2004; Börzel and Panke 2010).

This dissertation also views the EU institution as keeping the modernization project alive through aspirations and imaginations of continuous development. Anna Tsing calls the commitments to modernization *Modernization projects* (Tsing 2000). Their end products may have little in common with the harmony that is implied in the term "Harmonization Process" that is given to the alignment of the national laws to the European expectancies. "Harmony" describes a state of peace and concord and stands at the end of a process that transforms and stabilizes turmoil. Modernization projects, on the other hand, are often riddled with ambiguities. Hence, where harmonization in official terms becomes something that can be found and measured in the establishment of common standards within the common market, in the everyday lives of the people however, being "harmonized" may very well be equivalent to turmoil and "harmony" would be an utterly incongruous word to use.

According to Tsing (2000), studies of modernization as sets of projects look in at least three directions. First, analysts focus on the cultural specificity of commitments to modernization. They explore the elements through which modernization projects make assumptions about the world. Second, they scrutinize the social practices, material infrastructure, cultural negotiations, institutions, and power relations through which modernization projects work – and are opposed, contested, and reformulated. Third, analysts use the promise of questions and dilemmas raised in modernization

programmes without becoming caught up in their prescriptions for social change. As Tsing explains,

> [projects] ... are to be traced in relation to particular historical travels from one place to another; they are caught up in local issues of translation and mobilization; although they may be very powerful, we cannot assume their ability to remake nature and society according to their visions (Tsing 2000: 347).

'Modernization commitments viewed as projects' analyze the materialities of Europeanization practices as well as the transformations of social relationships and institutional negotiations. As the cultural anthropologist Gisela Welz explains, due to these commitments, new cultural definitions emerge that are context-specific. To conceptualize the effects of EU-governance practices (intentional or not), she coined the term *Europäische Produkte* [European products]. These products define a new category that includes not only consumer articles, but forms of organization, examples of production, regulation mechanisms and new knowledge (Welz 2005; Welz and Lotterman 2009; Welz 2015).

## 1.2. Biopower, Governmentality and Biological Citizenship

The concept of Health is historically interwoven with ideas of modernization, of a continuous development and an improvement of one's life. The promise of the ability to avoid risks, to control, to better one's self, appeals as Bröckling wrote, "to the basic fear of the modern, namely denormalization" (Bröckling 2008: 39). Somewhere around the 8$^{th}$ century B.C.E, the legendary poet Homer is believed to have written the Iliad and the Odyssey, presenting a layman's view of gods; gods with human qualities who would punish and could inflict disease upon non-worthy humans and their descendants. The importance of the consultation of oracles, as outside authorities who "knew

better", was already considered as an act of prevention. Later, in the 4th century B.C.E., Hippocrates, the "Father of Modern Medicine" as he is known in Western medicine, observed human behaviours and mentioned laypeople's personal responsibility in cleanliness as a successful prevention practice in Antiquity (Chadwich and Mann 1978). Western medicine has treated ancient Greek medical practices as the 'true' ancestors of the scientific method, in contrast to Egyptian or Indian methods, who adopted a mystic approach to their systems of medicine (Conrad et al. 1995; Grmek 1998). The domination of the medical institution occurred gradually and was confirmed by developments in bacteriology and the discovery of the microbe together with an increase of welfarist rationalities since the period following the Second World War (Rosen 1958; Rose 1998, 1999b). Colonial medicine advocated public health measures to treat or immunize against infectious diseases and to teach the natives how to avoid contracting these diseases in the first place through behavioural change (Rose 1998, 1999b). Nowadays, biomedicine and epidemiology use 'objectivity' to make judgments on 'risky' behaviours and individuals who are 'at risk' (Lupton 1995). Scientific studies provide guidelines that enable health and emphasize on a 'guarantee' of healthier selves and societies reinforcing medicine as a dominant institution (Adams 2010).

A number of sociologists and anthropologists have argued that public health and health promotion may be conceptualized as governmental apparatuses (Lupton 1995; Rose and Novas 2005; Mathar and Jansen 2010). Authorities have been actively trying to calculate societal risk that could end up being a financial risk, by working on the improvement of life for the members of their societies. Mathar and Jansen (2010) point out that the institution of public health has served as a network of expert advice

promising health and better lives. Changes in epidemiological knowledge of certain diseases and their causes, like in the case of smoking and its relation to lung cancer, rests on promises that with proper preparation, risk and uncertainty can be controlled. Prevention projects, such as smoking bans in public places, information campaigns on healthy eating, dental checkups, the benefits of breastfeeding or immunization through vaccination, and reduce alcohol/substance abuse programmes (Kelly 2000; Schee and Baez 2009; Losse 2012; Shoveller and Johnson 2006; Share and Strain 2008; Palma and Padilla 2012), are some examples of public health initiatives that focus on health promotion. What they have in common is the emphasis on health awareness and self-reflection and simultaneously a governmental engagement to inform and educate its citizens to engage themselves.

Foucault coined the term *Biopower*, to explain power strategies for the governing of bodies, technologies for the government of life (Foucault 1984). According to Rabinow and Rose, biopower entails 'truth' discourses about the vital character of human beings, an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth, strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health, and modes of subjectification, in which individuals work on themselves in the name of individual or collective life or health (Rabinow and Rose 2003: 3-4). Similar to biopower, Dean explains that *biopolitics*:

> [C]oncern the social, cultural, environmental, economic and geographic conditions under which humans live, procreate, become ill, maintain health or become healthy, and die. From this perspective bio-politics is concerned with the family, with housing, living and working conditions, with what we call 'lifestyle', with public health issues, patterns of migration, levels of economic growth and the standards of living (Dean 2010: 118).

A number of social scientists have dealt with the different ways authorities tried to exercise control over the lives of individuals. Some mentioned the top-down administration of power, like Rose and Miller with their terms *Technologies of government* and *Technologies of performance*; technologies that are utilized from above, as an indirect means of regulating agencies (Rose and Miller 1992: 183). This analysis of government goes alongside Foucault's understandings of power; power, according to Foucault, includes the forms of social control in disciplinary institutions, such as schools or prisons (Foucault 1994). Foucault conceptualized power as ranging from governing the self to governing others and used the term *Governmentality* linking it with *normalization* - the establishment of disciplines, knowledge and technologies that serve to proffer advice on how individuals should conduct themselves (Bröckling et al. 2011). Governmentality studies explore how conduct is shaped not only by formal political rationalities, but also by the mundane ways individuals govern themselves and others in everyday life (Foucault 1994). Governmentality, explain Wright et al. (2006) is a link to analyze the connections between Foucault's *Technologies of the self* and *Technologies of domination*, the constitution of the subject and the formation of the state. It incorporates practices of the self and the external government, surveillance and regulatory activities carried out for strategic purposes. Barbara Cruikshank (1993) mentions *Technologies of citizenship*, like the "self-esteem movement", the "self-government for evaluating and acting upon ourselves so that the police, the guards and the doctors do not have to" (Cruikshank 1993: 330). Dean (2010) explains how subjection and subjectivity encounter each other, and depart from the contemporary pastoral power that Foucault described in the shepherd-flock analogy as the individual is now 'normalized' in relation to a scientific knowledge of populations. Shore (2012) mentions policies aimed at forging citizenship,

typically representing themselves "as a rational and collectivist endeavour: i.e. pragmatic, efficient and geared towards serving the needs of the community, rather than the interests of particular individuals" (Shore 2012: 100). As Shore and Wright argue, "from the moment of birth, people become subjects of policies that classify, order and regulate their behavior, define their status and frame the norms of conduct that are expected of them" (Shore and Wright 1997: 4).

In addition, the British sociologists Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas describe *citizenship projects* as the ways in which authorities selectively try to turn (some) individuals into citizens in the form of contracts or national schemes; for example with national systems of compulsory education, the design of public spaces or the development of social insurance systems (Rose and Novas 2005). Based on this concept, they see in their concept of *biological citizenship* a political construction of bodily but also of genetic responsibility for the biological self:

> We use 'biological citizenship' descriptively, to encompass all those citizenship projects that have linked their conceptions of citizens to beliefs about the biological existence of human beings, as individuals, as families and lineages, as communities, as population and races, and as a species (Rose and Novas 2005: 440).

They view biological citizens as constructed from above (by medical and legal authorities, insurance companies and policy makers, among others), but also as practically "self-made" by using scientific knowledge as a means of self-representation. Anthropological work with patients, like Petryna's work with Chernobyl subjects (Petryna 2002), and Biehl's work on AIDS (Biehl 2004), use the concept of biological citizenship to illuminate issues of rights, claims, and social exclusion. The Finnish Setälä and VäLiverronen (2014), point out how field experts act as mediators of biological citizenship. In their

study of the Fat-Rebellion campaign, they document the dominant role of field experts in the mediation of scientific information and expertise and these experts' self-representations as reliable interpreters of scientific knowledge and technical measurements. These "experts of life" are linked to a moral economy of hope, affecting not only patients' hopes, but all types of hopes from different institutions (Brown 2003; Novas 2006; Appleby-Arnold 2013). Dean (2010) considers the multiple *technologies of agency*, to represent technologies of government that "engage us as active and free citizens, as informed and responsible consumers, as members of self-managing communities and organizations, as actors in democratizing social movements, and as agents capable of taking control of our own risks" (Dean 2010: 196).

As individuals become self-governed, they engage in socially acceptable behaviours of their own free will, constrained by their (new) beliefs that the ideal body is the civilized body (Gane and Johnson 1993). As Gane and Johnson argue, power is in the Foucauldian sense, itself embodied, and could result in an empowerment or responsibilization of subjects. Governmentality is linked in its development to that of the liberal state, which has historically emphasized individual freedom and rights against excessive intervention on the part of the state that was to be understood by the welfare state. As Rose (1999a) states, liberal government is primarily a matter of fostering responsible, "governable subjects". Containing inherent limits to the direct control of personal behaviour, to predicate upon the willingness and capacity of autonomous individuals to choose to exercise responsible self-government. In the increasing emphasis on the responsibility of individuals to manage themselves, to become "active and responsible consumers of medical services and products" (Rose 2007: 4), the

subject must be engineered, as the sociologist Ulrich Beck asserts, via the mobilization of diverse techniques, as the active, autonomous, responsible entrepreneur of his/her own Do-It-Yourself project of the Self (Beck 1992). This self-creating individual tries to maximize the chances for a good life through acts of choice. Life is accorded "meaning and value to the extent that it can be rationalized as the outcome of choices made or choices to be made" (Rose 1996: 57). The concept of free subjects who exercise autonomy and personal choice in the market is related to (neo)liberalism[2]. (Neo)liberalism is then, not only a means of governing the State, the economy, the society, but also a means of governing in these domains via the autonomous, responsible behaviours of a free, prudent, active subject. The technologies of responsibilization of neoliberal governance transfer collective responsibility onto self-regulating individuals. The notion of "community" with slogans such as "health for all" are characteristic examples of neoliberal governance (Lupton 1995). In what Rose (1999a) terms *government through community*, "a sector is brought into existence whose vectors and forces can be mobilized, enrolled, deployed in novel programmes and techniques which encourage and harness active practices of self-management and identity construction, of personal ethics and collective allegiances" (Rose 1999a: 176).

## 1.3. Health as an accomplishment of the individual self

Where the meanings of life are rendered into meanings transcribed by the market form, then the subjects of neoliberal rationalities of government emerge as "free" and completely rational. However, "this is not so much a

2. Neoliberalism has come to be featured in many different contexts. In this thesis it is associated with the Governmentality approach, with its emphasis on technologies of optimization, and the formation of market-responsive subjectivities (Rose 1993; Rose and Miller 1992; Burchill 1996).

given of human nature as a consciously contrived style of conduct" (Burchell 1996: 24). Nikolas Rose has shown how contemporary technologies of subjectivity promise a certain kind of freedom: not liberation from social constraints but rendering conscious psychological constraints on autonomy, and hence amenable to rational transformation. Achieving freedom becomes a matter "of slow, painstaking, and detailed work on our own subjective and personal realities, guided by an expert knowledge of the psyche" (Rose 1990: 253). The prudent individual that is imagined is not only cautious but capable and desirous of self-knowledge and willingly turns to the network of experts for the knowledge and the certainty that will help him/her achieve a better living. What has changed, according to Rose is that since the 20th century, biomedicine has:

> [N]ot simply changed our relation to health and illness but has modified the things we think we might hope for and the objectives we aspire to. [As a result] we are increasingly coming to relate to ourselves as 'somatic' individuals [...] as beings whose individuality is, in part at least, grounded within our fleshly, corporeal existence, and who experience, articulate, judge, and act upon ourselves in part in the language of biomedicine (Rose 2007: 26).

The assumption is that all individuals can aspire to the same ideals and have the potential for entrepreneurial social action and "it is simply up to the health promotion officer to encourage or facilitate the realization of this potential" (Lupton 1995: 59). Additionally, risks which were once deemed social, now accrue to individuals (Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie 2006: 136) and not attending to them might be interpreted as a personal failing. According to Rose and Novas,

> The enactment of such responsible behaviors has become routine and expected, built in to public health measures, producing new types of problematic persons - those who refuse to identify

> themselves with this responsible community of biological citizens (Rose and Novas 2005: 451).

Besides, as Conrad (2007) argues, medicalization of human life might have worrying consequences especially visible when differences are defined as problems; as learning disabilities or sexual dysfunctions for example. He identifies the danger that:

> [T]ransforming all differences into pathology diminishes our tolerance for and appreciation of the diversity of human life. […] The definition of medical norms is a cultural form of social control in that it creates new expectations for bodies, behavior and health (Conrad 2007: 146).

Saltonstall's (1993) interviews of middle-class Americans confirmed that health was conceptualized as an accomplishment of the individualized Self; a result of deliberate action involving the body. In the course of prevention strategies, a number of social medical studies have focused on the individual; like individual behaviours towards eating habits (Mutz 2005; Savva et al. 2007; Hadjigeorgiou et al. 2012). Similarly, Lupton's (2013) research on public health campaigns showed that preventive health measures tried to evoke an emotional response, in particular fear or disgust. The logic of non-health as personal failure can be seen in white middle-class populations able to adopt healthy lifestyle practices, working to distance themselves from unhealthy Others and to reaffirm their own privilege (Johnston, Szabo and Rodney 2011; Guthman 2009). Metzl (2010) describes how thinness is idealized as an indicator of healthfulness; a corporeal expression of individual responsibility and self-control. The stigmatization of fat bodies is gaining new legitimacy through medicalized discourses of obesity that naturalize fatness as a health problem and fuel public panic about a so called 'obesity crisis' (Lazarou et al. 2009; Savva,

Chadjioannou and Tornaritis 2007; Lobstein et al. 2004; Guthman 2011; Cairn and Johnston 2015).

Lupton (1995) sees parallels between the new type of subjectivity and the Cartesian notion of mind/body dualism. In this conception, the mind is considered to be separate from the body, ideally having the power to control the urges and emotions of the potentially ungovernable body. This understanding of the body depicts it as an instrument of consciousness, an object that is subject to the control of external forces and needful of careful training and discipline, and has practical implications for anthropology as it addresses the ontological composition of the Self. The body is perceived as a mirror to the authentic inner self, it can be measured, treated, opened up, stabilized (Turner 1994; Lupton 1995). This dualism is linked to other types of separation: reason from passion, outside from inside, reality from appearance, male from female, culture from nature, and Self from Other (Grosz 1994; Lupton 1995). Anthropology's lesson on these dichotomies is firstly, that although they may be presented as natural, they are in fact culturally constructed, and secondly, that there are no clear boundaries to separate the two. In Anne Marie Mol's (2002) "The body multiple", objects are multiple because they have many enactments, and it is the coordination of the different enactments that deserves our attention. Meike Wolf (2014) also scrutinizes the concept of 'one' health. The problem with normalization is not only the standardization of a universal model and the responsibilization of individuals to achieve it, but also, as Ewald (1990) argued, the mechanisms with which one specific model was chosen as most appropriate.

For Rose and Novas (2005), campaigns aimed at improving lay people's knowledge about science, health and technology are the cornerstones of

biological citizenship. In this sense, health education curricula represent biological citizenship projects as they reflect the information that is regarded by the authorities as relevant and important from a social point of view. As Rose and Novas (2005) argue, education both shapes citizens' self-understanding and impacts the way political and social elites perceive the individual citizen.

## 1.4. Health Education in Schools – training future biological citizens

The perception that schools are places which can be designed and utilized as healthy settings, is gaining ground among health promotion specialists (Paulus 2003; Deschesnes et al. 2003; Ioannou et al. 2012). Imaginations of "proper" future biological citizens are shaped by the establishment of analogous standards that become the cornerstone for structuring the aims of education, expanding beyond health to many aspects of children's lives.

Children's development has been a 'fact' configured in the context of specialist 'epistemic cultures' (Knorr-Cetina 1999) as well as 'knowledge practices' (Law and Mol 2002) and the teaching profession has been traditionally involved in diagnosing children's development and its status (Knorr-Cetina 1999). Discussions about children's development range from a focus on pedagogical aims, to prevention, and to early support and intervention programmes (Wintersberger et al. 2007; Kelle 2010). 'Investment' in childhood, an important aim of the postwar welfare state, stimulated development of child-centered policies and practices associated with risk discourse (Cunningham 1995; Rose 1999b; Beck 1992). The idea of the self-maximizing child in the Western world is predominant in curricula (Ailwood 2004, 2008; Graham 2007), in the establishment of "Key Competences" (European Commission 2006), and even in the design of

infant toys (Nadesan 2002). According to Rose, in educational systems the central neoliberal concepts to advanced liberal rule of "competition", "choice" and "enterprise" are seen as essential (Rose 1999a: 141–2). Together with the regulation of standards in following a global framework of educational aims, like lifelong learning and the transformation of school education and curricula, these key competences aim at producing the new knowledge workers (Bröckling 2008). Initiatives such as "Equity from the start" focus on maximizing children's possibilities:

> Early child development (ECD) – including the physical, social/emotional, and language/cognitive domains – has a determining influence on subsequent life chances and health through skills development, education, and occupational opportunities. Through these mechanisms, and directly, early childhood influences subsequent risk of obesity, malnutrition, mental health problems, heart disease, and criminality. At least 200 million children globally are not achieving their full development potential. This has huge implications for their health and for society at large (Commission on Social Determinants of Health 2008: 3).

Through the array of potential risks, professionals and laypeople surrounding children are called upon to be mobilized to turn their focus towards children's development. However well-meaning, initiatives surrounding children's health are neither neutral nor objective. They set out to standardize, to discipline and to 'normalize' as they rest on adults' presumptions about children's 'appropriate' development.

The formulation of presumptions about the processes of children's development is, according to anthropologists and sociologists, culturally relative (Lupton 1995; Kelle 2010; Honig 1999; Hungerland 2003). Perceptions of children's competency are directly related to the ways societies perceive childhood and categorize it into well-articulated

developmental stages. According to the American anthropologist Kathryn Anderson-Levitt (1996), the obsession with age and maturity among classroom teachers and academic psychologists depends on the particular way in which Western Europe and the United States have organized mass schooling. It grew out of the factory-like nature of schools and out of the schools' need to sort children. These institutional arrangements of mass education (graded instruction, compulsory school-entry age), permitted the development of *educational norms* that are linked to forms of knowledge and expertise, which view children's agency in instrumental terms (Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Fendler 2001).

In the new health movement, health becomes normative rather than normal; a goal to achieve for which age-appropriate, standardized child development is set, that becomes the benchmark for the adults in children's lives to reach. Rose mentions how biopolitical norms extrapolated from statistical data on the 'nature' of childhood increasingly provided the prism through which children were perceived (Rose 1999b). 'Normal' development was naturalized, whereas "development deviating from normalistic norms is subject to pedagogical and therapeutic treatment and thus tends to be culturalized and socialized" (Kelle 2010: 22). Inside schools, speech therapists, special need teachers, school psychologists, health visitors, pediatricians and other specialists, claim to represent the objective epistemological knowledge and attempt to repair any deviations from the norm. An "infrastructure of prevention" is set around the child and a series of measures are used to restore him (Donzelot 1979: 97). New spaces of negotiations between different professionals and parents are created and new types of knowledges are reproduced and exchanged. The network of experts claims to draw on objective, scientific, rational evidence and

simultaneously defines what *all* children need, with implications on the allocation of responsibility:

> The science of ECD shows that brain development is highly sensitive to external influences in early childhood, with lifelong effects. Good nutrition is crucial and begins in utero with adequately nourished mothers. Mothers and children need a continuum of care from pre-pregnancy, through pregnancy and childbirth, to the early days and years of life. Children need safe, healthy, supporting, nurturing, caring, and responsive living environments. Preschool educational programmes and schools, as part of the wider environment that contributes to the development of children, can have a vital role in building children's capabilities (Commission on Social Determinants of Health 2008: 3).

Not only educational programmes, but the family unit as well is charged with the responsibility for developing and maintaining the child's body, a responsibility that involves new sets of obligations for parents as biomedical knowledge expands to include more aspects of life. Already since the middle of the eighteenth century, Foucault referred to the incorporation of the family unit as a fundamental element of gaining information concerning the population (Foucault 1986). The control of bodily hygiene, diet, housing, clothing, physical exercise and familial relationships were important responsibilities of the family unit. With the developments in the medical world, the role of the family as an agent of medicalization remained vital. Bollig, Kelle and Seehaus (2012) in their study of "*Untersuchungshefte*" [examination booklets] in Germany argue, that expectations placed on parents have increased and parents are nowadays conceptualized as "moderators" for medical diagnoses. At the same time, children themselves are also called upon to assume responsibility for risk management by modifying their own attitudes and behaviour.

Nonetheless, anthropological conceptions of childhood do not base the definition of childhood on biological criteria alone. Anthropological studies dealing with children (Opie and Opie 1977; James et al. 1998) have challenged the notion of a universal developmental process. For anthropologists, these definitions are socially constructed. The notion of the socially constructed child questions the biological determinism of the developing child approach and views children and childhoods as varied across settings, time, and cultures. For example, a 7-year-old may be seen as needing supervision in one household, whereas in another household a 7-year-old may be expected to watch a 3-year-old sibling while the parent runs errands. Such views are not just variations in parenting styles but are often evidence of different cultural beliefs about children's competencies and their role in the family and society (Freeman and Mathison 2009: 9). To understand childhood as an anthropological basis means to reject Piagetian conceptions of a universal development based on concrete phases or stages of the development of children's bodies and competencies and instead investigate these in their actual setting. [3]

Helman (2001) refers to cross-cultural studies that indicate wide variations in the definitions of childhood, its beginning and end, and the behaviour considered appropriate for children and for those around them.

> The notion of childhood being a unique, protected, emotionally carefree existence, with its own mores, leisure pursuits, dress codes, diets, treats, toys, books, computer programmes, movies, videos and magazines that seems to be a feature of economically developed societies, where huge profits are being made from this conceptual

3. Piaget (1969) has described children's development to occur in predefined stages. His theory of cognitive development deals with the "nature of knowledge" and how children gradually come to acquire it.

> 'separateness' of childhood". By contrast, in poorer societies children are in effect 'trainee adults' expected to perform almost all the usual adult tasks, such as child care, cooking hunting, herding and earning money, as early as possible (Helman 2001: 6).

Smith (2011) suggests that ideas of children's agency within the context of normalization, can be taken up in ways which can disadvantage children. Because, within contemporary rationalities of rule, the promise of autonomy does not necessarily challenge generational inequalities and may serve to stigmatize "irresponsible" children and their parents in ways which reinforce the effects of structural inequalities (Smith 2011; Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie 2006). According to Kelle (2010), this context rationalizes the re-segregation of the advanced children of the elite from the children of the masses. Challenging its health educational aims can be seen as the equivalent of sinning because of their apparent voluntary "courting of risk" (Douglas 1990).

Critical scholars such as Young (1971), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Apple (1985), Giroux (1983) and Levinson and Holland (1996) elaborated a radical critique of the social effects of schooling in the so-called liberal capitalist democracies. They argued that schools were not 'innocent' sites of cultural transmission, nor could schools be understood as meritocratic springboards for upward mobility. They rather served to exacerbate or perpetuate social inequalities. In their view, schooling responded less to popular impulses for advancement and empowerment, and more to the requirements of discipline and conformity demanded by capitalist production and the nation-state. As Michael Apple argued, "the curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge" (Apple 1996: 22). Pongratz (2006) mentions for example, that international

assessments, like PISA, serve primarily as instruments in the disciplinary and normalization process, which as neoliberal technologies of power allow for the supranational regulation of education with the goal of increasing the competitive mentality that is beneficial to mutual trade.

Bourdieu developed the concept of *cultural capital* as a social resource analogous to economic capital. Cultural capital refers to a kind of symbolic credit which one acquires through learning to embody and enact evidence of social standing. French schools according to Bourdieu, give those of superior social standing an unfair advantage in reproducing their stocks of cultural capital. They allow elite groups to maintain power by only recognizing as 'intelligent' their cultural capital. These instruments of knowledge, although arbitrary they are nevertheless made to appear universal and objective (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 115).

Related to cultural capital, is the term *hidden curriculum,* the "messages, intended and unintended, which are transmitted about the culture of the school" (Munn 1999: 112). According to Woods (1990) hidden curricula include cultural parameters such as "values and beliefs, rules and codes of conduct and behavior, forms of languages, patterns of speech and choice of words, understandings about ways of doing things and not doing things" (Woods 1990: 27). The term has been used as a recognition of the contradictions between theory, represented in the official curricula and practice. A better term is the Greek word, *"παραπρόγραμμα"* [paracurriculum or subprogamme] which refers to the programme happening alongside the official one.

The hidden curriculum is a side effect of any learning opportunity, which includes lessons which are learned without openly intended (Martin 1983). It is usually used with a negative connotation as it might reinforce existing

social inequalities by educating students according to their class and social status. Related to Bourdieu's *symbolic violence*, its unconscious nature is not recognized as violence; it is seen as inevitable and even legitimate social action and dominated groups accept it without seeing or resisting it as social inequality (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 194-5).

## 1.5. Acceptable knowledge and uncertainty

Inspired by the field of research in Science and Technology Studies (STS), scholars have examined areas of acceptable knowledge and uncertainty (Beck, Niewöhner and Sørensen 2012; Braun and Kropp 2010; Sismondo 2010). The assumption is that science and technology are thoroughly social activities and the legitimate places of expertise and science in public spheres can be questioned. Technology and "the social" are not seen to be separate entities, but are considered to be in constant interaction and therefore they mutually shape each other. STS began by dealing with questions of knowledge production and its epistemological prerequisites, the makings of it, by empirically examining its consequences and by questioning the traditional spaces of scientific knowledge production. What was evident by these studies, was that science was not a result of purely intellectual contemplative activities, but the result of practice and social exchange and knowledge of every type (Beck, Niewöhner and Sørensen 2012). There is no single *Reason* or universal standard by which to judge all forms of thought and that what we call Reason is only the "specific and peculiar rationalism of the West" (Weber 1985: 26) and "[e]ven within the latter, there is a multiplicity of rationalities" (Dean 2010: 19).

Additionally, when science and technology interact with the social, the tensions that are created are usually not the exception but the rule, even if

scientists and technology experts might use the opposite rhetoric. Sismondo (2010) refers to *Trading Zones*, a term he adopts from Galison (1997) that can develop at the contact points of specialties. "In trading zones, collaborations can be successful even if the cultures and practices that are brought together do not agree on definitions" (Sismondo 2010: 19). He also refers to Star and Griesemer's (1989) *Boundary Objects*, a different concept for understanding communication across barriers: "Objects can form bridges across boundaries, if they can serve as a focus of attention in different social worlds, and are robust enough to maintain their identities in those different worlds" (Sismondo 2010: 20). The Health Education Curriculum can be seen to function as a boundary object, an object central for translating between viewpoints, a "key process in developing and maintaining coherene across interesting social worlds" (Star and Griesemer 1989: 393).

## 1.6. Conclusion

These are the theories that inform the present study. Moving along these lines, this dissertation tells the story of knowledge and processes that become hegemonic through an exploration of schools in Cyprus. It also reveals people's self-perceptions of *Cypriotness* and investigates the tensions that surfaced when social actors' practices and beliefs collided with these processes, culminating in the recount of children's ideas about health. The following chapter, entitled "Mapping the Field", attempts to set the stage and deals with the methodological questions of the study.

# Chapter 2

# Mapping the Field

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and is structured in three chronological stages. The section "In anticipation of the fieldwork" discusses important steps and decisions that needed to be taken before entering the field. The section "Performing fieldwork" is about the schools I visited and presents issues that arose once inside the field. Finally, the section "Writing the ethnography" focuses on reflexivity and the complexities of being an insider.

## 2.1. In anticipation of the Fieldwork

As a teacher I had been "observing" and "participating" in school cultures in Cyprus' schools for fifteen years. On many occasions I had been "interviewing" school actors trying to remain, if not totally objective, then disciplined subjective, in order to be fair to my pupils. These skills, along with professional connections and relations that I had developed throughout these years within the Cypriot educational setting as a primary school teacher, I believed, were bound to be beneficial for access to the field. In addition, as a researcher, I had chosen participant observation as a method for the research done for my Master's in Education on labelling and children's learning identities. I had also looked at the school as an organization, while studying for the Master in Business Administration, and had hoped that the research done on transformative leadership would be useful. I couldn't have been more wrong. An anthropological research is conceptually different and much more complicated, especially when the

time comes to write up the ethnography. Evaluating a performed intervention or an analysis of gathered written data will simply not suffice. Similarly, the anthropological recognition that explanations of human actions are superficial unless they acknowledge that human lives are always entangled in complex patterns, meant that my careful planning of questions in anticipation of the fieldwork was more useful as a tool for gaining access to the fieldwork, rather than anything else. Once inside the field, the prepared questions were a very small part of the information collected.

Cultural anthropological work is entangled with ethnography, the first being the study of humans and the latter being the written representation of this study. As Tim Ingold asserts,

> "[anthropology is] an inquisitive mode of inhabiting the world, of being with, characterised by the 'sideways glance' of the comparative attitude - is itself a practice of observation grounded in participatory dialogue... If anyone retreats to the armchair, is not the anthropologist but the ethnographer" (Ingold 2007: 87-88).

Contrary to *pädagogische Anthropologie* that focuses on the exploration of historical and philosophical anthropological paradigms in education and views ethnographic work in anthropology as restrictive (Wulf and Zirfas 1994), I consider ethnographic methods imperative if one wants to be able to follow cultural anthropological questions and complex interactions in the societal everyday life. Especially as Beck (1992) mentions, the unintended sides of knowledge development which, in the course of the reflexivity of the modern had, since the end of the 1980s, an important role in the debates of peoples' contact with knowledge and technology.

## 2.2. Research Design

Developed from Michael Burawoy's *extended case method*, the study draws on principles of *global ethnography* (Burawoy 2000) and the three levels of analysis: The ways in which international developments have influenced the introduction of the curriculum, the ways that newly established connections link the social world with other places, and the imaginations in which the social actors engage. Burawoy's extended case method recognizes that "context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects, in extending from process to external forces, and in extending theory" (Burawoy 2000: 28).

Anthropological research in schools is generally very limited. The researcher needs to spend a considerable amount of time inside a complicated system and schools are "closed" organizations with strict limitations on the type of access given to non-school actors. While there is a plethora of educational studies concerned with evaluating interventions, assessing the effects, the influence or the success of particular initiatives (see for example Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Osler and Starkey 2006) anthropological studies based inside schools however, are not easy to be found. One example of European anthropological research focusing on children is the research of Leonard et al. (2011) that focused on children in divided societies and explored how children and young people internalize, accept, negotiate and contest the dominant frameworks that influence their identities. Bendix and Kraul (2011) and Nietert et al. (2010) have looked at the organizational culture of schools and the ideas of "sameness" and "otherness" in Germany by examining school walks. Breidenstein and Kelle's (1998) ethnographic research in the school context showed how peer culture and lesson culture *[Unterrichtskultur]* cannot be analysed separately because they permanently

interfere with each other. Kelle and Bollig (2014) point to praxis theories to understand children's agency as an effect of multiple practices rather than as the result of intentionally acting human actors. In the Cypriot context, there have been some studies on schooling in colonial Cyprus and thereafter; focusing on education's prominent role in the emergence of nationalism and national identities (Bryant 2004; Christou and Spyrou 2012; Spyrou 2006b). Children's sense of Self has been researched by Zembylas (2010), Trimikliniotis and Demetriou (2009), Spyrou (2001) and Philippou (2005). Finally, children's perspectives on health are explored by Kostmann and Nilsson (2012) who adopt an educational viewpoint and focus on what makes children in Sweden feel good. They argue that health and well-being from children's perspectives is a relatively unexplored field even in educational research.

Especially because I was exploring otherwise "known waters" but with a different boat, I approached the field with more reservation than the excitement that one grasps when reading traditional ethnographies that dealt with children (Roopnarine et al. 1994; Schwarzman 1978; Mead 1930). There were no "native primitives" in my case, which meant that I had to try harder to be reflexive. Many ethnographers before me no longer act as outsiders, but have taken up the challenge of doing participant-observation in cultural settings to which they belong. For me as a teacher doing an ethnography in the school meant that I was generally accepted as an equal by the teachers. Immersing and establishing rapport was not an issue; the issues were to be found somewhere else as I explain in the following sections.

The research began conventionally with a letter to the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) and a submission of my research plan to the

Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation (KEEA) so that it could be evaluated. With the prerequisite of informing the Ministry and the Primary Education Department of the results, I received the approval for conducting research in two primary schools in Cyprus with relative ease. Had I not been a state teacher, would I have been granted approval to conduct an anthropological research in schools? Or would anthropology's traditional preoccupation with the Other have worked against me, as it would have been me to be measured against "Otherness" criteria? My role as a state teacher was clearly helpful. It was also favourable in gaining access to the schools themselves. The Ministry had approved my request, but only the school principal could approve my actual presence in the school. Two schools were approached: one in the centre of the capital of the island, Nicosia, following a suggestion of a ministry official, and the other one in Strovolos, a suburban city, a school I used to work at.

## 2.3. Performing Fieldwork

Dimotiko Ayias Elenis is in the centre of Nicosia, in a long-established area. During the time of the fieldwork, it numbered 140 pupils of various socioeconomic statuses. There were University of Cyprus staff offspring, but also children that lived in rented apartments around the school, and a few immigrant children. Years ago when I was still a teacher, having spent years working at rural schools, I returned to work inside the city and remember noticing the extreme noise during the breaks, in contrast to the level of noise I was used to in the villages. One colleague said "this is how the children of the apartment blocks *are*". They were then perceived differently than the children "of the houses", and they are still perceived differently today, since it was usually immigrants and low-income families that did not own a home. Recently, young families experience difficulties in buying a house, especially

since property prices skyrocketed and financial crisis hit the middle class, but owning a home remains for many a goal to achieve.

Strovolos Elementary is one of many Strovolos' schools, in a suburban middle class, homeowners' area that was developed within the last ten years. It numbered 340 pupils. There were hardly any immigrant children attending and it was chosen because of my personal contacts among the staff and pupils. Since ethnographic research is comparative, the two schools with their unique characteristics were necessary in order to be able to draw comparisons. These comparisons do not intend to generalize incidents; they serve to illustrate the examples when seen from a different viewpoint.

My first visit was in October of 2013. Showing his level of involvement and giving hints on the way things were working in the school, the principal at Dimotiko Ayias Elenis, Mr Spyros Alexiou, had already decided which teachers and which grades should and would be involved in the research; these were the 3rd and the 4th Grade of the school and their teachers. The principal of Strovolos Elementary, Mr Giorgos Evagelou, told me that he had no time to talk to the teachers about my research requests during the teacher conferences and it would be better if I talked to the teachers personally. In this case pleading on collegiality and former good relationships was decisive, along with the fact that this was not going to be an educational research looking for example at teacher effectiveness, or teaching methods. The anthropological aspect of the research was a mitigating factor for the school's staff. To my relief, the teachers of one 2nd grade, two 4th grades, one 5th and one 6th, accepted participation in the research. Access to the parents through the school was another important step, since the school needs to approve of any letter reaching the parents through the school bag - the official method of school-home

communication. The parents had to sign consents that their children were allowed to participate in the research. After the signed consents were returned, I ended up with a group of 75 children. In the years that followed, it was just a matter of informing the new teachers of the classes that some children in their class were participating in my research. Apart from one teacher in Dimotiko Ayias Elenis, and one in Strovolos Elementary, all the other teachers thought it was obvious that I was continuing with the same children.

In the period from 2013 to 2016, I visited Cyprus sometimes three and sometimes four times per year, for visits that were lasting between two to six weeks each time. Instead of conducting a 'traditional' ethnography of a single site over one long time span, I preferred Marcus' *multi-sited ethnography* (Marcus 1995), Burawoy's *ethnography-as-revisit* (Burawoy, 2003) and Welz's *moving targets* (Welz, 1998). These relate to the recent developments in anthropology's constructivist direction and the premise that the networks in which individuals exchange exceed local boundaries.

Ethnographical work presupposes being with the people and following them wherever they might take you; in the spaces of their everyday lives, in their relationships with others, within their code of ethics, and their beliefs. This voyage took unexpected turns; in my effort to complete the puzzle of the social actors' lives I was often looking for explanations and information to unexpected actual and virtual places. Consequently, my field sites were the two primary schools, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the parents' homes, and the places where the consultants and the health visitors invited me to. Additionally, there were some unexpected encounters, like in-school national celebrations, teacher conferences, a visit from the mayor, invitations to watch the end of some bullying prevention projects when they were

presented to parents, teachers' meetings with the educational psychologist, a teachers' conference with inspectors present, a teachers' conference with the special education teacher, a teachers' training in health education for teachers that would teach the lesson for the first time, and the teachers' union provincial conference. Overall, I interviewed and re-interviewed 75 children, 18 parents, 18 teachers, 2 principals, 4 ministry officials, 2 school health visitors and 2 canteen personnel ladies. The first interviews with the children were in groups of four children, decided by their teachers; sometimes in same gendered units and sometimes mixed. During the next visits I was following the classes during their school day and mainly held individual interviews. The interviews with the adults were all individual, except for one case in which two teachers were interviewed first together and then also separately on following visits. All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Then there were also discussions with actors that were not officially interviewed, nor recorded, but whose comments I noted down in my field diary. The field diary also consists of observation protocols inside classrooms, some of which were recorded after asking for permission, notes from the schoolyard, the teachers' lounge and teachers' conferences, newspaper cutouts, photos, videos and children's drawings.

## 2.4. The complexity of interviewing children

The children in Dimotiko Ayias Elenis faced me with reservation and in the beginning replied to my questions as they would reply to a person with a teacher status in the school. This was especially the case during the first interviews with children who didn't previously know me. The semi-formal focus groups worked better, they generated a more relaxed atmosphere. The answers were in Cypriot dialect, except for some rare occasions, during these first individual interviews, where they thought that a more "proper"

answer is expected of them. In Strovolos Elementary the children were less reserved. Not just children that used to be my pupils, but even some that only knew me from friends' or siblings' narratives. They would express feelings and even disappointments with other teachers and children at school. I assume that this was not only the result of personal sharing when I was a teacher at the school, but also the result of their perceptions of me, formed through their encounters with other children. There seems to be a "reputation" (good or bad) surrounding every teacher's persona that reaches children (and parents) one has never personally dealt with. And in some cases, even if there was no actual acquaintance, people thought that they knew me even if we had never met before. When I visited the building of the preschool next to the primary school for example, to ask if my daughter could spend some days there while I was busy at school, the assistant of the kindergarten informed the kindergarten principal that "the teacher who moved to Germany wants to talk to you". They did not personally know me nor had my children ever been there before.

The topics discussed were in the end much more than the original design of the interviews planned for. Children's opinions on health issues, their drawings and descriptions of healthy and unhealthy individuals, their opinions about the health education lessons, were enriched by discussions about their daily habits, things they like and things they hate in school, 'irrelevant' incidents that bothered them. I first had to forget one thing though and I realized that during the first couple of group interviews with the children: How *not* to help the children give me the expected answer. As a teacher, I used to avoid open-ended, out-of-focus questions unless I intentionally wanted to create a relaxed atmosphere. The open-ended questions had the potential of taking the lesson off course because children

prefer to share personal experiences in class and generate a relaxed conversation closer to their everyday realities rather than follow a planned script. Teacher questions need to be on point so that the answers lead to the expected results and the lesson can move forward to the next point according to the lesson plan. I hope that since I realized this, it must account for something. After all, the fifteen years in the classroom meant that I acknowledged their political lives, I had been a part of their daily political struggles, and I hope I could tell when they were giving me the answer they thought I wanted to hear and when the ideas were their own. The tone of their voice, the explanations after the 'official' answer and their body language were some of the distinctive parameters I was turning my attention to during the interviews. Pointing out that I know nothing, because I had left the school, but I *do* care because school was a big part of my life, were some of the tools I was using. The ambition was to present the interviews to the children not as formal, but as unstructured conversations.

## 2.5. Benefits of being an "insider"

The fact that the children knew me from before in Strovolos Elementary wasn't the only benefit that this anthropological work collected. Another advantage was the number of participating parents from Strovolos Elementary, compared to the amount expressing interest from Dimotiko Ayias Elenis. The parents needed to take time from their busy lives to arrange to see me and the parents who used to know me were more willing to do so. As it followed, these parents talked about different, seemingly unrelated incidents of their children's lives in detail. These incidents were involving people whom they knew that I knew and it was easy for them to make references to. They believed I already knew a lot so they made me privy to the details. This was an advantage because I was getting much more

information than I thought I would. In Dimotiko Ayias Elenis I was more clearly viewed as the Other. The discussions during the interviews were different with these parents. They were more focused on the answer of a question rather than elaborating with examples, and only after the first interviews, during follow-up interviews there was (some) deeper communication achieved. Some of the teachers who were not involved in the research were also very careful and even tense when I was sitting in the teachers' lounge. On one occasion, one teacher said "let's go outside, we have *ξένους* today" (referring to me as a guest/stranger), when she wanted to talk about something that had happened in the school. Had I not been accepted as an equal by the teachers in Strovolos Elementary, and had I not had the previous experiences, what kind of conclusions would I have been able to draw?

Still, there was a lot in common also with the teachers in Dimotiko Ayias Elenis. We were not only speaking Greek Cypriot dialect we were speaking *Teacher language*, using words and expressions that teachers share. The understanding and empathy made the gathering of information relatively easy, and I consider this as a tremendous asset to anthropological work. Finally, even if being an insider doing anthropological work is very beneficial, there are some complex issues that the insider needs to take into consideration.

## 2.6. Writing the Ethnography

Ethnographic knowledge is a construction involving both ethnographers and their ethnographic 'objects', now seen as active subjects of ethnographic knowledge (Englund and Leach 2000). Where fieldwork became a reflexive activity, it was evidence of anthropologists' scrutiny of

their own contribution to fieldwork interactions. "That is, rather than assuming that they were, for all intents and purposes, invisible to the people they were studying, anthropologists began to consider the effect that they had on the people with whom they were living" (Lavenda and Schulz 2007: 11). In addition, multi-sitedness carries with it other complications in terms of representation. As Burawoy explains, the detailed ethnographic revisits that the earlier anthropologists performed were trapped in the contemporary and tended toward realism, focusing on the dynamic properties of the world they studied; in between clearly defined borders, and as a result, constrained in the eternal present (Burawoy 2003). The new model argues Breglia "is based loosely on ideas of multi-sited research: awkward, perhaps unwieldy, juxtaposition rather than neat alignment; "sites" cobbled together rather than a heady, freewheeling postmodern pastiche" (Breglia 2006: 18). Burawoy encourages a transportation of ethnography into a historicized world, and at the same time lays the foundations for a reflexive ethnography in which the ethnographer becomes the central figure and needs to examine her personal assumptions, "by not seeking constancy across two encounters but trying to understand and explain variation, in particular to comprehend difference over time" (Burawoy 2003: 646–647). The challenge of the ethnographic revisit according to Burawoy is to disentangle movements of the external world from the researcher's own shifting involvement with that same world, all the while recognizing that the two are not independent (ibid., 645).

## 2.7. Reflexivity and the complexity of being an "insider"

My experience of moving back and forth between the two countries is an integral part of multi-sited ethnography. Etic and emic perspectives were entangled: I was a teacher and I was a native but was stationed in the West. Sarason wrote: "If your life's work is in schools, you have been socialized to see them in certain ways and to become insensitive to many things you take for granted and, therefore never examine" (Sarason 1996: 334). Very often, I felt that I couldn't achieve the necessary distance to be able to view things objectively. I used to act and practice teaching, like the teachers in the research. Sometimes, my teacher-identity would emerge and I found myself performing inner criticisms on the choice of teaching method. Other times, when the distance was achieved, I would catch myself feeling awkward *because* of this distance, for not belonging into a setting with which I identified myself for so long. It was also hard to appear to be doing nothing all the while when the teachers around me where constantly on the move.

In my case, the distancing and the reflection were only possible when I was sitting at my desk in Germany. Inside the field, the teacher and the researcher were intertwined and there were many more roles for me other than the role of the ethnographer to attend to. Leaving the school at lunch time, I was faced with the role of the mother; since my children accompanied me on all the trips, and the role of the Cypriot daughter; a member of a big Cypriot family. I also had the role of the Cypriot friend to sustain, with Cypriot friends expecting visits and meetings. I welcomed these expectations, I also wanted to be around them, I had missed them, but I realized slowly that these obligations were chaining me to my Cypriot-who-moved-overseas identity and left me with little time to deal with my Researcher-from-a-German-university identity. These two might seem

similar since one needs to be the one to be the other, but the former focuses more on things lost and the latter on things gained. In my case, like Burawoy (2003) mentions, going back to the desk was important. How else could I have aimed for a critical awareness of my assumptions and those of my informants? I definitely did not want to fall into Konto's description of fallpits "gazing at my own reflected image and mistaking it for the face of the other" or seeing "the Other as a clone of the Self" (Konto 1986: 86). I needed to be in Germany and away from the school and Cyprus where everything seemed alarmingly familiar and as such too much *common-sense* (Geertz 1983) in order to distance myself from the familiar and uncover the *un-common sense* (Breglia 2006).

While living in Germany I found myself testing my own cultural assumptions. The move to Germany enabled me to experience different stages of acculturation, which in turn influenced my enculturation, and I questioned my own cultural assumptions. Germany was nothing like England where I lived briefly as a student, where one's social relationships are among equals; other students that have the same concerns and similar experiences. And it certainly was nothing like Cyprus where we had family and friends even before our children were born. In Germany we were supposed to fit in as both a family and as individuals, in a city where we knew no-one. The children needed to adjust to the school system, I needed to adjust to the neighbourhood, and collectively - together and apart, we needed to form social relationships from the start. In the beginning, I found the Germans I met, the ones with whom I had no direct bonds (kinship or academic), were cautious to the point of suspicion; very much unlike the down-to-earth qualities that I associated with Cypriots – when looked at from my secure point of view as both a teacher as well as the wife of a Westerner. During

the process of my acculturation in Germany I realized that my first assumptions were possibly related to the way I perceived myself in the West, amplified by insufficient understandings of German language and culture, but they were not irrelevant to the way that Westerners perceive non-Westerners in the West. These reflections added to the process of enculturation, a process that had actually started long before we moved to Germany, when I had to reduce social events into simple explanations for my husband when he moved to Cyprus in 2003. Suddenly, I had to look for answers to questions that had never occurred to me before: "How should I greet everybody?" he would ask. "Am I supposed to kiss them all? And the men? First the right cheeks and then the left? Or first left and then right?" I still don't know how to give a general, cover-all-situations answer to some of his questions: "It depends on who will be there, probably first left cheeks then right but then I'm not really sure, and try not to initiate, follow what the others are doing". Becoming aware of cultural processes and reducing them into simple explanations, was my first step into enculturation and the testing of my own cultural assumptions.

Although this study involves many sites, the 'facts' that it discusses are not a product of one particular site or one particular temporal sequence. Gupta and Ferguson critique conventions of "spatial separation" and temporal sequence that separate "the field" from "home" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 12). Facts were not only collected in the field; apart from the continuous talking with friends and family and following up with research participants when I needed something explained, there was also the continuous reflection. Reading newspapers, checking educational archives and following developments were also a part of the process – a process that also included transcribing. I consider all these as contributing to the

ethnography. As Riles (2006: 2) mentions, [facts] "are produced collaboratively in the intersubjective experience of the ethnographic encounter".

The research participants had so much to say that I feel privileged that I had a chance to listen. As a teacher there isn't much time afforded to just listening. The amount of the collected material overwhelmed me. When I tried to analyze and code the data using qualitative thematic analysis (Seale 2004: 313) for categories and themes in my Citavi Projects, there were 115 knowledge groups and 993 knowledge items, and it was impossible to include everything. After some months, I went back and read the original transcripts again so that I wouldn't be restricted by my own thematic analysis, but I would re-evaluate the context in which the original comments were made.

The study is an exposition of actual situations that took place during the years 2013 through 2016 in which the fieldwork was performed, with some examples dating back to when I was a state teacher in Cyprus. I can't claim that my gathered data can be generalized and applied to the whole Cypriot society. But, as Mol (2003) acknowledges, I too hope that because of their specificities, the examples presented are strong enough to reach outside their locality.

Many have written of the explicit links between anthropology and colonialism (Asad 1973; Said 1978). Namely, that during the process of cultural representation, the ethnographer intrudes and then achieves a final domination of the Other in the text (Kondo 1986). While I was writing, rather than standing somewhere high above, describing using the ethnographer's gaze, I tried to stay down in the valley, among the people of which this study

is about and to use their language wherever it was possible. As Tim Ingold argued,

> [Anthropology…] educates our perception of the world, and opens our eyes and minds to other possibilities of being. The questions we address are philosophical ones. Of what it means to be a human being or a person, of moral conduct and the balance of freedom and constraint in people's relations with others, of trust and responsibility, of the exercise of power, of the connections between language and thought, between words and things, and between what people say and what they do, of perception and representation, of learning and memory, of life and death and the passage of time [...] (Ingold 2007: 83-84).

Drawing from Actor-Network Theory, also described as a "material-semiotic" method, which maps relations that are simultaneously material (between things) and semiotic (between concepts), I started by conceptualizing the field as a board game. A board game, without a pre-printed sheet of rules, which all the actors were playing simultaneously, rather than one after the other. Each actor had his/her own strategies that were often connected to other board games. If one wants to play, if one wants to write an ethnography, then she has to understand the other players' rules. The incidents during the game are a synthesis of knowledge and everyday life. As Annemarie Mol wrote:

> Epistemological normativity is prescriptive: it tells how to know properly. The normativity of ethnographic descriptions is of a different kind. If reality doesn't produce practices but is a part of them, it cannot itself be the standard by which practices are assessed (Mol 2003: 6).

## 2.8. Conclusion

Following the developments in Actor-Network Theory, which is more a method, rather than theory, and its questions on the modern separation of nature and culture, there is the understanding that it is "utterly impossible to understand what holds the society together without reinjecting in its fabric the facts manufactured by natural and social sciences and the artefacts designed by engineers" (Latour 1996: 3).

According to Law (2009), applying Actor-Network theory means to understand practices by tracing how the webs of heterogeneous material and social practices produce them:

> Actor Network theory is a disparate family of material-semiotic tools, sensibilities, and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located. It assumes that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations (Law 2009: 141).

In questions of knowledge production, it means that we examine the field keeping an eye on the different knowledge forms and technologies that may compete for sovereignty of interpretation and active power (Beck, Niewöhner and Sørensen 2012). In this sense, the Curriculum, discussed in the following Chapter, is taken to be an *actant* representing *technologies of government* in Rose and Miller's (1992) conception.

# Chapter 3

# The emergence of an imagined common curriculum

This chapter discusses the health education curriculum and the forces around its implementation. It presents the ways in which hegemonic forms of knowledge tried to establish themselves and the mechanisms that were used to achieve this in order to yield the curriculum's success in forming a common sense of personal obligation towards health. While curriculum reforms are costly, economic uncertainty was shaping the background at the time of the introduction of the new curriculum. The financial crisis, which took Cyprus by surprise, did not stop the efforts to reform the educational system but it certainly affected them.

## 3.1. A European Curriculum for all

Different preventive endeavours concerning children's health, stemming mainly from the contiguity of Cyprus and Europe, forged a favourable terrain for the new curriculum. Some examples of preventive endeavours are for one, the Cyprus National Action Plan for the Environment and Child's Health, which was created as a response "to national concerns and to international commitments resulting from the European Strategy for Health and Environment" (Mihailidou 2011: 33). "Fred goes to School" was another endeavor with an intervention programme for alcohol abuse and smoking with some prevention characteristics based on the model of "FreD Goes Net", a European development and transfer from the German "FreD" for first-time drug offenders. And finally, "F.E.E.T. to Walk", was an Anti-Drugs Council programme that tried to target vulnerable children and youth. These

initiatives, promoted by the government rather than by NGOs as the case in other countries may be, can be seen as what Welz defined as "European products" (Welz 2005), as they originated in Europe and were a result of European directives. The fifth ministerial conference report on environment and health also pointed out that establishing strong political will is the main facilitator of health initiatives in Cyprus (WHO 2010) and "EU policies will provide an enabling framework, and [...] a defined budget allocation provides certainty of action" (WHO 2010: 15-16). These initiatives are connected to the global as imported ideas that materialize in the specificities of the local. A specificity that might prove problematic when it comes to evaluating these initiatives, which were designed with different societies and structures in mind. Kapardi and Poulli (2012) mention, for example, the lack of evaluation of prevention/intervention programmes with which they came across while writing the national report for the European project AAA Protect (Alcohol Abuse among Adolescents in Europe), funded by the European Commission, and argue that lack of systematic evaluation of programmes represents an endemic problem.

The health education curriculum is by far the most wide-covering health promotion practice in Cyprus that falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Building on the 1997 Appraisal Study on the Cyprus Educational System, undertaken by UNESCO in co-operation with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) after a request of the Government of Cyprus, the Council of Ministers appointed in 2003 the Committee of Seven Academics (CSA) to examine the educational system and submit proposals for a reform (Unesco 1997). In 2004, the CSA submitted its report entitled "Democratic and Human/Humane Education in a Euro-Cypriot state. Prospects for Reconstruction and Modernization"

(World Bank 2014: 5). In 2009, 20 different committees, one for each school subject, were established; a reform initiative that was seen as the "first real major education reform in Cyprus" (Persianis 2010: 107), and a necessary change "within a framework of modernizing and upgrading" (Unesco 2015: 51).

Health education was introduced in 2011 as a new subject for grades 1 to 4, and it was abruptly added to the already existing home economics for the two last grades of the elementary school, grades 5 and 6. The name "Home Economics" remained in the timetable but it was placed second. Although health education was a new subject for many of the teachers represented in this study, work on it had begun years ago. In 1991, three international agencies in Europe: the European Commission, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Council of Europe, launched an innovative project to combine education and health promotion. Along with the three leading organizations, dozens of European countries and hundreds of schools, formed the European Network of Health Promoting Schools (ENHPS) to create environments conducive to health within schools (Burgher et al. 1999). Two ministries, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture joined this pilot programme in 1995 with five schools, and by 2011 more than half of the primary schools participated (Ioannou, Kouta and Charalambous 2012). During the 2nd conference of the ENHPS, Erio Ziglio of WHO Regional Office for Europe proudly stated that this international partnership had managed to move the network "from pilot to policy" (Young 2002: 41). Barnekow et al. in the publication "Resource for developing indicators" of ENHP congratulate the Cypriot project on health promotion and the designing of learning objectives, termed "success indicators" (Barnekow et al. 2006: 199-208).

"The programme was a huge success", confirmed a ministry official, and,

> [T]eachers were taking the time from other subjects like language or religion to teach health education topics even when there wasn't a subject officially named "Health Education", so at the time of the educational reform, the teachers demanded it themselves. And the reform adopted this demand making it look like it was a demand from the teachers themselves (Ministry official, Health Education Office, Ministry of Education).

Voices within the ministry described the curriculum as a triumph for the Cypriot public schools. Similarly, a school principal described health promotion as "schools' golden chance", because as he said, "children carry a serious deficiency and need to be taught how to develop specific skills that are not learned at home". This promise could only be materialized if the social actors were responsibilized to act accordingly in all the aspects of their lives. As it follows, the curriculum was officially celebrated as a success, which shouldn't come as a surprise. As Adams argues, traditionally "reports about programme effectiveness have been closely tied to the rhetorical styles of their funding organization" (Adams 2010: 50).

## 3.2. Knowledge as common sense

The health education curriculum (MOEC 2010a: 21) defines health as: "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", a definition that refers to WHO's 1948 definition of health as it is stated in its Constitution (WHO 1948). More specifically, the curriculum's main aim is stated as:

> The promotion of the mental, bodily and social well-being of the pupils as a resource for every-day life, with the development of personal and social skills as well as with the collective action to upgrade the social and physical environment (MOEC 2010a: 9).

This aim is "directly related to WHO's Global Conferences on health promotion" (Ioannou, Kouta and Charalambous 2012: 160). "Empowering the individual as a citizen inside a socio-economical composition [and] creating a supportive health promoting environment inside the school and the community" (MOEC 2010a: 9). The curriculum's objectives are grounded around three pillars: Transfer of knowledge of what is beneficial and what is detrimental to health, basic skills for the promotion of health (active participation and ability to act) and developing attitudes and behaviours relating to society (MOEC 2010b: 417). According to Ioannou, Kouta and Charalambous, children in collaboration with significant others identify health determinants naturally, through personal experiences, address the determinants of health and promote changes which facilitate healthy choices (Ioannou, Kouta and Charalambous 2012: 158). As it follows, experts assumed that everybody involved was going to be empowered to act as a health agent for the common good. Children were expected to explore differentiated social identities and to acquire tools for their own health and that of the community, conceiving their identity as a part of a bigger "we". In addition, it was anticipated that teachers and parents would be able to set health goals in favour of the community. "[The curriculum] enables pupils, parents and staff to be actively involved in setting health-related goals and in taking actions at the school and community level, to reach these goals" (ibid.155). The challenge for the health education curriculum, according to the experts, was to be found "in encouraging staff, students and parents to promote health rather than relying upon traditional forms of health education which concentrate on moralistic behaviour changes" (ibid. 155).

The following table presents the four thematic components of the Health Education Curriculum and the sub-themes that according to the curriculum represent the components of human well-being:

Table 3.1.: HE Curriculum Thematic Components and Sub-Themes

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Personal Development and Empowerment | 1.1 Self-Development<br>1.2 Emotional Health and Self Esteem<br>1.3 Values of Life |
| 2. Healthy Lifestyle and Safety | 2.1 Lifestyle and Living Conditions<br>2.2 Food<br>2.3 Physical Exercise<br>2.4 Drugs and Addictions<br>2.5 Safety |
| 3. Social Development | 3.1 Family Planning, Sexual and Reproductive Health<br>3.2 Diversity and Interculturalism<br>3.3 Social Skills |
| 4. Citizenship | 4.1 Consumer Education<br>4.2 Economic and Professional Education<br>4.3 Human Rights and Responsibilities |

Adapted from MOEC, 2011: 12. Copyright 2009 by Ioannou, Kouta, Charalambous

Each one of the sub-themes mentioned above is presented in a geometrical model that combines three levels of analysis that correspond to children's actions (represented in circles), and four knowledge components in the four quarters.[1] The sub-themes are broken down in the curriculum into success indicators that have a grade-to-grade progression. Success indicators are according to Young (2005), "[S]igns that give a fair and accurate representation of a part of the working of a complex system and changes

1. See Appendix A

within it" (Young 2005 cited in Barnekow et al. 2006: 41) and were used as educational aims.

Indicatively, success indicators that correspond to the first thematic area are built around getting to know and accepting of one's Self and describing the five dimensions of the Self (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual) and changes in these five dimensions with each developmental stage. There is a focus on respecting others' emotions and talking about universal values of life; such as love, responsibility vs. irresponsibility and boldness vs. cowardliness (MOEC 2010b: 418, 422).

Success indicators corresponding to the second thematic area refer not only to the exploration of the concept of health through personal experiences, but also through facts, stemming from scientific research: Healthy and unhealthy behaviours that relate to food, controlled substances (drugs, smoking or alcohol), physical activity and safety, and also a promotion of natural alternative remedies against everyday health problems like having a cold, headache, or stomachache. As it is stated, children should be able to identify health risk and talk about different factors that may affect risky behaviours (MOEC 2010b: 419, 425; MOEC 2011b: 15-17).

The third theme is concerned with the concepts of family, stereotypes, interculturalism, multiculturalism, social gender, sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, sexual and reproductive rights, pregnancy and birth. The children should be able to recognize, accept and respect difference, and work on conflict resolution skills, communication skills, respect the rights of others and talk about ways of reinforcing coexistence and acceptance of difference (MOEC 2010b: 419, 427, 429).

The fourth theme, albeit the ambitious title, settles on skills, rights and obligations of the children as consumers. Skills that have to do with the interaction with the school canteen, the gathering of information from product labelling, advertising techniques, consumer rights and types of occupations and shops (traditional and modern) as well as the importance of the profession for the future well-being (2010b: 419, 430, 432).

Reflecting its global scope, the health education curriculum tried to encompass many Western ideas that are connected to a healthy and safe lifestyle. As a school principal specifically mentioned, it was "an umbrella that covered everything". The topics were positioned inside the bigger framework of empowered citizens who choose health and health education was focusing on the general promise of better lives. As one ministry official explained:

> We don't separate the topics in health education. They have common prevention factors and common risk factors. Smoking is not very different from exclusion in intercultural education. And it's not very different in the way that you address gender equality. Or consumers' education or human rights or emotional education or food and health. […] The same goes for sex education. It's one thing different to have a single subject "sex education" and another thing to have it in the frame of health education. It is more powerful. (Ministry official, Health Education Office, Ministry of Education and Culture)

The following section discusses the expectations placed on the teachers and how the experts tried to convince the teachers to work as health moderators by presenting modernization as the only natural way forward and positing people with concerns as backward. In the language used, the community was to be imagined as a bigger "we" with common aspirations.

### 3.3. Responsibilizing the teachers

During the optional training workshop for teachers who would teach health education for the first time, which I attended in September 2014, I was startled to see that there was no reference made to what the curriculum was about. The first thing we did was to play team games, which the trainer explained would enable us to pick and choose activities that we could readily apply to our class "the very next day". The trainer, a school consultant and teacher himself, said "this is much more useful than trying to convince you about the philosophy, there is absolutely no reason". Explaining the curriculum itself was presented as trivial because it was presented as a natural effect and thus dealing with its implementation was unavoidable. Indeed, the teachers voiced no concerns and even thought of the training as useful. During the break I overheard discussions praising this specific school consultant, because he gave them "practical stuff and not useless theories". After all, they all agreed, they needed practical suggestions if they were supposed to be responsibilizing the children themselves. The prevailing guideline during the training was "present them with the facts". However, teachers had difficulties in understanding this directive. The following extract from the training presents the perplexed reaction of a teacher:

Consultant: You just present them with the facts. You don't tell them what is right and what is wrong, so that they don't feel stigmatized if they or someone they care about belongs in this group.

Teacher: What do you mean "I don't tell them what is right and what is wrong"? I will be disappointed if I let them discuss a topic and then not tell them what the right

thing to do is. Smoking for example, will I not tell them that it's bad for your health?

Consultant: Try letting them discuss things in small groups; talking to classmates helps. We want to avoid preaching. We present them with facts and let them decide by themselves (Observation protocol, September 2014, Teachers' training).

The information providers attempted to treat knowledge presented in the curriculum as "scientific facts" and convince teachers that were supposed to use an objective, matter-of-fact approach, but confused teachers instead. It looked like it wasn't clear what these facts actually were, and that not everybody understood the same thing. The information providers additionally attempted to draw a separation between "new" and "old" ways, and most importantly, to present the illusion that everybody is committed to bigger goals. As the school consultant, during the same training explained:

> We don't tell the children any more "do this to be healthy", then they think "Oh my God, do I have to do all these things to be healthy?" We all try together for something. We want this shift: from what to do for myself, to what to do for the school, the family, the neighbourhood and our community. How should we act so that our friends, our family and our fellow citizens behave in a more healthy way? We are very interested in this shift. (Observation protocol, September 2014, Teachers' training)

As it follows, not only was the knowledge of the curriculum presented as common sense, it was promising improvement of quality of life for all and was allegedly what everybody should be aiming towards. However, the training that the teachers received was not enough. Both school principals agreed that there was no serious in-service training. The consultants would

visit once or twice a year to talk with the teachers and there were seminars at the beginning of the school year, but these were concerning all the curriculum subjects. Teachers were asked to attend two of the seminars held on the reformed subjects and an attempt was made that within each school the personnel *as a collective* attends all offered seminars (World Bank 2014: 19-20 my emphasis). When I asked Mrs Kasiani, a teacher at Dimotiko Ayias Elenis, if she was satisfied with the training she said "*όι καλέ, τίποτε*" [figure of speech meaning "not at all"], "they invited us only once and the teachers left from there with one thousandth from what they were supposed to acquire". During a different interview Mr Spyros, the school principal in Dimotiko Ayias Elenis also pointed out:

> Cyprus cannot afford the simultaneous training of all the teachers, it will take years, experience with the subject matter, and seminars and concerns and exchange of materials and perspectives between the teachers, until they all learn their new roles. But it will be up to the teachers' since the state fails to do it. And through the years, they set up a repertoire of practices which they use. (Mr Spyros, Principal, Dimotiko Ayias Elenis)

Systematic evaluation of programmes, teacher-training and availability of materials are not unrelated to the availability of funds but then again, funds for other things, like for the teams of academics that undertook the reform, were available. The framework of lack of funds was used to justify lack of training and teachers were to be convinced that they should have been educating themselves. When discussing the insufficient teachers' training, Mr Spyros commented: "There are teachers who will fight and there are teachers who will be more relaxed, they will do some activities and they will keep at those". By distinguishing the two he emphasized the divide between *good* teachers who would try hard and *bad* teachers who would not, asking

teachers to be actively involved in this project. Mrs Popi and Mrs Froso, classroom teachers at Dimotiko Ayias Elenis who were confident in their lessons on health education, indeed thought that training themselves was the natural thing to do. They said that most of the things that they know, they learned on their own initiatives because they were "a bit hyperactive" and they laughed as they attributed their willingness and energy to their nature. They believed that it was up to them and their nature, to want to be good teachers and therefore to train themselves: "Maybe it doesn't need to come from the ministry, perhaps the teachers between them can organize ways to train each other". That "good" teachers should assume the responsibility of training themselves appeared very often during the fieldwork. Teachers had no difficulty in seeing their mission as educating the masses; a role traditionally associated with teachers since colonial times, when teachers and priests were the only educated people on the island (Bryant 2006). Most of the teachers I interviewed thought that they should be involved in their own project of self-improvement, the only natural thing to do if they wanted to be *good teachers*. As Mrs Popi mentioned, it was normal that they work on their own time and their own initiative because "with everything that has to do with the school, if we were just working on the time allocated by the school we would only have enough time to go in the class and deliver a traditional lesson". Traditional lessons were thought to be bad, whereas modern, dynamic lessons were considered to be appropriate.

There was another instance during which the financial crisis was used as a framework to convince teachers to assume responsibility themselves. During the teachers' union regional conference, which I also attended in 2014, the atmosphere was heavy and teachers were complaining about the salary cuts,

the freezing of the promotions and the budget cuts that meant less teachers in schools. One principal sitting with the attendees stood up, took the microphone, and said that although she was angry with Troika, she believed that it was every teacher's duty to give "not just 100% of their efforts but 180% of their efforts in the classroom, so that nobody can say 'look they cut their salaries and they are doing the minimum'". That was the only way to "reclaim our lost dignity", she emphasized. The dignity was perceived as "lost" compared to the past, especially because during the austerity measures teachers' public image plummeted as the public opinion turned against them. There was a plethora of newspaper articles in which teachers were targeted as unfairly well-paid and lazy: [2] "Teachers 178 days of work and 187 days of rest" published Philelefthеros, a local newspaper in July 2013. [3] Almost two years later, in February 2015 in Paideia-news a local online newspaper, a sociologist with a teaching position at a University in Cyprus responded to teachers' union POED's request for special units for children with behavioural problems following an incident of a teacher being beaten up by a parent:

> In-service teachers should admit that they are of the luckiest groups. Isn't it guys? The luckiest! Look around you, how many people can claim that? There is no fear of losing their jobs, their salaries are not reduced to a great extent, etc. etc. The opposite can be said of children. What should your role be in situations of social crises? I will say it to you – whom I used to teach – again: "teachers perform a *λειτούργημα* [moral service] not an occupation. We become teachers

2. According to the Eurydice Report 2013/14, the minimum statutory salary for teachers in primary and secondary general education was 126% of the GDP per capita, whereas the highest salary can reach 306% of GDP (page 9). Retrieved 28 August 2015 from http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/Education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/salaries.pdf

3. Article retrieved 15 June 2014 from http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/top-stories/885/152543/daskaloi- 178-meres-douleia-187-anapafsi

> to change the world not to be able to wear expensive shoes and carry matching expensive bags […] you have learnt nothing from my lesson (Paideia-News, February 2015) [4].

In this excerpt, in-service teachers are placed in one homogenous group, and becoming a teacher is presented as a matter of luck that did not necessarily involve hard work or success in very competitive university entrance exams. Being "lucky" is shameful when others are struggling to make ends meet and the financial crisis as well as others' misfortune was set as the framework under which teachers' professional value was being measured.

The good teacher, a modern subject, was expected to embrace this change as natural and actively educate herself to perform. Additionally, the language used by ministry officials was rejecting individuals who may not have been able to work with the new curriculum. "It's just that the supporters of 'no' have learnt to shout a bit more and the supporters of 'yes' don't. Anyway, the people that are more educated don't bother", said a ministry official when I asked about tensions inside sex education. She believed that any reactions were not of real concern:

> I think that essentially, there is no reaction. (…) I don't pay attention to this because anyway they [the decision makers] find it difficult to reach a decision. They might be holding a book about sex education and delay its approval (…) but at some point, they will approve it because they ask an academic and academically it will pass. (Ministry official, Health Education Office)

4. Article retrieved 30 April 2016 from http://www.paideia-news.com/index.php?id=109&hid=15494&url=Για σοβαρευτείτε!

What mattered to the policy makers were the standards that the academic expertise was setting. Health education was privileging modern people, educated ones, people who don't bother with contestations because they are inherently modern themselves. At the same time, actors incapable of becoming health agents were excluded. The official rhetoric was that there were not significant protests either from the parents' side or from the teachers' side. As a ministry official told me when I asked about teacher complaints related to preparation time: "There was never a concern about finding the time to prepare for the lesson, because it was from the beginning (since the ENHPS) that you should 'use it only if you want, it's not forced upon you, it is only if you want'". But it was clear that the modern teachers would and should want to proceed with this change. Otherwise they risked labelling themselves as traditional which was in this case synonymous to "backward". As a home economics teacher told me, her professional role changed dramatically because of the introduction of the curriculum, but she couldn't talk openly about her disagreements on sex education because "they mark you if you dare say something, *νάμπου είσαι πίσω που τον κόσμο*; [*are you behind the rest of the world?* Figure of speech meaning *backward*]. It's natural. One group that pretends to be modern".

That teachers were "encouraged" to prove their worth was not new. Teachers were actively involved in the project of proving themselves even before the introduction of the health curriculum. There were for one the annual achievements' reports which teachers needed to complete to be included in their personal files kept at the ministry. This report included the categories: a) in-service training on own initiative, b) in-school activities assigned by the principal, c) in-school activities on own initiative and d) spiritual, social and cultural activities outside school. They attended

seminars (with a fee) organized by private organizations, like the Institute of personal, family and professional development, or the teachers' organizations to get certificates for their personal files to be used as proof for (a) or (d). The principal would sign these reports and add comments and the inspector would write reports on the teachers too. These reports would get translated into numerical grades. I looked at the reports my principals and inspectors wrote for me, as well as their comments: "excellent knowledge; unique innovative approach; methodical; keeps educating herself; is conscientious; polite; excellent relationships with parents". These were great comments indeed, I must have been really good! In the meantime, I heard about a teacher who dressed up as a parrot for her lesson when the inspector was going to visit, now this is truly a "unique innovative approach" isn't it? In my 2007 report, when there was still no indication that the teachers would at some point be allowed access to the principal's reviews, the principal wrote "she does not easily accept the suggestions of her superiors". [5] When I looked at it years later, I was puzzled. Perhaps my principal at the time was referring to a disagreement that took place in September of the previous year, where she had argued "the youngest teachers will take over the first grades and you are getting the first grade" and I replied with "but I am not among the youngest of the school". She might have even been referring to something else that I am (still) not aware of. There was no other explanation written on the report and she never mentioned anything to me. After that disagreement, she threw her pencil on her desk and said "you are getting what I tell you or I will make you go

5. The decision that teachers were going to be allowed access to their personal files after a formal request and payment of a fee, was decided during the meeting of the general director and the directors of primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as the teacher unions: Poed, Oelmek and Oltek on the 30th of July 2009 (Information retrieved from the Akida archives available at www.akida.info).

around the school"; threatening with depriving me of running a classroom. I never openly questioned her again. The inspector who signed that report repeated her comment, perhaps because as I knew, they were personal friends. Two years later, the same inspector was assigned to my new school. In my next report, possibly because by then teachers were allowed access to their records, she noted, "she is not afraid to support her opinion". Whether this new phrasing was meant to be interpreted positively or negatively, I am not sure. What I can say though is that conformity to the authority is another essential component of what makes good teachers in Cyprus. As a World Bank document points out, "one of the main weaknesses of any policy initiative to improve standards in Cyprus lies in teachers' perceptions that promotion can be achieved by saying and doing what inspectors and other important policy makers wish to hear and see" (World Bank 2014: 21). The new health curriculum describes teachers who are empowered and able to make choices in favour of health. However, at the same time they should "keep a personal file and start creating a personal bank of materials so that the principal and the inspector can have a tangible reference point for the degree to which you have conformed to the success indicators" is mentioned explicitly in the ministry's publication "Implementation guidelines for primary school teachers" (MOEC 2011: 6).

## 3.4. Maintaining the imagined consensus

The curriculum was supposed to promote better lives for everybody, and it encapsulated promises for a better future as if there was one homogeneous community that could have equal access to that future. In order to be able to present the Curriculum as encompassing all individuals and as representing the community, knowledge was presented as natural and

individuals as having common goals. However, to achieve this there seemed to have been a need for curriculum refinements. These refinements were not made public, there was no discussion about amendments. One could only spot them if she was carefully comparing documents. It was during the process of looking at the success indicators for the purposes of this dissertation, that I realized that the success indicators were not identical to the curriculum's aims. The curriculum that was published in 2010 (MOEC 2010a, 2010b) was different to the implementation guide for teachers published one year later (MOEC 2011). In the curriculum, for example, there was the indicator "children should refer to factors that may reinforce co-existence of individuals and nations without problems" (MOEC 2010b: 429). In the implementation guide the word "nations" had been replaced with the phrase "groups inside the school and the community" (MOEC 2011: 18-19).

At first I was confused. Which were the success indicators that I should use as a start for my questions for the fieldwork? I started digging deeper. I found another example in the Sub-Theme 3.1: Family planning, Sexual and Reproductive Health. In the implementation guide of 2011, it was comprised of the following success indicators:

Table 3.2.: Sub-Theme 3.1 Family Planning, Sexual and Reproductive Health

| Grades | Success Indicators |
|---|---|
| 2nd grade | -What family is and its various forms (nuclear, extended, single-parent, adoptive, etc).<br>-Recognizing the reproductive parts of the human body and the parts, which are private. |
| 3rd grade | -Describe gender similarities and differences.<br>-Describe the characteristics of a healthy family. |
| 6th grade | -Factors that may affect family life (financial situation, health, place of living).<br>-Problematize on expressing sexuality and sexual maturity (flirting, nocturnal emissions, masturbation).<br>- Types of violence (physical, sexual, psychological, financial) inside the family and generally.<br>-Recognizing the factors that affect the social gender.<br>-Personal hygiene during puberty.<br>-Menstruation, myths and realities. |

(Adapted from MOEC 2011: 18-19)

During the fieldwork it became clear that these were the success indicators that the experts and the teachers considered as valid; the ones in the implementation guide for teachers. These were the indicators used during the teachers' training and it is on these success indicators that my interviews were based. These were not the original ones found in the Curriculum (MOEC 2010a, 2010b). The original factors affecting family life, "marriage, divorce and cohabitation" were not printed any more. They were replaced by what was perceived as more fitting: "financial situation, health and place of living" (MOEC 2010b: 427). It looked as if references to any kind of pre-

marital relationships that might have been understood by the term "cohabitation" were to be avoided. In addition, other indicators in the curriculum, like "knowing the bodily functions of reproduction, pregnancy and birth" and "associating healthy living with sexual and reproductive rights" (MOEC 2010b: 427) disappeared from the implementation guide. Finally, looking at the 2nd grade and the types of family, whereby in the international setting these may include: never-married families, blended, grandparents as parents, and same-sex parent families; in the Cypriot implementation guide the abbreviation "etc." is chosen as a safer choice. [6]

Ioannou, Kouta and Charalambous (2012: 155) explain how the proposed curriculum would be piloted in a selection of schools for the year 2010-2011, evaluated and then implemented. Even if this appropriateness was the result of a recognition that societal norms where not at all trivial and unimportant, it remained undiscussed. The curriculum was still presenting a different "official knowledge". At the same time, the communities in which the curriculum specialists belong to, could set their own standards and evaluate knowledge claims themselves. As Sismondo argued, "there is no abstract and logical scientific method apart from evolving community norms" (Sismondo 2010: 10). Consequently, policy, a social construction, was also being shaped from below, and this negotiation resulted in the appropriation of the implementation guide to the local setting.

The editing of the success indicators did not end in 2011. There still seems to be an on-going re-negotiation as the success indicators on the online

6. A series of articles addressed to parents in America about different types of families can be found at https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/types-of-families/Pages/default.aspx.

platform are revised.[7] There are revised indicators for 2012 and then newer revised indicators for 2013, which are reminiscent of Little's reference to the exhausting prospect of primary school teachers' being put "permanently in an implementation-of-innovation mode" (Little 1993: 129), since the HE curricula were not the only innovation, there was a simultaneous reform in all the subject matters. Finally, in spring 2016, there was another revision after which "adequacy indicators" made their appearance.[8] During my fieldwork, the only thing teachers had to work with, were lists of publications and websites, many of them in English[9], and it was up to them to design the lessons and look for appropriate materials after an identification of health determinants that "evolved naturally" (Ioannou, Kouta and Charalambous 2012: 158).

7. At the time of the writing of the dissertation, this information was retrieved 12 April 2016 from http://www.moec.gov.cy /agogi_ygeias/ analytika_programmata.html. By the end of the writing stages, the online platform had moved to http://agogyd.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/ agogi-ygeias/analytiko-programma and a revised material was available dated 2017.

8. Some examples of the adequacy indicators addressed to teachers:
   Food is associated with health because it has the power to reduce illness and premature deaths, under-nutrition, obesity, improving quality of sleep, and increase energy. The concept of 'balanced diet': the pyramid of Mediterranean diet, importance of eating all the food groups (cereal, fruit, vegetable, dairy, meat, fish, eggs, pulses, nuts – the importance of often and light meals, the importance of the breakfast, reducing fat, sugar, salt) (MOEC, 2016: 12-13).

   De-constructing stereotypes based on nutrition habits of different cultures (i.e. not all Chinese eat only rice, Indians curry and Americans hamburgers, there are Cypriots who are vegetarians and Muslims who drink alcohol). There is a complexity of factors that affect the eating habits of different groups: place of stay, weather, local products, religious beliefs, globalization etc (MOEC 2016: 18-19).

   "Masturbation does not cause any mental, physical or emotional damage. Some people masturbate and some do not" (MOEC 2016: 39)

   Myths associated with menstruation: When a girl is menstruating, she should not take a bath; everybody knows it; she should not wash her hair neither with warm nor with cold water; she should not be doing sports. With menstruation, bad blood is leaving the organism (MOEC, 2016: 39-41).

9. The implementation guide of 2011 lists 48 different sources that were judged as supportive to health promotion and which teachers could take ideas from.

## 3.5. Conclusion

Consistent with the idea of the curriculum as an actant, it is granted to be a source of actions. The experts were referring to the curriculum during the teachers' training and not to the team of authors. It had its own substance, it established the connections between other actants and conveyed social meaning.

The curriculum was imagined as a vehicle which (some) Cypriots used to realize their European identities as it set out to shape teachers who implement initiatives, and parents and children who assume responsibility for their health. Its knowledge was promoted as common sense and it privileged individuals who had certain characteristics that were perceived from above as "modern". Modernity was presented as a goal to be reached and individuals were expected to be able and willing to make healthy choices for the benefit of the community and to act as health agents creating changes corresponding to a modern way of being. Teachers were consequently supposed to present "facts", intrinsic motivation in teachers was presented as "natural" and the economic crisis was used as a tool to exercise social pressure and convince the teachers to undertake their own personal and professional development.

Although there are discrepancies between the curriculum and the revised directions to teachers, there was a convenient silence about the adjustments which was probably beneficial in addressing different audiences. While strategies for creating biological citizens "from above" tend to represent science as unproblematic (Rose and Novas 2005), "claims, theories, facts and objects may have different meanings to different audiences" (Sismondo 2010: 12) and actors have their own concerns and versions of truth. Additionally, while the rewriting of the indicators suggests that the local

actors were indeed actively shaping the curriculum, there was no official admission of the fact. The following chapters explore local concerns and different versions of truth focusing on instances in which culture defines normality.

# Chapter 4

# Tensions and Negotiations

As the health education curriculum enters the teachers' lives, it creates new meanings for their roles. The following discussion focuses on politics rather than health or education and underlines social actors' understandings of what their professional role inside the school should be. Schools may be sites of cultural reproduction, as Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) argued, but they are also spaces where political struggles are identified, articulated, and propagated (Giroux 1981).

## 4.1. Who should teach health education?

A number of different teacher groups with competing interests were involved with health education inside schools: home economics teachers, who previously only taught home economics to 5th and 6th grades, school health visitors, classroom teachers, and teachers specialized in HE who were sometimes additionally seconded in the ministry as consultants.

Home economics teachers witnessed a renaming of their lesson to "Health education/Home economics" and included new topics besides the nutrition and needlework topics they used to teach. Home economics teachers were often assigned to two or even more schools and were thus "visitor teachers". School health visitors [*σχολικοί ιατρικοί επισκέπτες*] were also "visitors" as they visited schools from time to time, performed medical examinations and gave lectures to the children. The topics of these lectures were now included in the health curriculum but school health visitors witnessed no change to their professional roles. They continued to visit schools and deal with the

same topics as before. They dealt with personal hygiene in the 1st grade, then accident prevention in the 2nd, healthy nutrition in the 3rd, heart diseases in the 4th grade, puberty in the 5th and for the children in the 6th grade they held preventive lectures on smoking and HIV.

The ministry's suggestions surrounding the introduction of the curriculum included that HE was better off with the classroom teachers and the lesson was to be taught by the classroom teacher wherever it was possible. In January 2014, a ministry circular invited the principals to send one teacher for in-service training. On this circular the phrase "preferably a classroom teacher" was noted in bold.[1] Interestingly, this wasn't the strategy that was used in the case of the secondary school teachers. In the latter case, the roles were separate and home economics teachers would continue teaching Home Economics/Health Education (with the names reversed this time). The following excerpt is from an interview with a ministry official who explains the experts' strategy concerning the primary school home economics teachers:

> If there was a person who had been teaching home economics for 20 years, and goes to a school and asks to teach it to all the 5th grades; then on many occasions the principal would accommodate their request. Sometimes the school principal supports them, who has to reconcile a lot of demands. And we don't want to interfere in this procedure of the principal. We don't want to create friends and enemies through this process. It is in the jurisdiction of the principal. But the other teachers have started to become more assertive. The HE lesson, the topics that it is dealing with, have a lot in common with topics that are anyway dealt with by classroom teachers, so they feel that they are losing time as classroom teachers because they would cover the topics anyway so why not having the time in the timetable? There was a conflict. But we let it be resolved at school level. What is important is that this group, friends

1. MOEC circular number dde4034. Retrieved 4 March 2014 from http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy.

> of health education, is growing. (Ministry official, Health education office)

Evidently, although there were some official guidelines from the ministry, there was an atmosphere of confusion in the schools while I was there, which caused the teachers stress.

## 4.2. Tensions in the fields of specialization

If we conceptualize the fields as transaction zones, and the curriculum as an *actant*, that is, it plays an active role in the setting of a standard, and look at the meanings of these relationships between 'natural' expectations from the actant, 'social' interactions of the actors and 'meanings production' (Callon and Latour 1992) we can make some useful observations.

### 4.2.1. Classroom teachers

Classroom teachers in primary schools indeed started to place claims on the subject which created tensions for the home economics teachers. In Dimotiko Ayias Elenis, there wasn't a visitor teacher for home economics. In addition, I only met with classroom teachers who were more confident with the new curriculum because they had participated in the pilot project of the ENHPS. Mrs Popi, Mrs Froso and Mrs Kasiani, were confident and with Mr Spyros' encouragement, but also because of their own initiatives, they were involved in "vaccination activities", as they called them, during which other teachers would go in their classrooms to watch them teach. They belong to the category of the teachers that the Coordinator would wish all teachers would belong. Health education was taught by the classroom teachers up to the 4$^{th}$ grade but Mrs Kasiani, the classroom teacher of the 6$^{th}$ grade, took over the HE lesson for both the 5$^{th}$ and 6$^{th}$ grades for practical reasons. The classroom teacher of the 5$^{th}$ grade, Mr Charis had taken over design and

technology (D&T) for both classes and these were held simultaneously with health education. Even before the introduction of health education, D&T for the 5th and 6th grades was held parallel to home economics. Half of the class was in one laboratory, very often cooking, and the other half was in the other laboratory carrying out wood constructions or other type of handiwork. The two halves were alternating on a weekly basis. After the introduction of the HE curriculum and despite ministerial suggestions, this practice for the 5th and 6th grades remained unaltered.

Things in Strovolos Elementary were different since there was a visitor teacher who previously taught home economics. Classroom teachers in this school were more assertive when it came to teaching the new lesson and described issues that had to do with "ownership" of the lesson. As a classroom teacher said when talking about home economics teachers*:*

> These ladies, and they are very nice otherwise, come to school and say that they are for health education. They are not. This thing is not written anywhere. There are so many nice topics to discuss with your pupils and it brings the teacher and the children closer together. A classroom teacher should teach this lesson.

The suggestion that the lesson was in better hands if it was dealt by classroom teachers renewed a pre-existing tension between being a classroom teacher or a specialized/visitor teacher. There are no official specializations in the Cypriot primary school and classroom teachers are trained to teach all the subjects and are expected to carry the title *πολυδύναμος δάσκαλος* [polyvalent, multi-forced teacher] proudly; [2] with

2. Teachers have a minimum of four years university studies. Older teachers who finished their studies at the Pedagogical academy took lessons for the recognition of their diploma as a university bachelor degree. Akida mentions that by 1997-1998 already 90% of the teachers had completed their studies at the Universities of Cyprus, Athens, Thessaloniki and Ioannina. Information retrieved from http://akida.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1239%3A2012-03-01-19-26-11&catid=1%3Alatest-news&lang=el

all the positive and the negative that this title entails. One of the specializations that were introduced in the primary schools that do not require a degree in educational sciences were some physical education teachers and this only recently. This is a political issue because it concerns appointments into a profession that recently became saturated. Classroom teachers are generally displeased with specializations inside schools. A classroom teacher commented:

> They appear suddenly and declare: "I am here for English" or "I am an Art teacher" and swipe the timetable clean. If they take all the subsidiary subjects from us what will be left for our 29 teaching periods? All the histories and geographies of the school?

Being a classroom teacher is associated with more power and visitor teachers might be seen as inferior by classroom teachers. Ownership of a classroom, much like ownership of land or homes is more honourable and socially respected, and classroom teachers' opinions matter more. As a teacher at Dimotiko Ayias Elenis told me when she was praising Mr Spyros, "thankfully he is not like other principals who don't take a teacher's opinion into consideration unless they own a classroom". Up to the introduction of the curriculum, home economics teachers' existence was not an issue because the classroom teachers did not want to get involved "with cooking" and had nothing to share, whereas now, each one wanted to prove that they were more suitable to teach prevention topics.

A school consultant explained to me during an interview that a home economics inspector had some years ago asked if there were classroom teachers willing to "give up" the classroom teacher role and specialize on home economics topics for the 5$^{th}$ and 6$^{th}$ grades. "Home economics teachers never really officially existed, they just baptized themselves that", he added. For the ministry officials and for some classroom teachers (even

though they may have personally wanted to avoid it for its difficulties) "giving the classroom up" was a sign of weakness and/or 'an easy way out'. Classroom teachers morally evaluated home economics teachers' motives and discarded the usefulness of the subsequent training they received despite the fact that their initial training wasn't inferior to classroom teachers'; in fact it was exactly the same.

### 4.2.2. Home Economics teachers

The home economics room in Strovolos Elementary was perfectly equipped. There were four round tables with four chairs around each table in the first half of the room facing the whiteboards. The second half of the classroom had four small kitchens, two on each side, which looked identical: a sink, working surface and cupboards and drawers with kitchen utensils arranged in exactly the same order inside. There was one big fridge at the back and two stoves. If something was used then it needed to be properly cleaned and returned to its original position. The home economics teacher was very welcoming and mentioned several problems. The curriculum's implementation on her time and the renaming of her lesson placed absurd demands on her and attempted to redefine her role. New topics were introduced, and they were foreign to her role, historically 'belonging' thematically and methodologically to other professionals. She mentioned unfamiliarity with the topics and methods and the force with which it was introduced in her daily praxis. She was especially critical towards sex education because "some parents set different moral principles for their children and I don't want to interfere with that". She chose some topics that she found "acceptable" like "Changes in the body during puberty", "Respect" and "Stress" and was critical of the new curriculum.

> From the values I decided to teach about respect. In the 6th grade, I chose "anger" and "stress". I am doing by myself whatever I want. A different teacher might do other topics. A friend of mine told me she is doing "cooperation" in the 6th grade, I am doing it in the 5th grade. Each one is doing what they want. And the topics are so many! When will I do all these? And to never do cooking. It is unbelievable, it cannot be done!

Besides, as another home economics teacher said, teachers did not know which topics where already covered:

> You start your lesson and the children tell you: *Κυρία, τούντο παραμύθι είπαν μας το πέρσι* [Mrs, we heard this fairytale last year]. They want us to coordinate with other teachers and write down what we did so that the next teacher will see it. But when? I am going to two schools".

Home economics teachers liked the nutrition topics. "Besides, children love cooking" said some teachers, and indeed, the children in Strovolos Elementary mentioned cooking as the thing they liked most about health education. On top of that, it was mentioned that the Gymnasium's new book on health education, published from the same Health Education Office, kept all the nutrition topics. Indeed, in that book one can find, "children should plan and prepare balanced meals based on the rules of healthy nutrition" (MOEC 2012: 16). The book was also explicitly stating that Home Economics/Health Education is *εργαστηριακό* [in the laboratory] and "the laboratory should be used as often as possible for nutrition and fabric technology topics" (MOEC 2012: 14). A primary school home economics teacher wondered why it was okay for the secondary school teachers to continue with the nutrition topics but not okay for her; and complained that she hadn't received further education. As a result, she had to continue with the topics she was most familiar with and this explains voices, like that of Pavlos' mother, Mrs Vasiliki, who wasn't aware of any lesson called "Health

education" in the 6th grade. The following is an excerpt from the interview with Mrs Vasiliki:

Researcher: What is your opinion on the lesson health education?
Mrs Vasiliki: I don't even know what the children do in health education.
Researcher: Their teacher is Mrs Evgenia, once a week Pavlos goes to design and technology and the next week he has health education.
Mrs Vasiliki: I have no idea what this subject is… Mrs Evgenia? (she remembers) No! They do home economics. They were cooking.
Researcher: It's called health education/home economics now.
Mrs Vasiliki: Ah! *Μα τούτον εν το μάθημα αγωγή υγείας*? [But this is the lesson health education?]
Researcher: The cooking takes up a smaller part. They have other topics too, it's just that the same teacher that used to teach home economics now teaches this.
Mrs Vasiliki: But *it is* home economics [*οικοκυρικά*]. They cooked pizzas, they cooked hamburgers. And now that the room is being renovated they will not be cooking, they will be doing embroidery.

Home economics teachers tried to defend their practices whereas classroom teachers saw themselves as better equipped to teach health related topics. The latter had the support of the experts who were actively shaping the appropriate groups to enact the curriculum. The quantity of the indicators and the minimizing of the nutrition topics, even if some home economic teachers grounded their criticisms around this point, was not the most problematic. Neither was the controversy around the topic of sex education, like some specifically mentioned. During follow-up interviews it was mentioned that if the ministry could approve a book, like it did for the secondary schools, then they would be more willing to teach the topics: "Why didn't they prepare a book?" one home economics teacher said. "For

the Gymnasium they published a book. You know what you are doing even if you disagree" she added.

The biggest problem was the way that HE was introduced as a classroom teachers' lesson, and the fact that its introduction endangered her specialization.. Suddenly, questions of who was more appropriate to teach these topics became an issue and home economics teachers felt that they had to justify their role. If home economics teachers would change their lessons to include these new topics, would they become the most appropriate group to enact the curriculum, or were they already negated because of their previous role?

### 4.2.3. The school health visitors

Mr Dimitris, a school health visitor, was a trained nurse. We met in October 2013 at Strovolos Elementary in the school's *ιατρείο* [infirmary]. The walls were decorated with health-related posters: The negative effects of smoking; How do we brush our teeth; Fruit and vegetables "Keys to Health". He sat at the desk and I sat opposite him with my notes and tape-recorder. He wanted to know how I was doing, we knew each other from when he was visiting my class to give lectures or coming by to get small groups of children to be examined either by the paediatrician (if they were due for a medical examination), or by himself. His responsibilities included checking sight, hearing, spines and body mass indexes. The examination room was next to the waiting room, equipped with a medical exam table, a separate toilet and a locked file cabinet.

I wanted to know what was in the file cabinets and he explained that this was where the children's personal files were kept. These include prevention checks and health histories comprising of allergies, operations, health

problems and medication taken, that parents complete and sign along with their permission that their child can be examined at school. Accordingly, health visitors may recommend to parents that the children be seen by specialists: ophthalmologists, ENT specialists, orthopaedists, endocrinologists or dieticians. Mr Dimitris also said that they check the vaccination schedules and update them when necessary, and I remembered being a first grader and receiving a vaccination at school and later that day surprising my mother at home with the news. It hadn't occurred to her that schools do that. These files, which are considered school property, are sent to the secondary school after the children complete the primary school and are finally destroyed 7 years after the children graduate from the Lyceum.

Mr Dimitris saw an informational brochure about the new curriculum and it intrigued him that it was similar to what health visitors were doing. It was the first time he saw it that year and he was wondering who was teaching it and what they were doing and "since there is health education from the school health services, is this something different?" I had no answer to give to that and when I left, he gave me some informational material that he gives to children after they visit the infirmary. One of these was a three-fold entitled "Mediterranean diet", published by the Ministry of Health in 2010:

> Through the frenzy of modernization developments, traditional Mediterranean diet remains the most healthy nutrition model. In the last years America and West Europe have changed their diets according to this exemplar […] We, as a Mediterranean nation, have the duty to go back to what our ancestors have taught us because tradition is the future globally.

Although I didn't know it at the time, I was going to be returning to this room for my focus groups interviews with the children and for some of the parents' interviews.

School health visitors' work was not confined to primary schools; they visited secondary schools and they also worked at clinics. Some of them held seminars for expectant mothers at the maternity clinic of Makarios Hospital. When I was expecting my first child, I went to those seminars looking forward to some insight, something that our pediatrician disapproved of. "These are housewives" he said, "and some of the things that they say make me very angry". School health visitors are considered experts by expectant mothers and the home economics teacher, but are dismissed as laypeople by paediatricians, and as the following section reveals, classroom teachers shared that perspective.

### 4.3. Who are my "friends"?

What was important to the ministry officials was that the group of the "friends of health education" was growing. But who were these "friends"? And how could one *become* one? School health visitors had common topics with the curriculum. Their role was not antithetic to the curriculum's aims but also not supportive, as they operated in parallel spaces and did not interact with each other. When the school health visitors examined the children, this was a different kind of enactment of prevention than the curriculum's enactment. It happened in the same temporal space but the professionals involved were not in the same geographical space. When they lectured, then the health visitors were as their name implied, visitors; guests invited by the classroom teacher who retained ownership of the class. School health visitors placed no claims on the curriculum and were not threatened by it because it did not change something in their lives (at the time). That school visitors operated *in parallel* to schools' "real mission", instead of *with* it, is not something new. In 2014, when I visited Mrs Panayiota at the outpatient clinic where she was stationed that day, she said

that she always felt like a stranger, there was no practical collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to begin with. It was almost as if she was unwelcome, she said. She mentioned an example where a principal once told her: "You need four hours to talk to them about smoking? Do one and I will write that you did four". School health visitors were perceived as hindering "more important things". The other school actors also re-defined school health visitors in relation to their own new roles. Home economics teachers liked having them there. Mrs Evgenia, a home economics teacher, said "why did they give me these topics? Let the health visitors deal with them, they have more expertise; they deal with doctors; and let me do mine" and positioned herself in an imagined symbiosis. Classroom teachers, if they didn't care before about their topics, now, because they also took over the same topics they defined them differently: "They should better stick to examinations and leave the lectures to us"; "their nurse training is useful for one-to-one situations but not for class-situations" and "sometimes their approach is inappropriate, boring and old fashioned". For the school consultants, faithful to the rhetoric of the collaboration, it was supportive that the health visitors were covering some of the topics, but it didn't mean that the teachers shouldn't be covering them as "this is something different".

Although ministry officials inside the Ministry of Education openly argued in favour of classroom teachers, one can say that despite the official claims, this was not necessarily the case. School consultants were seconded teachers who had some specialization on emotional development or multicultural education, who also taught HE in schools and they were not classroom teachers. If school consultants insisted on their recommendation that classroom teachers should be the ones teaching health education then

they would help abolish their own role as enactors of HE and there was no question about that. "Specialized teachers are good and bad" said a school consultant, a specialist himself but also a teacher and stationed at a school three days of the week, and he explained:

> Sometimes the classroom teacher is not familiar with the topics and wastes the time of the health education lesson and there you have the specialists and it's a shame not to use them. But we have also seen the opposite: that a classroom teacher who is familiar with them holds a very nice lesson whereas the visitor teacher talks about proteins.

What is noticeable is the paradoxical formation of two standards for specialized teachers: Specialized teachers perceived as having labelled themselves (in which case it was more probable that the term "visitor teacher" would be used rather than "specialized"), and specialized teachers who had their specialists' claims supported by the specific office in this specific timeframe, promoting this specific policy. What was clear was that home economics teachers were not to be considered "friends". Although I can't comment on the modalities of the specialization of the primary school home economics teachers, it was evident that the procedure, the methods of selection and the legitimacy by which previous specialists indeed became specialists, was questioned and rejected. What was done before wasn't good enough, what was done now was what mattered. And this is why home economics teachers were perceived negatively by the health education experts, a school consultant mentioned:

> They have the "old mentality". The ones we used to call "*οικοκυρικές*"[3]. They were the most negative, because the lesson left from their hands and they had difficulties in dealing with this. They lost the easiness of the lesson, working one month on milk products

3. Invented term deriving from "home economics" and personalized to mean ladies that deal with home economics. The word is very similar to "*οικοκυρές*" that means "housewives".

> and cooking, spending the first month to take out the utensils, wash them and dry them. But to do this with ten children, is really easy. And this is why in the secondary school they accepted it with joy "thank you, our lesson is upgraded" they said. Of course, those are truly specialists not like in our case, where whoever wanted was calling the inspector saying, "I also want to become a home economics teacher" and became one (School Consultant, Health Promotion Office).

Consequently, "friends" were the ones who were perceived to have had some training in "new" ways, or rather, "today's ways", within this specific philosophy, which may not be the one that will be deemed important tomorrow. Any kind of expertise and training that home economics teachers gained over the years was viewed as having little, if any value, perhaps because it was gained in the Cypriot context. All primary school home economics teachers were perceived to be in one solid group and the hope was that they were going to give up on health education, either in favour of the classroom teachers, or in favour of the new specialized teachers, as if those were also one homogeneous group.

A home economics teacher not belonging to the "friends" complained that she had received no training on the new subjects and had no time to train herself. But even if she wanted to become a "friend" it looked like it wasn't her decision to make. As the school consultant said, home economics teachers had the "old mentality", as if they were not modern enough. The teacher was aware of this when she chose not to express loudly her reservations on sex education. What the secondary schools' home economics teachers interpreted as a chance to give their lesson new prestige, because their role was not endangered, was intimidating for the primary schools' home economics teachers. This is reminiscent of the pasteurization of France, when private doctors only started to 'believe' in

serums once the Pasteur laboratory put these on the market and they didn't have to hand over their patients to other professionals (Latour 1988).

## 4.4. Contesting Expertise

Rose and Miller write of the process in which the personage of the expert, embodying neutrality, authority and skill in a wise figure, operating according to an ethical code "beyond good and evil" has become significant (Rose and Miller 1992: 187). In their argument, the rise of expertise is linked to a transformation in the rationalities and technologies of government. In this study, processes and embodiments of expertise are questioned and the placement of expertise is shifting in people's imaginations. Although the officials inside the ministry, the curriculum experts and the policy makers imagined themselves as the only ones dressed in an expert's cloak, teachers dismissed their expertise.

Mr Neophytos, for example, a classroom teacher at Strovolos Elementary, although himself not involved with HE, complained to me about the new science curriculum and commented that the curriculum experts are not "on top of things". Similarly, Mrs Popi might as well have been in the eyes of ministry officials the goal for other teachers to reach, but in her own eyes, expertise inside the ministry was flawed:

> The ministry couldn't help with specific guidelines even if they wanted to, because they weren't sure themselves about how things should work, and they didn't know what to tell the teacher about what she should do in that time and they thought "let them alone to be creative".

Teachers were also critical of the expertise that academics claimed to possess. To the sociologist's letter in the press, teachers replied citing their

own expertise on classroom practicalities: "You don't spit blood inside the class"; "Firstly look at how you teach your students who come to school and can't stand in front of the children" and "it must be true your introductory lesson was probably not good enough. All that it left in my head are some big words. But we are full of those". According to teachers, academics couldn't claim that they were experts on anything else except for big ideas that had absolutely no use inside the classroom. In one discussion with my former colleagues one afternoon they recollected how inaccurate the messages they received while in university were, compared to working in schools:

> And the worst thing was that they were teaching us that we are the best and that the teachers already in schools knew nothing because they just attended Pedagogical Academy. And instead of working with them, we thought that we could do everything better by ourselves (Dora, classroom teacher).

According to a school principal, academics and their teams absorbed the biggest share of the available funds in order to produce the material that was supposed to support the changes in the curricula and the timetable, each one running their own "*μαγαζούδι*" [little shop]. What he meant was that each academic wanted to promote his/her own specialization within the curriculum because it meant more students for his/her faculty. And he concluded: "They have never set foot in a class, they don't even know what the classrooms look like from the inside or what children look like for that matter". As Annelise Riles argued when she examined the temporality of technocratic artifacts such as documents, "expert knowledge itself is far less hegemonic and far more interesting than the caricatures of technocratic knowledge often make it out to be" (Riles 2006: 18).

## 4.5. Conclusion

Everything opposing health education was to be conceptualized as opposing the civilizing mission, as opposing a necessary transformation. Despite claims for universal truths and consensus, the curriculum's introduction, as expected and discussed by anthropologists and STS scholars in the case of projects, was accompanied by messiness as new kinds of relationships and new spaces of exchange were created. Teachers were involved in reorganizing themselves and tensions arose when they attempted to draw borders around their territories of expertise and to prove that true expertise was to be found only in their own practices. The curriculum could give strategic character to some of the network clusters according to the paths that were created; and it would define them as experts.

The introduction of the curriculum created new tensions between professionals and renewed old ones. If the tensions did not escalate into actual conflicts it was because the professionals did not actually commit themselves to the curriculum as a whole but to carefully selected pieces of it as the following chapter explores.

# Chapter 5

# How did they do it?

This chapter presents teachers' strategies and how they chose to teach prevention. The different "enactments" of the policy, how teachers practice prevention, always involve processes of interpretation. This results in different versions of the implementation of the policy, which I chose to call enactments. By presenting four examples of different teachers teaching prevention, I wanted to capture different perspectives of interacting within the project of improving health.

The following examples show that nothing is innocent or objective. The official line of "presenting the facts" and the rhetoric of a non-political curriculum is questioned and altered, proving that knowledge is subjective and that health projects are culturally situated.

## 5.1. Different ways of teaching prevention

### 5.1.1. Lessons on nutrition

The home economics teacher welcomes me in the classroom. Thirteen 5$^{th}$-graders sit in groups of three or four on each round table and seem pleased to see me. The lesson begins with a reference to the food pyramid of the Mediterranean diet. The teacher shows the big, three-dimensional, transparent pyramid that is permanently in the classroom and reminds the children that doctors and dieticians, in order to help us protect our health, have organized food items in groups. The base of the pyramid represents food that we should eat every day and on the top of the pyramid, food that we should eat rarely. This was one categorization of food items. Three other

posters on the classroom wall represented the second categorization of food items, on which this specific lesson was based: Food for Growth, Food for Energy and Food for Protection. The children are asked to name food items with proteins that belong to the group "Growth" and they mention meat, fish, pulses and milk products. The teacher tells them that even though her body needs less protein than theirs, adults still need proteins because it is the nutrient that helps wounds to heal. Then they continue with food items that give energy to the body and the teacher mentions how next year in science education they will learn about the oxygen we breathe and how it initiates a chemical reaction in the body which creates the energy we need to move. Then she asks them to identify what the foods that belong to the group "Protection" protect us from and the children reply, "from illnesses". "Exactly!", exclaims the teacher. She tells them that next year they will learn about the blood components and then about white cells that protect our body and the need for vitamins and minerals (In Greek the word for mineral is the same as "salt"). She adds that we are not referring to kitchen salt but to substances like iron, calcium etc., and that all these help protect the organism. At that point I hear Giannis saying quietly "*εν μας κόφτει*" [we don't care].

The children are asked to fill in a questionnaire, with a Likert-type scale on the frequency of consumption of different types of "good" and "bad" foods: eating salad, fruits, potato chips, sweets, fast food, drinking soft drinks. Then the children are asked to think about what they eat for breakfast and to represent this with a number. For example, if they were having bread and a slice of halloumi-cheese they should indicate the number 2 because their breakfast corresponds to foods from two groups: Growth and Energy.

For the last activity, the children use a paper plate divided into three sections and draw either an ideal breakfast or an ideal lunch, taking into

consideration that they should include foods from the three groups. Some examples like Nikos' "*mprizola*, cornflakes and salad" were promptly corrected by the teacher who explained that meat and cornflakes don't fit together. When Giannis gives his example aloud: "egg, croissant, toast with butter and marmalade" the teacher asks the children to comment. The teacher instructs Giannis to put each food into the correct group: eggs fit in with Growth, croissants fit in with Energy, toasts with butter and marmalade also fit in with Energy, so she concludes that he left a group out. She advises him that he put a lot of sugar in his breakfast and Giannis says: "This is what I eat, if you like it, you like it". The teacher is offended by his answer but does not reply to him. Instead, she addresses the whole class: "What we are trying to do is to improve ourselves so that we are healthy" and Giannis makes a gesture of protest accompanied by a noise that I couldn't distinguish. The teacher concludes: "If someone is not interested, I can't force them, I am not coming into your home to make your breakfast for you".

Afterwards she asks the children why in their opinion it is important to learn about groups of foods and Skevi answers: "Because then we know what our body needs. And we know what to eat". The teacher approves of the answer and adds that each body needs different kinds of food. The examples that are mentioned include an athlete who needs more energy than the girl who works in an office; a pregnant mother who needs more proteins for the growth of the fetus; an old person who is not growing any more or moving a lot and therefore needs more foods that protect health other than proteins; the children themselves who are still growing and therefore need to eat food items from all the three groups. She explains that this why dieticians have distinguished these three groups as important. They spend the rest of the lesson discussing food items and categorizing them in the three groups. (Classroom observation protocol, October 2014, 5$^{th}$ grade)

In line with the "truths" that the discourse of healthy eating is promoting, boundaries between "good" and "bad" choices and "responsible" and "irresponsible" subjects are drawn. The teacher frames food decisions as positive choices, resulting from education provided by expert knowledge and maintains in this way, emphasis on body discipline and self-control.

The knowledge is presented as common sense and as the sociologists Cairns et al. (2013) also argued for the Canadian setting, there is an ideological imperative for individuals to make food and consumption decisions that protect themselves from risk. The knowledge in the lesson is backed up by an analytical procedure to support its scientific origins. If you think scientifically, number your categories and sort your food items into these categories, you are on the right path of protecting your health. It is also up to the individual to reconsider his or her choices. No expert will come to your house to help you. You are presented with the true knowledge and if you are a rational modern being, but also if you are clever enough to discover it and prudent enough to accept it as it is hidden in the vegetables and it is a privilege to know about it, then you should choose to adopt this approach.

Most of the children in this class, as the situation inside many classrooms almost always is, had learned the type of answers that were expected of them. They were looking at the pictures on the wall and identifying "proper" food items that were illustrated on the posters and in the pyramid. In this case food acquires moral qualities, and it is also used to reinforce cultural stereotypes, gendered and generational ones; the girl in the office, the strong athlete, the caring pregnant mother, the idle old person, the priority for the growing child. Giannis thinks that this knowledge is not relevant to his everyday realities, neither now and perhaps nor in the future, and he is the only one that expresses his discomfort openly. A couple of teachers

mentioned Giannis as a child who was complaining a lot. They had talked to his parents about his attitude. This specific day was especially difficult for him. I had spotted him crying before the lesson, and when I asked his best friend, he said there had been a misunderstanding. If this had been a better day for Giannis, would he have bothered expressing his disagreement? How long will it take him to finally stop disagreeing?

Both this example and the next one, are about food decisions that become a matter of personal responsibility and will end up being considered as personal failure when the promise of health may not materialize. The example that follows, with a 6th grade, presents another feminine angle for food.

Some children come too late to the classroom and the teacher tells them that as a result of their tardiness, they will have less time for the cooking part of the lesson. She explains to me that this is their third lesson and that they have already talked about friends and enemies of the heart, so that I understand that everything is connected. She asks the children to quickly remind her of the friends and enemies of the heart: "Smoking is bad", "Good diet is good", "Positive emotions are good", "Stress is bad", "Clean environment is good", "Ideal weight is good", "Water is good". She writes the answers on the whiteboard and notes an X or a √ next to the word. She is pleased with their answers and asks them to remind her which is the good diet for the heart. The children reply, "Mediterranean diet". The teacher asks them which foods are at the base of it and the children mention bread, pasta, rice, *πουργούρι* [bulgur wheat]. She reminds them of potatoes and cereals and then states the importance of fruit and vegetables. Then they move on to today's lesson and are asked to take their notebooks out and start preparing a page for the vegetables. The teacher explains:

> When we work on food items the basic thing we always need to know is: *Why* are they so good and why must I eat them? Which are the nutrients that make this food item so important for our diet? You should write five reasons stating the importance of eating vegetables. Reasons that would convince a stranger, your reasons should be exact, the arguments precise, "Eat because they are beneficial" is not convincing. A good argument should be based on the nutrients that they have and what they are useful for.

During the discussion about vitamins that follows, the teacher mentions that vitamin A is also called a beauty vitamin and is good for the skin:

> This is important for girls, and it's good to know this, since we are supposed to be thrifty because of the financial crisis. Besides, now that you are entering puberty, you should eat vitamin A because it clears the skin of spots. All the creams that us women put on our face have side effects, just like medicines do. When we take a medicine, it may affect our stomach or our liver. The same goes for the creams that we use on our face. Therefore, it is better to use natural things.

Konstantinos says that his mother brought him a cream for girls, and he uses it so that he doesn't get any spots and Renos replies "it's not just for girls". The teacher says: "Okay, but there is a way to minimize the effects of puberty by eating correctly. Does anybody know what we should be eating and avoiding?" The children comment on unhealthy food items and the teacher explains that fats are bad for the skin and they should eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Then she says that vitamin C is a health vitamin and asks the children if they can remember why, since they covered this already in their science education lessons.

> Anthi: It helps to heal wounds.
> Teacher: Very good. The platelets heal wounds and vitamin C helps them. It also helps us not get sick easily. So that the organism is strong and resists the microbes. Which blood component is supported by vitamin C?

Vasilis: The white cells.
Teacher: Bravo, they eat the microbes. So, you see, Science is directly related to our lesson and this is why I teach science this year, because we can combine the topics.

When the theoretical part is finished, they put on their aprons and get ready to prepare a salad to the delight of the children that couldn't wait any longer. (Classroom observation protocol, October 2013, 6th grade)

In this example, food decisions assume a feminine character, like beauty and care. The linear correlation of vitamin A and girls' beautiful skin is a motherly concern. Renos might be questioning whether facial creams are just for girls, but he is not questioning that it is the mother who cares about the child's skin. More scientific details are being used in the 6th grade. Nutrients are measurable units; vitamin C is for platelets and vitamin A is necessary for good skin. Scientific expertise is again indispensable when it comes to decision making on questions of nutrition and details emphasize the linear relationships and underline the deterministic character of eating habits. Children may even minimize the consequences of puberty by making responsible food choices. Tradition, represented by the "Mediterranean diet" is used in the lesson with the references to the food pyramid, to represent an all-encompassing biological responsibility to be faithful not only to one's body but to one's tradition as well. The references in the classroom focus on the healthy, idealized body and face with emphasis on the proper way of eating, as if health is the promise of rational decisions.

The children mostly gave the answers that were expected of them and they had also realized that the sooner the theoretical parts were dealt with, the sooner they were going to finally start with the cooking. Apart from the cultural meanings that cooking food and transforming raw into cooked food has in any given society, in the lesson, cooking was also a mechanism to be

used as a threat or reward and keep the class in order. Another teacher at a different school, who only recently started teaching health education in a 6th grade told me that the children do not let her teach and that "one is constantly literally barking". She found cooking as the solution to her problem. "At least they do that", she said. Cooking food was used to balance power inequalities in situations where the adults were not necessarily the ones with the power.

### 5.1.2. Bullying prevention

The next example is from a lesson on bullying prevention and applies to the indicator "Social self-development". It was a sunny autumn day and the children of this 4th grade were sitting at their desks in groups. I sat at the back and the classroom teacher was standing at the front of the room. I remembered a University of Cyprus professor's verbal directions during my training as a teacher "never, never, sit down in the class", he said after he had watched me teach during one of the training sessions, another characteristic of "good" teachers. Standing when the children are sitting, a symbol of constant control, as opposed to sitting down and letting the class get out of control i.e. children walking around. The instructions are clear, the children are expected to work at the same pace and there is a lot of writing in the notebooks and the handouts to be used as "evidence" to parents and inspectors for good work done.

The teacher asks the children to think of some behaviours that may cause pain and to consider the victim's emotions. After this activity, they glue a small handout in their notebooks and read it aloud. On the handout, there is this story: "Some days ago during the break, you were playing a game with your friends. A child from your class wasn't playing with you but was

going around disturbing the other children. He was pushing others and was ruining the game". The teacher asks the children to discuss in their group the reasons for this child's behaviour and ways in which they could have reacted to stop his behaviour. I move closer and sit next to one group. The children give different explanations: "Maybe the group didn't want to play with him"; "Perhaps he had a problem, if they let him play, he will stop annoying them". They remember Nikolas who was chasing them last year in order to hit them and how they were running away from him. After a while, the groups are ready to share their thoughts on the reasons behind the child's disturbing behaviour:

| | |
|---|---|
| Anastasia: | Perhaps we said something that unsettled him. |
| Teacher: | Nice and how would we talk? |
| Anastasia: | We can tell him, "Come now if you want". |
| Evi: | Maybe the child had no friends and wanted to get our attention. |
| Teacher: | Nice, and the solution that you are proposing? |
| Evi: | He should come to our group. |
| Eleni: | Maybe he is jealous that they don't want him and maybe he is a very good child. |
| Teacher: | Bravo, perhaps if you would accept him in your group, he would stop this aggressive behaviour. So, most of us agree that the solution that we are proposing is to make him our friend so that he stops. Now I want you to present this as a short play. |

Savvas doesn't want to be the bully and Anastasia makes him do it. "You have to because you are a boy", she said. Their presentation is shaped as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Anastasia: | We don't want you here. |
| Savvas: | I want to play with you. |
| Nicolas: | What do you want so that you stop disturbing us? Do you want to play with us? |
| Savvas: | Yes. |

Nicolas: Welcome to the team.
(Classroom observation protocol, October 2013, 4th grade)

Bullying prevention here is about accepting that some children behave badly because of reasons that can be rationalized and that this is something that other children can fix.

In a different 4th grade, the children watched a video about a boy with red hair that was being laughed at. "The child supporting the victim is the child who makes the difference and he managed to make the whole group think differently" said the teacher.

In both examples of bullying prevention, the children were to be convinced that they were in control to change a difficult situation by themselves. On the first occasion, by trying to find out the reasons for the aggressive behaviour that may include own improprieties, and by being understanding. On the second occasion, by standing up for the victim. By preparing the children to become subjects in anticipation of bullying incidents, all the lessons on bullying that I observed (three lessons and two presentations to parents), were legitimizing the existence of bullying incidents. In none of the lessons was there announcement of punitive measures but instead, a preparation to deal with bullying incidents themselves. The school saw as its purpose to educate the children to expect these incidences and to learn to deal with them. The healthy individual is in control and stands up for those that are being discriminated against. But what if you are not in control? Does this mean that you are not healthy? Does it mean that it is also your fault for not being able to deal with the difficult situation by yourself?

### 5.1.3. Being good is fun

The third example takes place in a special health education room. Round red pillows form a circle on the floor and nearby stands a small puppet theatre. The walls are decorated with wall paintings that parents painted. I am impressed by the absence of chairs and desks and remember Sondergard's associations of the way speech circulates in the room, the breaking down of stereotypical hierarchical positions, the tolerance towards multiple interpretations (Sondergard 2010: 115) and wonder what kinds of alternative configurations of singular knowledge claims would there be in this room.

The 21 children of the 4th grade sit in a circle on the floor. They pick up cards from the floor and describe to their partners what they see on the cards. Skipping one child every time, the teacher sends half of the children outside to think of something exciting that has happened to them that they would like to share with their partners when they come back. While they are outside, she instructs the children who are inside the class to pretend that they ignore the child who is talking to them. The activity proceeds as planned and then the teacher asks the talking children how they felt when they were being ignored. Some answers were "angry", "disappointed", and "disrespected". One child mentions that they did the same thing the year before with a different teacher and the teacher replies "it doesn't matter we will discuss other things". She then asks them to consider how their parents might feel when they ask them to do something and the children sometimes don't listen. They explore examples that happened outside school and Anna mentions a time when she told her mother she would do her homework but she lied and didn't do it and her mother forgot to "check her". [1] The teacher

1. «Να με ελέγξει» is a phrase used by children to mean having their homework checked by someone.

asks her to consider "who had something to lose from this behaviour and where was this behaviour in the end going to turn against?" Then the children are asked to consider ways in which they can focus their minds: "Keep notes". "Not listen to what is happening outside". "Do it immediately so that we don't forget". "Pretend that we play while we tidy up", are some of their answers (Classroom observation protocol, October 2013, 4th grade).

The children were very participative in this lesson, as they were encouraged to share their opinions. There was no reading or writing, there was a lot of discussion and playing team-building games. They were excited to talk about themselves and there were many answers that were considered correct. They were discussing "proper" behaviours and ways to make these work for them. The lesson to be learned was that if the children exercised their duties as "good" children in a way that they felt empowered, rather than oppressed, then their lives, but also the lives of others around them, are made better and possibly more fun. This way, the children were directed to "freely" choose responsible behaviours, enter morally evaluated subject positions and enjoy it, rather than oppose it.

### 5.1.4. No more stereotypes

In the last example, the 22 children of a 3rd grade pretend that they are puppets while someone pulls their hands using invisible strings. Their teacher "transforms" the puppets into different characters and all children portray "girls that play with dolls", "boys that play with guns", "mums that cook", "wild wolves", "cute kittens", "fathers that read the newspaper", "grandfathers that change dirty nappies", "grandmothers that go for coffee with their friends". Then they discuss the roles they liked best and the teacher asks them why they found some roles funny. The children mention

what (in their opinion) is "natural" and what is not. Their answers were very interesting. I explore these in Chapter 8, which prioritizes children's own voices rather than teachers' practices. Following the puppet play and debrief, they have a long discussion about football during the breaks and how they can make it work for both boys and girls. The teacher asks them to consider ways to form equal teams and to reflect on what their underlying perceptions of others are, and she focuses on the word *cooperation*. Then the children are asked to put on a play in small groups in which they reverse the roles that they think are normal, for example, if they think that only boys win at football, they should present a girls' team that wins at football. "Or at our national celebration tomorrow where we said the women were making the socks and the men were going to war, reverse this", said the teacher (Observation protocol, 3rd grade).

The teacher, faithful to the experts' guidelines, or perhaps due to my presence in the room, did not mention what is right and what is wrong, instead, she gave them space to unfold their ideas. Although this lesson focused on the deconstruction of stereotypes, something else was happening in the room next door that focused exactly on the opposite. The school choir was practicing for the Greek national "OXI day" in preparation of the upcoming celebrations. "OXI day" is a commemoration of the anniversary when former Greek Prime Minister said "No" to an Italian ultimatum to allow Italian forces to occupy strategic locations in Greece or else face war in 1940. When I was transcribing this lesson, I noticed that the patriotic songs were actually recorded together with the children's and the teacher's comments and it was surreal to try to transcribe these completely different happenings simultaneously.

On stage, the girls assumed the roles of the mothers, the nurses, and the sock-makers. They were waving goodbye to the boys who were the sons,

the soldiers and the heroes. Both lessons, the one in the classroom and the one on the stage, and many other lessons, in the other classrooms behind walls, in the corridors, during assemblies, shape the creation of citizens. Are these "new" lessons or "old" lessons? They are both; some new and some old, very old. Inside the classroom, the focus was on reversing stereotypes and representing this in a playful manner; there was no memorizing or putting costumes on. For what was happening on the stage, there was careful practicing and dressing up. There was going to be an audience and the messages where important, therefore they were memorized: "*Μάθετε λοιπόν πως οι Έλληνες δεν πολεμούν μόνο για τη νίκη τους, πολεμούν για τη δόξα και την τιμή τους*" [Greeks don't fight only for victory but for their glory and honour] I heard the children recite.

I watched the OXI celebration at Strovolos Elementary. On the way to the theater Georgia, a 5th grader complained: "Every year the same thing, over and over again". The song "*Γυναίκες Ηπειρώτισσες*", was being played, praising the values of the Greek women from Epirus.

| | |
|---|---|
| Γυναίκες Ηπειρώτισσες, | Women from Epirus, |
| μέσα στο χιόνι πάνε | walk in the snow, |
| και οβίδες κουβαλάνε. | carrying bullets. |
| Θεέ μου τι τις πότισες | God, what did you give them to drink |
| και δεν αγκομαχάνε; | and they don't kneel? |
| Γυναίκες Ηπειρώτισσες, | Women from Epirus, |
| ξαφνιάσματα της φύσης. | wonders of nature. |
| Εχθρέ, γιατί δε ρώτησες | Enemy why didn't you first ask |
| ποιον πας να κατακτήσεις; | who you set out to conquer? |

One child recited "*Το ισχυρότερο όπλο είναι η ψυχή, ζήτω η αθάνατη Ελληνική ψυχή*" [The most powerful weapon is the soul. Hurrah for the immortal Greek soul]. The presentation that followed was about the Greek flag. A girl pretending to be Greece asked the children pretending to be the

people what colour they would like on their flag. "White doves are our soul, so white is the colour that we want" and "glorified mother, our souls are bathed in the blue water, it gives us life, we want it on our flag", were the answers she received. "And then the golden sun kissed the flag and the kiss was transformed into a golden cross", I heard a child recite and the use of what Herzfeld (1992) described as the power of 'natural' symbols and how they constitute convincing bases for the reification of culture and the creation of the imagined community was concluded.

In the end, the children presented a play called "*Ο πιτσιρίκος*". In this story, a group of German soldiers were guarding their food and a group of Greek children were thinking of ways to steal the food from them. "We might be small, but we are canny, after all, the end justifies the means, let's go *Ελληνάκια* [little Greeks] the old trick always works", said one child. Then a group of children pretended to have a fight in front of the soldiers when the rest stole the Germans' food. This representation conceptually resembles the story of Karagiozis, the trickster figure in the Greek history of Shadow Theater, who tries to oppose the Ottoman regime. I remembered the first time my husband came to watch my class performing at an OXI celebration, in 2001, when I was a teacher at a rural school: "They are holding guns? On stage? What is it about?" he wanted to know as he didn't understand Greek. "It's about being heroic" I said, and it was the first time that I wondered about it. Nobody had questioned it before that.

Despite their incompatibility, the emphasis on nationalism is blended with the values of respecting difference in the enactment of the curriculum. As a result, the educational system may be proud that it includes everything necessary for modern, European, biological citizens, and simultaneously everything necessary for traditional, national citizens. A salad of new and old

to the same audiences who, according to what the situation demands of them, should be able to pull the right card out of their sleeve and give the right answer. Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz (2006) and Spyrou (2006) were indeed right when they wrote about an educational system that "may be seen as strategically offering different messages to different audiences" (Papadakis et al. Kindle locations: 173-177) only in this case, one can also say that it also offers different messages to the same audiences.

## 5.2. Teachers' strategies

Whereas the curriculum appears highly structured, with its aims, the success indicators and the adequacy indicators, when investigated, as Latour (1988) argued, these structures don't seem to hold. Teachers were given a specific method to follow, and the identification of health determinants was expected to result "naturally". But there was nothing natural in the identification of health determinants, it was always a question of what was practically achievable for the social actors. As it followed, each teacher taught their own prevention.

For the home economics teacher, the uncertainty that accompanied the introduction of HE made her consider other solutions, one of which was science education. Approaching science was a way for her to adjust to the changes in her role and alleviate the tension. As she explained,

> I started believing that at some point I will have to go into the classroom. This is why I took over some of the science education lessons this year. Besides, I think the topics are related to mine.

She hoped that with science education she would be able to negotiate her role as a specialist teacher longer. If some teachers would not "give" her health education and some principals would not support her, she could

perhaps keep some health education classes and fill up the rest of her working time with science education. She recognized that there was a danger of "going into the classroom" (become a classroom teacher) and with adding science education to her topics she could still negotiate her specialist role without totally giving it up at once. She had invested in her specialized role for many years, and if experts saw in her cooking lessons a refusal to adjust to the "new", because of the "easiness" of the lesson, it was a risk she was willing to take. Science education represents something else too. Because the importance of her professional role and her specialization on teaching nutrition were being questioned, she attached scientific bioknowledge to reinforce and validate the importance of her nutrition topics and consequently her role, and the decision she took years ago to adopt this role.

Classroom teachers chose their topics primarily based on the availability of teaching materials and not based on the indicators. When I asked the teachers why they chose bullying, they said that they were familiar with it even before the introduction of the curriculum because it was a topic that was frequently being dealt with at school. Indeed, there was also a project against bullying taking place in 2014 while I was visiting Strovolos Elementary in which the 4$^{th}$, 5$^{th}$, and 6$^{th}$ grades of the school where participating. The project was called Daphne, it was a European initiative and it was held with the guidance of the school's educational psychologist under the umbrella of health education. A classroom teacher at Strovolos Elementary reminded me that we had started these topics in this order together before I left, and this was another moment in which my two identities collided, when I realized that not much had changed since I used to be a teacher at the school, despite the introduction of the new curriculum

and the changing indicators. Even Mrs Popi, a classroom teacher at Dimotiko Ayias Elenis who was trained on the new curriculum and was closer to the experts' imaginations, said that her primary aim was always the needs of the classroom, to the point that she forgot to look at the indicators; she hadn't ever dealt with sex education.

Teachers selectively used curriculum's standards to fit their everyday lives and their own comprehension. They chose the topics that they were comfortable with and worked with the materials that were easily accessible in the time constraints that they had. Some things were impossible, like preparing new materials, while simultaneously keeping track of the changes. Teachers had very little time to produce new worksheets from scratch. "They just give us a title and from this we are supposed to form a lesson, thank you very much", was one characteristic comment from a classroom teacher. Some things were more possible, like finding examples from the online platform. For all the teachers, the success indicators were the least influential. Nobody mentioned that they were changing, and nobody had even noticed. I wonder how the time – and money – spent on their writing and re-writing could have been of better use.

These examples are of teachers who taught health education. There were also other teachers who looked at health education critically. A teacher at Strovolos Elementary for example, had specific religious concerns:

> We are sacrificing Orthodoxy on the altar of equality. I think this is a big mistake because this land has some traditions, and someone that is coming should respect them. Just as I will respect the traditions of someone else, when I go overseas.

Another teacher at Strovolos Elementary, during a discussion we had on discipline problems inside school asserted that health education was not

what Cyprus needed at the point because Cyprus was in a state of "*κρίση παιδείας*"[2] [pedagogical crisis] and health education aims were unfitting:

> When you send me one *αμπάλατος* [illiterate, incapable of being trained] what is the school going to do with him? The school is faltering, and we are dealing with health promotion and working with projects etc. etc. etc. It's like expecting an analphabet to do a master's degree.

Latour talked about chains of associations rather than stable structures. The coherence of the chains of associations is a material and a practical matter, not a question of logic. What kinds of other commitments to the curriculum would there have been if the agency of the teacher groups that form the networks that Latour talked about were differently associated? Like in the case of the secondary school home economics teachers for example. Strength depends on what sustains the associations; the relationships of the actors inside school, the materials available, things that teachers already knew how to do, these things form together with the new curriculum a network of possibilities and impossibilities.

As Mol argued,

> 'Science' doesn't have the power to impose itself. If it spreads this is because there are actors outside the laboratory who associate themselves with it. And they may pick through what is on offer and take bits and pieces. They do not get overwhelmed by a massive structure, or a coherent episteme (Mol 2002: 64).

2. Deriving from ancient Greece, Paideia, refers to the rearing and education of the ideal member of the polis. An ideal and successful member of the polis would possess intellectual, moral, cultural and physical refinement (Robb 1994).

## 5.3. Lessons on responsibilization

All the aforementioned examples emphasize choice to prevent risk, and the personal responsibility for future health, what Rose (2007) relates to the moral project of the self. These different enactments are about the development of future citizens and embody ideals of good children that make responsible choices for their own bodies, the benefit of their families, that of their school, and of their future. It's about the types of self that they should aspire to be. When I asked the teachers and the parents if they thought tests or grading was appropriate for health education, they were all against it:

> I think it's like religious education. One university professor told us once: "What does it mean that this student had a 20 in religion? It was supposed to be inside him. And I was watching him. I graded him with 20 but I was watching him, and he was a bad character outside the class. And you see the other student who tries hard, he may even get a 10 but he is humble, quiet and good. Eh what does it mean for religion this grade?" I think something similar is health education. (Classroom Teacher, Strovolos Elementary).

According to the participants, the curriculum's knowledge was about values. How was it possible to give a grade to someone's internal values such as morality? Similarly, it wasn't possible to grade "Responsibility towards health" with a number. The lessons were referring, for teachers and parents alike, to the embodiment of values, to subjectified knowledge. Health education, on the crossroads of science and culture, shouldn't be so much about controlling through subjection as it was about the makings of biological citizens through internalization of subjective values. In Rose and Miller's (1992) sense, it was a responsibilizing mode of government, a mode in which the aspirations of authorities with the lives of individuals were supposed to be linked.

It was also difficult for the teachers not to mention rights and wrongs like the new methods expected. With the exception of the stereotypes example, all the other teachers were talking about children's responsibilities. In the nutrition examples, children's identities are constructed with relation to a morally responsible food discourse. In the bullying prevention examples, children should be understanding, empowered, empathetic and take over the responsibility of preventing bullying incidents. In the active listening example, children who find ways to comply and simultaneously feel empowered are the ones promoted. Children were being taught that if they behaved in this manner then they could solve their problems. Mol (2008: x) describes how "choice like a magic wand turns everything into private concerns and shifts the weight of everything that goes wrong onto the shoulders of the (patient) chooser". Similarly, the type of prevention that I observed was shifting the weight of making good decisions onto the shoulders of the children. The problem with this type of prevention is the individualization of blame for things that do go wrong and for which children have no power over.

There is another issue for concern with the expectations that are being placed on children. When the children are expected to fit into societal patterns, what happens to the children who will not or cannot identify with these examples? The sociologist Ervin Goffman (2005) referred to moments of "mixed encounter" in which marks of difference based on size, color or ability create groups of "normals" and, by exclusion, groups of "others". Using a Foucauldian perspective, Metzl wonders "what new selves and citizens are created by this health rhetoric and what non-selves and non-citizens are constructed and then left out?" (Metzl 2010: 6-7). In the examples discussed in this chapter, the "we" that is used excludes those

children that for different reasons do not fit in. In all the lessons, counter examples were used to reinforce the ideal: The child who doesn't care what his breakfast is, the child with the aggressive behaviour, the child who is not listening to the parent and although not directly mentioned, the child with the non-Greek soul. What happens to the children who can't see themselves undertaking any physical activity because they are disabled? Or to the immigrant children who do not see themselves pictured on the "Mediterranean diet" leaflet or as belonging to its tradition because they come from somewhere else and have different traditions? Are these not good enough? In which citizen group do they belong?

## 5.4. Conclusion

These lessons refer to (some) of the standards that teachers set and as such the various modes of ordering of the self and ordering of society that are being performed. The facts that teachers dealt with, were personalized versions of truths; 'truths' surrounding the nutritional value of food, 'truths' about the nature of children, the 'truth' characterizing the identities of responsible citizens. If these specific truths were not contested, because they were taken at face value, there was a 'truth' that acquired a lot of contestation. The next chapter is about this contested knowledge, the tensions surrounding sex education.

# Chapter 6

# Resistance

Teachers practiced health education in a way that excluded sex education. This chapter discusses teachers' resistance towards sex education and brings forward parents' own imaginations of what they considered "appropriate knowledge" for their children. Another actor appears and assumes an active role in the discussion. The Cyprus Church incites discussions on properness and normality. The parents negotiate the tension by focusing on the home as the most appropriate space to deal with the topic. Questions of morality and gendered ethics are intertwined with questions of normality and with the participants' imaginations of being modern or traditional. The chapter closes with some conclusions on Cypriots' encounter with normality, social stigma and modernity.

## 6.1. A place of tensions: Rejected knowledge

Despite the curriculum's official language and the rhetoric from ministry officials, as it was evidenced in the fieldwork, sex education did not reach the children. I realized this early on, a teacher gave the first indications during our first interview. "Do you know what their view is on masturbation?" she said with a shocking expression on her face.

> We should tell the children that if they feel "the need" they should go somewhere private! I disagree with this. First of all, it is against our religion. Some people set for their children different moral principles. I can't interfere with that.

Mrs Panayiota, the school health visitor, had the same concerns. School health visitors were supposed to talk to 6th graders about the physical changes during puberty and about HIV protection. "But it was such a difficult task!", she exclaimed. The children were "unprepared and burst into laughter". The major sources of parental concern were the references to genital parts, masturbation and flirting. During the interviews with the parents, one mother who was also working as a teacher at a different school explained:

> This thing scares me as a teacher, I experienced it with the 2nd grade. We had a chapter about the parts of the body. When I reached that point, I discussed it with colleagues and the principal. One colleague said that she went to a meeting and a priest was there too, and they all agreed that this thing shouldn't be mentioned inside the school. The principal said that I should limit it and be careful, that some parents would react, that the children would perhaps transfer the words differently and the homes would get the wrong messages, and we might have problems with the parents. I didn't teach the chapter in the end, or very few things; I told them that the breast is important for women to breastfeed and I mentioned nothing about the genital parts.

The teacher expressed her reservations and outlined teachers' precarious positions that arose from the mediation between science and society. During the teachers' training, the consultant tried to ease the teachers' worries: "The sooner the children learn about these things, the healthier their relationships will be with the opposite sex". A teacher asked shyly: "What if they have never heard the word before?" The consultant wasn't asking the teachers to be very bold, he rather pointed to moderation: "You may give them a worksheet to connect the word with the description, they must have heard it somewhere". "But won't they try it then?" she asked again, as she wasn't referring to genital parts, like the consultant had thought. "What do

you mean?" he asked. "Ehm, masturbation for example", she said with a voice that was barely heard. The consultant replied that there is plenty of research evidence that "proves" that talking about these topics does not damage the children, it protects them. If they were well informed, then they would accept their bodies, and it would minimize the dangers of being sexually molested. Then, probably realizing at that moment himself that parents' reactions were an issue, and wanting to strengthen the teachers, he pointed out: "We are *not* obligated to ask for the parents' permission for these things. These are the topics of the curriculum and scientifically proven." Then he went on to explain that they are not supposed to say "do it", they are merely supposed to present the facts; "that some people masturbate and that it is normal and nothing to be ashamed of". But this wasn't good enough for the teachers. As one teacher told me: "It's not wrong to tell the children, but they must be ready to accept it, not that they go home and tell their parents and the parents attack you and then there is no one to protect you". Teachers questioned the ministerial claims about scientifically proven facts as they were conscious of the collective imagination for societal norms. To assume the role of the mediator was a very difficult task, because as teachers saw it, the ministry's "official truth", was tremendously contested.

## 6.2. Religious subjectivity

Constantinou (2012) mentions Greek Cypriot attitudes towards religion and explains that Greek Cypriots resort both to modern biomedicine and religion to make sense of ill health. They may understand health conditions and diseases as biological malfunctions or as the result of God's will, the action of the devil, or as a result of personal wrongdoing. In my study, there were people who contributed bad health and even death, to God's will. While

visiting some friends of my parents, there was a heated discussion about hospital experiences, since one of the participants used to be a nurse. The nurse was arguing that based on her experience, good people die quickly and painlessly, and it is only people who have been difficult or mean in their lives who suffer long deaths. When I asked why is it that sometimes young children die, I was told that this happens to prevent the family of future pain or the child of future problems. The common view is that Greek Cypriots are Christian, and Christian is taken to signify Orthodox. Looking for the reasons for this proximity to church, Loizos (2008) suggested that Orthodox Christianity provided a system which gave to the refugees "meaning to their particular losses, offered a degree of comfort, sometimes provided additional material support and created a visual environment of spiritual protection" (Loizos 2008: 113).

One Friday morning, I accompanied the children of Strovolos Elementary on their visit to the church. Before the visit, Mr Neophytos, the 6$^{th}$ grade teacher at the time, asked them to remind him how we show our respect in church. "We don't do nonsense"; "We don't talk"; "We don't climb on the church pews" said some of the children. We went on foot, and I knew the way very well as I used to walk it with my class three times per year when we would go to church. The children were not particularly attentive inside the church. They then proceeded for the Holy Communion, and to the infuriation of the primary school teachers, the secondary school teachers led their classes first to the communion; whereas the primary school children were younger and had unofficial "priority". A few non-Orthodox children stayed at school that day. According to schools' policies, they may join if they want to, as the exceptions are welcome if they want to observe the religious practices of the majority, but there was no precedent of an orthodox child not

participating. The priest held his sermon about how receiving Holy Communion is important for the body; the biggest gift of Christ to humankind. Then he talked about the daemons that might push people away from the holy path and he reminded me of the analogy of the angels who watch over good children that are mentioned in some Christian children's books.

That the Church of Cyprus is perceived as a legitimate actor inside schools and it also sees itself as such, is not new. Anthropologists that have researched Cyprus, have mentioned this extensively. The anthropologist Peter Loizos (1981) in his anthropology of Argaki village describes, for example, how the teachers in the village had to sign papers stating that they were Christians. The Church of Cyprus is also a political actor; the organization who fought for union with Greece during the 1955-59 campaign (EOKA), had as its leader Archbishop Makarios. According to Kitromilides, the nationalization of the Orthodox Church points to the "declining ability of the Cypriot Church to assume an autonomous social and ideological role in modern society" (Kitromilides 1989: 5). Christianity and nationalism are still connected, but not in imaginations of a union with Greece nowadays. According to Kitromilides (1989), the connection can be traced to the notion of Hellenochristian civilization as the result of a synthesis between the Ancient Greek past and Cyprus' Orthodox Byzantine heritage. [1]

1. In his newest book, Kitromilides (2016) explores the phenomena of national assertion in Orthodox cultures, and the consequent "nationalization" of Orthodox Churches and traditions, that pose theological and moral problems of a parallel but not identical nature to the problems posed by the encounter of Orthodoxy and Enlightenment (Kitromilides 2016). Kitromilides, uses examples from as far back as 1750 to support that the Enlightenment, as it was experienced in the Orthodox religious cultures of the eastern half of Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, emerged "not as a movement against religion or against the Church, but rather as a movement

The current Archbishop, who is not for that matter perceived by the people as necessarily expressing Christian views, often uses his role as head of the Church to publicly express personal views on matters that are not necessarily related to religion. References to educational matters are found for example in some of the synodical circulars that are distributed to churchgoers during Sunday Mass. One of these refers to the introduction of the Cypriot dialect in the new Curriculum as a mistake, because as it is claimed, "it might lead to the development of a Cypriot ethnic consciousness instead of a Greek ethnic one" (Cyprus Church 2013).

The involvement of the Orthodox Church has more adversaries nowadays. The widespread use of online newspapers and social networking have given more people the opportunity to express their opinion and has simultaneously widened the audience one can reach. The president of the Institute of Psychological and Sexual Health in Greece, for example, often appearing on Cyprus TV as a specialist on sexual health, accused the Church of being "the big obstruction of sexuality with its beliefs that children shouldn't learn anything about sex until marriage".[2] In addition, the Cyprus Humanist Association, an NGO founded in 2015, although quite small, voiced protests in the Media against priests visiting schools for scheduled confession sessions. Other remonstrations that the association has voiced,

against intellectual inertia and cultural backwardness" (Kitromilides 2016: 5). The Orthodox Church, he explains, had a remarkable openness to scholars of the Enlightenment, "to whom it willingly entrusted important roles in its educational establishments because they were better educated and therefore better qualified to help the Church to transact one of the main components of its pastoral work concerning the education of the faithful" (Kitromilides 2016: 10). In the same book, Makrides mentions that "the Western Enlightenment simply continued the path initiated by the ancient Greeks, so that modern Greeks had every right to profit from what was happening in Western Europe in modern times" (Makrides 2016: 45).

2. Retrieved 13 September 2015 from http://www.askitis.gr/sexualhealth/

involve children's actual decision power when it comes to churchgoing with the school, school visits to church to worship holy remains and attending the lesson of religious education. The Ministry of Education may excuse primary school students of other religious groups from attending religious services and instruction at the request of their guardians, but Greek Orthodox children do not have the option of opting out. Both the Commissioner for Children's Rights and the Cyprus Ombudsman at the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights issued recommendations to the Ministry of Education concerning religious freedom and neutrality of the State against any religion, which are available online. [3] However, the secondary school teachers' union president rejected the recommendation that children of sixteen years and older should be able to decide themselves if they want to go to church, asserting that "churchgoing is a decision for the parents to make". In light of this religious subjectivity, the following section describes the anthropologist's encounter with parents on the sensitive topic of children's sexuality.

## 6.3. Parents thoughts on Sex Education

The parents were troubled. They all recognized that sex education was attempting to enter their children's lives and were trying to remain in control of what their children would hear. Some of them thought of me as an expert on the topic. They viewed the interview as having an informational character, one in which I would inform them about what is being or should be done. However, the only thing I could tell them was what was officially in the

3. Report AKP 70/2015. Retrieved 20 November 2015 from http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/index_new/index_new?OpenForm/

curriculum and (at the time) in the indicators. As for what was actually being done, I am afraid I knew less than they did.

Some parents indeed said that they did want the school to talk about sex education. They had questions themselves, and (some) children were asking questions which the parents could not answer, especially in the case of a son asking the mother.

> It's difficult for me to talk to my son (6th grade) about where babies come from. And he is not asking his father, he is asking *me*. I think the school should contact the parents first, so that we know at home to talk in the same language. Not that the school says something else and I something different. But it is difficult, I don't know if the school will say something, it's already April, when will they have the time? But they shouldn't encourage premarital relationships (Mrs Vasiliki, Mother).

There was a line to be drawn between specific physiological and biological functions (like names of body parts and where babies come from) which were somewhat generally acceptable, and culturally contested norms like masturbation and premarital relationships (which are what parents understood from the reference to "flirting"); whereby both were rejected. While the school was seen as embodying a kind of expertise on the 'scientific' nature of the topic, there was a moral nature to the topic as well that was being inscribed by culture embodied by religion. Mrs Vasiliki saw the two essential qualities on the subject matter as contradictory, and legitimately wanted to be involved in the discussion.

In the following excerpt, Mrs Kyriaki also prefers to have control of the topics herself:

> In my opinion, the home is more appropriate for these topics, not because of conservatism, but because I think that even in the

> Gymnasium there are children who don't know what masturbation is. When you continuously deal with a topic, sometimes you cause an increased interest where there shouldn't be one. Like premarital relationships, it is a huge chapter, which I think a child is not able to manage (Mrs Kyriaki, Mother).

For Mrs Kyriaki, children's sexual frailty should be protected and the choosing of the "how" and the "when" children will be "exposed" was important. Others may misinterpret this as conservatism, but to her, it was the family's assignment to instill in the child the virtues and values that it considers important.

Many parents said they did not want the school to talk about sex education because as they argued, the children were too young. For these parents, the family was the only legitimate space within which these topics should be raised. However, would the children ask if they realized that the topic was not to be discussed? "Some children may be ready, but my child is certainly not", they argued when they imagined for their children an age not before 12 (the age that they leave the primary school) as an appropriate age for these topics to be addressed. Sexual knowledge represented a boundary between childhood and adulthood and imaginations of preserving the perceived innocence of children are strengthened through parents' efforts to protect them from adulthood's "victimization" that this knowledge entails. [4]

4. The theme of the "right time" had always had considerable importance for the ancient Greeks, Knowing the moment when it was necessary to act and the precise manner […] one of the essential aspects of the virtue of prudence […] that made one capable of practicing the "politics of timeliness" in the different domains-whether this involved the city or the individual, the body or the soul-where it was important to seize the *Kairos* (Foucault, 1986: 57-58).

After the interviews with the parents, it was clear that the parents were choosing the home as the most appropriate space to deal with the tension. Even if they admitted that it is difficult to talk about this and treat the child as a sexual human being rather than just a child that needs protection, they still said that they wanted to be personally involved rather than letting schools do so. I wondered whether it was because they wanted to choose the right timing that fitted each individual child, as Mrs Kyriaki claimed:

> I believe that the perception and disposition of each person is so different that a teacher, as much as he sees them in a classroom setting, there are some things that he will never know about these children. So, it is difficult to introduce this topic in classrooms with so many different people; is there just one approach appropriate for all the children? I consider it dangerous. And if the school wanted to help the parents it should find a way to address the parents so that they choose when their child is ready (Mrs Kyriaki, Mother).

There was a reiterating pattern that did not just involve "timing", as the parents claimed. The parents repeatedly mentioned schools that "shouldn't promote premarital relationships" and teachers who "shouldn't normalize masturbation". In this pattern it was clear that the parents recognized that schools are not neutral at all and cannot claim to present "facts only". Parents' persistence with the *home* was about having control of what the children would perceive as *normal*. It was about considering the family and not the school as the custodian of moral values. Except for one parent who attended school in England, none of the other participants had experienced sex education in school; neither as pupils themselves nor as parents of pupils that had it as a topic in school. The parents and teachers whom I spoke with were, in their vast majority, either very young or unborn at the time of the Turkish invasion and had spent their childhood during the rapid economic development of the country. *Their* parents were born in the 40s or 50s,

during British colonization and subsequently the struggle for independence, a period of extreme poverty. This generation had specific cultural imaginations on the proper gendered roles of men and women, who were mainly introduced to one another through family members or the *προξενήτρα* [the matchmaker] and were supposed to share a bed only after marriage. Persianis (2004) has mentioned the family that sees itself as required to act, to monitor, to protect, and shape the child's understandings, especially young women's moral virtue. Honour and shame, have been claimed to be *the* characteristic of Mediterranean societies (Peristiany 1965). The family's honour, closely intertwined with the neighbours' opinion, was manifested in the protection of the female virtue who should remain untouched and therefore "clean". According to this ideal model, one's honour must be recognized by public opinion because the community, and not the individual, is the custodian of social values (du Boulay 1974). I only met two parents who had discussed sex with their children. One of them, Mrs Artemis, had bought sex education books for her daughter, Zoe. "But other parents don't" she said. When Zoe's friends were at their house, they would all be around her books and would rush to hide them when Mrs Artemis would enter the room. So Artemis was sure "it's not normal to talk about it and other parents don't".

## 6.4. Normalization

Knowledge that is presented in the school setting is acknowledged, accepted as common practice, legitimized, normalized. This normalization is what the parents were afraid of when they said that knowledge might "push the children to try sex sooner". If it was discussed, then it was going to be presented as a "choice" and the parents did not think that there should be unlimited choices for their children. As Mrs Kyriaki stated: "I don't believe

that you can do whatever you want in order to feel well". This was especially visible when the interview turned to the topic of families.

According to the Special Eurobarometer 437, 80% of Cyprus' respondents agree that school lessons and material should include information about sexual orientation and 78% about gender identity. However, the report on implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the committee of ministers of the council of Europe on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity by the Republic of Cyprus (Kapsou and Mantis 2012), a report issued by the Cyprus Family Planning Organization and the accept-LGBT, criticizes most government departments they approached. They argue that most government departments were not even aware of the recommendation and it was only through the work done in the context of the aforementioned report that they got to know about it.

The Church of Cyprus actively participated in the discussion about homosexuality, and its legitimacy as a partner in this discussion was taken as natural by the participants. In this interesting excerpt in which the Church sides with Science against "overseas groups", the Church tries to point out the unnatural and abnormal nature of homosexuality. The Church Holy Synod wrote in May 2014:

> Men and women that are instigated and carried away by overseas groups, or from a confusion of their own consciousness, and support that the contiguity of same gendered people is *φυσιολογικό* [natural]. The Church and Science consider homosexuality as a human Fall and a human disease [and] suggest correct confrontation and cure […] as Church we stand always with sympathy and understanding next to

> every fallen fellowman […] and we pray that he repents, realizes his fall and asks for God's mercy (Cyprus Church 2014). [5]

During the fieldwork, the cohabitation pact was being discussed in parliament and there were articles in the press and discussions on TV panels. Intrigued by this discussion, I asked the parents what they thought about different types of families, including same-sex families, and if this was something that should be mentioned in schools. In my fieldwork all of the respondents, except one, agreed that families of two fathers or two mothers were unacceptable, and they did not want this mentioned at school. They couldn't imagine it affecting "us" Cypriots. Mrs Vasiliki explained her worries during our interview:

> This shouldn't be promoted. They already gave us a letter from the Church on this, have you seen it? (She hands it to me). They asked us to sign it and leave it at the church. For this thing. There is going to be a festival (referring to the accept-LGBT festival). *Όλος ο κόσμος* [all the world, everybody] will protest. These signed letters are for the Mayor because it is the Municipality that is organizing the festival. This is why I say that it shouldn't be promoted by the school this thing because it is something that ruins the family. It is something that our religion tells us that it is not normal (Mrs Vasiliki, Mother).

In the following excerpt, Mrs Vera mentions modernity and sides with "old-fashionism", using the term to mean tradition and conservatism rather than archaic or obsolete. In her eyes, tradition represented family values and clear-cut family roles. Mrs Vera did not mind being characterized as "old-fashioned" because, as she explained, roles in the families were important:

5. The circulars of the Church Holy Synod were retrieved 28 January 2016 from http://churchofcyprus.org.cy/ 15107 and http://www.churchofcyprus.org.cy/documents/ Synodiki_Egkyklios_gia_themata_paideias_2013.pdf

> It should be referred to as a social reality, but I totally disagree with "two fathers", "two mothers". Maybe this is considered old-fashioned, but I think that the roles in the family are important. I don't know what is happening in Europe, but for us it's a little bit early to start discussing it. They can frame it in the context of social discrimination. The point is, that one brings the other. If it is acceptable, where do you draw the line? They should or shouldn't get married, they may adopt or not adopt children, is this something that the school can discuss or is it something that the family should discuss? I am not sure that our society is ready to discuss this and if the children are ready to accept it and then talk about it with their parents. There is going to be a big problem. I don't think that society should evolve into a society that accepts everything. Because we need to draw a line (Mrs Vera, Mother).

While parents did not want same sex parenting to be mentioned at school, homosexuality was not at first plainly rejected by all parents: "It is a part of life now, they see it all the time on TV, so yes, they should learn about it in school". "Personally, I don't agree with it, but I respect that it exists", or "I wouldn't mind that they learn the different", or "I am not totally okay when the children see two men or two women kissing on TV. I don't like that. But to explain it in a lesson, I understand this", they mentioned. However open-minded they might appear, as the discussion proceeded, it became suddenly clear that these parents too did not exactly have acceptance and equality in mind when they said, "they should learn about it in school". They too drew a line to separate between what they thought was normal and what in their eyes was an irregularity: "I don't mind that they learn about this let's say 'anomaly' in school". Or "Yes, the school should inform the children so that they don't get a shock when they see them" and "the lesson about homosexuality is something for the future because I don't think that in Cyprus we have homosexuality to such a great extent". There was no

imagination of homosexuals belonging in different but, nevertheless, equal groups. Parents may tolerate that they exist, because they can't dispute the fact that they exist - they have seen it with their own eyes, but that it may be something normal is unimaginable. If parents would accept lessons mentioning homosexuality, then it would be to denote its oddity and reaffirm their own normality.

The curriculum's new, self-governed philosophy, arguing for the development of critical thinking skills, was understood by parents as freedom of choice. In my study, the parents were against presenting all options as equally valid, because this would mean that the children were free to choose. As Mrs Kyriaki pointed out:

> I don't think that I would teach my child, you know if you become gay it's ok. Not that I will not accept him, but it is not what I want for him. I don't think that the origins of homosexuality are scientifically proven, I think it may be a matter of choice, but when you give some "*πρότυπα*" [standards] to your children, you give them what you think is correct. There are families with an alcoholic for a father and a drug addict for a mother. I don't say you should reject these people, but I don't promote them as standards to my child. In the same way, I don't think that a homosexual family should be promoted as a standard. And I don't think that two gay men are in a position to raise a child in the same way that a father and a mother will. I don't know if this is considered "*συντηρητική άποψη*" [conservative opinion], but I think that the child loses something from it. This is why I don't see that this diversity should be promoted. To be promoted in sense of accepting diversity and tolerance, yes. But not to promote it as a standard like: "you know, you have choices". I will not give my child the ten choices that exist in society. I will give him the ones that I consider correct. But I will not give him as a standard something that I don't consider correct. (Mrs Kyriaki, Mother)

Mrs Kyriaki's description presents homosexuality as something one "becomes" and "chooses" rather than something one "is" and reveals that Cypriot parents have specific expectations of their children. Related to Herzfeld's description of Honour as "the aggressive presentation of an idealized self" (Herzfeld 1987: 64), the *protypo,* as described by the parents, was an exclusionary standard. One that excluded people who do not conform to expectations. This exclusionary standard was fueled by the Church. As another Church circular, stated:

> Beloved Children in the Lord, the aims of Education should provide a life course for Greek Orthodox Cypriots. The new curriculum does not include Greek and Orthodox identity topics. We need a society with an identity. Multicultural society does not abolish the identity. In fact, the opposite is true. The otherness is a fertile opportunity to clearly realize the identity (Church of Cyprus 2013).

The exclusion of the other is used then, to strengthen the Greek Orthodox identity. Similarly, as the parents highlighted, there shouldn't be an infinite availability of choices, actions and agency should instead be restricted and confined by discourses that regulate the child's being: parents' expectations, societal norms, religion. The view that there aren't any clear borders around science, and that morality and science are intertwined, and knowledge may be produced in places equally as legitimate as experts' laboratories, is not new. The professional, or professional knowledge, is not the indisputable authority able to differentiate between what is and isn't a problem in a person's life, cultural aspects are equally valid. For Foucault (2007) the shepherd-flock game and the city-citizen game were the two sets of beliefs involved in practices for the conduct of self and others. Interestingly, the sets of beliefs the parents were consumed by, although also involving the pastoral power, they were also very much about keeping up the

appearances of their normal selves and families, stigmatizing what they perceived as "abnormal". It was then not surprising that another Ombudsman report mentioned problems encountered by some male teachers who displayed "feminine" characteristics at schools who were rejected by children, colleagues and parents because they represented the wrong "*protypa*" for children. [6]

## 6.5. The stigma of being non-conformal

> I talked about transsexuals to my daughter, she asked me when she was in kindergarten if men can have children. At that time there was a story in the news about a transsexual man that had a baby. So, I explained to her that some people may be born as a woman but when they grow up, they feel more like men, but they continue to have the biological organs of a woman, so yes, they can have a child. Zoe hugged me and told me "Mami this is why I love you so much, because you explain things to me, all my friends asked their parents and all of them said 'no it's impossible' but we heard it on TV that it happened, and we were wondering". So, the next day she went and told her classmates. And I met some of their parents at a birthday party and some of them came up to me and complained about the things their children must listen to because of me. A father told me: "Aren't you scared that in the future your daughter will become a lesbian and that this will be your fault?" (Mrs Artemis, Mother).

In Mrs Artemis' story, the other parents disliked the fact that their children were exposed to stories illustrating a different standard and held Mrs Artemis responsible. During a follow up interview, Mrs Artemis told me that she had only recently found out that the other families were going on excursions on Sundays and that nobody had told her. This also had

6. The Report 11/20/2012 was retrieved 13 November 2014 from http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ Ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/presentationsArchive_gr/ presentationsArchive_gr?OpenDocument/

consequences on Zoe. She didn't want her mother to go and complain to the school every time she didn't like something, because she felt targeted and different and she didn't want to be different. Her classroom teacher described her as "very, very reserved". In his words: "She looks as if she has a fear inside her, she does not laugh". When her Art teacher said that she wasn't particularly accepted by the other children, she attributed this to her being a "free spirit" whereas the other children think "inside the box". I wondered if a child can appreciate being a "free spirit" to use her teacher's phrase. Having Artemis as a mother wasn't easy and Mrs Artemis recognized this herself when she said that there is a chasm between how she tried to raise her daughter and the norms being conferred by the school, and wondered how much she should be telling her daughter. When she disagreed with the other parents' gathering of money for the teacher's Christmas and end-of-year presents and told Zoe so, Zoe was convinced too. But then, only the children that did contribute to the present could participate in crafting the Christmas cards for the teacher one afternoon, and Zoe wasn't allowed by the mother who organized this event, to participate. In this case, what was the best strategy for Mrs Artemis? Voice her grievances and risk placing her child on the margins, or just comply? Artemis chose the first, but she recognized that it wasn't always the best course of action for her daughter. It takes a lot of strength to oppose what the public opinion considers "normal" and many parents comply with the norm because to do otherwise would possibly be stigmatizing for the whole family. Cyprus' small population and obsession with normality mean that being non-conformal can be quite stigmatizing. In Carter et al.'s descriptions about stigmatization, stigma is about social unacceptability (Carter et al. 2011). Goffman (1963) mentions the "spoiled identity" and argues that the negative effects of stigma can be avoided only by "passing

as normal" or changing the people with whom one interacts, suggestions that sound almost impossible in the small Cypriot society.

The standards that the children have to keep up with, have consequences for the ones that 'fail' them; consequences that extend beyond the individual. As Gisela Welz writes, referring to the intense social control in Cyprus, it is "not only the individual being held accountable for her or his actions by public opinion, but these also reflect back on family and kin" (Welz 2001: 26).

Conforming to an expected standard is a burdensome task; not only for children but for parents who may be unable to follow the norm as well, as the State itself appears rigid in its typecasting. A single mother who participated in the research explained how she was struggling with the State's inability to accept her as "never married" as opposed to "divorced", which would have been easier to deal with, bureaucratically. Since she had no divorce papers to present them with, she couldn't qualify for the category "single parent" and receive a small financial support from the State. This single mother also had difficulties in being viewed as a family by other parents. She mentioned a teacher-parent evening she attended. During the meeting, she asked the teacher if other types of families would also be mentioned in the class because her daughter had difficulties the year before in completing the worksheets with the two parents. One of the other mothers present immediately replied with "but these are not the normal families and children should learn what a normal family is".

## 6.6. Placing borders around normality and between Self and Other

Once the experts inside the Ministry recognized the tensions with sex education, the indicators were being rewritten and materials that referred to

sex education disappeared from the online platform. A school consultant explained, "They disappeared, we don't know who did it, but they disappeared, and why? Because there may have been a picture of a naked child and *one* person might have complained". There might have indeed been only one complaint, but one backed up by what Welz defines as the "localized nature of tradition". A tradition that is "both the essence of collective memory and the fabric of contemporary social life [...] and imply both an openness to the world and the introverted, parochial nature of a small society" (Welz 2001: 24). What the society perceived as normality and masked behind moral or family values was eventually for the people inside the ministry more important than the modernization process, which they themselves had initiated.

Cairns and Johnston (2015) referred to the term "calibration" and argued that people tend to avoid the borderline. In the examples presented in this research, the borderline appears to be quite thick and the socially accepted norms were placed in a small circle in the middle. People who for different reasons did not belong in the norm risked stigmatizing themselves and their families, and their social acceptability was endangered. As Constantinou argues, in his research of kidney transplantations in Cyprus: "a person who is rehabilitated socially is regarded as 'normal' and conversely, a person who is considered normal is assured of a successful social life" (Constantinou 2012: 30).

Additionally, authors who have dealt with the honour and shame debate (Herzfeld 1987) agree that these categories deal with the lines of social inclusion and rejection, the sexual aspects of which are but one facet. The questions of honour and shame also concern "protection and penetration of an intimate view of communal and even national identity" (Herzfeld 1987:

41). Spyrou (2011) mentions how in Cyprus, because of the nationalistic context, Self and Others are constructed in oppositional and exclusionary ways, which are highly stereotypical and prejudiced, characteristic of societies which have suffered from conflict. Anthias (2006) argues that the desire to be modern and therefore open to transformations of the self is bound by the construction of the Self as opposite pole of the Other across the border and in this framework, imaginations of hybridity in Cyprus are difficult to accept. The examples from the fieldwork also show Otherness being used as an example to strengthen the identity of the Self through processes of exclusion. The references to multiculturalism or to diverse groups were not seen as a celebration of polyphony, and for many of the research participants, diverse groups would serve as reminders of people who should be pitied for their misfortunes, reinforcing their own sense of "normal" selves. Relative to that is the assertion of Greek Cypriots of their superiority over non-European others, seen by scholars as related to the ambiguity that they feel about their European identity (Philippou 2005; Spyrou 2009).

Before I go on to address the children's actual views, I will refer to the moments of encounter between parents and teachers. These moments of encounter were not about contested topics because those were avoided. They were about everyday topics, as the following chapter explores.

# Chapter 7

# Moments of Encounter

We have seen how the introduction of the curriculum created tensions because of local actors' imaginations of morality and normality. The moments of encounter between teachers and parents in this chapter did not take place in the classroom, neither were they officially documented like in the case of protocols of teacher-parent meetings. Contrary to some educational studies in the Cypriot context (i.e. Symeou 2009) where the relationship between parents and school has been evaluated as very limited, my experiences within these two schools show a greater extent of parental involvement, albeit not the type that educational research findings suggest or perhaps are even able to measure. Following Anna Tsing, examining the effects of modernization commitments "requires attention to the social worlds both of and beyond modernization visions" (Tsing 2000: 329). These moments had to do with everyday topics that worked around official scenarios and were primarily concerning what these social actors had in common: children. They reveal the expectations that social actors placed on others in light of the moral responsibilities they subscribed to for themselves.

## 7.1. Protecting the child

The following examples describe moments of disagreement between mothers and teachers. Mrs Aggela, a bank employee, was disappointed because none of the teachers had managed to inspire her son, Rafaellos. According to her, this was the reason why he was demotivated inside the

classroom and barely participating. Giannis' mother was also disappointed; to her it seemed that the teacher was especially picking on her son when others were barely reprimanded. Fotis' mother also complained; the teacher told her that her son wasn't doing his homework. She asserted that the teacher should always check that the children had noted down their homework and also convince them of why it is important to do so. However, these 5th grade children's teachers, at Strovolos Elementary had very different views. Mr Neophytos, Rafaellos' teacher, mentioned one morning in the staff room how Rafaellos' mother had embarrassed him in front of all the parents, when she shouted during the parent-teacher meeting held the evening before: "The teachers should finally find Rafaellos' buttons!" (meaning that teachers should find a way to arouse and understand his individualities). The teachers were unsettled. "What did you reply to that?" asked one teacher. "Well, I said that it's Rafaellos who should try to find the teachers' buttons". The teachers were pleased and another one said: "I wonder what will happen when Rafaellos goes into society, will the society be adjusting to his personal needs?"

In the second aforementioned example, Giannis' teacher also described the incident to me. She said that she had spoken separately with both children involved in the incident and wondered how it was possible that Giannis' mother knew what the teacher had told the other child? Besides, the other child involved "said he was sorry, but Giannis was still complaining and for this reason it took longer to resolve the issue with him". Finally, Fotis' teacher said that if Fotis was capable of gluing a piece of paper on top of the teacher's comment which read "Homework not completed", to hide it from his parents, then he was capable of assuming the responsibility of noting down his own homework.

In the same light, during a different interview, Skevi's mother told me how Ioli had been bullying her daughter for two years. She informed the teacher and contacted the principal, mentioning that her daughter was crying and didn't want to go to school anymore and asked to be moved to a parallel class. The principal advised her to write to the ministry. After the Ministry's approval, Skevi was allowed to change classes. As there were no other steps taken to address the bullying, other than removing the victim from the classroom, the mother was not relieved and she phoned Ioli's mother herself. However, this phone call proved to be a disaster because Ioli's mother asserted that there was nothing wrong with her own daughter and if Skevi had a problem then her mother should take her to a psychologist. According to her, Ioli never lied, it was Skevi who was lying, and she was choosing to side with her child.

These moments may have different actors, but they have something in common. They describe power struggles with strong mothers negotiating situations on behalf of these eleven-year-olds, believing that their own children were being disadvantaged, when all the while the children's own agency, is not mentioned or considered. They are about protecting passive children, and their dominance is visible exactly because it rests on children's silence. The mothers were not only involved in the projects of their own children's upbringing and health, they were also morally evaluating other mothers. The following section attempts to describe in more detail how parenting, especially motherhood, manifested in the Cypriot context during the fieldwork, with some references going back to my teaching past.

## 7.2. The competition for best parenting

There is a whole discourse on prevention, with the notion of the "normal child", the "super child" and the "child at risk" (Kelle und Mierendorf 2013), not only in Medicine and in Education, but inside the home as well. Kascak and Pupala (2013) mention for example the ,,Wettbewerbsausstellungen" [competitive displays] of children in the United States, like the "better baby contests". Ideas of good parenting follow a similar trajectory in Cyprus, where there is a strong emphasis on the family and extended kin well into adulthood (Attalides 1981; Mavratsas 1992; Peristianis 2004). Lengwiler and Beck (2008) mention in their research with Thalassemia patients in Cyprus, the remarkable success of the screening of youth to check if they have the Thalassemia mutation[1]. This success was not only due to the unique coalition of actors (patient organizations, haematologists, health politicians, the clergy of the Cypriot Orthodox Church and international experts); it was also about this being interpreted by the participants as an ethical obligation to the future family. As Peter Loizos mentions, in post-war Cyprus having continuity of life goals "particularly education, advancement, marriages and parenthood for their children have been rewarding for Cypriots because they remained practicable" (Loizos 2008: 9). Aspirations to property and welfare collapsed, but social capital remained a standing structure. "The cultural ethic that parents must work hard to educate their children was seen as a shared, consensual and internalized norm" (Loizos 2008: 112). This ethical obligation towards the family was evident in this study. Parents in both schools were actively preoccupied with offering to their children the best that they could. They talked about the children's opportunities;

1. Thalassemias are inherited blood disorders characterized by abnormal haemoglobin production. In Cyprus, this mutation is called in laypeople's terms as having "το στίγμα" - the Stigma.

opportunities that the children should have in order to optimize their present and maximize their possibilities for the future. They also talked about a fear of deprivation, perhaps stemming from hardships endured in a war-torn country and the periods of poverty and interethnic conflicts that followed. The parents interpreted it as their ethical duty to protect their children from deprivation and help them advance themselves, and this manifested in different ways.

There were for one the special occasions: Christmases that were "for the children"[2] with expensive toys delivered on New Year's Eve by *Άγιος Βασίλης* (the Greek St. Basil who very much resembles the American Santa Claus). There were also the children's birthday parties; with professionally made birthday cakes ordered from confectioneries and organized catering costing more than a few hundred Euros. In addition, there were the everyday occasions: parents who organized almost all of their free time around the children's perceived needs. Children were driven to school and picked up at lunchtime. Towards the summer months and then again in September, it may have been as Sotiris pointed out "too hot" and this was the reason he would be sitting inside an air-conditioned car. For the rest of the year though, there were still always hundreds of cars parked outside the school and it was considered normal that the children were being picked up. Those whose parents worked, were being picked up by their grandparents who had already also prepared lunch for the children. In addition, parents spent almost every afternoon driving their children to private lessons. The World Bank mentions Cyprus as the second country among the European countries

2. Newspaper article retrieved 8 June 2016 from http://www.hri.org/news/cyprus/cmnews/2000/00-12-24.cmnews.html

with the highest investment on private tutoring (World Bank 2014: 29). Concurringly, for the parents in this research, but also back when I was a pupil myself but perhaps not to such an extent, the emphasis on private lessons was a shared consensus. The children I spoke with mentioned many private lessons: English (some even German), gymnastics, karate, badminton, dancing, football, violin, piano, guitar, painting, and theatre. This competition was present whether the parents could afford it or not. During one focus group interview, when I asked them about their afternoon activities, Konstantina answered my question on private lessons with: "On Mondays I go to English, on Tuesdays something else; on Wednesdays English again, on Thursdays something else, then I study for the homework of the private lessons of the next day". In this case, it was what Konstantina wasn't saying that was important. I used to know the family and I knew that Konstantina's family could not afford many private lessons. Despite that, she actively participated in the discussion, exactly in the way the other girls did, but used the vague phrase "something else" instead. The private lessons became a status symbol and even if the participants could not afford them, they would still strive for them. A similar example was mentioned by a school principal and concerned the choice of preschool:

> Parents may not be able to afford the private preschools, but they send their children there. "They will be better prepared" they say.

It was a silent competition of parents that were taking "proper" care of their offspring. When a car ran over Mikaela's feet in 2011, which she couldn't see approaching her because of the many double-parked cars in front of the school, the other parents were upset. However, there wasn't any big protest, like the "*mehr Sicherheit auf dem Schulweg*" [more safety for the way to

school] initiatives that I experienced in Germany, neither did anything change afterwards. Mikaela was one of the few children that were walking the way from school back home. The other parents didn't complain because their own children were being picked up and the parents wanted to continue to do so.

Nevertheless, the parents did not think that they had any choice. One mother described her experience with two private English institutes, when she had tried to find afternoon lessons with a private school for her 9-year-old son. "It's much too late for your son", she was told, "normally you would bring him to me for the whole three months of the summer for intensive lessons and then we see if he can join a group". During a second attempt, she was told, "I'm sorry, we don't do beginners at this age". She found one in the end, but the marketing strategies of the private institutes that included symbolisms of "common practice" and "limited spaces" were contributing to her wondering if she had made a mistake that disadvantaged her child. Even though she had made a conscious decision when her son was 6, not to burden him, she now had feelings of regret that she waited for too long. In the meanwhile, private institutes were capitalizing from marketing normality. Consequently, it is not surprising that many parents said, "It is normal, what everybody is doing", and their desire to also be normal would leave no space for questioning.

The moral obligations that the parents imagined for themselves were not only about preparing the children for the future. They were also about organizing the children's time in a way that they thought was "productive" rather than "risky" or "destructive". Some of their comments were: "What else is there to do instead, watch TV?", or "If you don't find activities for them, then they will become victims to the social media." Besides, "there is

nothing else to do" and "there are no other children to play with in the afternoons". Indeed, when Mohammad's mother told me back in 2010 that they were leaving Cyprus to go back to Syria after having lived in Cyprus for almost four years, she explained that the main reason was that her children were unhappy. They had made no friends outside of school and they were alone. "There are no other children with free time in the afternoon to play", she mentioned specifically. She didn't mention being discriminated against, but there wasn't any kind of integration. They felt "different" and so they left in search of more familiar surroundings. In a similar way, Cypriot parents who do not follow the norms, also risk being labelled "different", and this could have been understood as inviting stigma. "It is very difficult to notice that something isn't normal", said Mrs Aglaia, when she talked about her preoccupations with the time her son was spending on the internet. "To spot it, not to accept it as something normal just because everybody else is doing it. And if you spot it, can you really change it?" Mrs Aglaia didn't buy her eleven-year-old son the computer game that was rated "18+" but many of his friends owned the computer game already and she was engaged in discussions over it every day, until she gave up. Continuously insisting that you are different from others around you, not only entails the risk of being rejected by others as we have seen in Artemis' and Zoe's case, it can also be exhausting.

## 7.3. Ideas about good motherhood

These ideas about proper care, both contributed and were simultaneously being reflected in ideas about good motherhood. Motherhood and having a family were and still are two of the main cultural goals for women to achieve full personhood (Constantinou 2012; Argyrou 1996; Loizos 1981). As an unmarried teacher commented "you are only considered successful as a

person in Cyprus if you are married and have children" and this was a prerequisite for a successful social life. Mothers were in their vast majority the ones actively involved with children's upbringing. Similarly to Dubish (1991) who described women's active role in creating Mediterranean public life and social structure in a rural Greek village, Greek Cypriot women were mainly the ones visiting schools and talking to teachers, involved in parents' associations, organized bazaars, had an active role in the children's upbringing and in assuming responsibility for healthy development. Mothers were also the ones involved in children's health and children's food, a responsibility that precedes becoming a mother. Protecting the child's health becomes an aim with the idea of a planned pregnancy, with nutrition supplements like folic acid, and later with neonatal screenings and the public emphasis on breastfeeding. It becomes a responsibility, since public discourse on healthy eating traces the reasons of possible diseases back to pregnancy and early childhood. Hassan-Wassef describes for example the first 1000 days as a "window of opportunity, critical in shaping a child's life-long health and development" (Hassan-Wassef 2012: 407). Health images and mothers' preoccupation with children's food intake are also mentioned in Peter Loizos' ethnography of Argaki in Cyprus. The villagers dreaded Tuberculosis and because of that, all parents wanted their children to look "plump and robust" as this represented a healthy image (Loizos, 1981: 23). In my study, health images were entwined with food intake with mothers assuming an active role which resembled strategic planning and concerned designing courses of action, executing the plan, completing and evaluating.

During the interviews, the mothers viewed children's food intake as their own personal responsibility. The following pages present some of the mothers' narratives during individual interviews while discussing nutrition. I

believe that these mothers spoke to me in a language they thought I could understand, being a mother myself and of similar age. If the interviews had been conducted by a male teacher or a younger female teacher, they may have turned out differently. The mothers spoke to me as if I knew exactly what they were talking about. And indeed, I did.

> I think I am doing a pretty good job, I control it […] I am not *που τούντους γονιούς* [those type of parents] that go very often to Mcdonalds or whatever […] With my son we had a problem, he was too picky but we found his button, we enticed him by telling him that he is not going to be a good football player then and he started eating like footballers do (Mrs Helen).

> When the mother is the one who prepares the sandwich for her child, every mother, she will go and choose the cheese that her child eats, or the specific ham that has no fat that her own child eats, or the specific fruit, *να του το καθαρίσεις να φάει το μωρό σου* [to clean it and peel it for him, so that your baby will eat it] (Mrs Aggela).

Mrs Alexandra was proud that her 19-year-old prepared her afternoon fruit snack by herself without needing to be told to do so:

> But I did a lot of work before; insisting that only fruit is allowed as a snack. And I was counting the pieces because I know that they should eat five portions of fruit per day. I started working on this ever since they were babies (Mrs Alexandra).

Mrs Irini was also proud that Stavros liked homemade food:

> But for this *επάλεψα πάρα πολύ* [I fought very much]. I was continuously trying to explain that ready-made food is not good, that chicken nuggets etc. are harmful. I had to give him a motivation; that he stands and cooks with me or to prepare the lunch somehow differently, to decorate it in nice plates (she laughs). I think that even the plate, the process of placing the small carrots and all the greens, it was a motivation for him. I also explained that we should all sit together at the table and this is the time that we devote to each other

> and talk about our day, this also worked a lot. He now runs happily to place the plates and when we eat, he doesn't want that we just eat but he wants us to discuss how our day was, I think *επέτυχα τον στόχο μου* [I achieved my aim] (Mrs Irini).

These mothers are actively engaged in their children's healthy eating projects and personally assume the responsibility of continuously surveying children's food intake. It is a personal burden, personal hard work and a personal failure for them when it doesn't work, as the following two extracts show:

> Unfortunately he slips up. We are all for a healthy diet; I have been teaching him to eat correctly since he was a baby, it's just that Leonidas is overdoing it with the sweets. And I try to control the situation; this is why I don't want him to be able to find sweets at school. He comes home and then eats here too, he is asking all the time, then he goes to the *γιαγιά* [grandmother], where he may eat three chocolates. Grandmothers and grandfathers are also giving sweets. We try to control this… there is still work to be done (Mrs Evi).

> Anastasia put on some kilos. We stopped buying chocolates, whatever I can do, I try. I stopped buying. She may protest but I tell her, we talked about it, "you know the reason". We try. Whatever I can do, I try. Of course, they are children, I don't want to create a problem of nervous anorexia. She gained 2-3 kilos more than what she should be. I try. With swimming, gymnastics, bicycling, I purposefully take her outside, she likes it of course, we don't say "we go for this reason", she likes it. Whatever we achieve (Mrs Andri).

The ideological imperative for individuals to make food decisions that protect themselves from risk that Cairns and Johnston (2015) mention, typical of a neoliberal food environment, is strongly present for the mothers of this research. Mrs Evi and Mrs Andri try to control the children's food intake. Additionally, Mrs Andri measures Anastasia up against some

standards that she considers appropriate for Anastasia's body. She actively organized a project around the problematic of Anastasia's 2-3 extra kilos and assumed the responsibility of planning it, executing it and evaluating it, and consequently the liability associated with its possible failure. Assuming personal responsibility for children's health and children's food, means that failure also becomes personalized and may be translated as failing as a mother and losing value in the eyes of other mothers. This mind-set extends to ideas about "good" and "inadequate" grandmothers as well, whereby the "good" ones prepare children's favourite lunches and are always available to take care of their grandchildren and the "inadequate" ones do not. What other roles were not taken into consideration by mothers, and *for* mothers, once they adopted the motherly role of guarding children's food, children's learning and children's health? What were the consequences of adopting this role for women's achievement of personhood, especially if they were not mothers and could not adopt the role of the guardian of children's food intake?

## 7.4. Motherhood and the school canteen

Just as women might have seen themselves as "failing", they were also perceived by others as "failing". Ideas about failing mothers appeared when I was interviewing Mrs Lenia, the lady who worked at the school canteen in one of the schools. The school canteen is a three-year rental granted by the School District Board, after request for tenders. The children could buy ministry approved items at pre-approved prices from the school canteen through a window that communicated with the schoolyard. In both schools, there was a problematic around the school canteen that was not new. I knew about it ever since I used to work there. Parents and teachers in both schools

complained that the canteens were selling non-approved items. As a teacher mentioned:

> As a mother, I avoid giving my child money for the canteen for two reasons. Firstly, because I see what is happening with the queue in front of it. There is no equality; the little ones or the weak ones stay behind, and the strong ones push their way to the front, and a child needs 20 minutes that takes up the whole break so that s/he gets something to eat. And secondly, because it's junk food what my child will find in the canteen, something totally unhealthy and maybe even prohibited (Mrs Eleonora, classroom teacher).

When I asked the teachers why this was still happening, they mentioned that the ladies at the canteen "don't care, only want to profit". One teacher told me "We have a crisis now and she shouldn't lose her job", which was very noble, but I wondered if trying to solve the problematic before or after the crisis would have indeed been more successful. Some teachers explained how the reason was simply that people wanted to avoid conflicts. Mrs Eleonora mentioned:

> The members of the parents' association are afraid to do their job and report her because we are in Cyprus and if you report something it might be considered "*κάρφωμα*" [snitching]. Or it's "ο *γνωστός του γνωστού*" [a friend of a friend], or you don't want to jeopardise your relationship with the canteen personnel. I don't know. I honestly don't know. I think this is the way we are.

The teachers and parents whom I interviewed didn't want to be held personally responsible for the falling out with the canteen lady. Holding them personally responsible was taken as synonymous with polarising them. One teacher explained: "There is nobody to act on the complaints, they just tell her that we complained. And if next time around she bids the highest offer she will get the canteen again". Consequently, the social actors

asserted that since nothing would change anyway, there was no need for them to engage in personal confrontations. Indeed, I evidenced no direct confrontation, only tensions and talks behind walls. I did hear an anecdote though from a teacher: "I remember a school, they had puff pastries, a lot of them and it is not allowed. The principal was asking for this to stop. In the end a point was reached at which the canteen lady was standing in the middle of the school yard shouting at the principal for not understanding her".

The ladies who worked at the school canteen in both schools complained that they didn't sell enough to cover for their costs and cited this as the reason why they would bring food items that weren't allowed. I had the chance to talk with two of them and received from one, Mrs Lenia, interesting comments. Whilst Lenia was complaining about her income, she mentioned poor children who had their sandwiches sponsored by the parents' association, by the Ministry and by the Archiepiscopacy, and complained that she would only get her money every two months. It was in this context that her ideas of "failing" mothers appeared. Because what she perceived to be proper motherhood led her to dispute the existence of "poor children". In her words, it was "not possible that their mothers have money to have their nails and their hair done, but can't afford a sandwich for their children" and "what kind of logic is this that allows someone to fall so low and label themselves poor to get anything for free?". For Lenia, it wasn't a matter of external circumstances but a lack of dignity and a lack of motherly qualities that drove some mothers to label *themselves* as poor. She also complained that *"εν κανεί διούμεν τους φαί έχουν τζιαι απαιτήσεις ότι εν τους αρέσκει"* [it's not enough that we give them food, they also have claims that they don't like it], including herself in the group that supports

the less fortunate. The support was for her literal, not only because she wasn't making any profit from these sponsored sandwiches, but also because she was making a loss as she was adding her costs for electricity for her fridge, which were not covered. For Lenia, if their own mothers didn't care, why should she be disadvantaged? A good mother, according to Lenias' understanding, puts her child before herself, and her dignity and honour before her own needs. Lenia assessed the mothers as failing and used this argument to justify her own defiance of the rules. As she put it, "these mothers were anyway giving to their own children sweets and crisps themselves", so why shouldn't she do it?

Perceptions of what makes good mothers underlined food situations and were present in the conflicts concerning food items from the school canteen. Perceptions of good motherhood also extended into teachers' ideas although they were not necessarily involving food decisions. Through teachers' recollections of their efforts to responsibilize the children discussed in the following section, teachers are faced with parents' own ideas of what is "proper" for their child, whilst having to manage their own assumptions.

## 7.5. Responsibilizing someone else's child

Teachers had their own imaginations of "proper" mothers and expectations of good mothers and "proper" childhood upbringings. The teachers I interviewed distinguished between *"φροντισμένο μωρό"* [a child taken care of in the family environment] and *"παρατημένο μωρό"* [a neglected child from his/her family environment]. They also distinguished between *"οριοθετημένα μωρά"* as positive examples; children who have learned that there are limits to the allowed behaviours and respect the rules, and

inversely *"ξαπόλυτα μωρά"*, children who are "let loose" as negative examples. Good mothers often visited the school to ask about their child's progress.[3] They checked their children's homework, and set high standards for the homework done, and would never send the children to school with dirty clothes. At the other end of the spectrum, a bad mother "leaves the child neglected, not checking the homework at all", "everything he achieves he achieves by himself, *μόνος στο πέλαγος* [alone in the open sea]".

### 7.5.1. Tools to responsibilize the parents

The expectations on teachers to be modern and present "facts" went side by side with expectations for parents who were more interested in the advancement of the community rather than the protection of their own home. As the example that follows shows, this was very difficult to achieve.

Strovolos Elementary's participation in the bullying prevention programme "Daphne", aimed to inform children and their parents about bullying. The parents were informed about the programme through letters prepared by the school in collaboration with the educational psychologist. The first letter stated the epidemiological research facts: The European programme Daphne II, 2007-2008, found a bullying occurrence of 17% in Europe and USA. The second letter informed the parents of the characteristics and personality traits of the bullies and the victims:

3. Foreign mothers, used to different school systems in which the teacher will invite the parents if there is a problem, may not realize that this is expected of them and may be unfairly labeled as "bad" mothers.

Table 7.1.: Characteristics of bullies and victims

| Bullies | Victims |
|---|---|
| Physically strong<br>Need to control others<br>Have no empathy<br>Feel no guilt<br>Are aggressive<br>Lack emotional control<br>Tendency to delinquency<br>Have no moral reservations<br>Blame the target child<br>Have low school achievement | Deviate from the norm:<br>(in terms of body shape, skin colour, speech pattern, have learning difficulties or may be charismatic, may be from different nationalities)<br>Have low self-esteem<br>Show stress and insecurity<br>Are physically and psychologically weaker<br>Are passive, lonely and insecure<br>Have better relationships with adults than with children |

Adapted from the 2nd letter sent to parents/Strovolos Elementary/Not dated.

Whilst the second letter prescribed clear-cut characteristics to determine what bullies and victims look like, the third letter focused on the characteristics of the family environment that may encourage children to demonstrate bullying behaviour i.e. very strict or very lenient parenting styles, lacking in correct ways of communicating and setting limits, insecure relationships between parents and child, and cited examples of aggressive behaviour or violence inside the family, which directly attacked the family honour and the parental qualities. The fourth letter included a list with suggestions to parents of bullies and cited a website where parents could find more information[4]:

4. Details on the programme retrieved 18 February 2016 from http://www.moec.gov.cy/ edu_psychology/ evropaika_programmata.html and http://www.moec.gov.cy/edu_ psychology/pdf/dafni_parents.pdf

Table 7.2.: Instructions to parents of bullies

| |
|---|
| - Tell the child that this behaviour is not accepted and that there will be consequences.<br>- Try to find out the reasons of the child's aggressiveness. Is s/he mimicking older siblings? Is it a display of strength? Are there difficulties in anger management present?<br>- Consider afternoon sport activities that can help with teaching the child socially acceptable behaviours.<br>- Reduce time spent on the internet or TV and limit exposure to violent content. |

Adapted from the 4th letter sent to parents/Strovolos Elementary/Not dated.

These instructions were an attempt to responsibilize the parents to deal with bullying behaviours themselves. Besides targeting parental qualities and practices, teachers assumed that the parents were able to acknowledge the possibility that their own children might have been bullying others. They also assumed that with this acknowledgement, parents would be naturally interested and inclined to change this behaviour. As the examples of the fieldwork show, this was not the case. The parents involved in this research were either proud of their children's self-confidence or viewed their children as victims and tried to protect them.

### 7.5.2. Mrs Popi and Marios

At Dimotiko Ayias Elenis, some parents had collected signatures two years prior, to expel Marios from school because he was "too wild". Mrs Popi recognized that he had been indeed "out of control" and tried to responsibilize him and his mother, viewing him as a project.

> He was completely careless with his homework, with his clothes, with everything… he is lacking in this element, to study, to discipline himself. By himself, he can't do it. He needs a policeman on top of him to impose some things, perhaps until he realizes that it is more convenient for him if he achieves it himself. But we had the cooperation of the parents and I think that they themselves were

> supported through our actions toward their son (Mrs Popi, classroom teacher, Dimotiko Ayias Elenis).

Mrs Popi tried to work with both Marios and his mother, in order to empower him and simultaneaously responsibilize both of them. She invited Marios' mother to school and laid out the problems. She prepared a plan of action, told her how to set limits and according to Mrs Popi, the mother was grateful. "It wasn't easy", said Mrs Popi, "parents always try to find an excuse, *μα πέρσι εν είσιεν έτσι προβλήματα... μα σπίτι βρίσκει τα... μα στ' Αγγλικά εν καλός*" [last year he didn't have these kinds of problems... at home he knows the answers... he is good in English]. I knew what she was referring to: Parents' references of other "good" teachers with whom the child performs, placing one into direct competition with other experts. The doubts that are created: If the child is only bad in *your* class; is it because you are not a good enough teacher? Mrs Popi continued: "Or they try to find an excuse for their child and explain why he did what he did". I recognized this too; the tendency to justify their child's behaviour, which related to parents' ideas about their own parental capabilities. If the child is not performing and the school is not to be blamed, is it then because of the home's deficiencies in providing a "proper" upbringing? There is much more involved in the adult discussions about children than simply advocating children's learning and/or social skills. Teachers' responsibilization efforts may be interpreted by the parents as personal failures in good parenting. When they attempt to justify their children, they are simultaneously defending their own parental skills.

Mrs Popi concluded:

> When I got the class for the second year in a row, I saw some of the parents, how they were uncomfortable. I knew their child and I knew

> them, they couldn't hide any more, and this helped; they assumed their responsibilities towards their child.

Marios did stay in school and Mrs Popi mentioned that she was successful in the end with responsibilizing him and his mother. A number of factors contributed to her success. Firstly, she had used written proof: What did Marios actually write here, what did he do and when? Secondly, the principal supported her project of responsibilizing Marios. In her words:

> He took the responsibility of saying the ten negative things and allowed me to say two positive things until I could do it myself. He wasn't trying to phrase it nicely, he was very direct (Mrs Popi, classroom teacher, Dimotiko Ayias Elenis).

Finally, and most importantly, even though they were not identified by the teacher, there were the factors associated to the mother's and the teacher's perceptions about their own value and their views of each other. Mrs Popi had a history of having worked at that specific school for many years and the community knew and respected her. There was no perceived direct competition between her and a different professional that could have been used against her. In addition, Marios' mother wasn't a "useful" example to society. She let him go alone to the park, she wasn't working, neither was his father. Mrs Popi viewed Marios' mother in this light, but the mother also viewed herself in this light. According to Mrs Popi's description, the mother "had a pleading expression. Yes, please help me".

### 7.5.3. Parents and teachers at Strovolos Elementary

In the example mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Rafaellos' mother, Mrs Aggela, knew that her son was misbehaving in school but maintained that these teachers were not teachers in the proper sense of the

word and this was the reason. They just cared about doing their lesson and not about the child as an individual and were unable to understand him. When she complained to me about his teacher not explaining something in mathematics sufficiently, she recounted:

> They are going to close Laiki Bank now, we are in a mess at the bank; I can't come to school to look for her and talk to her. I said to him: "Tell her to explain it better to you" and I wrote her a *ravasaki*: "*Φρόντισε να τα καταλάβει*" [make sure that he understands] (Mrs Aggela, mother, Strovolos Elementary).

The word "*ravasaki*" literally means "a love letter", Mrs Aggela is using this metaphorical cynical expression to emphasise that her letter was emotionally charged and that it was on purpose that she was a bit hard. Mrs Aggela viewed herself as an important player in the society; one that deserved respect. Because of her occupation, especially considering the financial crisis, Aggela's identity as a powerful, useful citizen, is one that includes imaginations of others who should also assume their shared responsibilities in the citizenship game. In both examples, being "useful" to the society was the quality that determined who had the right to speak the last word in an exchange.

What Mrs Popi expressed as a solution to her problem, wasn't experienced by the teachers in Strovolos Elementary. Mrs Ioanna, for example, had stopped the Daphne programme because her class wasn't able to do any of the team building activities without "turning the class upside down". Some of the boys had said to her "we can tell you the answers if you want but we are not going to actually act like that"; and still most of the parents thought that their own children were the victims. Mrs Ioanna gave up. She explained that she was afraid to tell the parents that their children were involved in

bullying incidents or that they were misbehaving, because "The parents don't accept it, they tell you '*πέφτω από τα σύννεφα*' [I fall from the clouds, you catch me completely unawares]. They say that nobody mentioned that to them before, so it is you against everybody else".

Mrs Ioanna perhaps expected that teachers and parents shared common understandings on children's appropriate behaviours. But in the cases where teachers describe the disruptive behaviours however, parents often see this behaviour as a sign of confidence or "spiritedness" that might prove invaluable to their children in future. In the following example, Mr Neophytos comments on the impossibility of continuing with his science lesson and has difficulties with the parents precisely because the understandings of appropriate behaviours are not commonly shared.

> They throw the stuff out of the window. I don't do the experiments in groups anymore; I do one demonstration and they have to watch. I am not allowed to send anybody out of the classroom even if she or he is not letting me continue with the lesson (it is not allowed). They are supposed to use the thermometer to measure the temperature of the boiling water. *Ολάν εννα τα σύρουν κάτω να τα σπάσουν ούλλα* [they are going to throw everything down and break everything]. You have two students who disrupt the whole class, *ό,τι θέλεις κάμε* [do what you will], unless you shout the whole day so that you manage to do at least 50% of the job you are supposed to do. At some point you give up.

Mr Neophytos' narrative extended to include the parents. They were worrying him:

> If you have a falling out with two or three of them then immediately *φκαίνει το όνομά σου* [you get a bad reputation]. They stop coming to ask about their children's progress and they send letters of complaints to the ministry. In the end, it's all about the principal. If from the first year he shows that he will not tolerate any kind of

> involvement from the parents, then they stop. The worst is if the principal is trying to keep equal distances between teachers and parents in a case of a dispute. Then the parents *αλώνουν* [thresh] the school (Mr Neophytos, Classroom teacher, Strovolos Elementary).

For Mr Neophytos, the principal's role was decisive. If he or she was preoccupied with keeping equal distances, in an effort to appear fair, then this was going to be disastrous for the teachers in the school and the school itself. However, it wasn't easy for the principals. What was their role exactly? Were they still teachers, who received a promotion and had a background in educational training and perhaps even an active involvement in the teachers' union POED with a focus on teachers' problems? Or were they now representatives of the Ministry, and should focus on placating any turmoil; responding to every organization's internal need of avoiding conflicts? School principals tend to be presented in the literature as teachers' supporters. Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou (2014) argue for example, for the need of better training for principals so that "teamwork between principals and teachers is achieved" and in order for principals to be able to help them "when they feel anxious, inadequate and overwhelmed" (Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou 2014: 137). Are these suggestions realistic?

As the following example shows, principals are not given any specific guidelines to deal with situations that might create friction between teachers and parents. During the teacher conference with the inspectors at Strovolos Elementary, the teachers mentioned their distress because of some children's behaviours. The inspectors couldn't help them, they only warned that they should be cautious of strict measures because "schools that tried to be strict were falling into a trap", and "if you set strict rules, in two months you will have exhausted them and then you will not know what

else to do". The inspector's statement was not only admitting that there weren't many measures to take, but also that he could be of no help, and it was up to the school actors. In this occasion, the principal, Mr Giorgos, sided with the teachers and mentioned how families refuse to cooperate when the school suggests that there is something wrong with the child's behaviour and wished for the appropriate mechanisms from the Ministry. The inspector reminded them that it's every child's right to receive an education and they shouldn't even think of the possibility of expelling anyone. The principal, caught between his role of answering to the Ministry and his role of alleviating teachers' problems, was unable to find a solution. Everything was pointing towards the teachers. Teachers should manage it themselves. But they should tread carefully otherwise they would risk being bad-mouthed and black-listed: by the parents, by the principal (when completing the section on "relationship with parents" in his evaluation), or even by colleagues.

To make conditions even more burdensome for teachers, the Ministry would also occasionally turn public opinion against teachers, with detrimental consequences for teachers' reputation. For example, after the teachers' union POED announced strike measures in order to complain about the changes in the appointing system in October 2016, the Minister of Education accused the teachers of purposefully waiting until after the school holidays had ended to go on strike, as if their reasons were actually wanting to avoid work[5]. In the end, teachers were expected to culturally fine-tune themselves before any social conduct with parents was to take place; a cultural fine-tuning that should include parents' expectations. It is therefore not

5. Newspaper article retrieved 5 November 2016 from http://dialogos.com.cy/blog/aporripti-ta-peri-maximalistikon-etimaton-i-poed/

surprising that teachers were unwilling to assume the responsibility of introducing sex education and preferred to stay inside a framework in which they felt safe.

## 7.6. Conclusion

Ideas and expectations of good motherhood are embedded into children's lives and affect the social conduct in diverse ways. In my study they are used as a tool to monitor food intake, to organize children's free time, even to legitimize the canteen's lack of adherence to regulations. They even prevail in teachers' responsibilization efforts.

The mothers were interpreting teachers' comments as personal failures in motherhood and personhood, and teachers often had difficulties in addressing the subject of children's behaviour. As it follows, parents subscribed to a moral responsibility towards their own family rather than the community as a whole and even used "objective scientific tools" like the "school instructions to parents of bullies" as a tool to expand their own vocabulary so that they could comfortably point out *other* parents' lack of parenting qualities. As Bryant (2004) mentions, mired in what anthropologists have called "amoral familism", Cypriots were not ready for impartial justice that was not socially relative. Heed needs to be paid to parents' perceived responsibilities towards family and kin which might extend to areas outside school. In future opportunities of career advancement for example, the responsibility towards one's own family, and criteria relevant to kinship, takes precedence over qualifications.

In this discussion on the moral responsibilities parents and teachers subscribe to, the children's voices were silenced, and fathers' voices were

absent. Are we even able to talk about children who make healthy choices when there are hardly situations in which children need to make choices? Are the curriculum's neoliberal dreams materialized when the conditions are absent? How Greek Cypriot children's agency is negotiated, if at all, is what the next chapter discusses.

# Chapter 8

# Children's lives and agency

Ideas and expectations of good parenting, especially those of good motherhood, are embedded into children's school life and affect teachers' responsibilization efforts. This chapter turns its focus to the children. The ways in which children chose strategies, negotiated in their relationships with others and exercised choices, allow us a partial view into the ways they form subjectivities and subject themselves to responsibilization efforts.

## 8.1. Being a child in Cyprus

Many children described that much of their time is spent attending school and private lessons, something that they were not very happy about.

> On an ordinary day, I wake up around 6:30, eat a toast or sometimes cornflakes, and then I brush my teeth. Around 7:30, I go to school; I leave my bag in the classroom and play outside with my classmates until 7:45 when the lesson begins. When the school finishes, at 1:05, I go home, eat my lunch and do my homework. Then someone drives me to my private lessons and afterwards I take a bath and watch some TV (Olga, 5th grade, Dimotiko Ayias Elenis).

When I asked them about the reason they have private tutoring, some of them mentioned being forced by their parents but many of them said, "Because I need to be prepared for my future", or "I may study overseas", showing in this way that they had internalized a positive correlation between obtaining good grades and having a good job in the future. Indeed, if children want to be able to study anywhere else except Cyprus or Greece, they need to speak another language. However, while studying overseas

used to be correlated with better employment opportunities, as the colonial condition had shown Greek Cypriots, this was not necessarily the case now with the financial crisis and the rise of unemployment. Additionally, while afternoon ballet or art lessons were not expected to have a "return on investment", children, similarly to their parents, could not imagine for themselves anything else apart from the future they initially tied themselves to and the present they perceived to represent normality. Spending every afternoon for private tutoring had consequences on the quality of children's free time and also pre-defined the social groups with which the child would interact.

Steketee and Gruszczyńska (2010) in their report about juvenile delinquency in six new EU member states, refer to quantitative findings that support that young people in Nicosia generally spend their free time alone or with their family, as opposed to with friends. Indeed, contrary to Germany where parks are filled with children whenever the sun shines, schoolchildren in Nicosia rarely go out to play during the week. Play is reserved for the ten weeks of summer holidays. During the school year, children don't generally go out to play, and whether children (who may have had the time) would indeed go out to play when there are no other children around, is questionable. Besides, even the construction of the playground equipment is usually prohibiting, since it is made for very young children, defining in this way the socially expected groups to be using it. Indoor playgrounds do have interesting activities for schoolchildren, these are however never cost-free, and they are designed with separate areas for adults and children. Adult and children areas are separated by glass doors or gates and parents (who can afford it) are expected to sit, order a coffee and watch the children, rather than play with them.

It is not only adults and children who are perceived as parts of different worlds; boys and girls also see each other as belonging to different worlds. In the same way the parents subscribed to specific expectations for others, children's subject positions were heavily influenced by specific conceptions for their own gender and those of the 'opposite'[1] one.

## 8.2. "We are very different"

One of the topics discussed with the children during the focus groups interviews was "friendships". During one interview at Strovolos Elementary, some 6th grade girls mentioned that even though they may play with boys, friendships between girls and boys were not common:

Mikaela: We are different, they only care about football, and they don't mind if they get a low grade on a test like girls do.

Anthi: Yes, they don't care… This is probably good because, I mean, perhaps they are not so stressed like we are.

Rania: Boys can easily change friends, but girls might be friends for years.

Chryso: As far as I'm concerned, I prefer to play more with the boys because the girls, if you share your problem, they might laugh at you, but boys don't think like this.

Anthi: I would also like to say something to this, if you tell something to a girl, she may become jealous and angry. You can talk to a girl about personal things but only if they are similar to hers. With boys you can also talk about things that you wouldn't tell a girl because they are not going to be jealous.

Mikaela: Girls don't have such good relationships like boys do. When boys fight, they hit each other whereas girls fight with words.

1. I placed the term 'opposite' in single quotation marks as a recognition of the bipolarization it suggests that may be contributing to dividing qualities and to discrimination.

At first glance, this discussion among girls in the focus group, besides illustrating how different boys are from girls, also appears to be praising boys' friendships. The girls, except for Rania, present those to be not as "complicated" as girls' and there is mention of a conscious effort to be cautious, perhaps even calculative, in their relationships with girls. Boys have better relationships between them and for Mikaela, they might hit each other but this is not as bad as fighting with words; a feminine way to fight. This conversation has a prologue that is not visible to the outsider but affects these girls' answers. I only happen to know about it because I used to teach them, and I had extensive talks with some of their mothers at the time and then again as a part of the research. I would like to use this example to point out that a researcher's interpretation might not be what interviewees have in mind, and to stress the advantages of the ethnographic method together with being an insider. Anthi had tried hard to be accepted by a specific group of girls in the class whom she perceived to be "cool". When she mentions an active effort to be liked by girls and a cautiousness in telling them what they would like to hear, it may be because of this experience. She was initially being kept at arm's-length from the popular girls' group and interpreted this as being bullied. She then asked for help from her mother and the school to help her not be 'bullied' and kept on persisting to be accepted into their group. One of her strategies was to approach less popular girls and try to create her own group, without losing focus from her initial aim. When I was there for the interviews it looked as if she had achieved some sort of acceptance from the "cool" group. During one interview with Mrs Vera, Veronika's mother, she mentioned that Anthi had "achieved her aim of being accepted by the other group and shunned the girls who initially supported her", her own daughter included. Anthi still actively calculated and minded what she would be saying. Mikaela and

Chryso on the other hand, were in the group of girls who supported Anthi when she was complaining that she was being rejected and now assert that boys' friendships are better than girls'. Finally, Rania who speaks favourably of girls' friendships, belongs to the cool group; the group to which Anthi wanted to belong to begin with.

This excerpt also reinforces other comments of the children, during the interviews as well as inside the classrooms: that learning is a female priority. The girls perceived it as natural for them to be stressed about their test results, whereas boys were expected to be indifferent and remain cool. They thought of being stressed out as a weakness unfitting to boys and associated in this way masculinity with strength and emotional detachment. In the girls' case, physical violence would be inappropriate, as Mikaela's comment shows, a conclusion that could also be derived by many of the children's comments. Girls fight with words whereas boys might hit each other but harbour no hard feelings after a fight; another sign of them being emotionally detached.

These stereotypes worked at the same time by ostracising boys who might have appeared to be emotional. Girls also believed that they ultimately have more capabilities, because boys or men "don't care about these things". During the lesson on stereotypes with the 3rd graders at Dimotiko Ayias Elenis, when the children were asked to comment on representations that made them feel uncomfortable, a girl said: "A man changing a dirty nappy isn't very natural, men are lazy", and another girl said: "The grandfather doesn't even know how to do it, mums know more things". That girls see themselves as more capable does not necessarily mean that these additional capabilities are going to be used to their benefit. These 'natural' capabilities may serve as a disbenefit in the long term upon the girls' assumption of

gender specific roles and responsibilities i.e. the responsibility of taking care of the family, as well as assuming the role of the "good mother"; and believing this as the natural thing to do.

## 8.3. Boys, girls and play

Boys and girls also viewed each other differently in what concerned the games they played. During the lesson on stereotypes in the 3rd grade, a boy mentioned "I don't want to play with dolls, then they will laugh at me". The boys agreed that they would never play with a doll at school but that they might have played with a cousin at her home because *"ήταν κρίμα"*, because they felt sorry for her and not because of any kind of personal satisfaction. Boys' personal satisfaction wouldn't involve playing with dolls, even at home when nobody would watch. Although barely 9-year-olds, they had specific imaginations of what the socially accepted norms for their gender were. Marios said, "I don't like dolls because it's like being a boy-girl" and he used the word for "tomboy", usually used for girls, to describe what he thought to be "abnormal" boys. Since children were unaware of any other terms that may describe people who are not simply boys or simply girls, there was an invention of a new meaning for an existing word. As the following excerpt shows, the word "boy-girl" [αγοροκόριτσο/tomboy] takes up a new meaning: [2]

| | |
|---|---|
| Marios: | Playing with dolls is like being an agorokoritso (boy-girl). |
| Mrs Popi: | What is a boy-girl? |
| Marios: | It's being boy and girl at the same time. |

2. Translating agorokoritso literally would be "boygirl". Agorokoritso means in Greek a girl that enjoys rough, noisy games that can be 'traditionally' viewed as associated with boys. It is used equivalent to the English term tomboy.

Milia: No, it's when you are a boy, but you are behaving like a girl, you decorate dolls, have princess castles.

Mrs Popi, faithful to the Ministry's instructions not to comment on rights and wrongs, or because clearing up the confusion meant stepping into a controversial territory, or even due to my presence, didn't discuss this further.

The masculine stereotypes of strong boys who choose masculine games were also mentioned by the 6th graders at Strovolos Elementary and concerned football. Iakovos explained how boys are better friends because they can play football well and girls can't. "We were playing football and they [the girls] were dancing at the goal post or talking", he said with a dismissive tone for dancing and talking. Boys' friendships were re-enacted inside the football field; a place where they had common goals. Football, together with being competitive, becomes a symbol for masculinity and boys who didn't like to play football were "stuck with the girls". Girls on the other hand, shouldn't be competitive while boys who were not competitive were viewed as inferior. In boys' struggles for a masculine identity, aims that have a competitive value were more important than other types of aims. When Antonis criticized their sports teacher he mentioned: "He is treating us like five-year-olds and asking us to pass the ball around instead of explaining the game rules when we are participating in a school tournament very soon". Boys didn't need useless guidelines, they needed important game strategies in order to win.

During a break-time in Strovolos Elementary, on one of the days I was spending following the 6th graders around, the boys were once again playing football and I looked for the girls. Some girls were outside watching

the football game and some of them were in the classroom with no interest in going out to play. I wondered if it was possible for the girls to join in at football, if it would empower them.

The third-grade girls in Dimotiko Ayias Elenis did play football with the boys. However, even though boys and girls were sharing spatial territories, it still wasn't working for the girls and they complained to their teacher. The boys avoided passing the ball to them. "But you stay at the back" said Marios, and then he turned to Mrs Popi and explained: "We play offence and girls stay at the back, how are we supposed to pass the ball to them when they are behind us?" Agni then said something that helped distinguish their different priorities: "When I play with you it's not to win, I am playing to have fun", and Mrs Popi liked her comment and repeated it. The problem was, boys didn't play for fun, they played to win. It was much nicer to play *"Λύκοι και αρνάκια"* [wolves and sheep] said Zoe, 5th grader at the time, during her interview. This surprised me because this was a game that younger children play, a catch game. "Lykoi kai arnakia is really funny", said Zoe, especially today because "the little ones didn't realize that we were the sheep and they were supposed to be the wolves". Consequently, even when boys and girls did play together, they had different definitions of what a game was for and they still wanted different things from the game. "Wolves and sheep" was one way to resolve this because they could combine their different priorities "to win" and "for fun" and they couldn't do this with games like football since then their "superior" and "inferior" aims would collide. However, it was usually younger boys that were playing wolves and sheep, because the boys in their own age were preoccupied with football.

## 8.4. Girls and boys negotiating power

The girls negotiated power in their inter-relationships between themselves silently, sometimes turning to their mothers for help (like Anthi and Veronica did) and not really challenging the boys or the adult authority inside the school, they wanted to play "for fun" and talk. The boys were preoccupied with negotiating power in the games between them in more obvious ways and they were noisier. Many teachers in Strovolos Elementary complained that the children "don't know how to play" and football was a topic especially riddled with tensions. The boys were fighting a lot and every time they had a fight, if their classroom teacher would hear about it, they wouldn't be allowed to play football the next day. Antonis commented on their classroom teacher, Mr Neophytos, "For everything that goes wrong he only has the same punishment 'forget about football in the break.'" Mr Neophytos, having seen boys fighting in all the schools he had worked in over the years, started thinking that "This is the way Cypriots are" as he mentioned during his interview:

> Perhaps it is our temperament, the sun and the high temperatures, that they discover themselves through fighting… I think it's in our DNA, it's normal in Cyprus. They fight about football, they fight when two Lyceums accidentally meet in the same space when they go on an excursion, they fight about the teams... they look for reasons to fight. I don't know… We have this as a nation… I don't know why (Mr Neophytos, Classroom teacher).

For Mr Neophytos children didn't know how to play and they only fought. Interestingly, he considered it to be natural for Cypriot children to have fights between them. When the teachers think it is natural for children to fight, and that this is how Cypriots are, how much does this contribute to a vicious cycle? The first part of his sentence also hides a perceived

naturalness and it was phrased as a complaint; one that I heard from other teachers too. Why don't they know how to play? After all, they are children, isn't it natural that they know how to play? However, play, combining essential social skills, involves a number of techniques and competences that have to be learned. Unfortunately, play is generally not awarded with the same value as other competitive knowledge. Inside the school there is no time to play team-games other than during physical education, after all, there is a lot of material to be covered. In Kindergarten and in the 1st grade children may have more time to play since they can't write yet. It is perhaps not surprising that the 5th graders were still playing "wolves and sheep"; it may well have been the only game they had learned. Besides, in the competitive school environment, the teacher who lets the kids play instead of teaching them, will perhaps have to defend herself for "doing nothing".

In what concerns power negotiations between children and teachers, it was mainly the boys whom I saw trying to negotiate freedoms. They were the ones who were challenging the adult authority in the school and were louder, whereas girls were quieter. In the following example Rafaellos, Mrs Aggela's son, describes an incident involving him and the Art teacher during one individual interview:

Rafaellos: Just because I was repeating everything she was saying, she [the Art teacher] almost killed me. She was pulling me from the T-shirt and she threw me out of the classroom. She sent me to the principal's office and Mr Giorgos told me we will talk about it afterwards. I went back to the class and the teacher said nothing. Afterwards she came and she told me that she *overreaaaacted* and that she was *soooooorry*…

Researcher: Did you also say that you were sorry?

Rafaellos: But basically we were playing a game…

(Rafaellos, 6th grade, Strovolos Elementary)

Rafaellos, a strong player in the class among his peers, similarly to his mother in the previous chapter, tried to exercise power by repeating what the teacher said. He asserted that he acted as a member of a team that was doing the same thing (he and some friends were playing a game together) and argued for diminished accountability; he shouldn't have been the only one being blamed for it. Rafaellos also complained that he received no warning: "Without warning, she screamed 'I've had enough of you.'" When I asked what a fair warning would be, he said "at least three chances every day before being sent to the principal's office". Afterwards, I spoke with the Art teacher, she mentioned that Rafaellos "*never* let her deliver her lesson, he *never* drew and he talked all the time". For her, this incident was the peak of a very long process, one that lasted much longer than one lesson, like Rafaellos imagines, but Rafaellos uses the "three warnings" to present her as 'out of control' and undermine her authority.

During a different interview, Sotiris, also imagined starting his day with a clean slate, and also argued in favour of the three chances per day. He criticized "bad" teachers who "grab your stuff if you used them for the wrong purpose and take you by the hand to take you to the principal's office".

Researcher: What does the principal do?
Sotiris: He writes down what we did and then sends us back to our class and says that he will call our parents.
Researcher: Did this happen to you?
Sotiris: Yes. Last year. Many times.
Researcher: And what happened?
Sotiris: My parents came to school and the school made me miss a lesson that I liked and my parents took the i-Pad from me for five months.
Researcher: Did you think this punishment was fair?
Sotiris: No, not really.
Researcher: What would have been fair in your opinion?

Sotiris: Fair would be for example if they would take my i-Pad and my mobile for one or two weeks. Or all the electronic games for three or four days.

While Sotiris was talking, the grabbing of his belongings and leading him by the hand was the one sentence spoken with some emotion. The confiscation of one's property, and then holding them by the hand to take them to a higher authority was emotional. For the rest of his sentences he used a matter-of-fact tone. After the humiliation, the important consequence was the one his parents set. He didn't mention what he thought about the school's consequence, and being caught up in the conversation I didn't even ask. To his mind, the electronic games were the actants that wielded the powers. Electronic games were being used almost by all parents that I spoke with as a mechanism of reward or punishment to control children's behaviour and they were consequently awarded with much more power than any school consequence had.

When I asked other children what their school consequences were in cases of misbehaving, they mentioned a few: "To miss three breaks"; "Stay seated on the chairs outside the principal's office"; "Miss out on sports." Were the punishments fair? "Yes", they said, they were "deserved", "not too bad", "what was expected". It looked as if the children were involved in Foucauldian technologies of the self. In order to act freely, the subject must first be shaped, or perhaps at least show that s/he is shaped. As Dean argued, "shaped, guided and moulded into one [subject] capable of responsibly exercising that freedom through systems of domination" (Dean 2010: 193).

In children's everyday relationships negotiation of power to solve personal problems was an important element. The children used strategies and

aligned those to help them either achieve acceptance by their perceived important peers, negotiate freedoms with their relationship with the adults, and reduce tensions with others. One important strategy used very often by the children in this study in order to minimize tensions was *not telling*. When it came to football, for example, the boys were aware of the mechanisms that would allow them to keep on playing and when it was possible, they avoided mentioning that there was a fight, so that they would be allowed to play on the next day too. Another example was mentioned by Sotiris, who said: "Some topics I don't mention at home, for example, if there is a girl I like, if I did something stupid, or even if I did something wrong". Konstantinos said: "I won't tell my parents if I forgot to do an exercise, I will tell my friends". Rafaellos didn't mention the incident with the Art teacher to his mother, "otherwise she would have come to school and start shouting like she did when I was in the 1st grade". And Zoe did not mention to her mother everything that unsettled her at school, trying to solve the tensions by herself because her mother's involvement would have created more tensions for her to resolve. Following Trnka and Trundle, the assumptions of responsibilization promoted by neoliberal thinking that assume personal choice and autonomy should be re-conceptualized as "open-ended relationships in which power is negotiated between parties" (Trnka and Trundle, 2014: 142). In this case, the children try to act out their agency by keeping silent in order to have some control over their personal space and being silent wasn't an expression of passivity, it was a very active and thought-through strategy.

Similarly, when boys talked about girls then they preferred to do this with other boys rather than with their parents. As Sotiris said, "Girls are not a topic to bring up for discussion at home". Besides, parents did not consider

flirting as normal and as expected; children did not either, with consequences for their teenage and adult lives and their imaginations of "proper" ways to behave and those about "proper" partners. The lesson on how to behave in romantic relationships with the other gender was missing. Sex education was perceived by the children as a taboo topic. Although we never discussed it, the children were aware of sex and they also knew that we don't talk about it. During one focus group while we were discussing disagreements that happen inside school with their friends, Doros said something into Renos' ear and they laughed. When I asked why they were laughing, Doros - with a nod and a gesture - "allowed" Renos to tell me. Renos explained then that sometimes boys might be fighting because they have sex with the same girl, to which I did not reply. I couldn't have replied; not only was it not my place to discuss it, but their choice of words (which were not the ones I just used) was also prohibiting. What was clear was that the children accepted me and perhaps did want to talk about it but were not aware of the socially acceptable words to use. Since they did not know how to use the words, they also did not know how to act around the other gender. As far as I was concerned, I had to be careful. Upsetting the parents with "wrong" questions or comments could have meant that I was perhaps not going to be allowed to return to complete the fieldwork. The situation in which children found themselves was clearly unfavourable to them. In September 2015, the Executive Director of the Cyprus Family Planning Organization mentioned in the local press his worries around lack of family planning clinics in Cyprus, the misinformation of youth and the limited and costly choices for women concerning contraceptive methods which are also

subjected to parental consent if women are under 17.[3] Additionally, according to the programme "I'M SET" (Implementing Mandatory Sexuality Education for Teens), a programme developed in cooperation with Norway and funded by the EEA Grants, less than half of the Cypriot participants (aged 15-24) mentioned use of a contraceptive method.[4]

## 8.5. Gendered healthy bodies

Children's gendered identities were also affecting their ideas about health and consequently, being healthy meant different things to boys and girls. One activity that I had the children do during the focus group interviews was to draw a healthy or an unhealthy individual, to describe this person and give him or her a speech bubble[5]. Boys gave descriptions of the healthy people depicted in their drawings in terms of physical ability. For Iakovos being healthy meant to have a strong heart and for Rafaellos to have energy, to run around. Renos said "you need to train, you do a lot of exercise", and Doros said "you eat a lot of fruit, no smoking or taking drugs". A healthy person, they agreed is "strong and can hold out" and the healthy body was "strong, not too thin". Boys emphasized hard work and physical ability and praised the strong active body.

On the contrary, girls' comments described the healthy body to be the result of moderation and carefulness. Anthi drew a sick person and explained that "*εν επρόσεχε* [he wasn't careful] and wasn't wearing his jacket", Zoe said

3. The interview was published in Philelefθeros and retrieved 27 September 2015 from http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/top-stories/885/278521/posa-den-xeroume-gia-tin-antisyllipsi

4. The programme I'M SET is described online at www.sexualityeducation.com.cy, retrieved 5 March 2016.

5. See Appendix B.

that it's "important for our health to have a good balance of things in our life" and Rania mentioned "not too much sport, a little bit, not to get too tired, this is not healthy". Girls' comments circled around being cautious and avoiding extremes. During a different focus group interview, Thalea said that being healthy "is all about eating the correct quantities" and Sotia explained that "big quantities of food, if you only eat those and nothing else, they will also make you fat, like only cucumbers, a lot of them, you still get fat". For the girls the healthy bodies were "balanced", "not too thin, not too fat", the result of careful thinking, moderation and self-control.

Alongside moderation, there was another feminine angle given to the image of health that required women as the main care givers and protectors. A couple of children mentioned their mothers in their drawings. They wrote for example: "I wish I would have listened to my mother" in the speech bubbles. Some descriptions included the wife standing next to the bed "giving her man water". Recent feminist scholarship has highlighted the work of protecting, promoting, and embodying health as women's work (Beagan et al. 2008; MacKendrick 2014; Cairns and Johnson 2015). Similarly, when I asked the children to recollect times during which they were ill, the mothers were the ones that were mentioned.

Unexpectedly, food decisions were also perceived by the children as motherly concerns. As Rafaellos' following comment shows:

> On Wednesdays I bring a sandwich with just lettuce and tomato because my mum said *τάχα μου* [allegedly] I must be on a diet on Wednesdays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays I go swimming, on Mondays and Fridays I play football, so on Wednesdays she decided that I should be on a diet (Rafaellos, 6$^{th}$ grade).

Rafaellos' mother set a plan of action for him, which he followed, but he didn't really think much of it; "*τάχα μου*" he said as if the way she was thinking was trivial. The mother was seen as the guardian of food intake and when I asked the children to draw a person preparing food for their family, they drew mothers and grandmothers. Grandmothers were important to the children in this research and they too had a decisive role. The premise that grandmothers played an important role in the children's lives, and that advice and guidance ultimately assumed a feminine character in children's imaginations, can be seen in Rafaellos' following comment. When I asked him who he turned to when he had a problem to solve he said:

> It depends on the type of advice that I need. For guidance, I go to my [older] sister and my mother. For my electronic games, I will go to my father and for things that happened to me, I will go to my grandmother. Because anything that I tell her she forgives me, she wants to please me, she pays attention to me.

Petros also mentioned how his grandmother would fry potatoes if he didn't like the food, a comment made by a couple of children; as it follows grandmothers would cook what the children liked to eat and often disregarded nutritional value. In the end, when it came to food decisions, these were being determined by the adult females in the children's lives but they were very relevant to what the children wanted to eat.

The children didn't show any conscious decision making in favour of healthy food. Food decisions weren't a choice that children were actively making for the benefit of their health. What children did mention when it came to decision making concerning food choices was more based on "fun" than "proper" and "proper" decisions were something for the mothers to take. When I asked how many sweets they eat, Zoe explained that she would eat one-two and then her mum would tell her 'that's enough'".

## 8.6. Imagining healthy and non-healthy

When it came to the non-healthy drawings, imaginations of nonhealthy individuals, who happened to be ill for reasons beyond their personal responsibility, were very scattered and only appeared if a child had a personal story to base it on. Complicated diseases were also not a part of what they chose to draw. Apart from two occasions in which the children focused on medical conditions they were familiar with, in all the other situations the children drew and talked about unhealthy individuals who brought the illness onto themselves. When I asked whether it was difficult or easy to be healthy, they all said that it is actually very easy for people to be healthy. All they had to do was "just eat properly and exercise sometimes" or "just not eat too many chocolates or sweets". The children imagined health as a natural consequence of being proper. They normalized a healthy life and imagined themselves as having control over their health. Even though boys and girls had different ideas of what it meant to be healthy, what both body images had in common was an emphasis on the fit body to which successful individuals must aspire.

Overweight people were the people represented more often in children's drawings to fit the image of unhealthy individuals, followed by drawings of smokers. Both were described as conditions of illness that were their own fault. Veronica's speech bubble of an overweight person on her drawing was saying "what else should I eat next?" and Anthi explained that the person on her drawing was eating sweets and this is why he was overweight. Mikaela also drew for me an overweight individual that couldn't move. "He is sitting all day on the sofa, is eating and is bored", she explained. Similarly, in Petros' drawing, the overweight individual looked like this "because he was only eating crisps *τζιαι πελλάρες* [foolish things] and was sitting all day on the

sofa". Giannis also drew an overweight person with spots on his face that appeared because instead of eating properly, he ate too many sweets. "Why was he eating too many sweets?" I asked. "He knew they are unhealthy but he didn't care", answered Giannis emphasizing that being overweight was the result of being improper, lazy and foolish. When Giannis said "he didn't care", he didn't mean "care free", he meant "foolish", because now "they are sad, they don't like it that they are like this". There were no imaginations of overweight people being overweight for reasons other than their own fault or of accepting themselves. They were perceived to be sad because others pitied them and if others pitied them then they surely also pitied themselves.

In addition to obesity, the children agreed that smokers were unhealthy and had an "unclean facial skin", "look older than their age", "their skin gets darker". And for the smoker who is now ill, "he should have thought about it before, now it is too late, he has cancer in his intestines". When Mikaela drew an unhealthy person, she explained that this was an "obese-careless-smoker who *εν επρόσεχε* [wasn't careful]. Now his eyes were black, his mouth was black and his lungs were black too". Agni laughed and added that she couldn't imagine herself kissing an old sick man. People with spoiled health looked differently, felt differently and they were surely not normal. Alexis said "an unhealthy person has a loose facial skin" and Evaggelos added "a dull colour". Some mentioned, "they have skins like old ladies". Andreas commented on the "sad face" and Rafaellos said he "feels helpless". Children spoke in terms of blaming those people who do not simply decide to ''turn their lives around'' (Carter et al. 2011; Gard and Wright 2005). They were certainly different from the healthy image they had in mind for themselves; many possibly unclean and sad, fat and older, usually darker or even black; in any case, their colour was dull and they felt

helpless. The scenarios involving ill people that the children were talking about, were not about normality. These were the exceptions: ugliness, laziness, obesity, carelessness. They were also not about themselves but others' spoiled images. As Metzl argues, drawing on Goffman, "affirmation of one's own health depends on the constant recognition and indeed the creation, of the spoiled health of others" (Metzl 2010: 5). Children celebrated for themselves normality: clean and happy, thin and young, white, vivid and self-confident; these adjectives were representing for the children the healthy image.

## 8.7. The future, proper partners and proper families

Stemming from children's perceptions of health, and their ideas of what is normal, boys and girls subscribed different gender characteristics to the proper partner. "Proper" men do not display emotions, are competitive, interested in sports, and loud. They are not interested in making food decisions and promoting others' health is not actually their task. Also, as the following example illustrates, "proper men" don't hug each other:

During Mrs Kasiani's lesson on bullying with the 5th grade which I observed, she showed them a short video of boys being asked to slap a girl.[6] The video ended with the boys being asked to give the girl a kiss. After her lesson, during the interview, she mentioned that she had shown the clip to the 6th grade but had had a different discussion. How would they react or what kind of a reaction would they have liked to have, if they were in a similar situation themselves. Afterwards, they swapped the roles; what if there was a boy standing in front of the camera?

6. Video retrieved 30 October 2014 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2OcKQ_mbiQ

> And when I said "everybody might give a kiss to others", he said: "Eh what *kyria* [Mrs], I should kiss him? I won't." "Why not?" "Because he is a man and I am a man too". "So?" "Men only shake hands". "So wait a minute", I told him, "What about your dad? You don't hug and kiss your dad?" He wasn't speaking. "Your grandfather? With your friends?"(…) And while the lesson was proceeding at some point he started crying and said "Kyria… I can't… I can't breathe… I need to go home." He felt that he was ill and he actually became ill. And he called home and they picked him up. This was the most intense reaction that I ever saw (Mrs Kasiani, Classroom Teacher, Dimotiko Ayias Elenis).

The tensions around children's sexuality were reflected in my decisions concerning the interviews with the children. I didn't ask them if they had had a lesson on the parts of the body, or what they heard on masturbation. These topics were for my alert-teacher self, "off limits". One activity that I held was to show them pictures of different families and to ask them which one they would choose for the classroom board to be put under the title "family". The majority chose the mother, father, boy and girl with fair colours as the most acceptable and general category encompassing all the rest. According to the children's responses, the rest were inappropriate because there was either a mother missing, or "why is the auntie standing there, this is not an authentic picture", or "black children and white parents; what kind of a family is this one?" Nasos chose the black family and said "it doesn't mean that only white people can be a happy family, there can be love in other races too" and suggested we use the black family's picture, to make a statement against racism. Not because it was a normal family, but exactly because it was not normal, this is why it was going to be used as a statement.

When I asked them which one picture they thought was more fitting to a Cypriot family, the children chose indeed the Cypriot family (with traditional artefacts on the wall in the background). This wasn't the one they would

choose to be displayed, apart from Renos who said "let's put this one with the *μουστάκας* [moustachioed man]" and it sounded like he was making a joke i.e. "let's add this one for a laugh". For the children in this study, imaginations of what families look like or what they should aspire to, did not include traditional Cypriot artefacts or fathers with moustaches who looked "too Cypriot". Children's imaginations of a "superior" family; one that belongs on the classroom board, where we usually display the best of our work, and what the rest should aspire to, were tending towards "new", "modern", mainly European ideals. Alexis was the one who after showing me which one was the "Cypriot" family, pointed out which one he thought was the "Greek" family. When I also started asking the other children during the interviews that followed, I found out that for many of the children photos of Greek families were among the ones that they would put up on the board. The most interesting conclusion of this activity was that none of the children suggested that we should put all the pictures on the board. Nobody contested my suggestion of "just one".

Along the same lines, children had normalized going to church. After the school visit to church I accompanied the children on, there were some interviews scheduled with the 6$^{th}$ graders. During these interviews I asked them how they found their visit to church. The children hadn't really thought about it. "What do you mean?" asked Antonis, "good", he added without waiting for an explanation and he shrugged his shoulders. It was a natural process, one they knew since Kindergarten, and most of them said, "It is important that we are close to our religion". Stavros was the only one who said, "We go and sit for an hour and I'm totally bored". Then I asked if there was more religious education at school, would that make it ok to go to church less often? "No", replied Antonis without hesitation. "Religious

education is just a lesson, for our lives it is important to go to church", differentiating between what a school lesson is and what important for life is. Here it may be that a school lesson is supposed to be "learned"; possibly meaning "memorized and repeated" but doesn't necessarily have practical implications in our lives. However, Church was important for our "real" life, even Antonis who was the most critical interviewee, agreed.

## 8.8. Conclusion

The children reproduced images of "proper" gendered bodies that behaved in "proper" ways and had specific conceptions of others' spoiled images and of how "proper" future partners should look like. They imagined unhealthy individuals who brought the disease on to themselves and at the same time imagined their own selves as being able to minimize risks and as having control over their bodies. Images of healthy individuals shared common characteristics as if there were only one healthy female image and only one healthy male image and a corresponding single way to be healthy.

Cultural values of femininity and masculinity were enacted by both genders. Masculinity was associated with power and competition, and a physically strong body. Carefulness and sentimentality were accorded to femininity as well as the duty to protect the body and promote the child's health. Similar to the mothers discussed in the previous chapter, children also thought that proper food decisions were an adult feminine concern. Responsibility and regulation of their bodies was to be carried out by the mothers and health promotion acquired feminine characteristics.

The following concluding chapter brings the parameters discussed together and evokes the initial theoretical considerations in identifying knowledge, normality and Cypriotness, borders between nature and culture and tensions between tradition and modernity.

# Chapter 9

# Conclusions

The dissertation dealt with the introduction of the subject of health education in the public schools of the Republic of Cyprus utilizing a cultural anthropological perspective. The implementation of the curriculum was looked at as a project of modernization and was examined ethnographically over a period of three years. The anthropological focus on the constructions of identity, normality, the ambiguities between nature and culture, and the tensions between tradition and modernity, have brought interesting issues to the surface that would have otherwise been missed from the educationalist's perspective, who would have perhaps taken the introduction of the new curriculum at face value. Educational research often assumes the language of the dominant institution and educational studies mostly do not engage in dilemmas about the forces behind modernization efforts because they view modernization as necessary. In addition, educational policy-making today increasingly constrains the way we think about education because it draws language from business administration, working to exclude other ways of thinking about education, such as its institutionalized form and its links with normalization processes in society.

The study was based on the principles of Global Ethnography, involving at least three different experiences and levels of analysis (Gille and O Riain 2002). In my study, the social actors and place were caught up in a transnational project that created new connections. Along the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the WHO Regional Office for

Europe, dozens of European countries and hundreds of schools formed the European Network of Health Promoting Schools, to create environments conducive to health within schools. Health promotion advocates in Cyprus were able to use transnational connections to restructure accountabilities inside the Ministry, influence policy-making and accomplish curriculum changes.

Globalization as a force reshapes the local, and *the modern* serves as a powerful discourse through which local concerns are appropriated (Gille and O Riain). My study shows how global forces re-defined social relations locally in Cyprus. Home economics teachers were side-lined and refused access to further training, giving way to classroom teachers and other more specialized teachers who were considered to be more appropriate, and thus tensions were created around the transfer of knowledge through a hierarchical chain that became longer but was propagated through inequalities of power.

In the third experience, the rigidity of globalization as force is contested, and here globalization becomes an ideology countered by an imagination that galvanizes collective action. The movement fails to develop a global imagination because of competing visions of the global. The curriculum proved incapable of countering the local vision that was embedded in Christian moral ideals dictated by the church and in parental understandings of normality. The two competing visions; a modernist vision, supported by the ministry and health education specialists, and the vision supported by the church and parents who would reach back to local religious and social traditions, collide over the vision for the children, whom the curriculum was actually about.

The dissertation shows how hegemonic forms of knowledge employed mechanisms that ultimately facilitated the success of the curriculum in creating a personal obligation towards health. Its knowledge was promoted as "common sense" and it privileged individuals who were perceived from above as "modern", while simultaneously the financial crisis was used as a tool to exercise social pressure on teachers and convince them to work harder. As the curriculum privileged modern subjects, everything opposing health education was to be conceptualized as opposing the civilizing mission. The expectation that social actors prioritize actions taken towards the shaping of healthy communities perpetuated the deception that community is a united group sharing the same interests. Imaginations of the community as a coherent set of "values for all" overlooked that human relations are riddled with tensions. Despite claims for universal truths and consensus, the curriculum's introduction, as expected and discussed by anthropologists and STS scholars in the case of projects (Tsing 2000), was accompanied by messiness as new kinds of relationships and new spaces of exchange were created.

## 9.1. Teachers

As teachers saw their roles changing, they attempted to reposition themselves in relation to other professionals inside their professional spaces. Tensions arose when they attempted to draw borders around their domains of expertise while simultaneously contesting the expertise of the ministry officials. The knowledge transfer from health science to political decision making as well as the different expectations of policy makers, health promotion experts, the school actors and the parents with regard to policy advice and knowledge transfer, made for conditions that were neither

linear nor straight-forward. What the academics started with was gradually being altered in the implementation instructions by the policy makers, sometimes working with the health promotion office in the ministry, but also sometimes bypassing it. In practice, the curriculum was refined until it was thought to represent an "acceptable version" to the collective expectations of teachers and parents, but the official version was kept in its original form to be used when Cyprus needed to turn its modern face towards Europe. The knowledge of the curriculum wasn't "common sense" at all, even if it was presented as such in an attempt to cover up for opinion differences in religious and political matters. Consequently, experts' references to "facts" and "normality" failed in their effort to engage the social actors and to avoid contestation. If the tensions did not escalate into actual conflicts, it was because the professionals did not actually commit themselves to the curriculum as a whole, but to bits and pieces of it. The rhetoric from inside the Ministry was that teachers "embraced" the curriculum as if it were a baby. But in the ways it was enacted, the curriculum was not a single entity that can be judged in simple binaries, like "good" or "bad", neither can it be "embraced". Rather, it was appropriated, altered, sometimes even ignored, and was cut into pieces, to make it work on an everyday basis in class and in order to avoid conflicts within schools and with parents.

Experts' responsibilization efforts assumed that all teachers were empowered and indeed eager to be involved in the do-it-all-by-yourself projects, and that together with parents and other community members, they were able and willing to act as agents of change for the improvement of the society. What these responsibilization efforts overlooked, were the personal strategies that social actors employed to make sense of their realities. As to what was considered as "usable knowledge" in the curriculum,

by whom, according to which criteria, and under which institutional conditions, depended on particular situations. Teachers took decisions based on several factors, and success indicators were the least decisive. There were different kinds of understandings about what the lesson was about, different imaginations of what it should have been about, and different degrees of willingness to be involved in the project. In the fluidity and messiness of practices, teachers worked on aspects of the curriculum that they considered "doable" and had other "real" concerns that were different from those that the curriculum subscribed to them. Teachers were pushed to work on many fronts; assuming that they were committed to the curriculum's expectations also meant that they needed to design learning activities on their own, and to develop teaching materials to teach prevention and contribute to "healthy schools". When the financial crisis occurred, and controversies erupted about whether civil servants deserved to be paid as much as they did, teachers were no longer committed to the curriculum's aims as a prevailing framework to guide their efforts. Rather, they wanted to prove their value, "to gain their lost respect". Teachers did not see themselves as respected in the way that earlier anthropological studies described the social role of teachers in Cyprus. What was mostly important to the teachers in my study was their reputation, both within their immediate professional domain and their private lives. It was only in this context and within these frameworks that they imagined themselves as professionals who teach health education. They however did not consider themselves to be "agents of change in favour of health". There were not any imaginations of commitments towards the community as a whole, or even furthermore, taking a moral responsibility towards working for health improvement in general.

What was evidently missing, was a kind of support on behalf of the authorities to attend to the challenges that negotiations between experts and lay people usually face. On the contrary, in instances of disagreements between Ministry and teachers, the Ministry issued announcements using a language that purposefully placed parents in opposition to teachers. Without the necessary support, teachers could not have become empowered agents of change, as the policy-makers had expected them to. The teachers thought that they were being sent "empty-handed into war", and that they would be held personally responsible in case their efforts backfired. They would have been more willing to work with preapproved teaching materials that were addressed directly to the children (children's books or worksheets). Instead, they were faced with documents addressed to the teachers themselves, such as success indicators or lesson plans. To have teaching materials handed to them would have eased the burden of having to function as "translators" between science and society all on their own. In Science and Technology Studies, it is generally agreed upon that,

> Successful science in the public sphere can [only] be the result of the co-production of science and politics. Science can more easily solve problems in the public domain if scientific knowledge is carefully adjusted to its public contexts and attuned to the different knowledge of others (Sismondo 2010: 54).

Sex education could have benefited if home economic teachers were included in the "trading zones". By allowing them to expand their professional roles to include sex education, they could become proponents of sex education and this could have a positive impact on its success.

## 9. 2. Parents

The curriculum's claims of "objective knowledge" were contested not only by teachers, but also by parents. This was particularly obvious when they expressed strong reservations about the subject of sex education. In fact, the subject did not reach the children in the schools in this study because it was incompatible with what the parents considered as "normal". Sex education was considered inappropriate in a social context where even the act of flirting was seen as indecent. In parents' imaginations, sex education interfered with their moral values and their role as custodians of morality. In Cypriot society, to be socially accepted one must adhere to the social norms that prescribe proper ways of behaviour, and strive for goals that are considered socially worthy. One single mother who participated in my research explained that once she had asked for financial support from the government to pursue a Master's degree at the university, she received the answer "It's like asking for help to buy a Mercedes. What do you want a Master's for?" Other needs were more pertinent to her case; it was implied she should find a husband instead of attempting to support herself and her child.

Striving for socially worthy goals is related to the desire to be normal and is associated with positioning oneself strategically in what is perceived as "middle ground". Pursuing socially accepted goals also explains why the parents continued to pay for additional private lessons for their children despite the economic hardship this caused. This practice, tied to parents' perceived responsibility towards their own family and kin, was not only entangled in hopes for the future – the rising unemployment rate meant increased difficulties in securing future jobs – but also in ideas of children's successful participation in society at present.

One limitation of my study is that the participating parents were not the ones most affected by the financial crisis, since these parents had more important concerns than participating in my research. This also partly explains the absence of fathers among the people whom I interviewed. But this absence also demonstrates that children's health is primarily considered a female concern in Cyprus since it is the women who have taken up the project of dealing with the child's body.

## 9. 3. Symbolic struggles

Moments of tensions between teachers, mothers and children brought to the surface prevalent ideas about what constitutes "acceptable" life choices, "proper" childhoods and "good" mothers. The responsibilities that the mothers subscribed to concerned their own families rather than an imagined community of Cypriot citizens. Protecting the child was a dominant priority for the parents, a risk especially assumed by the mothers, who believed that motherhood was a life-goal and guarding children's food intake one of its distinctive components. Because of the parental imaginations of responsibility towards the family, responsibilizing the parents was much more complicated than the official narrative admitted or planned for, and it involved the teachers in scenarios that could potentially damage their relationships with the parents. Naming a child a "bully" could have been understood as synonymous to blaming themselves as failing teachers and risking their reputation, or as blaming the parents as failing in parenthood. One of the unintended consequences of the workshops against bullying was to expand the parents' vocabulary so that they could eloquently characterize the other children as bullies and complain that their own child was a victim of this bullying using expert terminology.

In these symbolic struggles, there was no space for the children to exercise their own agency. The children tried to mitigate the tensions created in their negotiations with adults by not telling. Remaining silent was an active, conscious strategy employed by children, not an expression of children's passivity. Additionally, boys' misconceptions about the acceptable language to be used when it came to romantic relationships with girls underline their uncertainty in dealing with the other gender. Children protect themselves from unpleasant situations by refraining from speaking up, and this underlines the subject positions that they enter: Ones that are tied to the social rules dictated by the adults around them and exclude references to sex education.

## 9. 4. Lessons on responsibilization

The lessons to be learned inside schools and home presented "facts" and promoted individuals belonging to the social category of people considered "normal"; there were facts surrounding the nutritional value of food, facts about the "nature" of children, "truths" characterizing the identities of responsible citizens, the value of competitive knowledge over play. These individuals had similar eating preferences, adhered to the same traditions, were of Greek national descent, their sexual preferences as adults were not to deviate from the norm, and behaved in a gender-appropriate way. While in many complex modern societies, people "no longer believe in coherent sets of norms imposed in a single order" (Mol 2002: 62), coherent sets of norms are still quite important in the Cypriot context. Being different was inviting stigma, and particular bodies were marked as more or less legitimate. Single parenthood or homosexuality were seen as a deviation or an outright abnormality and individuals harboring a perceived non-normality in the family also bear a moral responsibility towards their

offspring to hide it. Responsibilizing the children then, in this context, is seen as synonymous to them learning to adhere to expected standards rather than in them learning to exercise choice in a free market.

## 9. 5. Children's imaginations of health

Boys and girls saw themselves as belonging to different worlds, manifested partly in the games they played which took place "parallel" to each other rather than "with". As they saw themselves as very different, their life aspirations were also perceived as different. Additionally, their imaginations of health were heavily influenced by ideas of "proper" gendered bodies that behaved in proper ways. Masculinity was associated with physical strength, emotional detachment and competition, and femininity with being careful and reticent and a tendency towards sentimentality. When boys negotiated their freedoms in more vocal ways and were competitive, often using bodily force, girls were quiet and passive; characteristics considered to be fitting well to their nature. The attributes of nurture, feeding and protecting the body and the child, as well as gentleness, were associated with femininity. Many of the curriculum's aims, particularly those about making healthy food choices, sexual and reproductive health and also locating risks for health, were interpreted as feminine, and as such, perceived as involving inferior types of knowledge.

The children had specific conceptions of others' spoiled images. Being overweight and being a smoker were both described as conditions of illness, as results of wrongful acts and of unwillingness to change one's lifestyle. Unhealthiness acquired moral dimensions that attributed blame to the individual. Health was read as the promise of propriety, and there was only one way to be proper and only one kind of proper family to aspire to. In the

language that they used, children imagined themselves as belonging to a non-discriminated, even superior social group. They pictured themselves as having choices in the future and as living in a country that will support the materialization of the possibilities that it promises. Following critical scholars (i.e. Weis and Dolby 2012; Cairn 2014) the neoliberal condition may cultivate harmful effects when young people may feel empowered by a discourse of possibility because failed attempts to materialize these hypothetical opportunities may be read as personal deficits.

## 9. 6. Concluding thoughts

Projects have distinctive cultural commitments and every project is shaped by unexpected interactions. Development is reformulated through its constant negotiation and translation within distinctive settings. My study shows that the health education curriculum became a project in the sense that Anna Tsing and other scholars indicated: Its final form did not represent the original plans and intentions. The government officials, the academics and the curriculum specialists who collaborated on the health curriculum did not anticipate that its features were to be transformed in the process, to be adapted for multiple uses and that they would "rub against each other awkwardly, creating messiness" (Tsing 2002: 472). Since there were no measures taken to attend to this problem, very little actually changed and the curriculum was much less effective than it could have been.

According to a World Bank document, "the reform effort, ongoing since 2004, seems to have resulted in less change than might have been anticipated" (World Bank 2014: 15). The contestation of official knowledge and the failure to recognize this contestation as valid on behalf of the authorities partly explain this. Additionally, as economic survival assumed

priority over other goals, and people tried to justify lack of quality on many levels passing it off as inevitable, the vision of social actors to operate as agents of environmental change for healthier communities appeared frivolous.

Finally, the curriculum failed in its promises because of the local dismissal of expertise, which stems from how Cypriot identities are constructed within the framework of various imaginations of European hegemonies. Some of the social actors in this research thought that the change was too much because they viewed modernity as a threat, whereas others thought that the change was not enough because although they were inherently modern themselves, they felt that the "Cypriot mentality" prevented social progress and kept things from changing. Where the phrase "Cypriot mentality" was usually used to mean "being backward", it was also taken to describe individuals who view the Cypriot cultural identity as inferior to that of Western Europe. Both connotations underline Argyrou's argument, that in the symbolic confrontation between Cyprus and Europe, Greek Cypriots imagine that Western modernity is a destination to be reached (Argyrou 1996).

Following Argyrou, while Greek Cypriots imagine themselves as members of the wider community of Europeans, it is in the context of submission to a hegemonic identity that issues like the modernization project under study can be understood. I would like to add that this symbolic destination is not static in the Greek Cypriot imagination; it is perceived as also moving forward itself. This means that local actors who strive to reach it, imagine staying even further behind with each day that passes. This leads to a farrago of modernization projects, especially within the educational system, that usually have a short lifespan and hence fail to engage the local actors.

Because of this effort to systematically try to reach a forward-moving target, the concept of "change" in Cyprus is problematic and "expertise" is an especially contested concept. Who will be perceived as embodying more expertise, or which change will be deemed as more appropriate, is a matter of circumstances that will never remain unquestioned and will not last for long. Each time a new idea is being promoted, it is doing so at the expense of an older one, very often rejecting it rather than building or adding to it. This contributes to mistrust towards government officials and to the process of implementation of new ideas being looked at critically, and also leads to social actors who are unwilling to invest in them because they do not believe that they will last anyway. Το *νέο φρούτο* [The new fruit] is the one that will also wither tomorrow. That there may be different ways to be modern side by side, just as there may be different ways to be legitimately normal, is hard to imagine. Then, it becomes hard to prioritize what is indeed important for a society. This leads either to the rejection of the proposed projects, or to the engagement with many, complicated projects, to support the belief that one has to do as much as possible in an effort to reach fast-forward-moving destinations. Expert studies end up in drawers, not only because the know-how to implement them might be missing, but also because of this local contestation of expertise. My study confirms Argyrou's argument, that Greek Cypriots imagine Western modernity as a destination to be reached and celebrate the division the "West and the rest". Looking up to European policies and trying to implement them, creates for Cypriots more problems than it solves. Reports that document the achievement of harmonization "on paper" do not actually reflect what is indeed being done on the ground; social actors are confused, wasting time, money and energy to amend or cover up discrepancies and give out conflicting messages.

"Becoming European" then is for Cypriots a painstaking process, doomed to never bear fruit because they will always think that they are lagging a step behind "actual" Europeans. Innovations and modernization efforts in Cyprus need to untie themselves from the context of "what is being done in Europe" because in the Cypriot imagination, no effort will ever be good enough. Modernity is indeed a concept ridden with hegemonic ideologies and an "instrument of division", as Argyrou suggests. I find it, however, difficult to reject modernity altogether because I believe that the Cypriot society is unable to dissociate itself from the idea of Europe or from Western modernity and reject it altogether as an empirical reality. I believe that the rejection of a single vision of modernity and the recognition of multiple modernities is more constructive because it recognizes that modernity and Westernization are not identical, a concept which can be more useful in the Cypriot context as well as to other modernizing societies, where there is persistence of religious, cultural and traditional patterns. Therefore, I prefer to see it as analogous to the notion of Europeanization and recognize the possibility for it to assume multiple facets. Welz describes Europeanization as centring attention on becoming, rather than being European, and as she very well puts it: "Europeanization pays special attention to the unevenness and discontinuity of the process, instead of expecting convergence and increasing cohesion" (Welz 2015: 5).

In this light, curricula, educational norms and policies, but also tradition and heritage can be analyzed in their materialities of Europeanization practices and be dealt with as European Products in the way that Gisela Welz describes (Welz 2005; 2015). All of them are ridden with technologies of domination and linked to forms of knowledge and expertise representing European standards. Rather than measuring themselves against standards

from the outside, looking at what and how things are being done in Western Europe, as if there was only one legitimate way, Greek Cypriots should become attentive to what they implement locally and how social actors can become more engaged in working towards locally effective policies. On many occasions, Greek Cypriots have proved that they are hard-working and creative. If their efforts and commitments were directed towards their own educational needs, for the kind of biological citizens that are conceivable in Cyprus rather than for a kind of citizen they imagine that Europe wants them to portray, and if they also valued the expertise gained locally derived from actual practice, they could be more successful with their reforms.

My study shows that health education was compared to a project of biological citizenship. Health projects place emphasis on health awareness and self-reflection. With the promise of the ability to avoid risks, individuals are engaged as active and free citizens, as informed and responsible consumers, and as agents capable of taking control over risks. In my study however, the lessons that the children received were embedded in practices that were very much anchored in traditional patterns. There were no claims for rights and recognition made in biological terms, rather citizenship was articulated around more traditional solidarities such as national identity and the family, pointing out that biomedical practices that work to "make up" selfhood cannot be separated from kinship or social life and that social actors have limited possibilities to exercise freedom of choice. Concluding, the study has demonstrated that there are many ways for European Union member states to deal with health prevention regimes in the course of Europeanization and that the assumptions of responsibilization that presume personal choice and autonomy should be reconceptualized.

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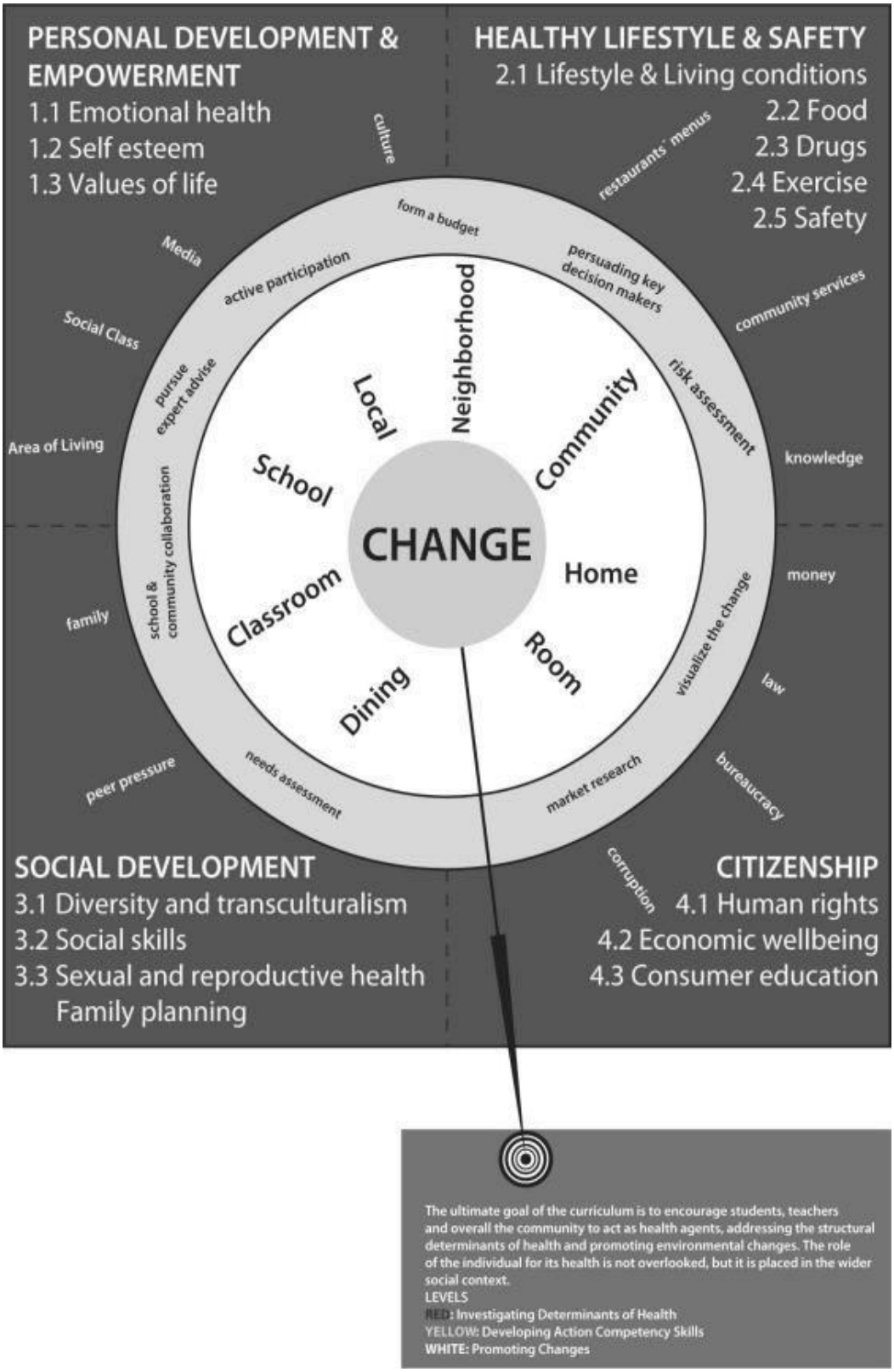
# Appendix A

The model for developing the Cyprus health education curriculum



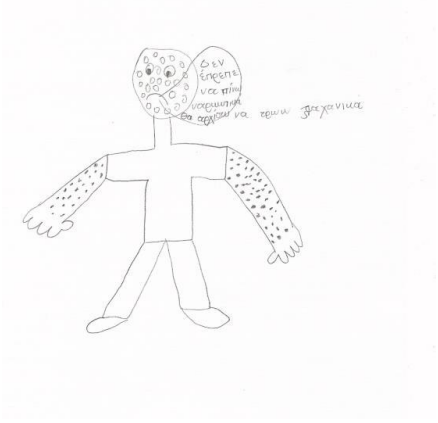

(Ioannou, Kouta and Charalambous 2012: 157)

# Appendix B
# Children's drawings


*Yummy!*


*What shall I eat next? Shall I drink narcotics or smoke?*

*NARCOTICS*



*I shouldn't have drank narcotics. I will start eating vegetables.*


*Where are the sweets?*


*I wish I'd listened to my mother and not gotten sick.*


*I will definitely have a health problem with all these sweets that I eat but I can't lose the weight. I have fever all the time because I eat non-stop.*