

Drawing a Sociocultural Profile of Cyprus by Reviewing Some Key Findings and Discussing Change and Diversity

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Abstract

This paper aims to draw a sociocultural profile of Cyprus and briefly discuss change and diversity in the country. Data relating to family, gender roles, social relations, Hofstede's dimensions, the World Values Survey, and work-related attitudes are presented, and differences between social groups and how values might be changing are discussed. It is suggested that Cyprus has historically been a relatively conservative society, something which has changed in the last few decades to some extent. On Hofstede dimensions, Cyprus scores around the average on individualism, medium to high on power distance, masculinity, and long-term orientation, and very high on uncertainty avoidance. In the World Values Survey, the results of Cyprus are close to the centre of the axes that represent the data (but somewhat shifted towards the more conservative end). It is finally argued that the significant numbers of Cypriots who studied abroad contribute to diversity and change within society.

Keywords: Cyprus, culture, values, change, diversity

Introduction

Outlining the sociocultural profile of countries has been a central theme in the social sciences, and particularly so in anthropology, sociology, politics and, more recently, management. In anthropology and sociology, this practice allows for a comparison between societies, while in politics and management it provides the background for a discussion on the impact of culture on managing and leading people. Numerous categorisations have been proposed, from the simplest one which involves only two categories (e.g., high vs low context countries)² to more complex ones, such as the ten country clusters' categorisation³. In most cases, countries are classified

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² Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (Anchor Books: 1976).

³ Globe, *Culture Groups* (2016), available at: <https://globeproject.com/results#list> (last accessed 9 December 2021).

in geographically/culturally-defined categories (for example Eastern Europe, Latin Europe, Latin America, Nordic Europe, Middle East in GLOBE's research). In the context of this discussion, classifying countries that do not fall clearly into one geo-cultural group can be particularly interesting. Whereas Sweden, for example, would clearly fall in the Nordic Europe group and Brazil in the Latin American one, countries such as Switzerland and Kazakhstan would be more difficult to categorise. Cyprus is an example of a country that does not fit neatly into one category of countries. The cliché that is often used to describe its position is that 'it is situated at the crossroads of three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa'. Even though this statement might be considered accurate, geographically, by many, it does not provide information about the position of Cyprus socially – in terms, in other words, of its cultural values. Where would Cyprus, in other words, be in terms of its cultural values compared to other countries and how are these changing? This paper attempts to provide answers to the above questions.

Hence, the paper is organised as follows: it begins with a description of the historical social conditions – particularly in relation to the family and social relations— presents the results of Cyprus⁴ according to Hofstede's value dimensions and the World Values Survey (WVS), and discusses changes in family structure and characteristics, as well as diversity within society. In summary, it is argued that Cyprus has historically been a relatively conservative society, while today its World Values Survey results are close to the world average on the two main dimensions that are used to summarise the survey's findings (but somewhat closer to the conservative side of the dimensions). On Hofstede's dimensions, Cyprus scores medium on individualism, medium to high on power distance, masculinity, and long-term orientation, and very high on uncertainty avoidance. As far as change and diversity are concerned, this paper informs that significant changes in relationships-related values have been observed and that a noteworthy difference in values is also observed between individuals that have studied in Anglophone societies in the last few decades and individuals in the local population that have not had the same experience.

Methodology

This review paper synthesises data from related research work on Cyprus and other countries. Initially, it draws a historical sociocultural profile of Cyprus, in particu-

⁴ The data were collected from individuals living in the area controlled by the Republic of Cyprus.

lar in relation to family, gender roles, social relations, and trust in society, comparing it with other Mediterranean societies. Then, it presents data of the Hofstede's survey and the World Values Survey. These surveys are selected due to the former probably being the most well-known and widely cited research on cultural values and the latter being 'the largest non-commercial, cross-national, time series investigation of human beliefs and values ever executed'.⁵ Results are compared with international data and comments are made primarily in relation to diversity and change in the country.

Cyprus: A Historical Social Background

In Cyprus, as in many other societies of the Eastern Mediterranean, a relatively conservative social outlook regarding gender roles and a central role for the family had been key societal characteristics for much of the previous century and until recently.⁶ Gender roles had been clearly differentiated and the nuclear family—parents and children—but also the extended family—grandparents, brothers, and sisters of the adolescent members of the family and their families, and even uncles and aunts—had often been the main unit of economic and social life. Relationships between family members were strong and personal interests and desires had been typically suppressed in favour of family solidarity.⁷

A similar social situation was observed in Southern Italy and was described as 'amoral familism'.⁸ In this context, as explained by the same author, the close family is often seen as the most important in-group and people act according to the principle 'maximise material, short range advantage of the nuclear family'. In such cultures, one should expect to see authorities that consist of individuals interested primarily in enriching themselves or their families, and the upper class to be highly opportunistic and uninterested in furthering the community.⁹ Laws are disregarded unless punishment is probable, bribes for officials are common, those who claim to be interested in the welfare of the community are considered frauds, and there is limited popularity of voluntary organisations.

⁵ World Values Survey, *Who We Are* (2018), available at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVS-Contents.jsp> (last accessed 20 September 2020).

⁶ Michales A. Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanization in Cyprus: A Study of Nicosia* (Nicosia: Social Research Centre, 1981).

⁷ Nicos Peristianis, Neofytos Charalambous, Michalis Koutsoulis et al., 'The State of the Cypriot Family in Cyprus', Report based on research commissioned by the Committee for the Family in Cyprus and conducted by the Intercollege Research Centre (2004).

⁸ Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward society* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1958).

⁹ Harry C. Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995).

This antagonistic way of thinking is also evident in individual behaviour in other Mediterranean societies. When competition between individuals arises, the tendency for it to become fierce is there. The competitive atomism of the Greek society, for example, has also been highlighted by other authors. The intense competition and jealousy that surfaces in individual relations in Greece has been noted,¹⁰ and an ‘anarchic individualism’, which is the tendency to consider liberty as conterminous with total irresponsibility toward the collectivity, the lay public and others rather than being an expression of identity as individualism as is often in the case of Anglophone societies, has been stressed.¹¹

This kind of atomistic behaviour often stands as a barrier when it comes to collaborating in teams. An intense focus on self-interest makes it difficult for people to work harmoniously for collective goals, and those in position of power often feel that they need to take control or even use coercion to direct the team effort more effectively. Otherwise, what is supposed to be a group effort may result in a collection of individuals working independently, probably in contradicting directions even. This contributes to making management styles in such societies more authoritarian compared to what the case is in Anglophone societies.

Intense focus on self-interest also contributes to the creation of a particularistic value system where actions are not judged by a universal standard that applies equally to all. The self is initially excluded by the moral standard applied to others, and reasons —or more rightly, excuses— come in abundantly to explain individual behaviour that promotes self-interest in a less than rightful way. Others close to the individual —family and friends— are also often excluded from a moral code applied to others. This way of thinking, added to the competitive nature of relations, leads to ‘clientism’, a system of reciprocal, interpersonal and voluntary exchange relations between actors commanding uneven political powers and conducting mutually beneficial political transactions.¹² This link between people of often different social status shares a common interest in excluding respective peers and rival groups. The role of objectivity and impartiality in such an environment is thus limited.

¹⁰ Constantinos Sykiotis, ‘Social Institutions and National Business Systems: A Review of Greek Industrial Development’ (PhD Thesis, Manchester Business School, 2004).

¹¹ Constantine Tsoukalas, ‘Free Riders in Wonderland; or, of Greeks in Greece’ in Dimitri Constan and Theofanis Stavrou (eds), *Greece Prepares for the Twenty-first Century* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1995) 191, 219.

¹² Sykiotis (no 9).

Unsurprisingly, this social background leads to low-trust mentality in the wider environment, where both individuals and groups one does not belong to cannot be trusted. As self-interest and the relationships with groups closely related to the individual take precedence over following some set of universal rules, one can expect –probably rightly– that unknown individuals will be treated in a less favourable manner than known ones. Consequently, trust in strangers or ‘outsiders’ is limited in such environments. An obvious way to go around this situation is to try and establish a close personal relationship with unknown economic agents so that they are not ‘outsiders’ anymore, thus increasing trust within this in-group. Personal relationships therefore become very common in business transactions.

The above low-trust mentality is partly offset in Cyprus by an important feature which can act as a moderator setting a ‘high moral standard’ for people to follow, namely *philotimo* in the Greek language. There is no equivalent for this word in English; a literal translation would be ‘love of honour’ and is probably similar to what is called *honneur* in French.¹³ As a concept, it implies a self-imposed code of conduct based on trust and fairness. An individual with ‘*philotimo*’ often helps in overcoming difficulties and encouraging cooperation between workers or staff which no rule or order could otherwise impose. It also means that if, for example, an employee is treated ‘properly’, he/she will give more than what is normally expected to please his/her employers (‘properly’ translates to being respected, praised, and shown concern over personal matters). As Triandis indicates, a person who is considered ‘*philotimos*’ behaves towards members of his in-group in a way that is ‘polite, virtuous, reliable, proud, truthful, generous, self-sacrificing, tactful, respectful and grateful’.¹⁴

Cyprus’ Results on Hofstede and World Values Surveys

Even though the brief analysis above may provide a broad outline of some main features of the sociocultural environment in Cyprus, it does not indicate how the Cypriot society compares with other societies on these and other more rigorously defined theoretical dimensions. Social characteristics often have more meaning when compared with other social contexts, and research in this area has often been devoted to comparative studies. Are, for example, relations between superiors and

¹³ Philippe d’Iribarne, *La Logique de l’honneur: Gestion des Entreprises et Traditions Nationales* (Paris: Seuil, 1989).

¹⁴ Harry C. Triandis, *The Analysis of Subjective Culture* (New York: Wiley, 1972).

subordinates more or less authoritarian than what the case is in other societies? Is the Cypriot society more individualistic than others? Are social values more conservative compared to other countries? Despite the challenges in doing cross cultural research¹⁵ and the limitations in comparing answers even to standardised questionnaires,¹⁶ comparative research can provide at least some indication regarding the extent or the kind of differences that are observed between societies. The results of the Hofstede model are presented first, followed by the results of the WVS.

Hofstede's Model Results

Hofstede's model is a framework developed by Geert Hofstede to compare cultural values. It was initially proposed by Hofstede in the 1970's, at a time when the impact of culture on management was not yet obvious to many researchers in the field. As perhaps the first model of systematic comparison of cultures and one that was based on a large comparable sample —Hofstede was working at IBM at the time and compared responses of 117,000 employees working in the company in different locations around the world— it soon became widely accepted and used, and it remained prevalent in cultural studies and management ever since. It is used in this paper because of its predominance in comparing cultural values. Indeed, as de Mooij and Hofstede claimed, 'in order to understand cultural differences, several models have been developed of which the Hofstede model is the most used'.¹⁷

Initially, the model included four dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism-Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity-Femininity. It was later refined to include a fifth dimension, Long Term Orientation, and more recently a sixth one, Indulgence vs Restraint. The first five dimensions —on which there are data available for Cyprus— are explained in more detail below, before the results on each dimension are presented.

¹⁵ Monir Tayeb, 'Conducting Research across Cultures: Overcoming Drawbacks and Obstacles' (2001) 1(1) *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 91-108.

¹⁶ Anne W. Harzing, 'Response Styles in Cross-national Survey Research' (2006) 6(2) *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 243-266.

¹⁷ Marieke de Mooij and Geert Hofstede, 'The Hofstede Model: Applications to Global Branding and Advertising Strategy and Research' (2010) 29(1) *International Journal of Advertising* 85-110.

Power Distance

Power Distance relates to the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.¹⁸ The fundamental issue related to Power Distance is how a society handles inequalities among people. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of Power Distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has their place, and which needs no further justification, whereas in societies with low Power Distance people strive to equalise the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.¹⁹ In high Power-Distance societies, relations are more paternalistic and autocratic, and centralised authority is more common. In lower Power-Distance societies, there are more democratic or consultative relations between those expecting and accepting power.

In the Hofstede survey, questions used to calculate this dimension included whether employees are afraid to express disagreement with their managers, the kind of manager they prefer, and the kind of manager they have now (in terms of how the manager handles authority). Cyprus did not participate in the initial survey but a survey conducted in the country later revealed a score of 75.²⁰ The highest score reported in the Hofstede survey was 104 in Malaysia and the lowest 11 in Austria (with the average score of all participating countries being 57). Based on the above, the Power Distance score in Cyprus would be best described as medium to high compared to international data.

Individualism-Collectivism

Individualism may be defined as a preference for a loose-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families.²¹ Its opposite, Collectivism, represents a preference for a tight-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of

¹⁸ Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values* (Newbury Park, CA, Sage, 1980).

¹⁹ Hofstede Insights, 'The 6 Dimensions of National Culture' (2021), available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/models/national-culture/> (last accessed 9 December 2021).

²⁰ Eleni Stavrou-Costea, Jacob Eisenberg, Chris Charalambous, 'Mapping Cyprus' Cultural Dimensions: Comparing Hofstede's and Schwartz's Values Frameworks', A paper presented at the 18th International Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (Spetses, Greece, 2006)

²¹ *Ibid.*

a particular ingroup to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. According to Hofstede, social identity in individualistic cultures is based on individual contribution, and basic social values emphasise personal initiative and achievement.²² In this context, there is greater employment mobility, since individuals are expected to look after their own interests. In collectivist cultures, on the other hand, social identity is based on group membership, and greater emphasis is placed on belonging vis-à-vis personal initiative. Hence, individual initiative is not highly valued, and deviance in opinion or behaviour is typically punished. In collectivist cultures, group decisions are considered superior to individual ones, and group-based responsibility and action are consistent with the culture. In individualist cultures, more explicit verbal communication takes place, whereas in collectivist cultures communication is more implicit.

Hofstede uses a combination of questions to arrive at ‘individualism scores’. These include rating the importance of job characteristics such as living in an area that is desirable by the individual and his or her family, cooperation with others at work, good physical working conditions (good ventilation and lighting, adequate workspace, etc.), and having a job which leaves sufficient time for personal or family life.²³ The score of the Cypriot sample was not far from the international average (42 in Cyprus vs. 44 which was the international average).²⁴

Uncertainty Avoidance

Another widely used dimension that influences attitudes towards work is what Hofstede called Uncertainty Avoidance, which he defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.²⁵ Countries exhibiting strong Uncertainty Avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. Weak Uncertainty Avoidance societies maintain a more relaxed attitude where practice counts more than principles.²⁶

²² Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations* (2nd edn, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Stavrou-Costea, Eisenberg, Charalambous (no 19).

²⁵ Hofstede (no 21).

²⁶ Hofstede Insights (no 18).

To measure Uncertainty Avoidance Hofstede used questions that examine the strength of a belief that company rules should not be broken (even when the employee thinks it is in the company's best interests), the expectation that someone will continue working for the same company for many years, and the frequency that someone feels nervous or tense at work.²⁷ Mediterranean cultures and Japan rank the highest in this category. The score in Cyprus is also very high (actually, its score is 115, which is the highest of all countries that participated in the survey).²⁸ Cultures that score high on Uncertainty Avoidance prefer rules and regulations in the structure of the environment, and employees would be less likely to take individual risks in business situations. Approval from higher authority is normally sought for any decision that involves personal risk, and innovative solutions to business problems are less likely.²⁹ A reason often given by employees in high Uncertainty Avoidance environments for avoiding taking personal risks at work and looking for security in employment is the fact that when others and formal institutions are not trusted, people feel that formal rules and regulations are the only means to increase both their security against being exploited and the possibility that what has been said orally or informally at the individual level or promised at the institutional level are actually materialised. This is likely to lead to excessive paperwork and bureaucratic procedures in organisations and disproportionate demand for more 'secure' jobs, like the ones in the public sector.

Masculinity-Femininity

The fourth dimension in Hofstede's research was Masculinity-Femininity. According to Hofstede,³⁰ social gender roles are clearly distinct in more 'masculine' societies: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. The focus in masculine cultures is in doing and acquiring rather than thinking and observing. In feminine societies social gender roles overlap; both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. In organisations with masculine cultures performance and achievement are important, while status is the presupposition of success, contrary to feminine cultures

²⁷ Hofstede (no 21).

²⁸ Stavrou-Costea, Eisenberg, Charalambous (no 19).

²⁹ Hofstede (no 21).

³⁰ Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (McGraw Hill, 1997).

where people orientation prevails, small is beautiful, and status is not very important. Cyprus’ masculinity score was 58 (Japan was the highest with 95, Sweden was the lowest with 5, and the average was 50), so it could be described as medium to high.³¹

Long Term Orientation

Hofstede’s fifth dimension, Long-term Orientation, is high in societies that foster virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole, Short-term Orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the present and short-term future. Societies who score low on this dimension prefer to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms, while they view societal change with suspicion. Societies with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education to prepare for the future.³² On this dimension, Cyprus scores 59. The highest score (118) was recorded in China and the lowest (16) was recorded in West Africa (the world average was 46). Thus, Cyprus’ results may be described as medium to high.³³

Cyprus’ results on the dimensions discussed above are summarised in the table below.

Table 1. Cyprus’ Results on Hofstede’s Dimensions in Comparison with Other Countries

Indicator	Cyprus Results Compared to International Data
Power Distance	Medium to high
Individualism	Medium
Uncertainty Avoidance	Very High
Masculinity	Medium to high
Long term orientation	Medium to high

World Values Survey

The World Values Survey (WVS) is a global network of social scientists studying changing values. The WVS consists of nationally representative surveys conducted

³¹ Stavrou-Costea, Eisenberg, Charalambous (no 19).

³² Hofstede Insights (no 18).

³³ Stavrou-Costea, Eisenberg, Charalambous (no 19).

in almost 100 countries which contain almost 90% of the world's population, using a common questionnaire of more than 200 questions. Until now, 400,000 respondents have been interviewed.³⁴ Moreover, the WVS is the only academic study covering the full range of global variations, from very poor to very rich countries, in all the world's major cultural zones. The survey started in 1981, and seven waves of surveys have been executed to this day. The WVS has given rise to more than 400 publications in 20 languages.³⁵

Upon analysing the results, two dimensions dominate the picture: Traditional/Secular-Rational and Survival/Self-Expression values. According to Inglehart,³⁶ the lead researcher of the WVS project, societies near the traditional pole emphasise the importance of religion, parent-child ties, and deference to authority, along with absolute standards and traditional family values. Those societies reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide, and have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook. Societies with secular-rational values have the opposite preferences on all these topics. The second major dimension is linked with the transition from industrial societies to post-industrial ones and the unprecedented wealth that has accumulated in advanced societies during the past generation. This has resulted in an increasing share of the population taking survival for granted and has led to a shift in child-rearing values from emphasis on hard work toward emphasis on imagination and tolerance as important values to teach a child.

Cyprus is located close to the centre of the 'cultural map' as seen on the WVS map below (its coordinates are a bit below zero on both axes). This means that Cyprus is somewhat closer to the traditional and survival sides of the axes. As it may also be seen from the map, the countries that are closer to Cyprus are Kyrgyzstan and Ethiopia, and, in an outer circle, Bahrein, Indonesia, Zambia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Macedonia. Other European countries that are near include Portugal, Croatia, and Greece which may be found a bit further out. If we counted the countries in the four quadrants with Cyprus at the centre, we would find 13 in the bottom left, 22 in the bottom right, 20 in the top left, and 33 in the top right. The distance of Cyprus from the top right country (which could be described as the most liberal) is approximately twice compared to its distance from the country in the bottom left (which

³⁴ World Values Survey, *Who We Are* (2021), available at: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVS-Contents.jsp> (last accessed 10 December 2021).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Chichester, West Sussex: Princeton University Press, 1997).

could be seen as the most conservative). Thus, it may be claimed that, overall, the position of Cyprus is middle towards the more conservative end.

Another point that could be made is that Cyprus is included in the map area given the description ‘South Asia’, while Greece is in ‘Catholic Europe’. It would be more accurate, of course, if Greece was included in the ‘Orthodox’ section of the map. Another alternative would be to add another classification named ‘Mediterranean’ (or ‘Northern Mediterranean’ or ‘Southern Europe’) under which Cyprus, Croatia, Portugal, Greece, Italy, and Spain could be included ([North] Macedonia could also be included if the description was ‘Southern Europe’). This would create a thin section that stretches from Cyprus in the bottom left to Spain in the top right. It is understood that any classification and name given would not be perfect, and that the best that can be done is to achieve the best possible approximation/description.

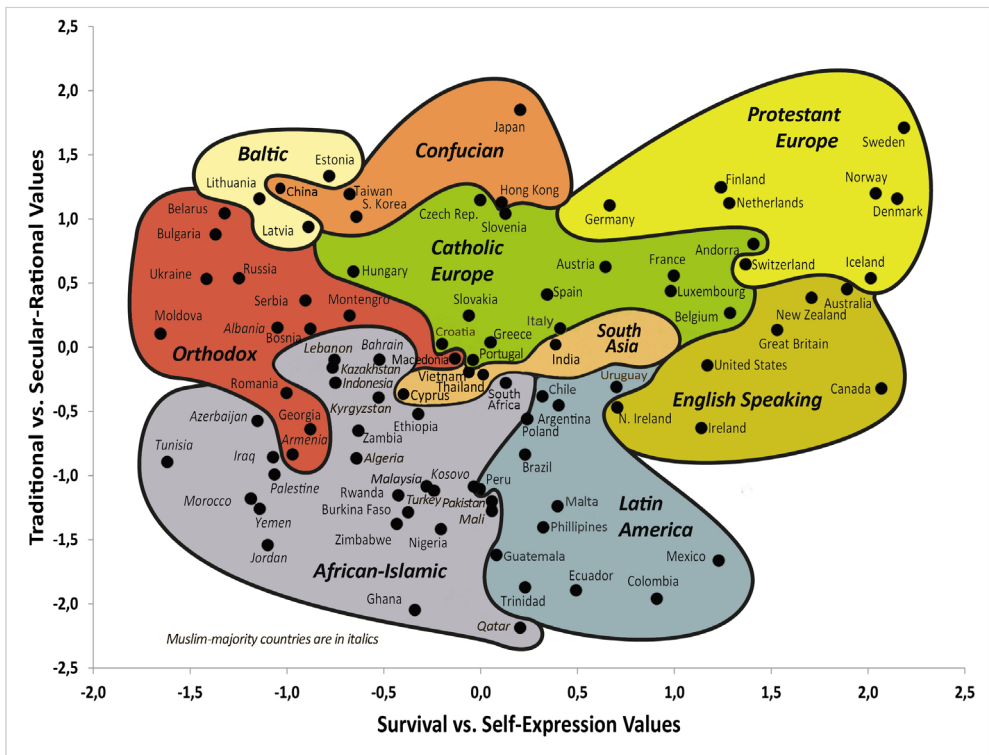


Figure 1. Cultural map of the world - WVS wave 6 (2010-2014)

Source: World Values Survey. http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/images/Culture_Map_2017_conclusive.png

Work Related Attitudes

The above combination of values has an influence on work-related attitudes and behaviours. As Lincoln and Kalleberg pointed out, the kind of work that is sought, the priorities in making a choice, and job satisfaction are related to a number of long-standing beliefs and social conditions, and these vary considerably between societies.³⁷ Two key influences on the way work is being viewed in the Cypriot context relate to the central role of the family and the high level of uncertainty avoidance. When priority is given to family and other relations, work is more likely not only to be rated as less important, but workers were also expected to react more positively to undemanding routine jobs that supply income without requiring a heavy motivational investment. A very common response in interviews with Cypriot employees when asked what they look for in a job was to allow them plenty of time to do what they want in their personal and family life.³⁸ Rarely were features like an interesting job, self-fulfilment and the nature of the job itself mentioned, and these do not seem to only be abstract beliefs: one only needs to look at the relentless efforts of the vast majority of workers to obtain a job in the public sector to conclude that secure income and time-off are of primary importance in job selection.

In Culture's Consequences Hofstede advocates the cultural relativity of motivation theories.³⁹ American motivation theories, he argues, have an inherent element of American cultural reality both from the part of the researcher and the samples used. Even when seemingly contradictory theories are advanced (like McGregor's X and Y theories), there are unspoken cultural assumptions behind, which include some or all the following:

1. Work is a valuable activity;
2. People's capacities should be maximally utilised at work;

³⁷ James Lincoln, Arne L. Kalleberg, *Culture, Control and Commitment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³⁸ Epaminondas Epaminonda, 'Institutional Change and Business System Diversity: Continuities and Contradictions in post-colonial Cyprus' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2009).

³⁹ Hofstede (no 21)

3. There are organisational objectives that need to be achieved that exist apart from people;
4. People in organisations behave like unattached individuals.

Based on these observations, Hofstede attempts to adjust motivation theories in a way that would more readily fit characteristics of other societies.

In Cyprus, assumptions behind people's relationship with work could be summarised as follows:⁴⁰

1. Work is a necessary evil, not a central life goal; to the contrary, family, friends and leisure are;
2. Organisations exist primarily to provide the rewards —mostly material goods and financial security— for workers to achieve their other personal and family objectives;
3. Job satisfaction is primarily related to how well a job provides these rewards and allows time for personal activities rather than being linked to whether workers' capabilities are maximally utilised or how much job activities are liked;
4. If minimum work can provide the desired rewards, it is preferable.

It must be acknowledged here that statements like the ones above can be contested on at least two grounds. First, one may argue that, to an extent, these statements hold in all societies (for example, material rewards and security are sought after by employees everywhere, and minimising work hours while increasing returns is desirable by most employees). Second, like any generalisation, even though it may summarise a general tendency in a society at a particular point in time, the statements do not convey the diversity within it nor do they capture any change that may be taking place. As far as the first argument is concerned, what can be pointed out is that it is often the extent to which certain values and behaviours prevail in one society that differentiate it from others, and as the earlier discussion suggests, there are differences between societies. In Cyprus, the above observations seem to hold to a greater extent. Regarding the second point, what may be claimed is that the above observations seem to hold for most of the economic actors at the time of the research. Certainly, there are individuals and groups of people that may not share this view —one such group consists of those educated abroad for example— and there is also change taking place with regard to people's values, for example in

⁴⁰ Epaminonda (no 37).

the values of younger employees. Even though estimating the extent of the diversity and the rate of change in people's values are challenging research questions, and a separate research design would have to be needed to offer a comprehensive answer to such questions, these issues are addressed briefly in the following section.

Changes in Relation to the Family

One area that has seen considerable change in Cyprus is family organisation and structure. Historically, fundamental criteria for the preferences of parents on issues of marriage of their children focused on the socio-economic interests of the family. As Attalides explains⁴¹ the parents of the couple would need to certify the economic prosperity of the other family, the place of family in the social hierarchy, as well as the 'morality' of the girl and her family ('morality' in the case of women was invariably exhausted in issues relating to sexual behaviour —any sexual relationships before marriage were denounced.) A 'good' choice in marriage would certainly increase the economic resources and would raise the social standing of the family in the community or village. The parents would normally provide financial assistance in the form of dowry: usually, the bride's family would supply the house and items related to its functioning, such as furniture, kitchen utensils, sheets, etc., and the groom's side would supply land and animals. Essentially, marriage arrangements involved a give-and-take procedure by comparing the assets of both sides.

Even though it cannot be argued that the financial conditions of the families do not still play a role in marriage decisions today, quite a few things have changed. For one, a large percentage of both boys and girls continue their education beyond high school,⁴² and this is considered to be part of the investment of parents for both sexes. It may be said that dowry in the traditional sense is almost extinct, even though it is common for parents, from both sides, to help the newlyweds in the first stages of their married life and even later. In addition, the opinions of both men and women are considered a more important factor in the marriage decision nowadays than in the past.

The mean age at first marriage has risen steadily in the last few decades, and according to the most recent available data it was 31.1 for men and 29.0 for women

⁴¹ Attalides (no 5).

⁴² Epaminonda (no 37).

in 2013, a figure that is close to the EU average.⁴³ Similarly, the total fertility rate, which gives the mean number of children per woman, decreased further to 1.3 in 2013 and has, since 1996, remained below the replacement level of 2.1. The number of births outside marriage has also increased and stands at 19.6%, while the crude divorce rate has shown a constant increase over the years, reaching 2.2 in 2013 from 1.7 in 2000 and 0.3 in 1980.⁴⁴

With regard to family related norms, Peristianis, Charalambous, Koutsoulis et al.⁴⁵ concluded that whereas traditional norms have remained relatively constant in certain areas, a significant change has occurred in others. More specifically, it was noted that important differences between the expectations from the two genders regarding gender roles remain, even though these seem to have decreased in some areas. Respondents were split, for example, on whether the father should be the financier of the house (44.6% agreed and 45.4% disagreed with this statement), and the majority disagreed with the idea he should manage the family's finances (53.6% disagreed with this statement while 25% supported it). In addition, only 24.1% of those asked supported that 'the place of the mother is in the house and not in the objective of professional career' (compared to 60.7% who disagreed). On the other hand, a high percentage (61.9%) wants the mother to act 'as mediator between the father and children', probably indicating that this traditional aspect of the role of the mother as the 'sentimental ring of the family' continues to be considered important and is cultivated in the Cypriot family. Also, 50% support the statement that 'the children should obey their parents independently of whether they agree with them or not' and consider 'respecting the old' an important value.

Diversity

Even though analyses like Inglehart's provide an overview of the differences of average results between societies, they conceal diversity that might exist within them. Differences in values between members of one society are common, and identifying the groups that hold significantly different opinions can help in understanding both value formation and change but also conflicts between groups holding contrasting values. In addition, such analysis could reveal that within societies

⁴³ Eurostat, Marriages and Births in Cyprus (2015) available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Marriages_and_births_in_Cyprus&oldid=267299 (last accessed 10 December 2021).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Peristianis, Charalambous, Koutsoulis et al. (no 6).

diverse groups may follow distinctively different paths in terms of value orientations. In Cyprus, one main difference that seems to exist is between workers who have had considerable educational and work experience abroad (in particular, the UK and the US) and those who have not. This difference is expected to be linked to the difference in life experience and the fact that the individuals that lived abroad were accountable to others who held significantly different values. As Epaminonda⁴⁶ noted, there are important differences between Cypriot workers who lived their life in Cyprus on the one hand and those who studied in Britain and the US for more than three years. The shift in the values of workers who studied abroad were towards less authoritative concepts of authority.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to present a sociocultural profile of Cyprus and discuss change and diversity in the country. It has been suggested that, historically, Cyprus has been a conservative society regarding gender roles and family-centric roles, which led to antagonistic relationships between unrelated individuals and a particularistic value system in which actions are not judged by a universal standard that applies equally to all. This led to a low-trust mentality environment in which personal relations were important for business transactions.

In theoretically defined Hofstede dimensions, Cyprus' score was average on individualism, medium to high on power distance, masculinity, and long-term orientation, and very high on uncertainty avoidance. In the WVS, the results for Cyprus were close to the middle of the axes on survival vs. self-expression values and traditional vs. secular values, but closer to the more conservative sides of the axes. These characteristics impact upon work-related attitudes which include placing priority to material rewards and security of employment.

Relating to change and diversity in the Cypriot society, it has been suggested that important changes in family structure and values have been observed. Moreover, it has been noted that a particular characteristic of the Cypriot society is the high number of individuals that studied in the last few decades in Anglophone societies, more specifically in the UK and the US. This seems to have led to changes in the values of these individuals, who, upon returning to Cyprus, exhibit a different

⁴⁶ Epaminondas Epaminonda, 'Changes in Authority Relations when Moving between more and less Authoritarian Cultures: The impact of Anglo-American Education and Return Home' (2014) 14(2) *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 173-193.

value system. This dynamic nature of society is likely to influence the direction in which social values will develop in the coming years.

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